



# Public School Accountability (1999-2000)

## Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP): How Low Performing Schools in California Are Facing the Challenge of Improving Student Achievement

Anne E. Just, Larry E. Boese, Rachel Burkhardt, Linda J. Carstens,  
Marsha Devine, and Tim Gaffney

In April 1999, the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) became law in California. Its three major provisions include:

- **Academic Performance Index (API)** to measure schools' yearly academic progress
- **Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP)** to assist low-performing schools to improve student academic performance
- **Governor's Performance Awards Program (GPA)** to provide awards/incentives to schools for increasing student academic performance as measured by the API

The California Department of Education (CDE) is responsible for PSAA administration. CDE handles the tasks necessary to implement the three preceding provisions. A description of each follows in the next section.

In addition, CDE research staff are conducting a statewide research and evaluation study of the first cohort of low performing schools, funded for the first time in the 1999-2000 school year through II/USP. This Research Summary describes two types of II/USP schools funded for different stages of school reform — those planning for reform and those implementing reform models. Because the planning and implementation schools are at different points on the reform continuum and using different approaches to reform, this Summary will not draw comparisons or contrasts between them.

Thus, *the Summary focuses on Year 1 implementation and impact findings from the study of the first cohort of II/USP schools.* Included also are overall conclusions about Year 1 II/USP operations and recommendations for future cohorts of II/USP schools.

### Accountability Provisions

#### Overview of the API

The API is a weighted index of student performance measures and other school indicators. Currently, the API only takes into account student performance on the Stanford Achievement Test, Version 9 (SAT-9). On the API scale of 200 to 1000, 800 constitutes the interim performance target determined by the California State Board of Education (SBE) toward which all schools should strive.

- Each year, a school is to increase its API score by five percent of the point difference between its API score and the statewide target.
- Numerically significant student subgroups (student groups by race/ethnicity and socio-economically disadvantaged students), who constitute 15 percent of student enrollment or 100 students, must also make 80 percent of the school's target for a school to have met its API target. (continued on page 2)

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Based on their API scores, schools are ranked from highest to lowest within elementary, middle, and high school groups. They are then divided into ten equal segments, or deciles. Schools in Deciles 1 through 5 that do not meet their API targets in a given year become eligible for II/USP.

*All public schools, including the II/USP schools, are expected to meet their API growth targets yearly.*

### **II/USP Background**

The II/USP provides funding to low performing public schools through two sources.

*The first II/USP funding source is state money to support a two-stage approach over three years. The initial planning year provides a school with state funds to hire an external evaluator to assist in developing a school Action Plan. In the second and third years, a state-funded II/USP school is to implement its Action Plan to improve both student academic performance and school operations to support improved student performance.*

*The second II/USP funding source is the federally-funded Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program. Competitively awarded, CSRD funds support a school's use of a research-based school reform model to systemically change, with an emphasis on improved student academic achievement, over a three-year period. In the 1999-2000 school year, 350 public*

*schools identified as II/USP-eligible, received their first round of state II/USP funding. These funds underwrote an initial year of analyzing school and district conditions and determining approaches to improve student academic performance.*

An additional 80 public schools received initial CSRD funding as part of the II/USP through an application process. These schools made an early, voluntary commitment to school reform by using the one-year delay in CDE's receipt of federal CSRD funds to plan for school reform on their own and to prepare their CSRD applications. CSRD funding supported their immediate implementation of specific school reform models.

### **Criteria for GPA**

Based on the API, schools that improved their academic performance received financial awards. GPA criteria are

- *A school meets or exceeds its API growth target. (Schools with APIs at 800 or greater in 1999 were required to make a minimum of one API growth point for awards.)*
- *Numerically significant subgroups at a school meet or exceed their growth targets (i.e. 80 percent of the school's growth target).*
- *A school's STAR test participation rate (i.e. the percentage of students tested) meets or exceeds the following: 95 percent for elementary and middle schools and 90 percent for high schools.*

## **Study Focus and Techniques**

The CDE study focuses on implementation in, and impact on, the first cohort of 430 II/USP schools initially funded in the 1999-2000 school year. CDE research staff used three data sources.

### **1. CDE databases about II/USP school characteristics and API performance**

CDE researchers developed a profile of II/USP schools statewide. Included were school demographic attributes as well as student achievement and API progress data.

### **2. Site visits to 25 II/USP schools: 12 state-funded II/USP planning schools and 13 federally-funded CSRD schools**

CDE researchers chose the schools to be visited to ensure geographic variety (e.g., urban, suburban, small city, rural), ethnically

and racially diverse student populations, grade-level variation (i.e. elementary, middle, and high school), range of API decile rankings (Deciles 1 through 5), and variation in CSRD reform models and in II/USP external evaluators.

The site visits incorporated interviews with school and district administrators, teachers, parents and community members, CSRD model providers, and II/USP external evaluators. The CDE research teams sought information about the "value added" nature of II/USP participation.

### **3. Surveys of II/USP school personnel**

Surveys to II/USP school principals focused on the schools' first-year experi-

ences in II/USP. Response rates included 83 percent of principals in the CSRD schools and 61 percent of principals in II/USP planning schools.

CDE also mailed a first-year retrospective survey for teachers in CSRD schools during Fall 2000. Each CSRD school principal was asked to choose two teachers on the school's leadership team and two non-leadership team teachers to complete the survey. The survey concentrated on teachers' reactions to, and implementation of, CSRD efforts in their classrooms. Forty-nine percent of teachers in 63 percent of the CSRD schools responded.

### Characteristics of Cohort 1 II/USP and CSRD Schools (1999-2000)

Using CDE databases, CDE researchers identified various characteristics of the state- and federally-funded II/USP schools in Cohort 1 in the context of schools in API Deciles 1 through 5. Table 1 displays these characteristics.

**Table 1: Characteristics of Cohort 1 II/USP, CSRD, and Other Schools in Deciles 1 through 5, 1999-2000**

	II/USP Planning Schools	CSRD Schools	Other Schools in Deciles 1 through 5
Number of Schools	350	80	2955
Average Number of Students Tested (gr. 2-11)	548	603	660
Percent of English Language Learners (of those tested)	34%	43%	36%
Percent of Title I students (of those tested)	65%	83%	65%
Percent of Low Socio-economic Status students (of those tested)	71%	83%	73%

The 430 II/USP schools in Cohort 1 constitute almost 13 percent of all Deciles 1 through 5 schools in the 1999-2000 school year. Among the 350 state-funded II/USP planning schools, 62 percent are in Deciles 3 through 5. By contrast, the 80 CSRD schools tend to be more concentrated in Deciles 1 and 2 (66%) than the planning schools.

On average, both the II/USP planning schools and the CSRD schools appear to be smaller than other Deciles 1 through 5 schools based on the number of students tested on the Stanford-9 statewide test. The planning schools tested an average of 112 fewer students than other Deciles 1 through 5 schools (548 vs. 660). CSRD schools tested an average of 57 fewer students than other Deciles 1 through 5 schools (603 vs. 660).

Data indicate that CSRD schools tend to have larger percentages of English Language Learner (ELL) students than II/USP planning schools and other Deciles 1 through 5 schools. The weighted averages derived from the number of students tested reveal that the II/USP planning schools serve about the same percentage of ELL students as other Deciles 1 through 5 schools (34% vs. 36%). However, the ELL percentage in CSRD schools exceeded both the percentages of planning schools (43% vs. 34%) and of other Deciles 1 through 5 (43% vs. 36%).

CSRD funds were largely earmarked for low-performing Title I schools by both federal law and by CDE eligibility criteria. As a result, the weighted averages based on the number of tested students indicate that Cohort 1 CSRD schools noticeably differ from the II/USP planning schools and other Deciles 1 through 5 schools in two other characteristics:

teristics:

- *Percentage of Title I students among students tested (83% vs. 65% each),*
- *Percentage of low socio-economic status (SES) students among those tested (83% vs. 71% and 73%, respectively).*

Thus, the II/USP planning schools in Cohort 1 tend to look more like other Deciles 1 through 5 schools than do the CSRD schools. In the planning schools, approximately one-third of students are ELL; nearly two-thirds receive Title I services; and, just under three-fourths are designated as low SES. CSRD schools are characterized by nearly 45 percent ELL students and by nearly 85 percent of their students being both low SES and receiving Title I services.

*Among the 350 state-funded II/USP planning schools, 62 percent are in Deciles 3 through 5.*

*By contrast, the 80 CSRD schools tend to be more concentrated in Deciles 1 and 2 (66%) than the planning schools.*

## Study Findings

Findings from the CDE study fall into two categories: *implementation* and *impact*. Both categories incorporate findings from the first year of II/USP participation.

This Research Summary highlights the findings for the state-funded II/USP planning schools and the federally-funded CSRD schools separately.

## Implementation Findings About State-Funded II/USP Planning Schools

From the school site visits and principal surveys, CDE researchers found considerable information about implementing II/USP planning activities at school sites and in school districts. At times, the data conflict and are so noted in this Summary. There are six categories of findings.

### 1. External Evaluator Selection

External evaluators are individuals or groups selected by II/USP planning schools to assist with the following responsibilities:

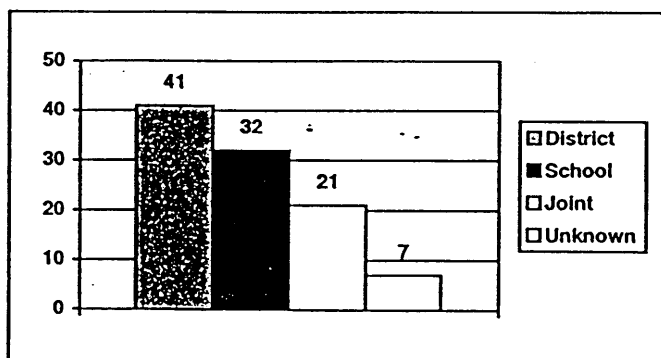
- Collect and analyze school demographic, process, and outcome data
- Work collaboratively with the school's Action Plan team on determining barriers to strong academic performance and solutions to those barriers
- Assist the school in developing its Action Plan

### Average Caseload of External Evaluators

*Individual external evaluators worked with an average of 3 II/USP schools. The range was 1 to 8 schools.*

*External Evaluator groups worked with an average of 8 II/USP schools. The range was 1 to 57 schools.*

Figure 1. Who Selected the External Evaluators?



*District determination* of the external evaluator was the *predominant* mode of selection (41%). *School selection* of the external evaluator followed at 32 percent. In 21 percent of the cases, there was a *joint school and district decision* about the external evaluator. In seven percent of the II/USP planning schools, it was unclear how the external evaluators were selected. Yet 90 percent of principals indicated that their external evaluators were a "good fit" with the schools' needs and expectations.

*Teacher and parent/community involvement* in selecting the external evaluator was *limited*. Sixty-nine percent of principals indicated that teachers were not actively involved in the process; 75 percent reported the same about parents and community members.

*II/USP planning schools chose their external evaluators from a CDE list of individuals and groups*, approved via an application and interview process. There were 14 individual external evaluators who worked with a total of 37 II/USP planning schools.

Among the 42 approved external evaluator groups contracted by II/USP planning schools were private educational consulting firms, county offices of education, institutions of higher education, and research agencies. These groups helped 313 II/USP planning schools.

## Implementation Findings About State-Funded II/USP Schools (cont.)

### 2. External Evaluator Assistance and Effectiveness

In general, the external evaluators received *high marks for the assistance provided and the contributions* made to their schools, according to site visit data. Principal survey data supported these findings.

- External evaluators were *highly responsive to Action Plan input from parent and community members*. (91% of principals)
- External evaluators *collaborated closely with the school* (90%)
- *External evaluators fulfilled all the terms of their contracts* for services in the 1999-2000 school year. (87%)
- *Principals would recommend their external evaluators* to schools with similar characteristics. (84%)
- *External evaluators' fees were reasonable* for the Action Plan services and products received. (65%)

In the right-hand column are the *six types of assistance* from external evaluators that were *most frequently cited* by principals when listing the three major contributions made by their external evaluators. Percentages reflect the request for multiple responses. Included also are illustrative quotes from the principals' surveys.

However, *not all the assistance from the external evaluators was viewed as satisfactory*. Examples came from site visits and principal survey comments. Site visit data revealed that there were:

- *Occasional mismatches* between school levels and the external evaluators' background (e.g., elementary school receiving assistance from external evaluator with only secondary school experience).
- *External evaluators whose full-time employment elsewhere* impeded or prevented their ready or timely accessibility to their planning schools.
- *External evaluators who were unfamiliar with the II/USP process* and its intent as well as with the PSAA legislative requirements and deadlines for Action Plans.
- *External evaluators who lacked experience* in systemic school reform, improvement of student academic achievement, and/or leadership of a high-performing school.
- *External evaluators who did not visit their schools*.
- *External evaluators who dominated the planning process* almost to the exclusion of the Action Plan team.

#### Most Helpful Assistance from External Evaluators

Acting as facilitator for the Action Plan process (21 %)  
*"Helped unite the community and staff towards a common purpose."*

Providing guidance and structure for the Action Plan (18 %)  
*"Ability to focus staff on students' academic needs based on data and standards"*

Providing expert knowledge and experience (15 %)  
*"Knowledge of the curriculum alignment process and its impact on student achievement"*

Analyzing data (9 %)  
*"Collection of districtwide data to summarize information into narrative to be aligned to the site's action plan"*

Providing leadership/acting as a catalyst for the planning process (8 %)  
*"Successfully planted a reflective change seed at this site."*

Writing, or assisting with writing, the Action Plan (8 %)  
*"Guided and assisted, but let staff write the action plan."*

Source: II/USP Principal Survey, Spring 2000

## Implementation Findings About State-Funded II/USP Planning Schools (cont.)

*"I was very disappointed with the external evaluator. Our site team wrote the [A]ction [P]lan. [The external evaluator] had no suggestions for us."*

II/USP Principal Survey Comment, Spring 2000

Principal survey data added more information about possible tensions between the external evaluators and schools.

- "The site was very responsible in developing the plan. There was very little input for plan development from the external evaluator."
- "The evaluator insulted the staff on several occasions, causing a visceral reaction."
- "Other contributions: none—a very poor job. The plan assessment was incomplete and inaccurate; the writing was not started until February."
- "[A major contribution was] actually writing the Action Plan, although we had to pay extra."

*"The feeling of the staff and the district was that the company had a plan they fit our school to. They did not look at real student work and were not timely. They talked at us, not to us and were selling a service for which little product came from them."*

II/USP Principal Survey Comment, Spring 2000

Since the primary product of the II/USP planning process is the school Action Plan, initial approval of this document may serve as a proxy measure of external evaluator effectiveness. In this context, *effectiveness varied widely*.

Of the 325 Action Plans CDE reviewed in May 2000, 200 (62%) were recommended outright for SBE approval and funding. These Plans had fully addressed all the PSAA-legislatively required elements and were considered ready for implementation.

The remaining Plans were returned to their respective schools for completion and/or revision per the legal criteria. Eventually, the SBE approved and funded all 350 Action Plans.

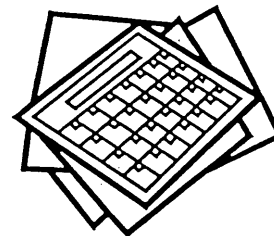
### 3. Initiation and Implementation of Planning Activities

*Information about these topics diverged noticeably between the responses to the principal survey and the data collected during the school site visits. Survey data indicated that.*

- Schools closely followed the legislatively prescribed II/USP planning activities. (97% of principals)
- Action Plans were completed in a timely manner. (95%)
- Planning school activities progressed with no major difficulties. (85%)

By contrast, school site visit data revealed that

- II/USP start-up was difficult for both the planning schools and the external evaluators. In this first year, much was unknown about both the process and the product (the Action Plan).
- The legislatively mandated timelines were viewed as most difficult, if not unrealistic. In essence, external evaluators and schools had about four months for the planning process, from the selection of the external evaluator on November 15, 1999, to the submission of the Action Plan on March 15, 2000.



- Implementation of the planning tasks was characterized as either collaboration between the school and external evaluator or as a domination-abdication relationship between the two parties. A fuller description of the types of relationships between external evaluators and their schools follows on the next page.

## Implementation Findings About State-Funded II/USP Planning Schools (cont.)

The figure in the center column displays four variations in the interactive relationships between the school community and external evaluators in the II/USP planning process. CDE researchers gleaned this information from school site visits, Action Plan reviews, and analysis of principal survey responses.

- a. Passive/Cooperative: The *cooperative-but-passive dynamic* was the most frequently experienced school-external evaluator interaction. Approximately 45 percent of II/USP planning schools were in this mode. While the school cooperated with the external evaluator, there was considerable dependency and reliance on the external evaluator to take the lead in the planning process. Sometimes the roles reversed, however, with the external evaluator assuming a passive, or disinterested, posture.

- b. Active/Cooperative: The cooperative-and-active interaction (25% of schools) was characterized by joint, collaborative efforts by both the school and the external evaluator in the development of the Action Plan. Because there was a high level of school "buy-in" to the II/USP process, the school shouldered its II/USP planning responsibilities and worked with the external evaluator.

**Table 2. Relationships between II/USP Planning Schools and External Evaluators**

	Active	Passive
Cooperative	Joint Effort High Buy-In (25%)	Dependence and Reliance on EE (45%)
Resistant	Conflict and/or Counterpoint (5%)	School Abdication Low Buy-In (25%)

- c. Passive/Resistant: By contrast, in the resistant-but-passive interaction (25% of schools), the school usually had low "buy-in" to the II/USP process. As a result, the school largely abdicated its II/USP planning responsibilities to the external evaluator.

- d. Active/Resistant: The final interaction, noted in only about five percent of the schools, was *resistant-and-active*. In these schools, there was palpable resistance to the external evaluator and/or to the evaluator's findings. The school actively engaged in outright conflict with, or at least worked counter to, the external evaluator.

### 4. Parent and Community Involvement

Every planning school visited had organized the required Action Plan team, composed primarily of parents and community members along with school staff representatives. In fact, survey data confirmed this information with virtually every II/USP planning school principal reporting that the school's Action Plan team had the requisite membership.

*Eighty percent of principals indicated that II/USP planning school status had contributed to an increase in parent and community involvement at their schools.*

### 5. Role and Support of the District

District involvement with II/USP planning schools was uneven according to information from site visits and the principal survey. CDE site visit data revealed that

- In several districts, administrative staff had "volunteered" local schools for II/USP planning status, without the knowledge of the schools involved. Often in these schools, there was little staff interest and investment in the II/USP planning process.
- Most school districts were not actively involved in the planning process at individual schools. Despite what role the district may have played regarding the selection of the external evaluator, a school was usually on its own to work with the external evaluator to develop an Action Plan.

On the positive side, according to II/USP planning school principals, school districts actively involved with II/USP:

- Supported change in their II/USP planning schools. (87% of principals)
- Provided assistance to schools to complete their planning activities on time. (82%)
- Eliminated barriers to ensure effective implementation of planning school activities at these schools. (75%)

## Implementation Findings About State-Funded II/USP Planning Schools (cont.)

### 6. Capacity of the Schools for Change

Again, the *information about this topic varied by source and presents a cloudy picture*. From the school site visits, the following emerged.

- “Buy-in” to the II/USP planning process and subsequent implementation of the Action Plan was sometimes lacking in the planning schools, thereby missing a major aspect of II/USP for school recognition of, and planning to overcome, low school performance.
- Some planning schools expected that their external evaluators would be responsible for imple-

menting the schools’ Action Plans, again missing a primary thrust of II/USP for schools themselves to take responsibility to improve school organization, instruction, and student performance.

- Many planning schools did not understand the high stakes nature of II/USP and of PSAA with its various sanctions and repercussions for schools not making improvement in student academic achievement.

By contrast, principal surveys revealed that

- Action Plan teams had determined professional development priorities

based on identified student academic needs. (97% of principals)

- II/USP planning school status focused the entire school community on improvements to increase student achievement. (97%)
- The school community strongly concurred on all specific strategies in the Action Plan. (94%)
- School Action Plans clearly focused on addressing student academic needs. (91%)
- Overall, teachers strongly supported II/USP planning school activities. (85%)

## Implementation Findings About Federally-Funded CSRD Schools

CSRD school site visits and survey responses from CSRD school principals and teachers provided substantial information about the implementation of this federal program at school sites and in school districts. At times the data conflict and are so noted in this Summary. There are eight categories of findings.

### 1. CSRD Model Selection

CSRD schools had considerable freedom in selecting their school reform models. In fact, some CSRD schools investigated various models on their own at CDE-sponsored design fairs and at schools already using different models. As a likely result, survey data yielded the following information.

- 96 percent of principals indicated that their CSRD models well matched their schools’ needs. Ninety-one percent of teachers reported that their CSRD models well matched their schools’ needs in reading/language arts; 69 percent so reported for math. In addition, 81 percent of teachers indi-

cated that school needs assessment information was used to match their schools with appropriate CSRD models.

- 89 percent of CSRD school principals reported that their schools independently chose their CSRD models. Fifty percent of teachers concurred, although 19 percent did not know whether the school or the school district chose the CSRD model.
- 88 percent of CSRD teacher survey respondents reported that their schools carefully investigated which CSRD models would be best for their schools.

School districts often played an important up-front role in guidance, assistance, and advice for their schools regarding CSRD models. However, districts rarely imposed models on their CSRD schools.

Teachers in CSRD schools played an active role in model selection. Eighty-six percent of principals indicated that teachers actively participated in CSRD

model selection process. Seventy-nine percent of teachers concurred. Information about the *extent of parent and community involvement* in selecting CSRD models varied, however. CSRD site visit data revealed that parents were generally not involved in model selection. However, 75 percent of CSRD school principals versus 46 percent of CSRD school teachers indicated that parents and community members did actively participate in selecting models.

Twenty-seven CSRD models were selected by the 80 CSRD schools. The number of schools each model provider worked with ranged from 1 to 26, with an average of 8 schools per CSRD model provider.



## Implementation Findings About Federally-Funded CSRD Schools (cont.)

### 2. CSRD Model Initiation and Implementation

*CSRD model start-up varied across school sites* according to site visit data. Some CSRD schools experienced a slow start in model implementation, often through no fault of their own. There were delays in forwarding money: from CDE to the recipient school districts and from the school districts to the CSRD schools. Some of the CSRD model providers, overwhelmed by demand, experienced delays in staff hiring and deployment to school sites.

Schools were generally slower to implement "process" models (i.e. those that focus on revision of school operations such as staff development or school governance) than "structured" models (i.e. those that incorporate specific curricula or instructional approaches). Yet, by the end of Year 1 most CSRD schools seemed on their way to full model implementation.

CSRD school teachers reported on barriers present at their schools at the time of CSRD model initiation. The three barriers reported to have had the most impact on CSRD model start-up were:

- High student mobility (70% of teachers)
- Turnover of teaching staff at the school (68%)
- Teacher resistance to change (63%)

Both CSRD principal and teacher survey data yielded *considerable information about CSRD model implementation*. Eighty-three percent of CSRD school principals indicated that CSRD model implementation had progressed at their schools with *no major difficulties*. Ninety-seven percent reported that the teachers at their schools *strongly supported* the implementation of the CSRD models; 85 percent of teachers concurred.

CSRD school teachers reported a *high degree of school administrative leadership and support* for CSRD model implementation in the following ways:

- Supporting teachers in their efforts to implement CSRD reforms (98% of teachers)
- Providing leadership in the CSRD reform effort (95%)

Principals reported that CSRD model providers averaged 15 days on site during the 1999-2000 school year. Most frequently, the model providers were at the CSRD schools for 12 days. The actual number of days ranged from zero to 73, depending upon the model provider.

In the right-hand column, CDE researchers compiled six categories from principal survey comments about the *three major advantages of their CSRD models*. Percentages reflect the request for multiple responses. Included also are illustrative quotes from the principals' surveys.

### 3. Professional Development

The CSRD program emphasizes professional development as an essential element of comprehensive school reform. Information about *professional development in CSRD schools varied by source*. Site visit data revealed that

- CSRD models ranged widely in terms of frequency and intensity of professional development as a model component.
- The *time constraint* encountered by almost every CSRD school in terms of model implementation was especially true for professional development.
- The state cutback of release days for professional development exacerbated the time constraint situation.

### Major Advantages of CSRD Models

Specific instructional strategies and techniques (14%)  
*"Higher order thinking and problem solving skills"*

Schoolwide focus (11%)  
*"Makes connections for adults as well as students as to the meaningfulness of the strategies."*

*"It (CSRD model) creates a common language for our school."*

Professional development to support model implementation (8%)  
*"Workshops related to language arts standards"*

Instructional coaching for teachers (7%)  
*"Provides models/support/classroom coaching to implement strategies."*

*"Assistance to new teachers"*

Comprehensive strategies for long-term change (5%)  
*"Building program for long-term vs. short-term quick fix"*

Highly structured/scripted model (5%)  
*"Structured lessons plans within grade levels"*

Source: CSRD Principal Survey, Spring 2000

## Implementation Findings About Federally-Funded CSRD Schools (cont.)

However, CSRD school principals indicated that

- Their CSRD model providers had provided a clear focus for professional development in reading/language arts (97% of principals) and in mathematics (85%).
- Their CSRD model providers had delivered instructional coaching to individual teachers in reading/language arts (83%) and in mathematics (74%).

### Most Helpful Teacher Professional Development Received from CSRD Model Providers

Alignment of classroom content with standards (88%)

Effective teaching practices (88%)

Using data to improve student performance (85%)

Addressing the academic needs of students at their schools (84%)

Ways to integrate the CSRD model with ongoing school improvement (81%)

Source: CSRD Teacher Survey, Fall 2000

Teachers also rated three *technical assistance methods* as most helpful in implementing CSRD models:

- Faculty/staff discussions focused on instructional issues and school-wide reform (88% of teachers)

- On-site facilitator(s) (81%)
- In-class observations and feedback (71%)

Teachers also identified three areas where they *needed additional information and training*, and indicated the best providers of the preceding information and training as follows:

- Ways to involve parents in students' learning (78% of teachers) The training should be conducted by the school (28%).
- Information about activities of other schools using the same CSRD model(s) (75%) The training should be conducted by the model provider (63%).
- Information about results from other schools using the same CSRD model(s) (72%) The training should be conducted by the model provider (59%).

**4. Role and Support of the District** School district involvement is a significant feature of the CSRD program in California. CDE required a joint district/school application for CSRD funding with specific district responsibilities identified.

Again information about the extent and nature of *district CSRD involvement* differed by source. Site visit data suggested that the district's role in CSRD implementation tended to diminish markedly after offering early guidance about model selection.

However, 79 percent of CSRD school principals reported in the surveys that their districts eliminated barriers to ensure effective implementation of CSRD models at the school level.

Further, 85 percent indicated that their districts collaborated with their schools to coordinate funds for CSRD model implementation.

### 5. Parent and Community Involvement

CSRD site visit data revealed that the *extent to which parents and community members took active roles in the implementation of CSRD models varied widely* across schools.

Often, parents had only a vague understanding of the CSRD model in relation to overall school organization and goals. Yet 84 percent of CSRD school principals reported that the *CSRD model contributed to an increase in parent and community involvement* at the school.



### 6. Evaluation Design and Strategies

Program evaluation of the CSRD process and its outcomes is an essential element of the CSRD program. CDE required district and schools to detail their program evaluation plans in their respective CSRD applications.

This area provided the most *stark contrast between site visit information and principal survey data*. CSRD school site visits yielded the following information.

- Most CSRD schools were struggling with development of data systems to collect multiple measures of student achievement—often without help from their school districts, as required of CSRD grantees.
- There was very little in place in CSRD schools and districts for systematic documentation of the process of CSRD implementation, as required of CSRD grantees.

## Implementation Findings About Federally-Funded CSRD Schools (cont.)

In contrast, CSRD principals and teachers reported via survey that

- Their schools used multiple measures to monitor the progress of student achievement as part of CSRD implementation. (99% of principals)
- Their schools had an ongoing process for monitoring CSRD model implementation. (96% of principals)
- Teachers participated in ongoing efforts at their schools to monitor CSRD implementation progress. (90% of teachers)
- Their districts had assisted with monitoring the progress of student academic achievement as part of CSRD model implementation. (77% of principals)

### 7. CSRD Model Fidelity and Effectiveness

CSRD site visit information and survey data were consistent on these topics. The site visits revealed that most CSRD schools perceived themselves as *implementing* their CSRD models with fidelity to the model's original design.

*Ninety-two percent of surveyed CSRD principals and teachers would recommend their CSRD model to schools similar to theirs.*

Survey data concurrence emerged with 99 percent of CSRD school principals who indicated that their schools were closely following the format and purpose of the CSRD model selected.

There were reinforcing perceptions of CSRD model effectiveness. During site visits, parents and teachers frequently reported *observable changes in student attitudes, behaviors, and learning* since the initiation of the CSRD models. (Schools, however, often did not have demonstrable evidence to confirm these perceptions.)

CSRD school principals indicated that

- There were positive changes in student academic achievement since CSRD model implementation. (91% of principals)
- There were positive changes in other indicators of school performance (e.g., student attendance) since CSRD model implementation. (87%)

Other principal responses testified to the effectiveness of implementing the CSRD models.

- The model providers fulfilled all the terms of their contracts for the 1999-2000 school year. (99% of principals)
- There have been improvements in teachers' instructional techniques in reading/language arts (96%); in mathematics (86%).
- The assistance from the model provider was beneficial to the school in reading/language arts (94%); in mathematics (80%).
- The school staff was highly satisfied with the services of the model provider. (91%)

CSRD school teachers identified several features of CSRD model effectiveness.

- Faculty meetings focusing on student achievement and schoolwide reform are regularly held. (89% of teachers)
- Teachers changed their instructional practices. (77%)
- The overall school climate is more positive. (70%)
- The instructional day was redesigned or extended. (62%)

### 8. Capacity of Schools for Change

Overall, CSRD schools seem to possess interest in and ability to bring about school reform. Site visit information suggested the following.

- Schools and districts that submitted successful CSRD applications demonstrated an early interest in and potential for change.
- Implementation of CSRD models generally appeared to be enhancing schools' capacity for change.
- Most CSRD schools have not yet addressed the issue of long-term institutionalization of the CSRD model to ensure continuation of school reform.

Survey responses supported the preceding points.

- 97 percent of CSRD school principals indicated that their CSRD models were integrally part of systemic reform at their schools.
- 62 percent of CSRD school teachers reported that academic and learning support programs and governance structure were integrated into a coherent whole at their schools.

### Impact Findings About II/USP and CSRD Schools

CDE researchers analyzed 1999 and 2000 API data for the 350 state-funded II/USP schools, for the 80 federally-funded CSRD schools, and for the 2955 other schools in API *Deciles* 1 through 5, all of which constitute California's low-performing schools. The purposes were to determine

1. Any school-level changes in student performance that may have occurred in the II/USP planning schools during their first year — even though improvement in student achievement was not an anticipated outcome of the first year's participation.
2. The school-level impact on student academic achievement from the first year of implementing CSRD reform models.
3. Comparison of II/USP planning schools and CSRD schools with other Deciles 1 through 5 schools in terms of meeting API growth targets and eligibility for Governor's Performance Awards (GPA).

API data exist for 313 II/USP planning schools, 77 CSRD schools, and 2955 other Deciles 1 through 5 schools. The following highlights the results from these data. However, it is too early in the II/USP process to determine the specific reasons for the school-level changes noted and to make overall conclusions about achievement at participating schools.

- II/USP schools needed to make an average of 14 API points to meet their API growth targets. They made an average of 63 API points in the first year. In 1999, II/USP schools had an average base API score of 523. In 2000, the average API growth score was 566.
- CSRD schools needed to make an average of 16 API points to meet their API growth targets. They made an average of 56 API points in the first year. In 1999, CSRD schools had an average base API score of 483. In 2000, the average API growth score was 520.
- Other schools in Deciles 1 through 5 needed to make an average of 14 API points to meet their targets. They made an average of 39 API points in the first year.

**Figure 2. Percent of California Low-Performing Schools Meeting API Growth Targets and GPA Growth Criteria, 1999-2000 API Reporting Cycle**

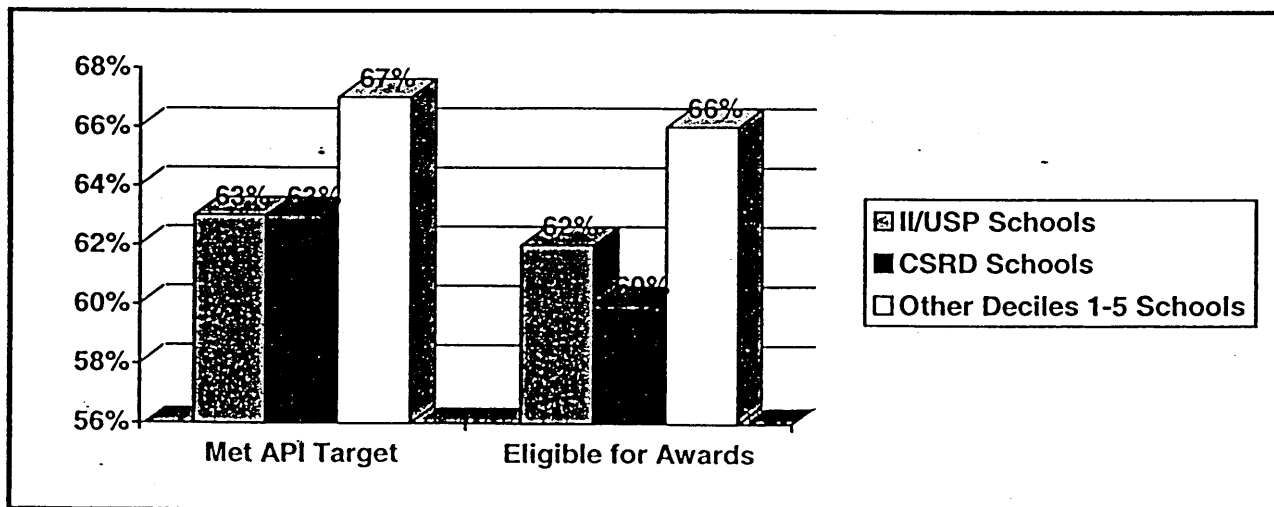


Figure 2 shows that II/USP and CSRD school performance was close to other schools in Deciles 1 through 5 in meeting API growth targets and in eligibility for monetary awards for improved student performance. II/USP planning schools were slightly more successful than CSRD schools in those two categories, and slightly less successful than other Deciles 1 through 5 schools.

## Study Conclusions and Recommendations

Data about *implementation and impact* of the state-funded II/USP planning year activities and of the federally-funded CSRSD reform models on the participating schools lead to a number of conclusions about their progress during this first year and recommendations for successive cohorts of schools in these programs.

This Research Summary highlights the conclusions and recommendations for the state-funded II/USP planning schools and the federally-funded CSRSD schools separately.

### **State-Funded II/USP Planning Schools**

#### Conclusions

1. Overall, school districts dominated the selection process for external evaluators. Teachers and parents generally had a minimal, or no role in the process.
2. Overall, external evaluators received high ratings from II/USP planning school principals for their assistance. However, there were some cases of less than satisfactory external evaluator assistance.
3. II/USP planning schools most often interacted with their external evaluators in a cooperative-but-passive manner, leaving lead responsibility for the II/USP planning process to the external evaluator.
4. School district involvement with, and support to, II/USP planning schools was uneven. District involvement and support ranged from districts' unilaterally "volunteering" schools for II/USP and then leaving them on their own in the II/USP process to districts' actively facilitating the II/USP process on behalf of their schools.
5. The capacity of II/USP schools for change beyond the planning year is uncertain.

#### Recommendations

1. School districts should not "volunteer" schools for II/USP without consulting with the schools beforehand. The school needs an active commitment to participate.
2. Schools selected by the state for II/USP participation should sign a "buy-in" agreement to ensure full cooperation with, and implementation of, II/USP requirements.
3. School districts should perform their own "due diligence" by screening external evaluators that appear most appropriate for their schools from the state-approved list. District support to their schools in selecting external evaluators from the district pool may facilitate joint district/school decisions about the external evaluators hired.
4. II/USP planning schools should involve teachers and parents as much as possible in the selection of the schools' external evaluators. (continued on page 14)

### **Federally-Funded CSRSD Schools**

#### Conclusions

1. Overall, CSRSD appears to provide a focused, coherent structure for school reform.
2. CSRSD models provided specific instructional strategies and techniques to improve student academic performance.
3. CSRSD models provided strong professional development, often including instructional coaching for individual teachers in their classrooms.
4. Overall, CSRSD schools seem to show ample capacity and potential for systemic school reform.
5. Overall, there is greater school choice and staff buy-in for reform in CSRSD schools, along with more extensive parent and community involvement in the reform process than in II/USP planning schools, a reflection of CSRSD schools' readiness for reform implementation.

#### Recommendations

1. School districts and schools should carefully select their CSRSD models based on a) thorough assessment of needs for improved student academic achievement and for school systemic change, and b) the capacity of model providers to deliver adequate and timely services.
2. CSRSD districts, schools, and model providers should work closely together to ensure timely funding, initiation, and implementation of CSRSD models.
3. CSRSD districts and schools should systematically monitor and document the process of CSRSD model implementation to ensure fidelity to the model design.
4. CSRSD districts should support their CSRSD schools in the development and/or maintenance of data systems to collect and analyze multiple measures of student academic achievement as part of the evaluation of CSRSD model impact. (continued on page 14)



**State-Funded II/USP Planning Schools****Recommendations (continued)**

5. II/USP planning schools should carefully select their external evaluators, looking for both expertise and compatibility.
6. External evaluators and their employees should consider carefully that they are a good match with each II/USP school and its needs. They must commit to being readily available to their II/USP schools (by phone, fax, e-mail, or face-to-face) in order to work collaboratively and responsively with the Action Plan teams.
7. II/USP planning schools and external evaluators both need to thoroughly understand the specific legislative requirements and deadlines for Action Plan development. CDE and school districts could share this education function.
8. II/USP planning schools and their districts need to incorporate adherence to all specific II/USP requirements and deadlines into the contracts or Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) arranged with their respective external evaluators, including the writing, preparation, and revision (if necessary) of the Action Plan at no extra cost. Districts may also want to include a contract provision to withhold a percentage of the external evaluator's payment until the Action Plan is approved and funded by the SBE.
9. External evaluators and II/USP planning schools should strive to be in the cooperative-and-active interactive mode as much as possible during the planning year in order to make the planning process most effective.

**Federally-Funded CSRD Schools****Recommendations (continued)**

5. CSRD districts and schools should collaborate in determining effective long-term strategies and funding sources to institutionalize CSRD model components after CSRD funding ends.
6. All CSRD districts and schools should cooperate fully with CDE's statewide CSRD research and evaluation study, as indicated in their signed assurances for funding. In addition, CSRD districts should coordinate their monitoring and evaluation activities regarding CSRD model implementation and impact with the II/USP local evaluation requirements of the PSAA law (Section 52058).

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