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For immediate release

Small California School Sees Big Test Score Gains

3/6/07, Rancho Cucamonga, CA - Students in a small, rural California school have made surprising year-to-year gains on state-mandated tests after their school implemented a targeted intervention program. The program, called Standards Plus, was used at all fourteen classrooms in the school, which serves approximately 400 students. The school's principal, Linda Morse, credits the program for allowing the school to exceed its Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) goal for the first time.

The Westmorland Union Elementary School District is a one-school district, educating students in grades K-8. Morse serves as superintendent as well as principal. Located in Southern California's Imperial Valley, an agriculturally rich but economically poor area, Westmorland is a small town of about 2,200 residents. The median income of Westmorland's households is less than half the California average, although the cost of living is nearly 25% above the national average. With an unemployment rate of more than 15% in the town, its residents have other things to think about than education. But a devoted faculty and staff have dedicated themselves to ensuring that students, 90% of whom are Hispanic, get the quality education they deserve.

"Standards Plus" Makes a Difference

"Standards Plus has made a big difference for our students," says Ruben Castro, the school's Reading First Coordinator and Curriculum Coach. It was Castro's idea to adopt the program, which is produced by Learning Plus Associates, a company founded by California teachers. "The program is easy for teachers to use and engaging for students," according to Castro. Beginning in January, 2006, and focusing on improving math test scores, he put Standards Plus into action with a two-pronged approach. First, he introduced the program's daily fifteen-minute lessons in every class in the school. Second, he created after-school "math academies" that targeted students who were "almost but not quite proficient" according to previous-year test scores. Dubbed "Rising Stars," the 41 selected students got "star treatment," studying in groups of six under the tutelage of a certified teacher. Learning the lessons of Standards Plus step by step, the students made rapid gains in their understanding of math concepts. In fact, 60% of the Rising Stars tested as proficient or above on statewide tests that were administered in June, 2006. That, in turn, helped the school exceed 2005-06 AYP math goals by two percentage points, the first year that the school had met its goal.

"Implementing Standards Plus was the only thing that we did differently between January and June last year," says Castro. "It's definitely responsible for our students' test score improvements." But he also credits the students and teachers who committed themselves to the after-school math academies. "Everybody worked really hard. Student attendance was great and so was teacher commitment. Standards Plus paid off for us because of their efforts." When asked to comment

about the program, he notes that “Standards Plus, if it is implemented correctly, is very beneficial to students. It really can help to close the achievement gap.”

A Unique Organization

Learning Plus Associates was founded as the Fontana Educational Institute by the Fontana Unified School District in 2002 in order to sell lessons that its teachers had written. These lessons form the basis for the Standards Plus programs that the organization provides to schools throughout the state, along with consulting services on how best to implement the programs and integrate them into existing curricula. Learning Plus Associates returns profits from sales of its products and services to the school district. Although it is still young as an organization, it has returned nearly \$100,000 a year to the Fontana schools, while it continues to create new products, including World History and Algebra.

For more information on Standards Plus, visit www.StandardsPlus.org or call Learning Plus Associates at (909) 484-6002. For more information on Westmorland Elementary School, call (760) 344-4364.