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Kern County Superintendent of Schools  
*Advocates for Children...*

Wasco Union Elementary School District  
LEA Plan: Monitor/Review Report  
October, 2015

The Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office gathered evidence for this monitoring report from these sources:

1) Visitation of classrooms (2 classes per grade level/content area) at all district schools between October 5-14, 2015 (78 classrooms total).
2) Discussions with administrators and coaches at each school site and with the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction

This report reflects the status of implementation of actions within the LEA Plan based on the above observations and discussions, as well as areas for future consideration. Included in the April, 2015 Monitor/Review Report were a number of initiatives that the district would be undertaking to improve the achievement for all students, but English Language learners, in particular. Following is a progress report on those initiatives:

1) The district, through its EL committee’s work in the spring and summer of 2015, created and implemented ELD standards-based lessons for each grade level and language level (emerging, expanding, and bridging) so as to systematize ELD on a districtwide basis. It was clearly evident during site visits that the new ELD delivery system is fully implemented. Taking this work a step further now, the district, under the direction of the ELD Coordinator, is working to create formative assessments for EL instruction, to better monitor student progress throughout the year. The timeline for the implementation of the ELD assessments is yet to be determined. However, the recent addition of the ELD Coordinator’s position provides the momentum and focus for efforts to systematically improve achievement for English learners throughout the district.

2) All schools, including Thomas Jefferson, have designated ELD time for each grade level/span. This scheduling provides the structure for all students to be deployed for ELD at their language level or to attend an English only class. This shift in scheduling had the most impact on the master schedule at Thomas Jefferson where all EL students now have 30 minutes of leveled ELD and 60 minutes of English-language arts in one block of time. This not only provides for leveled ELD for all students, but an integrated approach for ELD and ELA instruction where subject matter content and ELD standards can overlap and support one another.

3) The K-3 literacy initiative mentioned in the April, 2015 report, is still in its early stages of implementation, but is a focus of discussion and planning at the K-6 schools. Burke, for example, assesses grade 4-6 students on K-3 literacy skills and then identifies students in need of after-school intervention based on those assessments.

One question for consideration included in the April report was in regard to whether any additional resources were being provided to the school(s) with the highest EL needs. For 2015-16, through LCAP funding, the district has provided a number of additional personnel to support the needs of sites. Based on observations and anecdotal notes from meetings with site leadership, the increase in support staff is making a significant difference in laying the foundation for a culture of learning. Thomas Jefferson, for example, now has two deans, a 1-FTE counselor as well as a campus monitor and 1-FTE academic coach. Having the additional staff allows the principal the time to be the instructional leader of the school. It also allows for more intense classroom supports for students with academic and/or behavioral issues as well as the monitoring of student absences. All sites have benefitted from the addition of 1-FTE counselor.
In addition to increased personnel, the district is supporting the implementation of the Alternative-to-Suspension (AtS) Program at Karl Clemens and Thomas Jefferson, which has also contributed to improving the learning environment. Compared with suspension rates from 2014-15, suspensions are down significantly (Clemens: 68%, TJ: 40%) this year to date. There was no data available to quantify any improvements in office referrals, but anecdotally, the feeling is that they are also significantly reduced from last year. The AVID and STEM Programs at Thomas Jefferson were also enhanced in 2015-16 to better meet the needs of the targeted students.

**General Notes From October, 2015 Site Visits:**

All schools in the district continue to make progress in regard to embedding the "4-C’s” (collaborate/critically think/communicate/create) into daily instruction. There was evidence of student work products in most classrooms that indicated students are asked to demonstrate skills in each of the four areas. The district’s APTs (performance tasks) in ELA and math ask students to conduct research, synthesize it, evaluate it and then create something from it such as a report, presentation or writing activity. Students both evaluate their own work as well as that of their peers based on rubrics and established criteria for consistency within grade levels within a school and across the district. Additionally, classroom instruction included meaningful student collaboration. In almost every classroom visited, students were actively engaged through pair/share, project-based learning, interactive notebooks, and small-group collaboration.

The greatest shift in instructional practice was observed at Thomas Jefferson (TJ). English-language arts teachers have been collaborating with science and social science teachers and this collaboration is producing cross-curricular lessons that embed content standards into literacy and communication skills. The history day projects that are required assignments are the best example of these efforts. The science classes had students working in pairs to conduct research which they then were required to graph and synthesize into written word. The math classrooms visited at TJ had students working in pairs, using a graphic organizer to then individually create a written summary of their findings. For the most part at TJ, students were observed to be actively engaged including a new student who spoke little English who was noted in two different classes. Teachers had strategically paired the student with a higher-level English speaker and the student appeared to be fully participating in each class.

Other strategies that were observed to be in use substantially throughout the district were stand/deliver, sentence frames (in math as well), academic vocabulary posted, rigorous writing with students and teachers using rubrics for scoring guides. Strategies that were observed, but with less consistency, included students speaking in complete sentences when called upon, close reading, and the use of academic vocabulary by students.

The district’s response to intervention (RtI) initiative continues to evolve with the Tier II after-school intervention being more defined at each site. At Karl Clemens, for example, grade levels meet to design “wrap-around” plans for students in the Tier II program. At Burke, the grade 4-6 students who are more than two years below grade level in reading are referred to Tier II. Tier I intervention continues to vary between schools and between grade levels within schools. However, with the addition of counselors at each site, the vice-principals and academic coaches are conducting more “push-in” classroom support for students who need academic as well as behavior intervention within the classroom. At the elementary schools, UA time is the primary Tier I strategy being used by teachers to meet with individual students and small groups to re-teach while the rest of the class is completing assigned and “may-do” activities.

**Promising Practices Observed:**
1) The second grade teachers at Prueitt have developed an in-class “take five” station for students to reflect on misbehavior with restorative justice-type writing activities. These stations include a simple timer that is set for five minutes and written instructions for the student’s reflective writing within a three-sided board designed to isolate the student’s mind. If determined to be effective in addressing in-class discipline issues, this strategy might be considered for replication.

2) Palm Avenue School has organized a 5th and 1st-grade collaboration. 5th-grade students peer tutor selected 1st graders. 1st-grade students orally present the work from their performance tasks with 5th graders, and 5th graders make presentations to 1st-grade classes.

3) The shift to focus on Long-term English Learner (LTEL) data is slowly beginning in most schools. Palm Avenue provided the most evidence that LTEL data is currently provided to teachers through SchoolCity with domain scores for better ELD support. Also, Palm Avenue provides vertical alignment collaboration for grade levels around ELD standards so that teachers can know what to expect their students to know and be able to do at the grade level below and above their own.

Recommendations:

1) Continue the focus on The Four C’s of Common Core (collaborate, critically think, communicate, and create) throughout the district.
2) Continue to refine the Depth of Knowledge questioning, along with ensuring high rigor of classroom assignments.
3) Systematize strategic Tier I classroom interventions.
4) Continue to focus on the district’s issues related to its Long-term English learners (LTELs). Consider the work of Dr. Laurie Olsen in the district’s efforts for continual improvement in language and academic achievement of all English language learners, and the LTELs in particular.