

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **DAIT Capacity Study of the Santa Maria-Bonita School District**

By The Lowell Institute, Inc., contract DAIT provider

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District capacity represents the “current and potential ability of a district to implement a coherent, standards-based instructional program to improve student achievement.”

It may be useful to define capacity in terms of the resources available and the demand that is likely to exist. In this formulation, the capacity of a district is affected by its ability to receive and use resources, implement certain policies and practices, and act on and influence the surrounding environment toward the goal of improving student academic performance.

The DAIT process begins with a comprehensive needs assessment and continues with the identification, prioritization, and implementation of actions that have the potential to bring about dramatic improvements in district and school operations. The intention is that through the DAIT process, districts will make significant improvements in many areas of their work. These areas include governance and leadership; alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; data systems and achievement monitoring; alignment of human and fiscal resources with district goals; meaningful parent and community involvement; and targeted professional development for teachers and administrators. Through this process student achievement will improve, district infrastructure will be strengthened, district resources will be allocated more effectively, and COE capacity to support local school districts will increase.

The DAIT provides direct support to members of the District Leadership Team (The District Leadership Team is locally convened and typically consists of site and district administrators, teacher leaders, and other key personnel, e.g., special educators, English learner experts, and fiscal officers) in their individual and collective roles and works with selected school site leaders where targeted changes need to occur.

A DAIT is a team of county office of education (COE) or other organizational leaders who provide targeted technical assistance and support to Program Improvement (PI) districts in Corrective Action (Year 3 of PI). The team works with the district to examine current practices at both the district and school levels; evaluate the effectiveness of those practices; identify and prioritize the district’s major areas of need; develop and implement actions that target those needs; and, ultimately, help the district exit PI status.

PI status first occurs when a district that receives Title I, Part A, funds fails to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years. Should a district make AYP in any year, the district will maintain its prior-year PI status. However, should it fail to make AYP in one year, it will advance in PI. The DAIT process is a policy option that the State Board of Education (SBE) may invoke in combination with one or more federal sanctions when a local educational agency (LEA) advances to PI Year 3.

## **Initial DAIT work**

A major focus of the initial DAIT work in the Santa Maria-Bonita School District has been developing the ongoing DAIT process. Specifically, the DAIT provider and the district formed a DLT consisting of the DAIT provider and members of the Superintendent's Cabinet. There are representatives from educational services, fiscal services, human resources, special education, student services as well as the superintendent. This group provides the vehicle for collection and collation of all the pertinent data from the CDE assessment instruments (ELSSA, APS, LRE, and DAS). The group also has focused on bringing a clear and specific message about the function and process of DAIT to the other district employees.

In addition to the DLT, the team decided to reconvene a district-wide committee previously utilized for decision-making, the NCLB committee. The 24 member NCLB committee consists of community members, teachers, classified personnel, board members, district leaders, and site leaders.

The purpose of the NCLB committee is two-fold. As the DAIT and DLT identify the three to five priorities for district focus, the NCLB committee will be engaged in the discussion of identifying the methods, processes and functions to be established within the district to best meet the priority goals. In addition, as a representative committee of the district community, the representatives will provide feedback to the committee from the distinct stakeholder groups.

## **The initial DLT/DAIT findings of areas of strength:**

***Stability of District Leadership*** – District leadership is remarkably stable. The Superintendent has served for 9 years. Assistant Superintendents in Educational Services and Human Resources are career members of the district, promoted from originally teaching in the district. The Assistant Superintendent for Fiscal Services is new to the district yet comes with significant experience in fiscal services. With the exception of the new Director of Categorical Programs, who comes to the district from the University of California where she was a researcher in second language learners and school improvement, all of the directors are long-time employees of the district, having moved through the administrative ranks after being teachers within the district. The same is true of the site leadership within the district, almost all principals and assistant principals have moved into administration after being teachers in the district. This situation could be perceived as a double-edged sword – very stable, yet possibly, too ingrown. However, in the initial DAIT discussions with both the DLT and district leadership as a whole, it is obvious that the entire district administration is focused and desires to see significant improvement and has welcomed the opportunity to utilize the DAIT process as “an outside set of eyes partnering with the District to build a solid instructional plan for all students.”

***Reorganization of Instructional Services Department.*** The IS department has been reorganized to better address the district's academic needs. The Staff Development Coordinator, and Research and Assessment Coordinator positions have been eliminated.

A new Coordinator of Curriculum and Instruction position has been added to support the full implementation of the four core subjects, formative assessments and staff development; the Pupil Services unit has been reorganized to include health, safety and discipline; a Library Media Coordinator has been hired to streamline the adoption process, assist with the integration of technology, and institute a new textbook and supplemental programs management system; the former Director of Consolidated Projects has been hired as Director of Curriculum and Instruction, which will facilitate the coordination of activities between curriculum and categorical programs; a bilingual English Learner TOSA (Teacher on Special Assignment) has been hired to oversee the English Learner and English Language Development curriculum; and a Standards and Assessment Teacher on Special Assignment has been hired to integrate new formative and summative assessments into the OARS database, as well as coordinate data output for sites using expansive categorical student information data base.

*Teamwork* - A collaborative instructional team has been formed to coordinate all academic and student support services. Additional personnel to include a new Coordinator of Curriculum and Instruction position has been added to support the full implementation of the four core subjects, formative assessments and staff development; The Pupil Services unit has been reorganized to include health, safety and discipline; A bilingual Director of Consolidated Projects with extensive experience in research, assessment and evaluation has been hired to oversee the full implementation of federally- and state-funded categorical programs for students and families, and support the core curriculum and implementation of research-based practices; A Library Media Coordinator has been hired to streamline the adoption process, assist with the integration of technology, and institute a new textbook and supplemental programs management system; The former Director of Consolidated Projects has been hired as Director of Curriculum and Instruction, which will facilitate the coordination of activities between curriculum and categorical programs; A bilingual English Learner TOSA (Teacher on Special Assignment) has been hired to oversee the English Learner and English Language Development curriculum; A Standards and Assessment Teacher on Special Assignment has been hired to integrate new formative and summative assessments into the OARS database, as well as, coordinate data output for sites using our expansive categorical student information data base.

### **How Santa Maria-Bonita has addressed the issues of Program Improvement thus far.**

To address the needs of our students and families, the district has engaged in a strategic planning and a district-wide systemic approach for continuous improvement ensuring that every child has access to a quality education and that each child has an equal educational opportunity and reaches their highest potential. Our district strives to promote high standards, higher expectations, and a college-going culture for all children. To accomplish these goals, since 2003 the district has been implementing several programs in its schools to support the core instruction and address the needs of their diverse students, particularly English Learners (e.g., Saturday school, summer school, preschool, extended day, after school, reading interventions, math intervention, migrant support programs, leveled ELD). To successfully implement high quality programs and

differentiated instruction at each school, our district is has hired additional teachers on special assignment (TOSA), intervention teachers, reading coaches, teacher tutors and instructional aides. All teachers are fully credentialed and highly qualified, and the majority has received AB466/SB472 training in the most recent adopted ELA and math programs. Additionally, 35 teachers have received intensive professional development and coaching in Math and Science. However, despite our efforts and continuous improvement, our district has failed to meet some of the AYP targets and has been identified as a Program Improvement District Year 3. Eleven elementary schools and three junior high schools are also in Program Improvement status, and one of the PI schools has also been deemed as state-monitored (SAIT). There is need to further analyze our current practices, and update our district and school plans for improving academic achievement for all students.

***Academic Achievement:*** The district has tripled the percentage of English Learners proficient and above in ELA during the last 6 years, and has met two of the three AMAOs for Title III. In 2007-2008, 52% of English Learners made the Annual Progress in Learning English (AMAO 1), and 32% of English Learners attained English proficiency on the CELDT (AMAO 2). However, English learners did not meet the Adequate Yearly Progress in English Language Arts at the LEA Level (AMAO 3). All subgroups have exceeded the district-wide AYP targets in mathematics, but three subgroups have not met the ELA targets: English Learners, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged and Students with Disabilities. Eleven elementary schools and three junior high schools are also in Program Improvement status, and one of the PI schools has also been deemed as state-monitored (SAIT). The district has had a positive API growth during the last six years. There is need to analyze the district's current practices, as well as the district capacity for improving academic achievement for all students.

### **Initial DLT/DAIT Recommendations**

Utilizing the local educational agency vision, mission, values and priorities, and based upon our findings from the DAS, the DLT/DAIT have arrived at focus areas around five DAIT Strands to include:

**1. Governance:** Santa Maria-Bonita School District needs to develop a coaching model for teachers, school and district administrators and staff.

**Analysis:** Although all administrators have received AB 430 training there has been a disconnect between the offerings and implementation within the district. There is a need for a comprehensive leadership training based on the EPC's and understanding how to implement research based practices effectively at each school site. Individual school sites are utilizing a variety of promising practices that include guided walk-through's, Professional Learning Communities, and collaborative grade level team meetings that may assist the district in replicating similar programs at each school site. Guidance from the ACSA coaching academy, Quality Educational Services Leadership Training, and the support of the Lowell Institute has gathered information from each school site, utilizing interviews and surveys to arrive at best practices that have led to significant movement of students to proficiency in RLA and mathematics. There are pockets of excellence at many school sites, grade levels and classroom levels that need to be identified and replicated

throughout the district. The Lowell Institute has access to a variety of resources and research to support our Leadership training.

## **2. Alignment of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments to State Standards:**

The district needs to develop a comprehensive intervention approach to serve the needs of English Learners and other students at risk, which should include the full implementation of the most recent SBE adopted standards-based materials for English Language Arts (fall 2010) and Math (fall 2009). A Response to Intervention (RtI) model is necessary to address the instructional needs of all students. There is need for ongoing support and coaching for teachers and administrators to successfully implement the RtI model and the new adopted programs.

### **Analysis:**

- 1) Students at risk to include English Learners, SED, and Special Education) do not consistently receive instruction focused on intensive and strategic and SBE approved materials for students two grade levels or below have not been fully implemented in all schools;
- 2) English Learners do not consistently receive English Language Development targeted to their proficiency levels;
- 3) Standards-aligned supplemental ELD materials (SB 1113) and Replacement core programs for 4-8 grade two levels behind have not been consistently implemented in all classrooms.
- 4) There is need for research-based instructional strategies to assist Students at Risk (SED, EL, SPED) to move through AYP proficiency levels;
- 5) School sites have not consistently implemented a response to intervention model inclusive of certificated teachers (Intervention teachers to reduce class size or push-in) to support those Students at Risk (SED, EL, SPED) in need of intensive ELD or ELA literacy skills; and
- 6) Not all sites have utilized additional certificated staff (Intervention teachers) to focus on Students at Risk (SED, EL, SPED)
- 7) Pockets of excellence within school sites, grade level teams and classroom teachers do exist which need to be identified and findings of effective strategies shared throughout the district.

## **3. Data Systems and Achievement Monitoring:**

The district should implement a comprehensive diagnostic/placement, formative and summative assessment system to provide students with needed interventions as well as monitor progress and exit students.

### **Analysis:**

- 1) Teachers and administrators do not consistently use information from on-going assessments to plan and provide instruction based on student language proficiency and academic performance goals;
- 2) Students are not consistently placed in strategic and intensive settings during or after the school day;
- 3) Formative assessments focused on vocabulary and reading comprehension are not consistently implemented every six weeks to monitor student progress;

- 4) Collaborative grade level team meetings are not consistently implemented focused on data along with focused discussions on what will occur when students do not learn standards to plan interventions and reteaching.
- 5) Teachers and administrators do not consistently meet regularly to monitor ELD groupings using formative assessments to plan instruction.
- 6) The district has multiple data bases that need to be combined for easy teacher and administrative access for formative, trimester benchmark and CST data to drive instruction – currently teachers can access OARS which needs to be expanded to include newly developed formative and trimester benchmark data.

#### **4. Professional Development:**

SB472 training in the new SBE approved math programs should be provided for all teachers as soon as the local governing board approves the new math program. SB472 training in English Learner instruction (ELPD) should be provided for all teachers immediately.

##### **Analysis:**

- 1) All teachers have not been provided AB 472 trainings in mathematics and English Learners;
- 2) There will be a need to implement AB 472 in RLA following the adoption
- 3) Content experts and coaches have not been consistently implemented to support and assist teachers to deliver strategic and intensive instruction; and
- 4) professional development has not been consistently provided to utilize formative and summative benchmark assessments to drive instructional delivery.
- 5) Teacher leaders have not received leadership training to support administration in district-wide reform.
- 6) School sites using categorical funding have attended a variety of conferences and professional learning opportunities but implementation of information gathered, research-based promising practices do not have an avenue for district review or sharing. Due to the mobility of our students a common set of research based practices need to be implemented district-wide.

#### **5. Parent and Community Involvement:**

There is need to strengthen the communication between parents and school staff. Due to the particular characteristics of the population that the district serves, there is need for improving three main areas: parent education programs, outreach and communication, and parent leadership.

##### **Analysis:**

- 1) Parents do not consistently receive parent education opportunities, including how to assist their child in learning English and acquiring literacy, throughout the district;
- 2) Our findings from reviewing parent education events during 2007-08 reveal that an inadequate percentage of all EL parents are involved at schools;
- 3) The District has not fully established protocols, resources, trainings and an accountability system to maximize outreach opportunities for EL parents in schools throughout the district; and,
- 4) Our district is serving a large number of immigrant families and former migrant population with low levels of literacy in their primary language and limited or none

English language proficiency; these families need to learn how to navigate the American school system to better support their children's education, as well as enhance literacy in their primary language and develop English language skills. There is need for comprehensive parent education programs that address the families' needs as well as promote parental involvement.