



MARQUARDT SCHOOL DISTRICT 15 AND THE CONSORTIUM FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

A Case Study in Sustained Partnership 2002-2015

Contents

- ✦ Introduction
- ✦ Methodology and Summary of Findings
- ✦ Background for Partnership - A Big Promise
- ✦ Trust
- ✦ Collaboration
- ✦ Visionary Leadership
- ✦ Value of CEC as an External Partner
- ✦ Impact on Culture
- ✦ Impact on Student Growth and Achievement/Opportunity Gaps
- ✦ Implications

About CEC

Established in 1987, CEC is a network of Illinois school districts with a consistent mission for over a quarter of a century: to build collaborative structures, processes, and cultures with and among key educational stakeholders including labor and management to transform educational systems to continuously improve student learning and achievement. It has grown dramatically from 12 member districts in 1987 to nearly 90 in 2015.

CEC's staff and network of consultants currently offer training programs, workshops, consultation, networking events, and coaching throughout each year. CEC continues to build and strengthen partnerships to increase its capacity as a premier provider of high-quality coaching, training, services and support to districts and schools.

Introduction

In 2001, Marquardt School District 15 (SD15) in Glendale Heights Illinois stood on a precipice. The school board had hired a new superintendent. The budget was hemorrhaging. The District culture was characterized by low trust between the District administration and the teacher's association.

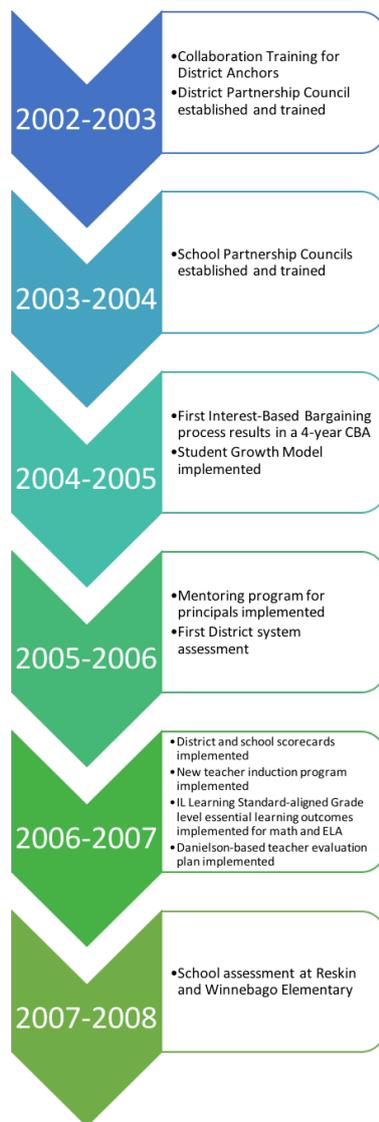
At the same time, the District was beginning to experience what would become rapid demographic changes. In 2000, the District student population was 49% white and 23% Hispanic. By 2013 it reversed and the District student population was 22% white and 50% Hispanic. More importantly during this time period, the number of low-income students more than tripled, rising from 23% in 2002 to 75% in 2014 and taking the District from being well below the state average for low-income students to well above it. A decisive and focused response was imperative to ensure that student achievement rose.

Among the immediate actions taken by Marquardt was to engage an external partner – the Consortium for Educational Change (CEC) – to help mend fences long broken among leaders in the District. From its early beginnings in 1987, the Consortium had dedicated itself to assisting Illinois member districts and their schools by providing on-site and cohort consulting services that include coaching, as well as specialized facilitating, mentoring, and training. What sets CEC apart from similar consulting organizations is its commitment to its twin pillars of collaboration and organizational capacity-building. The first Marquardt connection to CEC proved to be pivotal as the Consortium continued in a partner role with the District for over a decade, assisting SD15 in every aspect of its efforts to proactively face demographic changes and succeed in improving student learning for all children regardless of income.

Methodology and Summary of Findings

Timeline

Beginning dates for initiatives started during the partnership between Marquardt SD 15 and



This case study examines the nature and impact of efforts by the three “anchors”¹ in SD15 – District administration, union and school board – to forge new and more productive working relationships to respond to the steep cultural and economic challenges to the District’s success. In particular it examines the role that an independent external thought partner, the Consortium for Educational Change, played in helping to create and support the conditions needed for an effective response by a district in financial straits and at the start of rapid student change. It describes the efforts undertaken by Marquardt since 2002 in implementing more than a dozen CEC programs and services intended to lead to a collaborative culture and a rise in student growth.

The mixed method case study is based on interviews with 16 administrative and teacher leaders from July 2013 to February 2015 and the customary phases of qualitative data analysis were conducted (extracting the essence, organizing for learning, and explaining the findings) using manual coding.² Quantitative data were drawn from multi-year Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) reports, Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test scores, Organizational Health Instrument (OHI) survey results, and the District’s own Parent Satisfaction Survey results and all were analyzed via simple descriptive statistics.

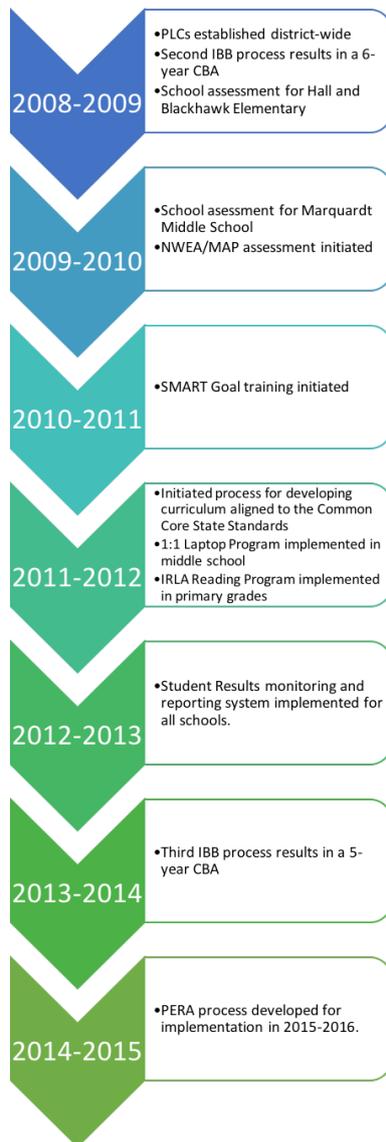
The analysis of quantitative data reveals demonstrable and significant impact of the District efforts at improvement in three areas:

1. Culture

The Marquardt culture is perceived as healthy, i.e., the District is able to function effectively, to cope adequately, to change appropriately, and to grow from within. There are increases over six years in all dimensions of organizational health with the strongest current scores for Cohesiveness and Goal Focus, two of the OHI key correlates of student performance. Parent satisfaction is consistently high with strong agreement with feeling welcomed and informed.

¹ Dolan, W. Patrick. (1994). *Restructuring our schools: A primer on systemic change*. Systems & Organization: Kansas City

² Miles, M. and Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



2. Student Growth

NWEA MAP results in Mathematics and Reading demonstrate that Marquardt students grew more than the national average for all grade levels except one in 2012-2013 and every grade level in 2013-2014. Marquardt also had a general internal increase in the number of students meeting the national normalized score projection.

3. Achievement/Opportunity Gaps

The percentage of students meeting/exceeding growth projections of subgroups of English Language Learner (ELL) and Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL) students compared to that of the whole student body shows good progress in the closing of gaps in achievement/opportunity. ELL students in particular display impressive growth compared to their fellow students.

Four key themes emerged from the interviews:

1. Trust

District stakeholders intentionally entered into a process designed and facilitated by CEC to build and then sustain relational trust to create the environment for District success.

2. Collaboration

As part of living the agreements to build trust, District stakeholders began to increasingly conduct daily business with new structures and in collaborative ways, specifically using interest-based strategies that are the core of CEC's work with all its member districts.

3. Visionary Leadership

Marquardt's labor and management leaders, guided by CEC personnel, converted the social capital generated by the increasing relational trust into proactive actions to drive continuous improvement.

4. Value of an External Partner

There was a realization that having an external partner such as CEC to provide expertise and coach educators can assist a district in meeting its improvement and student growth goals.

In the end, this is the story of how partners Marquardt and CEC seized the opportunities for change. Together a collaborative culture was created within which impressive successes for adults and students have been accomplished and the District's promises to its community kept.

BACKGROUND FOR PARTNERSHIP – A BIG PROMISE

In 2001 the new superintendent, Dr. Loren May, assessed the District's financial situation and decided that a referendum was needed. However, even though it was in serious financial trouble, the District did not have strong enough community support to pass a referendum on the first attempt. It took three attempts and \$800,000 in painful cuts to staff (including an administrator, teachers, social workers, and aides) for Marquardt to finally pass a referendum in April 2003. The difference? In that final referendum, the slogan "Promises Made, Promises Kept" reflected the heightened sense of partnership of the District with its community, promising that new funds would result in smaller class sizes, assistance with reading, increased technology and arts, and foreign language in the middle school. These promises have indeed been kept, and results reported to the community on a regular basis.

Current Board President Bruce Barreras remembers how the referendum was finally successful, "It was not just about avoiding cuts. Our objective was to develop a vision of the future and then match the finances to do that. If we were going to ask the community for more funds then we needed to show what they were going to get and then hold ourselves accountable for delivering on those promises." The referendum did indeed save the District from further cuts, but, more importantly, it raised community and District expectations for results for children. While PBIS data since 2006 consistently indicate that 96% of the district's students regularly met behavior expectations, there were challenges and gaps in achievement

that needed to be addressed. The referendum set in motion a series of opportunities that, if capitalized upon, had the potential to change the trajectory of the District and ensure focus on its three strategic goals:

- ✦ All students will make a year + of reading/math growth as measured by District assessments.
- ✦ Students who have attended Marquardt District 15 schools for at least two years will be performing at grade level in reading and mathematics.
- ✦ Each school will close the achievement gap between students (Free and Reduced Lunch and Non Free and Reduced Lunch) as measured by both district and state assessments.

TRUST

The experience of failing to pass a desperately needed referendum twice and then working together to pass it on the third attempt by rebuilding connections and communication lines with the community provided a powerful demonstration of the value of trust for District leaders. Simultaneously during the 2002-03 school year, the District administration and teacher's association also took initial steps to develop a new relationship. The Marquardt Education Association leaders sensed an opportunity as they observed how Dr. May listened with an open mind to ideas and concerns from the Association in the early part of his tenure. They approached him with the idea of working with the Consortium for Educational Change to work on trust between labor and management.



About Interest-Based Bargaining

Interest-based bargaining (IBB) is a negotiations model that permits achievement of shared goals without undermining either party's ability to achieve its own goals and protect traditional and legitimate rights and roles. It departs from an adversarial, positional bargaining model of collective bargaining by focusing on parties' "interests" (underlying motivations, fears, desires, or concerns) rather than their proposed "positions" (solutions) to "problems" (bargaining topics or issues). As a result IBB provides opportunities for the bargaining parties to learn whether their interests are in conflict, shared, or complementary and to consider most problems to be matters of shared concern. More specifically, the IBB process requires that the parties describe bargaining issues in a "story" format, then articulate their interests, and then, looking beyond specific demands and through substantive discussion, brainstorm possible solutions.

As a result, IBB allows parties to identify multiple ways to satisfy interests and to solve problems creatively. External standards are often generated and used to select the options that meet both parties' interests. IBB is often facilitated by one or two third-party neutrals who advocate for the interest-based process, not for the parties themselves, and who also train the parties in the skills needed for this approach.

IBB can lead to increased trust among the bargaining parties.

The Marquardt Education Association leaders recognized that “we needed to change the way we did business. It was not productive for anyone. We looked to CEC to help mend fences. [Facilitated by CEC], we worked on Saturdays with the school board, administrators, and teachers in trust-building activities. It was a lot of work to change the way we did business.”

CEC founder and director Jo Anderson and his team were brought in to begin a process of training programs and consultation with the District anchors that built and re-built relationships. One of the most important outputs of the training was the use of the Interest Based Process (IBP). According to Dr. May and former MEA President Michael Knapp, “IBP is what changed the District the most.”

The most dramatic example of IBP was in collective negotiations in 2004 using a process called **Interest-Based Bargaining (IBB)**. Trust was high enough that the UniServ Director of the Illinois Education Association (IEA) and the District's attorney, individuals who normally behave as advocates for their respective party's positions, internally facilitated the process. The negotiations resulted in the District and teachers' association signing an unprecedented five-year agreement. The next IBB process, facilitated by the same persons, resulted in a six-year agreement.

“...Successful IBB requires disclosures about interests that make parties feel vulnerable to exploitation, the parties need trust that it is safe to make these disclosures. Trust is built slowly over time and only with mutually satisfying transactions. ... Relationships and trust between the parties can develop that are helpful during implementation of the contract. Implementation problems are fewer and solved at lower and less costly levels of the process. ...[Further] IBB provides an opportunity to directly address student achievement in the collective-bargaining process. IBB can minimize ritualized adversarial behavior and enable productive relationships to develop, better situating the parties to improve student achievement.”

– Kaboolian, L. and Sutherland, P. (2005). *Win-Win Labor-Management Collaboration in Education: Breakthrough Practices to Benefit Students, Teachers, and Administrators*, (pp. 19-20). Boston MA: Rennie Center.

ARTICLE 4.4 Professional Responsibilities

The Administration shall establish teacher and student schedules for the elementary and middle schools in accordance with the educational programming needs of the District, provided that such schedules are not inconsistent with the terms of this Agreement.

Teachers recognize that their responsibility to their students requires the performance of duties that involve the expenditure of time beyond that of the instructional day.

Attendance at parent-teacher functions outside the regular student day are part of the professional responsibilities of the staff. All teachers are expected to attend parent conferences, student staffings, curriculum nights and all other meetings where direct parent contact occurs. The Administration will make every reasonable effort to schedule student staffings during the workday.

Additionally teachers are required to attend faculty and team meetings. Whenever possible written communications will be used to minimize the number of meetings.

Plan(s) for sharing the responsibility for representative attendance of the staff at additional functions such as middle school orientation, promotion, musical performances and parent organization events shall be determined by each school's SPC (School Partnership Council). Every effort shall be made to gather input from the entire faculty to aid in the SPC's planning.

At the direction of the superintendent an emergency meeting may be called.

The regular workday and other professional responsibilities are compensated for in the salary schedules set forth in the Appendices attached to this Agreement.

Aside from the increased length of contracts, the content of the contracts demonstrate a commitment to the strategic goals and trust among professionals. For example, since the referendum had permitted the funds to raise teachers' salaries significantly, the teachers agreed that daily amount of "contact" between themselves and students would be increased, resulting in the longest school day in the geographic area and adding the equivalent of 11 paid working days to the teachers' year. Further, the contracts refer to a **"Professional Day" in Article 4.4.** Teachers routinely attend meetings that affect them, no matter whether they are scheduled for early morning or after school. Staff no longer "punch in and punch out" with a strict and limited workday, as is traditional in an industrial approach to work. The professional day promotes trust in teachers and eliminates any need to monitor them. "It's about the work," states Knapp.

In a remarkable example of trust, MEA president Knapp approached the District management in January 2014 with concerns that the current 2009-2015 contract would have dire financial consequences for the District that could cause staff cuts. He offered to open negotiations early. The contract, again using IBB, was reached in four and a half days, facilitated solely by the UniServ Director, and included such concessions as some teachers being frozen at the top of the salary schedule and all teachers moving to half steps on the salary schedule until the last year of the contract.

Openness about District finances is another trust building element in Marquardt. As keeping the District fiscally healthy is a key concern for all, Dr. May talks to the entire staff every spring about multiple financial metrics. It is important to note that even though Equalized Assessed Valuation dropped 48% from 2008 to 2015, the Operating Charge Per Pupil, the state determined measure of the real cost to educate a child in Illinois, increased in the District from \$11,170.59 in 2008-2009 to \$14,466.13 in 2014-2015 – an increase of 29.5%. The anchors agreed to spend down the District's fund balances to maintain this level of operational expenditure and also provide salary increases to employees each year.



However, relational trust is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for school improvement. As Bryk and Schneider point out, “Collective decision making with broad teacher buy-in, a crucial ingredient for reform, occurs more readily in schools with strong relational trust.”³ This leads to the second of the themes: Collaboration.

COLLABORATION

For CEC and Marquardt, it was important to keep in mind that collaboration for its own sake was not the goal. Improved District and school performance for the shared purpose of improving student learning, not just better agreements, was the primary reason to collaborate.

CEC’s approach required re-orienting stakeholders in Marquardt – starting with labor and management leaders - toward the development of relationships based on collaboration. This re-orientation involved creating “safe” places for labor and management leaders to work together to develop improvement strategies using interest based processes and shared decision-making. Safe places are located in new structures at the District and school levels: District Partnership Council and School Partnership Councils.

The District Partnership Council (DPC) was established in 2002 as a structure within which the union and management – in the presence of representatives of the school board, schools, parents, and community - take responsibility for a District culture that either enhances or curtails the work of the schools. The members set parameters within which schools can make improvements based upon the needs of their

student populations. The absence of a partnership structure or mechanism at the District level can send the message that union and management are not acting in concert with each other, which can divide loyalty at the employee level and create in parents real doubt about leaders’ focus on the ongoing work of educating their children.

School Partnership Councils (SPCs) were established in 2003 to provide a venue “to have the people in the school make decisions to benefit kids.” The members of SPCs include school administrators, union representatives, teachers, classified staff, and parents. One principal described its purpose as to ensure that “principals don’t become the keepers of the knowledge.” The SPCs regularly discuss the efficacy and quality of current programs and practices; identify, choose and embrace initiatives and strategies (within the parameters set by the DPC); and then track and evaluate them, constantly driving improvement with honest measurements.

Each SPC shares its learning with the DPC and, ideally, with other schools. Although the focus and operation of the SPCs evolve to fit the needs of the schools, they remain the groups that are consulted by the DPC first about what to do with new data, a new problem, or a new opportunity. As one SPC member stated, “We could not do our jobs if we were not so highly collaborative.”

In its role, CEC provided intensive development, training, and consultation for Marquardt’s DPC and SPCs. CEC staff assisted members in diagnosing District processes, building organizational structures needed to promote and support District-wide change, and preparing team

³ Bryk, A. and Schneider, B. (2003, March). Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for School Reform. *Educational Leadership*, 60(6), pp. 40-45.

members for their leadership roles in District wide transformation. Similarly CEC designed and delivered a program to prepare school teams as facilitators of change efforts and help them innovate within the parameters set by their DPC using the techniques of organizational diagnosis, group processes, conflict resolution, communication, problem-solving, decision-making, and SMART Goal development.

Armed with new skills, and DPC and SPC structures that are protected in the collective bargaining agreements, Marquardt educators have the necessary venues and processes for highly developed collaborative efforts. As Darling-Hammond has stated, “Collaboration, however, requires time as well as will, and this means that school staffing and schedules must be designed differently.”⁴ Time to communicate and work together is assured in Marquardt as follows:

- ✦ Superintendent/MEA President meet monthly
- ✦ District Partnership Council meets 6 times a year
- ✦ School Partnership Councils meet bimonthly or monthly
- ✦ Grade Level and Department Teams meet weekly
- ✦ Teachers meet daily in common planning time
- ✦ Every Monday is an early release for students and a lengthened day for teachers.

Using this time, employees focus at all levels of the system on the SD15 Imperatives: Student Achievement, Client Satisfaction, and Stewardship of Resources. These are interdependent and rely upon strong Communication among stakeholders.

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Similarly the leaders in Marquardt consistently keep the Imperatives in front of all decision-making bodies. The leaders built upon trust and collaborative relationships in order to envision the need for concerted action.

One example of visionary leadership has already been described: the approach to the School Board by the Association President Michael Knapp 18 months before the end of the 2009-2015 contract to reopen it to avoid a financial crisis. There are numerous others, with four that are illustrative of leaders collectively and creatively taking steps to either avoid or correct problems.

Teacher-Led Curriculum Development

The District engaged CEC to help teacher representatives develop grade level essential learning outcomes in mathematics and English language arts aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards. “I Can” statements were written in student-friendly language. Teachers used the essential learning outcomes as a way to shift teaching from a text-driven approach to a standards-based approach. Later the curriculum was revised and aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Once again, CEC was involved in facilitating this process. The value to this work was that teachers “owned” the curriculum and therefore were more invested in delivering it with fidelity.

Early Adoption of Technology

The District was an early adopter in using technology to enhance both teaching and

⁴ Darling-Hammond, L. (2014, June 30). To close the achievement gap, we need to close the teaching gap. (Article in Huffington Post). Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/linda-darlinghammond/to-close-the-achievement_b_5542614.html.



learning. All teachers have laptops to provide easy access to data and teaching resources. The District's internal website houses tools, strategies, data, and other information in each curriculum area to provide consistency, as well as a sharing site for ideas and new strategies. Extensive and timely training and support provide for effective and efficient use by educators of technology. In 2010, the District moved to one-on-one technology for upper level students. The program began with sixth grade and was phased in over a few years to grades 7 and 8. With the diverse population, the opportunity to check out a tablet for the year gives every student full access to technology at any time. A recent study shows a dramatic increase of 24.28% in the GPA of those upper level students who take home laptops (85%) over those who do not (15%). Additionally, SMARTboards for grades K-2 and laptop carts for grades 3-5 augment their learning. For parents, the District assists with internet access at a very low cost and provides PowerSchool, a student management software system, so they may check on their children's progress.

Flexible Transportation Zone

The District leaders responded to the fact that their poorest populations were living primarily in dense apartment complexes. To continue a strictly neighborhood school model would result in overcrowded schools and classes for those students. The solution was to disperse those students to lowest sized classes throughout the District, maintaining neighborhood schools where possible and not splitting families. An early side benefit was enhanced diversity in more schools as well as consistent class sizes throughout the district.

Teacher Hiring Process

An innovative human resources process was designed and implemented in which teachers are hired for the District, not for a particular school. This helped to create a sense of shared ownership and responsibility in the District. Teachers were hired to join the District – not a school. This also meant that transfers of teachers could be made to match building and student needs, without the customary stigma of involuntary transfers that are part of most teacher contracts.

CEC's role was and continues to be to bring the latest research-based practices to the attention of the Marquardt leaders and assist them in staying ahead of important trends and mandates such as adoption of the new Illinois State Standards and Illinois' new performance evaluation requirements.⁵ As Dr. May readily admits, "CEC asked me the tough questions," describing a CEC consultant's insistent advice that the District provide time for collaborative work by teachers and principals.

VALUE OF CEC AS AN EXTERNAL PARTNER

The superintendent was only one of the interviewees who expressed the value of bringing an external partner inside school and administrative walls to provide expertise, insights, and coaching. Additionally, instructional leaders, principals, and union leaders described the assistance that they, and therefore the District, received from CEC – both generally and in regard to particular programs and structures.

⁵ Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA). (2010). IL Senate Bill 315; Public Act 96-0861. Springfield, IL: Illinois General Assembly.



Instructional leaders among the teachers reflected upon the introduction of the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence as the framework for the **System Assessment** conducted by CEC at the District level.

SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

The CEC System Assessment process assists a district or a school to reflect on a framework of research-based practices that, when implemented systematically and effectively, have proven success in improving student, staff and organizational performance. Baldrige, Professional Learning Communities, Standard Bearers and 5 Essentials provide similar sets of practices against which the district or school can self-assess.

A CEC audit team of "critical friends" (volunteers from other districts) interviews multiple stakeholders and reviews evidence to give the district or school an external validation of its self-study and self-assessment. The process identifies overall strengths and overall opportunities for improvement aligned to the research-based practices

According to one instructional leader, "The first Baldrige training was huge. It changed my whole classroom. It changed my whole viewpoint of what I did. Plan-Do-Study-Act Approach. The way the system worked together. Building a mission statement. All those little things." Teachers and administrators later experienced school level system assessment using the Professional Learning Communities framework and felt fortunate to be able to serve as critical friends in visits to other schools and districts.

These experiences and the guidance provided by the CEC consultant "put what we are doing in perspective with a larger focus in terms of other districts. [CEC] offers an outside perspective that gives momentum. CEC sees us in a different way than we see ourselves. ...When you are proceeding

on a new path it is nice to have a friend along the way. CEC wanted what was best for us."

The interviewed principals expressed appreciation for assistance with the School Partnership Councils, which evolved immensely since 2003. CEC played a role in "really making them about student achievement and the sharing out of data. It is probably the thing that has made the most change." According to them, CEC reinforced the notion that, "The purpose is to have people from the school making some decisions that would benefit kids."

Additionally all principals have been able to have a mentor from CEC, providing an individualized support system. According to them, CEC "provides clarity, systems focus, how to handle change, connections to the outside world, lifeline to knowledge in the area, new ideas, professional development, and coaching."

One MEA leader recalled, "Through the years, we have used a lot of CEC resources. When I think about all of the people in education and the conferences CEC gave us access to, experts like Marzano [Robert], DuFour [Richard], and others." She explained, "I think the District has done some phenomenal things over the past 10-15 years and I think it is because of CEC. I truly do. When we first met with Dr. May we agreed that CEC was a good partner. They have been our help along the way. And teachers have respected that... teachers look at it as being helpful."

Another leader recognized the importance of CEC talking with them about state measures of student achievement, the Illinois State Achievement Tests (ISAT), "going away." The ISAT was scheduled to be replaced by 2015, so Marquardt moved decisively away from the ISAT to other assessment measures to better serve its

needs and avoid a gap in its ability to track student achievement. “We found that helpful to know what is going on and [CEC’s] explanations of the projected pathway several years ago were really helpful to navigate the changing environment with their consultative services.”

IMPACT ON CULTURE

There are two longitudinal surveys assessing and tracking the Marquardt culture since 2006: an all-staff survey contracted with Organizational Health, a diagnostic and development company, and an annual Parent Satisfaction Survey that was developed by the District and CEC. Both have positive and insightful outcomes.

According to the company website, Organizational Health was “initially defined by the late Matthew Miles ... as an organization’s ability to function effectively, to cope adequately, to change appropriately, and to grow from within.” Miles identified ten key dimensions of Organizational Health that the company operationalized into an 80 statement Organizational Health Instrument. The District engaged its staff in the online survey for four school years from 2006 to 2012 and will repeat it again in the Fall of 2015.

According to the company, high performing schools and districts tend to score highly on all ten dimensions. However they consistently found a statistically significant relationship between student performance and three particular dimensions:

- ✦ Goal Focus (GF) - the ability of persons, groups, or organizations to have clarity, acceptance, support, and advocacy of school-wide goals and objectives.

- ✦ Cohesiveness (COH) - the state when persons or groups have a clear sense of identity, are attracted to membership, want to stay, and are willing to influence and to be influenced.
- ✦ Adaptation (ADA) - the ability to tolerate stress and maintain stability while changing to meet the unique needs of their stakeholders.

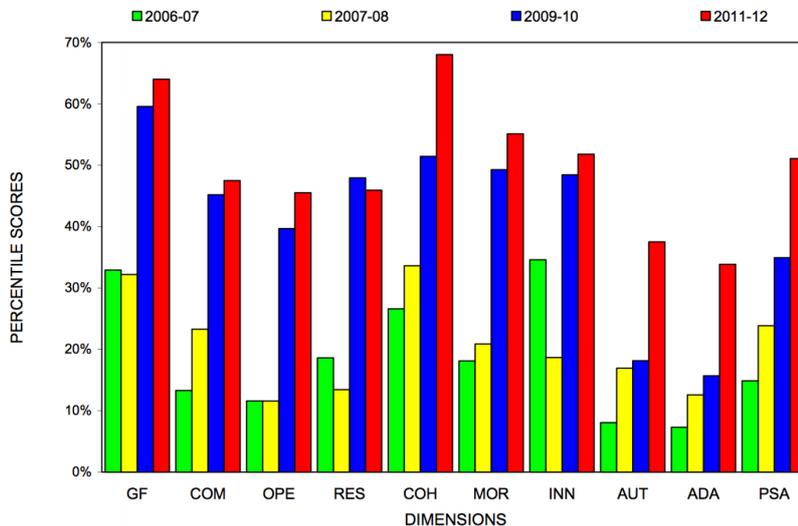
Marquardt increased its percentile scores in all ten dimensions over six years. The two dimensions in which the District scored the highest in 2012 were Cohesiveness and Goal Focus, two of the three key correlates of student performance. Impressive increases from 2006 to 2012 of 40% or more occurred for the dimension of Cohesiveness and two other dimensions:

- ✦ Communication Adequacy - that state when information is relatively distortion free and travels both vertically and horizontally across the boundaries of an organization
- ✦ Problem-Solving Adequacy - an organization’s ability to perceive problems and to solve them with minimal energy.

These results are not surprising given the themes of Trust, Collaboration and Visionary Leadership that are outlined in the pages above. Proactive leaders working together in an atmosphere of trust would be likely to build an organizational culture that their staffs believe is cohesive, communicative, and problem-solving.

This is good news that indicates a very strong culture as perceived by staff. However, the District sees an opportunity in Adaptation, the dimension that had the lowest percentile score of any over time. Adaptation is that ability to tolerate stress and maintain stability while changing to meet the unique needs of stakeholders. While the percentile has increased

ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH PROFILE MARQUARDT SD #15 SCHOOLS 4 YEARS OF OH DATA



GF: Goal Focus - the ability of persons, groups, or organizations to have clarity, acceptance, support, and advocacy of school-wide goals and objectives.

COM: Communication Adequacy - that state when information is relatively distortion free and travels both vertically and horizontally across the boundaries of an organization.

OPE: Optimal Power Equalization - the ability to maintain a relatively equitable distribution of influence between the leader and members of his/her work unit.

RES: Resource Utilization - the ability to coordinate and maintain inputs, particularly personnel, effectively with a minimal sense of strain.

COH: Cohesiveness - the state when persons or groups have a clear sense of identity, are attracted to membership, want to stay, and are willing to influence and to be influenced.

MOR: Morale - that state in which a person, group, or organization have feelings of security, satisfaction, well-being, and pleasure.

INN: Innovativeness - that ability to be and allow others to be inventive, diverse, creative, and risk-taking.

AUT: Autonomy - that state in which a person, group, or organization have the freedom to fulfill their roles and responsibilities

ADA: Adaptation - that ability to tolerate stress and maintain stability while changing to meet the unique needs of their stake holders.

PSA: Problem-Solving Adequacy - an organization's ability to perceive problems and to solve them with minimal energy.

fourfold since 2006, Marquardt leaders believe that they must continue to support staff in an environment of increasing change and pressure.

Focusing on the views of parents, Marquardt requests that they complete the Parent Satisfaction Survey in person annually at parent-teacher conferences. The survey asks for ratings of disagreement and agreement with 25 statements using a Likert 5 point scale. Despite the continued increase in the number of low-income parents in the District and its schools, a significant percentage of whom do not have positive schooling experiences or high school

degrees themselves, parent satisfaction has consistently been very high. There are no ratings below 3 and the range of average ratings is from 4.08 to 4.62 for the District in November 2013.

The highest rated statement (4.62) is "I feel welcome when I call or visit the school," followed by several statements with agreement ratings above 4.5 referring to parents being informed about students' general progress, essential curriculum skills and achievement, and activities and events. These findings are not surprising given at least two factors that emerged in the interviews. First the "Promises Made, Promises

Kept” theme and outcomes from the winning referendum built a foundation of trust and partnership in the District and its personnel in 2002 that was sustained over the years. Second, the PowerSchool technology system made information sharing with parents continuous and effective, well beyond the usual communication strategies of meetings and flyers.

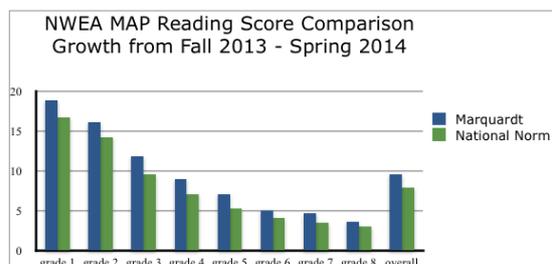
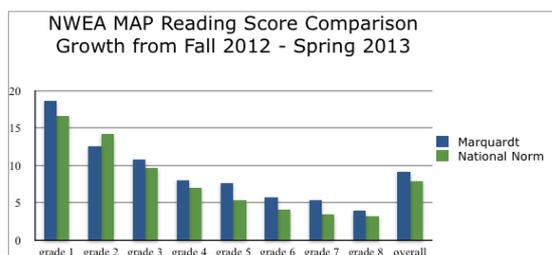
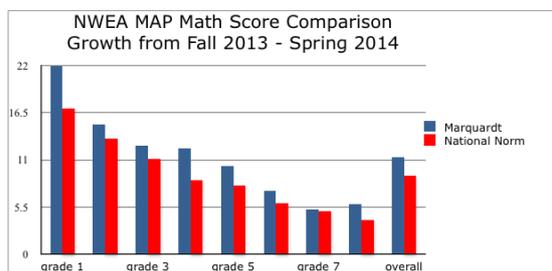
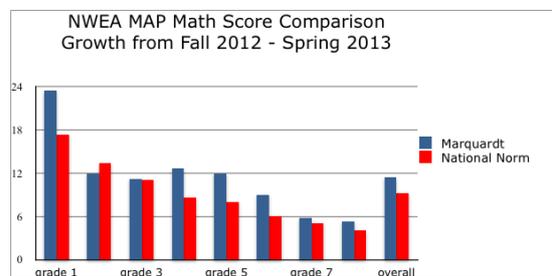
IMPACT ON STUDENT GROWTH AND ACHIEVEMENT/ OPPORTUNITY GAPS

As indicated above, the District leaders decided to remove their focus on the Illinois State Achievement Tests in 2012, given CEC’s guidance and their own visionary predispositions. Instead Marquardt began to use the NWEA MAP assessments of Reading and Mathematics to accurately measure student growth and learning needs. NWEA better served its needs at the classroom, department, school and district level to drive decisions about curriculum and instruction and Marquardt avoided a gap in its ability to track student achievement with the retirement of the ISAT. Marquardt and the other school systems that feed into the Glenbard High School District share their data with one another in the spirit of collaborative improvement.

The following tables reveal that Marquardt students grow more on average than the average student across the nation for all grade levels except one in 2012-2013 and every grade level in the following year. The far right columns in both the Mathematics and Reading charts demonstrate that the District pulled even further away from the national scores in the second year. This is particularly noteworthy for a District with schools ranging from 80% to 50% of their

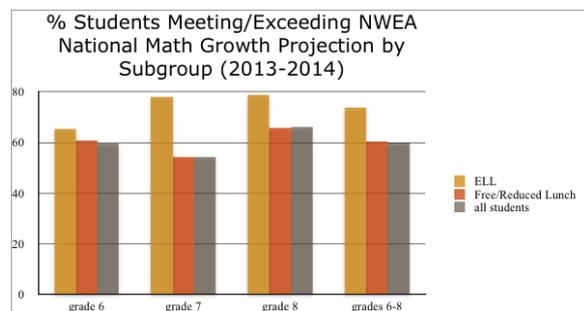
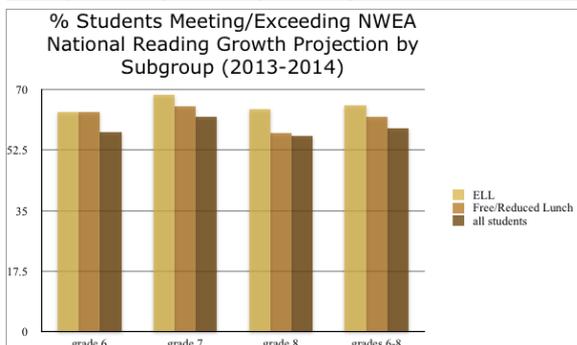
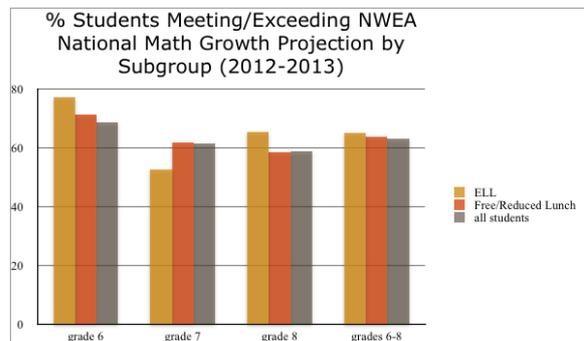
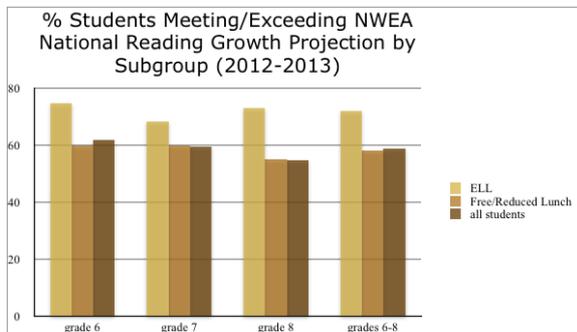
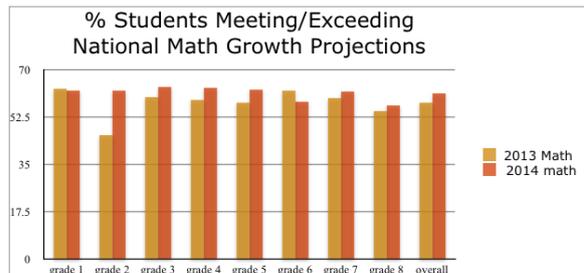
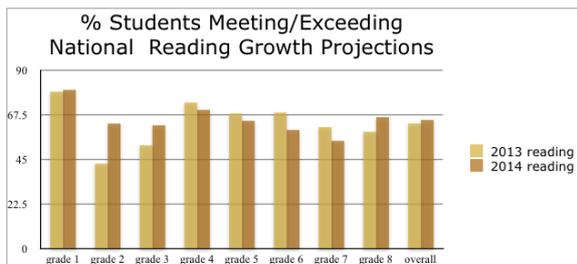
students living in poverty. Also Marquardt had a general increase among themselves from year to year in the number of students meeting the national normalized score projection.

The tables below show the percentage of students meeting/exceeding growth projections for the 2013 school year compared to the 2014 school year for both Mathematics and Reading. This shows the internal growth of SD15 students for most grade levels and overall.



In addressing the achievement/opportunity gap, the District examined the percentage of students meeting/exceeding growth projections by subgroup for both Reading and Mathematics. Looking at the detail tables showing the percentage of subgroup categories of English Language Learner (ELL) and Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL) compared to that of the whole student body, there is good progress shown in the closing of the achievement/opportunity gap. ELL students in particular display impressive growth compared to their fellow students.

These data go a long way in demonstrating that the District met its 2002 strategic goals as outlined in the referendum to significantly increase student growth in reading and mathematics, assure that students who have attended Marquardt District 15 schools for at least two years would be performing at grade level in Reading and Mathematics, and close the achievement gap between FRL and non-FRL students.



IMPLICATIONS

It is extremely difficult to pinpoint the direct contributions of any or all of the District’s improvement strategies to the positive culture, the rise in student growth, and the closing of achievement/opportunity gaps for Marquardt’s students. That is, which of the actions or what mix of factors are key: increased resources, intense focus on data, collaborative teacher work time, teacher-developed curriculum aligned to standards, collaborative frameworks and structures, technology, professional days?

Nor can the positive effect of CEC on Marquardt’s successes be isolated. However, in the current era of major state mandated initiatives and increasing poverty in student populations, this case study demonstrates that collaborative cultures, structures, and processes can be successfully used by school districts to create a sustainable environment for continuous improvement. The foundational concepts of Trust, Collaboration, and Visionary Leadership matter and sustain improvements.

Marquardt continues to face challenges. It is difficult to sustain a collaborative culture with shifts of position holders among the three anchors. Succession planning becomes even more important in order to sustain forward momentum. Constant change is a reality, especially in curriculum, assessment, and technology. The implementation of new teacher evaluation mandates will challenge a previously low-stakes approach to teacher observation and feedback in the field. And, finally, limited financial resources continue to place pressure on the District despite its historical ability to jointly make decisions to adequately fund the cost of educating children.

However, the long Marquardt – CEC partnership does reveal how third-party support can provide additional expertise on “what to do” and “how to do it.” A third party, especially working with a district and its schools over a significant period of time and in multiple capacities, can provide an insightful outside-in perspective and provide expertise in research-based practices. Further, it can build powerful relationships among anchors, facilitate the difficult discussions, raise tough questions, and, finally, reinforce and celebrate the successes that this, and other districts, experience.