

# Learning Plus Associates Case Study

## Using Standards Plus to Address State Standards

### Santa Barbara Elementary School District–Cleveland Elementary School

*Plan-Do-Check-Act embedded in school practices*

#### Challenge

Cleveland Elementary School is in the Santa Barbara Elementary School District. Sixty-five percent of the students are English Language Learners, and the California Department of Education designated 91% of the students as socio-economically disadvantaged. In spite of the difficult situations faced by many of Cleveland's students, the school improved 257 API points (488 API to 745 API) between 1999 and 2006. Their ELL students' API is 712 which is 22 points above the state average for all ELL students.

#### Solution

When asked about this growth, Mr. Michael Vail, the school principal, stated that the school decided to take a no excuses approach. He said, "The buck stops here." The staff decided to take responsibility for the students' learning and find ways to meet their academic needs. As a first step, they adopted the Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) improvement cycle advocated by Gerald Anderson from the Brazosport Independent School District in Texas, the same process used for Standards Plus.

Mr. Vail said this decision impacted all elements of the school's activities. They arranged to have over two hours a week of shared time for each grade level team to analyze student achievement, identify important academic content, and plan their instruction (Plan). They taught the important content to their students according to identified needs (Do). They assessed the outcomes of instruction and analyzed the results each week (Check). Then they conducted re-teach interventions during the regular school day, after school, and during inter-sessions to ensure all students had multiple opportunities to learn (Act).

The school focused their instruction on grade level standards. They found that their adopted text materials did not include all the important California standards in all grades. They made three important decisions. The first was to "take back the curriculum from the publishers" by building an instructional calendar based on their students needs. The second was to embrace assessment as a valuable tool rather than a thing to dread. Mr. Vail described it best when he said, "We look at assessment as a health check, not an epitaph." The third decision was to implement the Standards Plus materials.

#### Results

Since the Standards Plus lessons were written to state standards, they helped fill the gaps the teachers found in their regular curricular materials. The Standards Plus lessons were flexible and it was easy for the Cleveland staff to arrange the lesson sequence to complement their existing curriculum calendars. Perhaps the most valuable tools provided through the Standards Plus materials were the weekly assessments. The assessments fit perfectly into Cleveland's PDCA model by providing weekly real time results. They used the results to identify students and target the content students needed to learn during intervention and re-teach sessions. This process was the cornerstone of Cleveland's success.

