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STACEY CHILDRESS
JENNIFER M. SUESSE

The STAR Schools Initiative at the San Francisco Unified School District

Early one morning in spring of 2006, Christine Hiroshima sat at her desk enjoying a rare moment of peace and quiet. As chief academic officer of the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) since 2004, Hiroshima was responsible for the academic programs in the district's 107 schools, which served over 56,000 students **(Exhibit 1**). Hiroshima had one thing on her mind that day: how to continue improving student outcomes at the district's chronically underperforming schools.

The improvement of low-performing schools was the subject of national conversation and policy. State and federal accountability systems, including No Child Left Behind, imposed various sanctions on chronically failing schools. School leaders across the country were struggling to improve student outcomes in such schools. Observers could point to isolated school turnarounds but could find no example of an urban district achieving excellence across its entire system.

In San Francisco, underperforming schools had received close attention since a 1983 court ruling that SFUSD unconstitutionally "engaged in discriminatory practices and maintained a segregated school system."[1] In response, district leaders over the years had tried a variety of improvement strategies to address issues of achievement and equity across the city. Launched in fall of 2001, "Students and Teachers Achieving Results" (STAR) was the most recent effort and a critical piece of the district's "Excellence for All" strategy. STAR realigned district resources by providing struggling schools with a package of targeted services that included additional school personnel, central office support and oversight, and instructional resources that were often absent in low-income schools.

By 2005, the STAR program had generated promising results in many, but not all, of the 44 participating schools (**Exhibit 2**). Hiroshima knew her team needed a deeper understanding of the strengths and limitations of the intervention if they were to transform all of the district's chronically underperforming schools into beacons of excellence.

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[1] 1983 Consent Decree written by the United States District Court for the Northern District of California, in the case San Francisco NAACP, et al., vs. San Francisco Unified School District, et al., Civil No. C-78-1443 WHO.

Professor Stacey Childress and Research Associate Jennifer M. Suesse prepared this case. PELP cases are developed solely as the basis for class discussion. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective management.

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Developing a Coherent Strategy: "Excellence for All"[2]

In summer of 2000, the SFUSD Board of Education appointed Dr. Arlene Ackerman superintendent of schools following a nationwide search. With over 30 years of experience in public education as a teacher, principal, and deputy superintendent, Ackerman had most recently been the superintendent of the public school system in Washington, D.C. She articulated five core beliefs intended to guide the work of all stakeholders on behalf of SFUSD students: 1) children come first; 2) parents are our partners; 3) victory is in the classroom; 4) leadership and accountability are the keys to our success; and 5) it takes the entire community to ensure the success of all students.

Since 1983, SFUSD had operated under a consent decree, managed by a federal judge, that required the district to meet educational equity targets for all students. Upon her arrival, Ackerman appointed an educational equity committee to advise her on ways to respond more effectively to the requirements of the consent decree. The committee included members from SFUSD central and school staff, parents, board members, community leaders, and union leadership.

The committee found that the achievement gap between African-American and Latino students and their white and Chinese counterparts was widening. After controlling for student and school characteristics in 10 years of standardized test data, the committee demonstrated that African-American and Latino students as a group scored lower than other SFUSD ethnic groups, regardless of poverty or other factors. The educational equity committee reported that substantial numbers of SFUSD teachers and administrators had lower expectations for African-American and Latino students and that some schools used a "dumbed-down" curriculum for these students. To address these findings, the committee put forth recommendations that were incorporated into a districtwide strategy for improvement. Ackerman and her team developed a five-year plan dubbed "Excellence for All" that included the input of over 3,000 teachers, parents, and other community members, who attended public input sessions and school meetings to discuss the plan.

The "Excellence for All" strategy focused on academic achievement for all students, the equitable allocation of district resources, and accountability for results. It included concrete actions to support the strategy, including giving parents a choice about where their children attended school, creating classrooms all over the city in which teachers had high expectations for all learners, and placing decisions about and accountability for instructional programs and the resources to support them in the hands of school communities. After obtaining unanimous board approval, Ackerman submitted the plan to the federal judge monitoring the consent decree in April 2001. The judge approved the 231-page document as SFUSD's plan to meet the mandates of the consent decree, and implementation of "Excellence for All" became a legal requirement (**Exhibit 3**).

To implement "Excellence for All" at the school level, SFUSD developed a weighted student formula (WSF) that attached a variable dollar amount to every student based on his or her learning needs. Each year principals received revenue based on their actual student enrollment and then conducted an academic planning process with their school-site councils (SSCs). Principals worked with SSCs to develop performance targets and an academic plan that was responsive to their students' achievement data from the prior year. Principals and SSCs then created budgets that allocated available resources to specific activities in their academic plans. All principals were evaluated annually on the achievement of their schools' performance targets and their management of staff, stakeholders, and financial resources **(Exhibit 4**).

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[2] This section is adapted from Stacey Childress and Robert Peterkin, "Pursuing Educational Equity at San Francisco Unified School District," PEL-005, The Public Education Leadership Project Case Series, Harvard Business School Publishing, 2004.

A Star Is Born

One Friday afternoon in June 2001, Ackerman and then Chief Academic Officer Elois Brooks were discussing the persistent challenge of improving student achievement at the district's lowest-performing schools with an outside expert in grant funding, Dr. Mitzi Beach. Even though "Excellence for All" was a comprehensive strategy, Ackerman and Brooks believed that the district needed a specific intervention to adapt the strategy to the needs of chronically underperforming schools. Brooks was an experienced public educator who had arrived in San Francisco only a few months earlier when Ackerman persuaded her to join the SFUSD leadership team. Brooks explained: "I had never been a chief academic officer before, but I had been a principal. So, when I arrived in San Francisco, I asked myself, 'What would I want the Chief Academic Office to do if I were still a principal?' I didn't have any role models or firsthand examples, but I knew I wanted to focus on supporting schools, especially those that were struggling."

As the conversation continued on that Friday, Brooks walked around the third floor encouraging others to join their emerging analysis of root causes of poor performance in schools. She wanted to ensure that those with longer tenures in the district could contribute their "institutional knowledge" to the design of the intervention. "Dr. Beach's presence was also essential," Brooks recalled, "because she helped us figure out how to finance our plans from the moment they emerged. Arlene and I had worked with Mitzi in Washington, and she knew how to work with categorical and grant money." Ritu Khanna from the Data Planning and Research Department and Chief of School Operations Deborah Sims were among those who joined the conversation. Sims remembered:

> Elois marched right into Ritu and said, "Please get me the trend data on these schools we've identified. We've got to do something. There are just too many schools that are failing, or at least too many not making the accelerated gains that are needed. Let's go right now." We spent the rest of the day defining the elements of a successful school and the barriers that prevent success. We knew the most important element of a successful school is a principal who is a strong instructional leader—someone who understands how to really move a school forward academically. We assessed whether there were strong instructional leaders in each school. In places where there wasn't strong leadership, developing a strategy for filling that void became the most important element of the reform effort.

Ackerman added:

> I knew we could not approach each school separately, so we started to brainstorm about what issues these struggling schools had in common. I wanted us to talk not only about what the schools needed to change, but also what *we* needed to be doing differently at central office. I was looking for a systemic approach that would support rather than punish schools that were struggling to improve.

The discussion focused on core issues such as helping young and inexperienced teachers improve their practice, getting substitutes to travel to low-income neighborhoods, developing school leaders, and expanding access to extended learning opportunities. For Sims and Khanna, this was an opportunity to share what they had learned from prior efforts in low-performing schools in SFUSD.

Consent decree First, they discussed the legacy of the initial consent decree. The 1983 ruling demanded that SFUSD focus its attention on certain neighborhoods where discrimination and segregation appeared to be the worst. The consent decree included a four-phase implementation plan and named six schools ("Phase I schools") to be reconstituted immediately in the 1983–1984 school year. Reconstitution aimed at transforming the school environment by removing and replacing the existing school team (including administration, faculty, and staff). Plans for the Phase I

schools were specific and well funded, while plans for an additional 19 schools to be included in the later phases, II–IV, were more vague. In 1992 a court-appointed "committee of experts" found, "Phase I schools had achieved statistically significant gains in student achievement for targeted students. Such gains were not consistently found in Phase II through IV schools."[3] In reviewing this analysis in June 2001, the team concluded that to be successful at scale the new intervention needed to be simultaneous, comprehensive, well organized, and coherent across multiple sites.

Comprehensive School Improvement Program (CSIP) The second intervention they discussed was CSIP, a court-ordered response to the 1992 committee's report that required "that 'low achieving targeted schools outside Phase I be reconstituted' and that the District 'annually reconstitute at least three schools every year till the task is completed.'"[4] To assist low-performing schools prior to reconstitution, CSIP included a one-year intervention that provided targeted schools with resources. If its year-end evaluation showed no improvement, a school could be reconstituted. Only a few schools were actually reconstituted in the mid-1990s, but CSIP was poorly received, and Sims and Khanna recalled that it was ineffective in improving performance. In contrast to reforms during Phase I of the consent decree, the term "reconstitution" took on negative connotations during CSIP. From their review of CSIP, the team concluded that one-year interventions had little effect; therefore they needed a multiyear plan to support low-performing schools.

Immediate Intervention Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP) In 1999, the state of California began to involve itself in the challenge of low-performing schools through an initiative dubbed II/USP. SFUSD applied for state-funded planning grants of $50,000 per school under the program and received funding for 13 schools. As part of developing school improvement plans, the state required the district to collect feedback from schools regarding common obstacles to improvement, from which SFUSD identified five key barriers:

1. High percentage of inexperienced teachers at II/USP schools
2. Lack of implementation of standards-based instruction
3. Limitations on use/availability/management of state and federal funds
4. Disproportionate number of targeted students concentrated in the II/USP schools
5. Lack of coordination of instructional support programs, resources, operations, and services[5]

Khanna recalled:

> I assumed leadership of the Data Planning and Support Department only a few months before we joined the II/USP process. The exercise of developing plans informed by an analysis of the barriers—both on the district and school side—was a key factor in establishing our approach to low-performing schools. The state grant also provided money to hire an external evaluator, which gave us a way to create accountability for this work, and established a precedent of using research-based strategies for reform.

[3] Report cited Ritu Khanna, John R. Flores, Bonnie Bergum, and Davida Desmond, "The History and Practice of Reconstitution in San Francisco," Department of Research, Planning and Evaluation, San Francisco Unified School District, presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April 19–23, 1999, p. 4.

[4] Ibid., pp. 4–5.

[5] Cited in district report "Feedback from II/USP & CRSD site teams at the March 3, 2000 meeting on District Barriers I–V."

Dee Dee Desmond, a former principal at a Phase I consent decree school who worked with Khanna on the planning and implementation of II/USP and would subsequently take a lead role in implementing the STAR program, noted, "While staff was initially skeptical towards the CSIP programs because of reconstitution, the II/USP effort included resources for schools. We were able to begin working with a small group of low-performing schools to address both site and central office barriers to improvement."

Applying the Lessons of the Past

As the design team discussed these experiences, they concluded that they could design a program to draw on the things they had learned. They agreed that their new approach should avoid attaching a negative label to low-performing schools and should focus on deploying targeted resources to address specific barriers to performance at schools as well as the central office. The team named the program "Students and Teachers Achieving Results" to signal the focus on school-level supports and to attach a positive label to the new initiative. Brooks reminisced, "Most of the ideas of STAR emerged on that one day. I remember going home that evening feeling good about our work."

Over the next few weeks, the team sketched out the vision for the STAR program, drawing on their collective experiences as principals, administrators, parents, and teachers. They agreed on an overall goal "to increase student achievement at underperforming schools by providing targeted intervention at the school sites" and articulated four core beliefs as a foundation for the work:

- An underperforming school can become a school with high student achievement.
- Strong leadership at the school site is a key component to whole school change.
- Central office must position resources to support principals' development as instructional leaders.
- Underperforming schools commonly have similar issues and concerns. Likewise, successful schools share core elements that are linked to student achievement.

Selecting the STAR Schools

The STAR program had a broad set of criteria that qualified schools for entry. Rather than attempting to narrow the pool of candidates, Khanna explained, "We didn't just take the lowest-performing schools according to one measure but adopted a multiple-measures approach to the selection process." Thirty-nine elementary, middle, and high schools entered the program in fall of 2001 having met one or more of three eligibility criteria: participation in the II/USP program; an Academic Performance Index (API) score in the first, second, or third decile; and failure to meet no more than one of the performance targets in the annual principal evaluation process.

The team believed that no single intervention would be sufficient to address the myriad challenges facing underperforming schools. Based on school-level data and research about how to improve underperforming schools, the group defined three categories of interventions: additional school personnel, additional instructional resources, and additional district support. These interventions aimed to improve teaching and learning by increasing school, principal, parent, student, and teacher capacity simultaneously. Eventually, the design team's understanding of the chain of causality between each part of the intervention and improved outcomes was crystallized in a concept model for the program (**Exhibit 5**).

Additional School Personnel

After determining the total resources available, the design team decided to fund a total of five additional positions at each STAR school: an instructional reform facilitator, a long-term substitute, a parent liaison, an advisor in elementary and middle schools, and a learning support consultant. Some STAR roles would be part time and others full time, according to the demands of each role and funding limitations. The team articulated the performance barrier each role was designed to address, assigned school-site and district office responsibilities, and established successful school outcomes for each position (**Exhibit 6**). Although the program would be modified as implementation began, the purpose of each position and intervention was established from the outset. Desmond explained, "We believed that the school site was the critical place for change. Monies were designated to address certain common challenges that prevented low-performing schools from improving."

Instructional reform facilitators Over the years, budget cuts had eliminated the traditional assistant principal positions in K-8 schools throughout the district, leaving principals with sole responsibility over school operations, student behavior management, and instructional leadership decisions. The team created the role of instructional reform facilitator to address challenges created by the overwhelming demands on principals' time that could distract from instructional improvement.

Affectionately known within SFUSD as "IRFs" (rhymes with "smurfs"), these individuals were responsible for facilitating all aspects of reform at the school site and for establishing a focus on curricular alignment and instructional improvement at the classroom level. Desmond said, "The role of the instructional reform facilitator was based on research that says in low-performing schools high faculty and administrator turnover leads to teachers that are underprepared to deliver instruction. So the IRF plays two key roles, both of which are outlined in their job description—instructional coach and change coach." Sims added:

> The IRF is an individual who is responsible on a daily basis for leading the instructional program, supporting and coaching teachers—a person who has a deep knowledge base of pedagogy, instruction, and curriculum and therefore can support teacher growth by modeling effective instruction and facilitating meaningful professional development. Therefore, we were interested in IRF candidates with a minimum of five years of successful teaching experience, who understood teaching and learning and who were highly respected by their colleagues. The principal's role as the educational leader is to provide leadership by modeling, organizing, and creating the environment and conditions for rigorous learning and achievement to occur.

The district negotiated special status for IRFs (teachers on special assignment) with the teachers' union by clarifying that they would play no role in the formal evaluation of their peers. Principals were informed about the creation of the IRF role in July and asked to quickly recommend a candidate for the position from their staffs. Thirty-nine IRFs were hired by the district in August, most of whom had been recommended by their principals. Each IRF held appropriate state teaching credentials, at least five years of teaching experience, professional development and group facilitation experience, at least two years of leadership experience with school reform,[6] experience working with diverse populations, and the ability to communicate with multiple stakeholders.

Long-term substitutes For some STAR schools, procuring substitutes was difficult because many teachers were reluctant to travel to neighborhoods in which these schools were located. To

[6] According to the posted job description, this included work with II/USP, Reading Recovery, the Bay Area Writing Project, the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative, the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools, mentoring/coaching, resource/content specialist, restructuring, department chair, Urban Systemic Program, and other whole school change models.

address this problem, the team assigned a long-term substitute to each STAR school. The goal was to minimize missed learning opportunities for students and provide continuity in the school community, since these teachers would be permanently staffed to individual sites.

Parent liaisons Under the supervision of their principal and the director of parent relations at central office, parent liaisons worked to increase parent, family, and community involvement on the assumption that parent involvement was an untapped resource in most low-performing schools. Their role was to raise parents' expectations about their child's potential for academic achievement, to educate parents to assist their children to be successful in school, to partner with parents to close the achievement gap, and to help schools provide better information for parents in order to encourage communication with parents and families.

Advisors Because elementary and middle schools lacked staff who could focus exclusively on minimizing truancy and negative student behavior, STAR redefined school-based counselor roles that had previously focused on reactive discipline. Called an advisor, this more proactive role would assist with the development and implementation of activities to promote positive relationships among students, parents and families, community representatives, and school personnel.

Learning support consultants The team considered staffing schools with tutors but chose instead to create a learning support consultant position. These individuals were tasked with helping to link school climates with assisting socially and emotionally challenged students with behavioral issues. Some learning support consultants were nurses, and they reported to the school health department.

Instructional Resources and District Support

Instructional resources STAR schools were also granted access to financial and material resources that were often missing from underperforming schools. These included test-preparation packets; an extra $150 for supplies for each teacher; additional resources to enhance school library collections and establish new parent centers at each school; music, art, and after-school programming; transportation services for after-school programs; and additional money for snacks.

District support STAR schools received extra support and oversight from the central office regarding the district core curriculum. Sandra Lam, director of curriculum, noted:

> With the STAR schools, we made it very clear that they had to focus on the core curriculum. We required them to have blocks of uninterrupted time for language arts and mathematics instruction which could not be interrupted with pullouts for other programs. This was a huge shift for teachers, because they'd never spent that much intensive time focused on reading. Some teachers were still teaching mathematics for less than half an hour each day, and the recommendation is for one hour daily. I think it took us at the central office a while to become clear about our expectations—that this was the requirement districtwide, but we would monitor the requirement in STAR schools.

STAR also provided principals with an academic plan review process, district content specialists (both special education and multilingual), leadership development workshops, and targeted professional development for their teachers and staff. As it did for additional staff, the STAR team articulated the barrier each support was designed to address, assigned school-site and district office responsibilities, and established successful school outcomes for each support (**Exhibit 7**).

All SFUSD principals reported to one of five assistant superintendents, and the STAR design team elected to work within this structure rather than creating a separate reporting relationship for low-performing schools. Each assistant superintendent was tasked with monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of STAR resources. A cornerstone of central office support was a series of visits to each STAR school. These visits included "walkthroughs" of every classroom by a visiting central office team, followed by a conference in which school staff could discuss their progress and challenges with the central office visitors. STAR walkthroughs were intended as an opportunity for central and school staff to observe schoolwide teaching practices and work together to address challenges related to the school's academic goals. To conduct the walkthrough and conference process, each assistant superintendent assembled cross-functional teams with members from the Chief Academic Office, special education, multilingual programs, and specific content areas.

Funding STAR

Each STAR school participated in the annual academic planning process and received a lump-sum revenue allocation based on the weighted student formula calculation for its actual enrollment, as did all SFUSD schools. STAR schools also received an additional per student allocation, which by SY06 totaled $431 per pupil over and above the WSF funding. Total per pupil allocations at STAR schools ranged between approximately $4,000 and $5,000, depending on the effect the characteristics of the enrolled students had on the WSF. Additional expenses related to the STAR intervention were carried on the central office budget rather than on each school's budget.

The overall cost of the STAR intervention carried by the central office was approximately $9.5 million, most of which was invested in the additional staff positions (**Exhibit 8**). Approximately 70% of the total was paid for out-of-state categorical funds, with nearly $4.7 million coming from consent decree money and $1.9 million from a state initiative called economic impact aid. The remaining 30%, around $2.8 million, was funded through federal Title I dollars.

Implementing STAR

In order to roll out the new initiative by fall 2001, Ackerman asked Brooks to head up STAR through the Chief Academic Office but to involve several central office departments and school leaders in the implementation. Brooks and the assistant superintendents supervised the hiring, training, and support of the initial IRFs. The Office of Parent Relations coordinated the training and support of parent liaisons, who were hired by principals. Other central office employees recruited volunteer tutors and developed an evaluation process for after-school and other supplemental programs. Principals were authorized to hire long-term substitutes for their sites. Schools were informed of the new role of advisors, who were then trained in their new duties.

Every school in SFUSD completed an annual academic plan based on prior-year performance data. Principals and their school-site councils developed a set of activities and programs in response to the data and then aligned their available financial resources to the plan. The STAR leadership team began the implementation year by conducting interviews with principals from each STAR school about their academic plans. The goal of the interviews was to help principals understand the connection between their students' academic data and their strategy for the year. Each principal received five questions as a guide for discussion:

1. Are the plan's objectives aligned with the data patterns?
2. Are explanations for the data patterns and strategic activities in your plan?

3. Does your plan include essential components of a successful school, that is, activities that address standards-based instruction, family and community involvement, and professional development?
4. How will your benchmarks help you achieve your objectives?
5. Are your activities aligned with your objectives?

Each interview proceeded as an open-ended discussion based on the questions, and the STAR team recalled that principals exhibited a wide variation in their ability to answer these questions, signaling that some principals possessed a greater capacity for instructional leadership than others. In cases in which the team believed the principal needed development in instructional leadership, they counseled the principal to select a more experienced IRF to supplement his or her skills.

Following the principal interviews in early fall, the cross-functional teams began visiting schools for the first of the three walkthroughs each school would receive during the year. Brooks remarked:

> I knew we needed to come up with a system for accountability. Many aspects of the program were easy to implement because they matched what principals felt they needed to provide equity and increased achievement. However, finding a way to monitor schools was the most difficult part of the work and has required the most ongoing refinement. Principals and teachers were initially very skeptical of our plan to walk through their schools and didn't believe us when we said that the intention was not to evaluate individual teachers—but rather to evaluate the systems in schools to support instructional improvement.

The STAR design team did not mandate a specific protocol for assistant superintendents to implement in their walkthrough processes, and as a result there was wide variation in the quality and content of the feedback provided to school teams. In order to avoid appearing evaluative, the walkthrough teams attempted to give broad feedback about teaching practices they observed rather than singling out individual teachers for comment, but as a result principals reported that the feedback could be vague or confusing. Members of the various walkthrough teams informally shared their processes in an attempt to gain consistency across schools, but several participants in the visits noted the lack of integration across assistant superintendents.

The cross-functional nature of the teams also exposed variation in expectations for schools across central office departments, and resolving these differences of opinion could be a slow process. Brooks felt that it took "at least until the third year" of STAR to reach consistency across the walkthrough teams.

Overall, the walkthrough process was highly valued by both school and central office staff. Deborah McKnight, executive director of special education, explained the worth of the process:

> I was able to use the process of instructional walkthroughs and academic planning to address core problems we were facing in my department. Too often, special educators were opting out of core curriculum training, and I would walk into certain classrooms and wonder just what kind of teaching could possibly take place in that environment. STAR forced the issue of incorporating teaching and learning and differentiation and good instruction—all the things special education needs to be—at the whole school level.

Lessons Learned

Over the course of the first year, the IRFs and long-term substitutes emerged as key elements of the STAR initiative. "For both principals and teachers," the district's year-end evaluation report stated, "additional school personnel proved to be the most powerful intervention . . . particularly Instructional Reform Facilitators and Long Term Substitutes." Evaluators reported the following "most successful" interventions (see **Table A** below).

Table A "Most Successful" Interventions as Reported by STAR School Administrators and Teachers

Administrators	Frequency	Teachers	Frequency
An Instructional Reform Facilitator	13	An Instructional Reform Facilitator	12
Long Term Substitutes	10	Long Term Substitutes	8
Instructional Walk-Throughs	9	Additional $150 for each teacher	6

Source: SFUSD *STAR* Schools Initiative 2001–2002 Formative Evaluation Findings.

Note: Number of respondents commenting on which intervention was particularly successful.

The evaluation also showed that STAR schools wanted personnel better qualified to deal with crisis interventions (e.g., counselors, social workers, and nurses), as well as more common planning time in their schools and a clearer definition of the STAR roles (IRFs, parent liaisons, and substitutes). Modifications based on the evaluation's findings were implemented for the second year of STAR.

Ackerman acknowledged the need for adaptation and refinement after the first year: "Not everyone understood what we were trying to accomplish with STAR in the first year. I knew it would take time to get individual pieces to work properly, but this was a strong program, and I was confident it would get progressively better over time. I also had great confidence in Elois's ability to lead the implementation of this complex initiative."

Ackerman also recognized the limitations of the first-year rollout, explaining:

> It is a huge leap to get staff in central office to come out of their silos and see how all of the departments working together can better benefit schools. Furthermore, people who work in schools have no confidence that things can change in central office. Constant communication is key. It took a year for everyone to understand what we were trying to do. If I had to do it again, I would spend more time at the outset communicating our rationale for implementing the STAR program with staff at the school sites and central office. Communicating "why" and "how" the changes would improve student achievement might have made the initial year of implementation much smoother.

Clarifying the IRF Role and Adapting the Hiring Process

Although the IRF role was widely acknowledged as one of the most promising aspects of the STAR program in the first year, most of the early feedback noted that "the fuzzy job descriptions

were a real source of confusion, and resulted in multiple demands and duties being assigned to additional personnel."[7] This lack of clarity presented a number of challenges. As one IRF explained:

> When you are charged with instructional reform, some teachers are reluctant. When I first started, I had to help a teacher who wasn't very strong. He wanted to file a grievance because he felt I was going to evaluate him. Eventually we worked that out, and I learned from it. But it is not always easy to help a teacher realize they need to make changes and then to provide support and modeling for them. Sometimes I need more backing from the administrative team for holding teachers accountable. I can be a critical friend, but if the principal isn't making the case for why teachers need to work with me, then it can be hard.

Another recalled: "I remember walking into one of my first language arts meetings to present a central office direction that we would need to collaborate with each other and have a common curriculum at each grade level, and the entire team just walked out on me. I had a lot to learn about how to implement my responsibilities." To ensure greater consistency in implementation of the IRF role, as well as to clarify the hiring, training, and support of IRFs, Brooks and the STAR team charged Desmond, the executive director of school reform, with coordinating their efforts across the STAR school sites. IRFs still reported to their individual principals, but they met with Desmond biweekly. Desmond explained the challenge of allowing individual principals to recommend IRFs:

> IRFs did a variety of jobs their first year that ranged from lunch duty in the schoolyard to crunching numbers to coaching teachers. This new role of the IRF was being learned and implemented by the district and the schools. Many principals were gaining understanding of how they could use their IRFs and therefore demonstrated a wide range in ability to hire for this unique position.

In response, the central STAR team (assistant superintendents, Brooks, Khanna, and Desmond) modified the IRF selection process for the second year of STAR. They increased their efforts to screen and select centrally a qualified pool of candidates from which principals could select IRFs in an effort to achieve consistency in candidate quality and principals' understanding of the role. Principals could still recommend candidates, but the IRF role description and hiring guidelines were made more clear and strict. Desmond explained: "It was essential that the IRFs be hired at their school sites and view their principals as their line of authority, but we also needed them to have certain skills to ensure that they could do the complicated job we had outlined. Because I had no formal authority over the IRFs, the reporting structure required a delicate balance to be effective."

Additionally, Desmond identified a number of cores skills necessary for success as an IRF and created a centralized approach to developing them. She explained, "The IRFs needed a formalized professional development plan, so we developed a series of mandatory training sessions on topics such as using benchmark data and utilizing the other intervention supports that were part of STAR."

Even with a more coordinated hiring and training effort, IRF roles across the district remained varied. Some principals implemented the intervention just as the design team had envisioned it. In these schools, IRFs took on specialized roles focused specifically on instructional improvement by coaching teachers and outlining plans for schoolwide professional development based on detailed analysis of student achievement data. At other sites, IRFs were also tasked with administrative duties such as discipline and schoolyard monitoring. One veteran IRF said, "If you had all of us in a room, you would get 44 different stories about what we do and why we're effective."

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[7] SFUSD *STAR* Schools Initiative 2001–2002 Formative Evaluation Findings, p. 3.

Principals echoed this wide range of opinions about the IRF's focus. One principal described her IRF as "my right-hand woman," explaining:

> I see my role as the link to the community, so I split my time between the community and the classroom. My IRF, on the other hand, spends 100% of her time focusing on instruction and helping teachers. It makes my job easier, because we both observe classrooms then confer and come up with strategies to help certain teachers or certain grade levels, whereas if I were alone making these decisions, I would have to bother another principal to brainstorm.

Another principal managed the IRF role in a different way:

> My IRF had a unique role in our school because she does a little bit of the administrative work, periodically attends to discipline—which is something we all do here because it is everyone's responsibility—and then she supports me as an instructional leader. We support each other in setting teachers up for success. Sometimes she'll go in and model a lesson, sometimes I will model.

Overall, IRFs, principals, and central staff agreed that the variation could be a challenge but that on balance it was valuable. As one IRF noted: "The flexibility in our role allows us to really lend support that might not be explicitly stated in our job descriptions. And that is a good thing. Even though our job description is two pages long and aims to encompass everything, the role of the IRF is to be able to go into a school and figure things out and lend support where it's needed."

By the third year of the program, 100% of STAR principals identified the role of the IRFs as one of three interventions critical to the continued success of the STAR program, with 88% citing IRFs as the first critical support.[8] As an unexpected consequence of STAR, the IRF role also created a new pipeline of potential school leaders. By spring 2006, 11 IRFs had become principals and seven had become assistant principals, often in STAR schools.

Managing Differences, Striving for Consistency

Finding the right balance between site authority and central control was an ongoing challenge, made all the more delicate by turnover among STAR principals. Some of the more skilled and experienced principals wanted more discretion over STAR programs and resources, while newer principals often needed more supervision and help with implementation. Some principals and IRFs felt that the central office was not equipped to offer varied levels of support according to individual school needs. An IRF elaborated:

> One of the most interesting aspects of STAR is the flexibility between central mandates and site needs. The STAR team at central office doesn't really know how to differentiate their support for us, but that's okay because we do know how on-site. My first year as an IRF, we worked with the bottom-quartile kids to pull their performance up and tried to establish some instructional continuity. But we're past that. Now we're focused on how to move midrange students to proficient and above. We don't have to spend our time worrying about the same problems that we did our first year in STAR because we have flexibility at the site.

A principal described the give and take between the central office and her school:

> My IRF goes to a central office meeting every other week and comes back with ideas and then we hash it out and we say, "Does this make sense for us? Can we adapt that good central

[8] Ingrid Roberson, SFUSD 2003–2004 STAR Evaluation Report, p. i.

> office idea to our site?" The STAR program wouldn't be as effective if it was wholly centralized, nor would it work if it was exclusively site based. Central office provides a map, but schools are able to adapt, and principals who know what they are doing make it work well.

As one IRF explained, being part of a larger community of practice was a key to achieving consistency: "The ability to meet together every other week is very helpful because we notice that there is commonality in our work. If we didn't meet together twice a month, we would probably be even more divergent than we are now."

Managing Complexity over Time

In addition to the IRF role, the STAR design team periodically reviewed the implementation of other parts of the intervention. The long-term substitutes were not working as they had planned. A lack of coordination with Human Resources meant that these individuals appeared at the top of the districtwide substitute list, which meant they were frequently called for duty at other sites. This prevented the consistency that the team had envisioned at some hard-to-staff schools.

Brooks also believed they should have approached the change in the advisor role differently: "Although we rewrote the job description for the advisors, we didn't ask people to reapply for their jobs. It was difficult to switch their mind-set from their prior focus—too many of them were used to just babysitting kids that principals didn't want sitting in their offices, and we didn't fully communicate our intention of the changes in the position."

The team also struggled to work out the balance between central- and site-based support for the parent liaisons. Deena Zacharin, who oversaw this element of STAR, explained:

> At first principals hired the parent liaisons. Sometimes they would hire an active parent, sometimes they would add hours to a long-term school employee. In 2004, the Office of Parent Relations began to hire and train the liaisons as central staff, and everyone had to reapply for their jobs. We brought in a lot of new people and since have been more successful implementing a consistent system and structure to increase parent involvement.

Some STAR schools did not respond sufficiently to the initial set of supports, and the team elected to increase the amount of attention and support they received, creating a category of schools called "Intensive STAR." In more troubled sites, they began to consider reconstitution.

In 2004, Brooks transitioned to the chief of staff role and was succeeded by Hiroshima, a former assistant superintendent. Brooks stayed connected to STAR and, almost five years after the original brainstorming meeting, she reflected: "I can't point to just one thing that STAR did for low-performing schools. Students at these sites need a variety of things. As I look back, I know that I learned that a central office must be a support for schools. If schools knew what to do to improve, they would do it. They need direction, but administrators need to respect schools for what they bring to the table."

Chief Development Officer Matthew Kelemen commented, "Overall, STAR is about help. There is increased monitoring, but it is primarily a support system. In a world of scarce resources, STAR schools get significant additional resources. When you talk to most people in these schools, they don't feel penalized for being in the program. Instead, they appreciate it. They appreciate the resources."

Myong Leigh, chief of policy and planning, highlighted the complexity of implementing a program like STAR as part of a larger strategy to improve performance:

> It's important to remember that STAR was implemented about the same time as the site-based decision-making process, the weighted student formula, and a new principals' evaluation. STAR could have been in conflict with these other systems but in the end was not. Most of the key players at central office were involved in implementing all of these pieces, and we have managed to align them. When you step back from it, it's very cool.

New Challenges

In 2004, Ackerman determined that a number of Intensive STAR schools were not making sufficient progress and planned to reconstitute them over several years with support from the federal judge monitoring the consent decree. Once again, she asked Brooks to lead the effort. Called "Dream Schools," these sites were equipped with not only STAR resources but a prescribed school design. Additionally, all teachers and administrative staff had to resign and reapply for their positions. Almost none were rehired. The teachers' union had taken an increasingly oppositional stance under new leadership since 2003, and the Dream School plan and implementation accelerated the deterioration of its relationship with Ackerman. The union mobilized its membership and played a significant role in changing the makeup of the school board during the 2005 elections. The balance of power on the board shifted largely to opposition of management team recommendations regarding district policy and strategy.

Overall, SFUSD had improved student outcomes at all grade levels between 2001 and 2005 and had made progress in narrowing the achievement gap **(Exhibit 9)**. In 2005, the district was named one of the top five urban school districts in the nation by the Broad Foundation and was recognized as the highest-performing urban district in California by the state department of education.

Nevertheless, political unrest culminated in Ackerman's resignation in early 2006. Brooks also elected to leave SFUSD. Concurrently, the judge monitoring the consent decree declined a request to renew the ruling and continue his oversight for another three-year term. Implementation of "Excellence for All" was no longer legally required, which concerned many administrators who relied on the judge to support the more contentious elements of the strategy.

On the financial front, expenses were projected to increase faster than revenues in SY07 due to declining enrollment and new union contracts negotiated in SY06 that committed the district to over $19 million in new annual spending. With an estimated shortfall of $5 million on its $450 million operating budget, district leaders explored options to significantly cut existing spending to balance the budget. Because the STAR program accounted for $9.5 million each year, the team began to consider reducing some of the supports to achieve their budget targets.

In response to the possibility of losing some STAR resources, one teacher said: "I have a problem with that. We accomplished the growth because of the extra money, because of the professional development, and the IRF position. If they take the resources away after we've progressed so much, it's almost like we're getting punished—these things helped us get where we are. If they take them away, it's like we're back at square one."

School leaders were concerned as well, as one elementary school principal explained:

> Outside experts look at a program like STAR and think it's about reallocating and using resources differently. True, but it's also about *more* resources. STAR is designed well—I think having some things centrally designed and interconnected with schools is good, but I just want to go on the record and say that part of our performance problem in the past was too few resources. The STAR program brings extra resources to schools that need them most.

What Next?

From her perspective as chief academic officer, Hiroshima knew some tough decisions lay ahead. To reduce costs, she and the SFUSD leadership team had anticipated "graduating" successful schools from the STAR program. With this approach, schools that had improved would gradually lose STAR resources, which would reduce the program's cost but potentially jeopardize the gains schools had made. Hiroshima wondered if her team understood which elements of STAR were most effective and if they could design a scaled-back set of resources that would reduce overall costs but still provide ample support to schools and sustain their achievement gains.

Aside from the budget concerns, Hiroshima thought about the potential of the STAR approach for supporting improvement in schools that were not the lowest performing but still had a long way to go to achieve excellence. Assistant Superintendent Jeannie Pon believed non-STAR schools could benefit from STAR supports as well, saying, "STAR has been successful, and given experience working with my STAR schools, we are making ground and we want to continue the momentum. I wish my non-STAR schools had some of those STAR resources, too." In fact, if the team really understood which parts of STAR were most effective, was it possible to implement them in schools in the midrange of performance—those with API rankings of four—in order to accelerate their achievement gains? If some parts of STAR were discontinued universally, could some of the cost savings be reallocated to implementing effective supports in a targeted number of non-STAR schools?

As she gathered her things for a school visit, Hiroshima was determined to carve out time to address these questions with her team.

Exhibit 1 SFUSD District Demographic and Organizational Data

District Area Demographics	**SFUSD**
Total Population	776,713
Per Capita Income (in 1999)	$34,556
Household Income in 1999 below Poverty Level	10.2%
Student Demographics	**2005–2006**
Number of Students (K-12)	56,236
Chinese	32%
Latino	22%
African-American	14%
Other Nonwhite	11%
White	9%
Filipino	6%
Decline to State	4%
American Indian	1%
Japanese	1%
Korean	1%
Free and Reduced Lunch	55.1%
Dropout Rate (2004–2005)	1.7%
Special Education	10.9%
Gifted & Talented	13.9%
English Language Learner	29.2%
Schools (6th-Largest District in CA)	**2005–2006**
Number of Schools	107
Elementary (K-5)	66
K-8	6
Middle (4-6, 5-7, 6-8, 7-9)	18
High	17
Staff Summary	**2005–2006**
Number of Certificated Staff	3,819
Administrators (District and School Site)	228
Average Salary of Staff	$57,022
Average Years of Service	11.1
Age Distribution of Staff	
35 Years and Below	30.9%
36 to 44 Years	20.2%
45 to 55 Years	27.4%
56 Years and Above	21.4%
Teacher Ethnicity (2002–2003)	
White	53.9%
Asian	20.1%
Hispanic	9.2%
Multiple/No Response	7%
African-American	6.2%
Filipino	3.1%
American Indian	0.5%

Source: District information drawn from Census 2000 data, downloaded on August 19, 2003 from http://www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds/singledemoprofile.asp?county1=0634410&state1=6. Student and school information drawn from 2005–2006 SFUSD Accountability Report Card. Staff summary compiled from 2005–2006 SFUSD Summary, http://orb.sfusd/edu/profile/prfl-100.htm except for teacher ethnicity information, downloaded June 5, 2006 from http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/Navigation/fsTwoPanel.asp?bottom=%2Fprofile%2Easp%3Flevel%3D06%26reportNumber%3D16.

Exhibit 2a STAR School Performance, Elementary Schools, 2001–2005

School	Grade Level	School Demographics	Star Status (B)	2001 (C)			2005 (C)			Change 2001–2005 (C)		
		AA & L / Low-income (A)		API Score	API Rank	SSI Rank	API Score	API Rank	SSI Rank	API Score	API Rank	SSI Rank
Bret Harte	K -5	75% / 67%	Continuing	546	2	3	648	2	3	102	0	0
Bryant	K -5	89% / 75%	Continuing	594	3	4	671	2	3	77	-1	-1
Carver	K -5	72% / 68%	Graduating	605	3	5	678	3	4	73	0	-1
Chavez	K -5	85% / 75%	Continuing	606	3	5	723	4	9	117	1	4
Cleveland	K -5	63% / 69%	Continuing	648	4	7	703	4	4	55	0	-3
Cobb	K -5	78% / 71%	Intensive	655	5	4	655	2	5	0	-3	1
Drew	K -3	82% / 65%	DREAM	532	2	1	614	1	1	82	-1	0
El Dorado	K -5	46% / 69%	Continuing	593	3	2	694	3	1	101	0	-1
Fairmount	K -5	70% / 61%	DREAM	532	2	1	626	1	1	94	-1	0
Flynn	K -5	80% / 79%	Continuing	515	1	1	636	1	2	121	0	1
Glen Park	K -5	60% / 71%	Graduating	596	3	3	755	6	7	159	3	4
Hillcrest	K -5	48% / 69%	Intensive	577	3	1	634	1	1	57	-2	0
Malcolm X	K -5	71% / 67%	Intensive	570	2	4	620	1	2	50	-1	-2
Marshall	K -5	86% / 85%	Intensive	539	2	2	633	1	1	94	-1	-1
McKinley	K -5	61% / 69%	Graduating	615	3	3	771	6	10	156	3	7
Milk	K -5	65% / 56%	Graduating	554	2	1	766	6	8	212	4	7
Monroe	K -5	46% / 71%	Intensive	612	3	2	714	4	2	102	1	0
Muir	K -5	87% / 72%	Continuing	520	1	3	636	1	1	116	0	-2
Parks	K -5	67% / 80%	Intensive	677	5	9	640	2	1	-37	-3	-8
Revere	K -6	74% / 68%	DREAM	509	1	1	639	2	1	130	1	0
Sanchez	K -5	86% / 70%	DREAM	516	1	2	648	2	3	132	1	1
Serra	K -5	69% / 85%	Graduating	583	3	3	702	4	4	119	1	1
Sheridan	K -5	52% / 76%	Graduating	640	4	4	785	7	10	145	3	6
Starr King	K -5	66% / 72%	Continuing	545	2	4	721	4	9	176	2	5
Swett	K -5	64% / 82%	Continuing	597	3	2	616	1	1	19	-2	-1
Treasure Island	K -5	64% / 70%	*CLOSING*	618	4	2	654	2	3	36	-2	1
Webster	K -5	66% / 87%	Continuing	604	3	5	704	4	4	100	1	-1
Willie Brown	K -6	76% / 74%	DREAM	599	3	2	526	1	1	-73	-2	-1

Source: District files, California Department of Education, and casewriter analysis.

Notes:

1. Percentages are combined representation of African-American and Latino students and combined free- and reduced-lunch students relative to total school enrollment.

2. Star status indicates differentiation among participating schools. Graduating schools are transitioning out of the program; continuing schools remain in STAR; intensive schools receive additional services due to slower improvement; DREAM schools were reconstituted in 2004 or 2005; closing schools will be shut down by the end of SY06.

3. California uses an Academic Performance Index (API) to measure school performance. The API score (200–1000) is calculated based on school performance on a variety of standardized tests, including the norm-referenced CAT-6 and the criterion-referenced California Standards Test. Each school's API score is then ranked against those of all other California schools and assigned to a decile (1–10), which translates into the API rank. In order to account for variations in school demographics, each school is also ranked against the 100 most similar schools in the state, which results in an additional decile score, the Similar Schools Index (SSI).

Exhibit 2b Star School Performance, Middle and High Schools, 2001–2005

School	Grade Level	School Demographics	Star Status (B)	2001			2005			Change 2001–2005		
		AA & L / Low-income (A)		API Score	API Rank	SSI Rank	API Score	API Rank	SSI Rank	API Score	API Rank	SSI Rank
Burbank	6-8	59% / 66%	*CLOSING*	547	2	1	585	1	1	38	-1	0
Davis	7-9	75% / 52%	DREAM	430	1	1	519	1	1	89	0	0
Denman	6-8	44% / 66%	Graduating	609	4	1	690	5	4	81	1	3
Everett	6-8	85% / 70%	DREAM	497	1	1	563	1	1	66	0	0
King Jr.	6-8	44% / 64%	Graduating	655	5	7	695	5	6	40	0	-1
Lick	6-8	77% / 56%	Intensive	553	2	3	611	2	1	58	0	-2
Mann	6-8	87% / 63%	Intensive	579	3	2	586	1	1	7	-2	-1
Maxwell	6-8	70% / 70%	*CLOSING*	460	1	1	571	1	3	111	0	2
Vis Valley	6-8	38% / 78%	Graduating	579	3	4	667	4	6	88	1	2
Balboa	9-12	34% / 61%	Graduating	440	1	1	628	3	1	188	2	0
Burton	9-12	40% / 50%	Graduating	570	3	3	701	6	9	131	3	6
Galileo	9-12	22% / 54%	Graduating	547	3	3	744	8	9	197	5	6
ISA	9-12	62% / 54%	Intensive	543	3	6	603	2	5	60	-1	-1
Marshall	9-12	35%/ 55%	Intensive	606	4	4	634	3	3	28	-1	-1
Mission	9-12	61% / 57%	Continuing	421	1	2	575	1	4	154	0	2
O'Connell	9-12	84% / 44%	DREAM	516	2	3	631	3	7	115	1	4

Source: District files, California Department of Education, and casewriter analysis.

Notes:

1. Percentages are combined representation of African-American and Latino students and combined free- and reduced-lunch students relative to total school enrollment.

2. Star status indicates differentiation among participating schools. Graduating schools are transitioning out of the program; continuing schools remain in STAR; intensive schools receive additional services due to slower improvement; DREAM schools were reconstituted in 2004 or 2005; closing schools will be shut down by the end of SY06.

3. California uses an Academic Performance Index (API) to measure school performance. The API score (200–1000) is calculated based on school performance on a variety of standardized tests, including the norm-referenced CAT-6 and the criterion-referenced California Standards Test. Each school's API score is then ranked against those of all other California schools and assigned to a decile (1–10), which translates into the API rank. In order to account for variations in school demographics, each school is also ranked against the 100 most similar schools in the state, which results in an additional decile score, the Similar Schools Index (SSI).

Exhibit 3 Excerpted Goals from "Excellence for All" Five-Year Plan

OVERVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY GOALS

1. Increase the academic achievement of students of all races and ethnicities, and of English Language Learner and non-English Language Learner status, District-wide and for each school, and narrow the existing academic achievement gap between students of different races, ethnicities, and English Language Learner status, with this goal to be realized through the establishment of specific growth targets for improved academic achievement at each school, as measured by standardized tests and performance assessments.
2. Increase the enrollment and success of students of all races and ethnicities, and of English Language Learner and non-English Language Learner status, in honors courses, District-wide and for each school, at the middle and high school levels.
3. Increase the number and percentage of students of all races and ethnicities, and of English Language Learner and non-English Language Learner status, taking and completing Advanced Placement (AP) courses, District-wide and at each high school.
4. Increase the number and percentage of students of all races and ethnicities, and of English Language Learner and non-English Language Learner status, taking and earning a 3 or better on AP exams, District-wide and at each high school.
5. Decrease the overrepresentation of students from specific racial/ethnic groups and English Language Learner status in special education programs to the extent practicable by eliminating inappropriate referrals to and placements in such programs, District-wide and at each school.
6. Increase the exit rates for students of all races and ethnicities, and of English Language Learner and non-English Language Learner status, from special education programs, District-wide and at each school.
7. Increase the attendance rates for students of all races and ethnicities, and English Language Learner and non-English Language Learner status, District-wide and at each school, so that the attendance rate for students of each race, ethnicity, and English Language Learner status at every school is at least 98 percent.
8. Decrease the suspension rates for non-expulsionable offenses for students of all races and ethnicities, and of English Language Learner and non-English Language Learner status, District-wide and for each school.
9. Enhance early childhood education so that all children entering kindergarten in SFUSD, regardless of race or ethnicity or of English Language Learner or non-English Language Learner status, will possess the tools and skills necessary to be successful in school.
10. Increase the number and percentage of qualified, diverse teachers, District-wide and at each school, particularly at targeted schools. Targeted schools are those with a high number or percentage of low-performing students. A qualified, diverse teacher is defined as one who is credentialed and has:
    - classroom experience (3-5 years);
    - content-area expertise;
    - pedagogical expertise; and
    - cultural competencies.

Source: "Pursuing Educational Equity: Aligning Resources at San Francisco Unified School District," PEL-005.

Exhibit 4a Excerpts from SFUSD Principal Evaluation Documents

Principal Evaluation Criteria

Student Academic Achievement

A. Raising Test Scores

1. School met its statewide Academic Performance Index growth target **(Mandatory)**.
2. School increased the percent of students tested—at least 95% (M).
3. % targeted below average/basic proficiency moved to average/basic proficiency (M).
4. % targeted average/basic proficiency moved to above average (M).

B. Closing Achievement Gap for African-American, Latino, and English Learner Students

1. Attendance rate for AA, L, and ELL increased (M).
2. Suspension rate for AA, L, and ELL decreased (M).
3. Students at 8th grade with four or more Fs will decrease **(Essential)**.
4. AA, L, and ELL perform at national average or make significant gains on SAT 9 (M).
5. School met its statewide API targets for ALL subgroups (M).
6. Student performance on performance-based assessments will show improvement toward district targets (E).

School Leadership

A. Develop and implement site plan with benchmark performances and professional growth (M).
B. Align and monitor budgetary, human, and material resources to correlate with student learning goals as defined in school-site plan in accordance with the weighted student formula and other district policies (E).
C. Model, coach, and support individual teachers through ongoing classroom observations linked to instructional priorities in the site plan (E).
D. Implement and monitor SST/SAP process (M).
E. Complete and comply with evaluation cycle timelines for required staff (M).
F. Monitor implementation of California state standards-based instructional program designed to address defined student needs (M).
G. Monitor and support appropriate interventions so that demissions in special education and bilingual redesignations are increased (M).
H. Provide opportunities for extracurricular and/or after-school participation for students including student leadership or extended opportunities for learning (E).
I. Meet reporting deadlines as established in accordance with district policies (M).
J. Take appropriate actions to ensure a functioning school-site council (M).
K. Maintain evidence of regular home/school communications (with translations) (M).
L. Demonstrate increased attendance at family-teacher conferences, reflective of student population (M).
M. Show improved results in school performance satisfaction surveys by teachers, family/guardian, and students (E).
N. Maintain a clean safe school learning environment (E).
O. Develop and oversee school safety preparedness (M).

Levels of Performance: It is expected that all principals will work toward meeting all performance criteria, both mandatory and essential.

Exceeds Standards: Principal meets all mandatory performance standards and 5 of 7 essential performance standards.
Meets Standards: Principal meets 15 of 18 mandatory standards and 5 of 7 essential standards.
Does Not Meet Minimal Standards: Principal **does not meet** 15 of 18 mandatory standards and 5 of 7 essential standards.

Source: Adapted from internal SFUSD document, "Pursuing Educational Equity: Aligning Resources at San Francisco Unified School District," cited in PEL-005.

Exhibit 4b Excerpts from SFUSD Principal Evaluation Documents

Principal Performance Evaluation Plan Template (filled out by each principal)

To: Assistant Superintendent

From: Principal Name, School Site

Date: October 1, 2003

RE: Management/Leadership plan for school year 2003–2004

As required under the provisions of Article 11 of the UASF contract with the SFUSD, I am submitting a draft management performance evaluation letter to you for your review and feedback.

FOCUSED NEED #1 (Academic Achievement) Raising Test Scores

A. Major Activities—please indicate how will you attain Focused Need #1

B. Benchmarks/Timeline—how you want to be measured in your progress towards Focused Need #1 and when those measurements should be taken (no limitation on number of benchmarks and timelines)

   a. Benchmark A, Timeline A

   b. Benchmark B, Timeline B

C. Central Office Support Required (what, from whom and by when):

FOCUSED NEED #2 (Academic Achievement) Closing the Gap

A. Major Activities—please indicate how will you attain Focused Need #2

B. Benchmarks/Timeline

C. Central Office Support Required (what, from whom and by when):

FOCUSED NEED #3 (School Leadership) Ensure a functioning school-site council

A. Major Activities—please indicate how will you attain Focused Need #3

B. Benchmarks/Timelines

C. Central Office Support Required (what, from whom and by when):

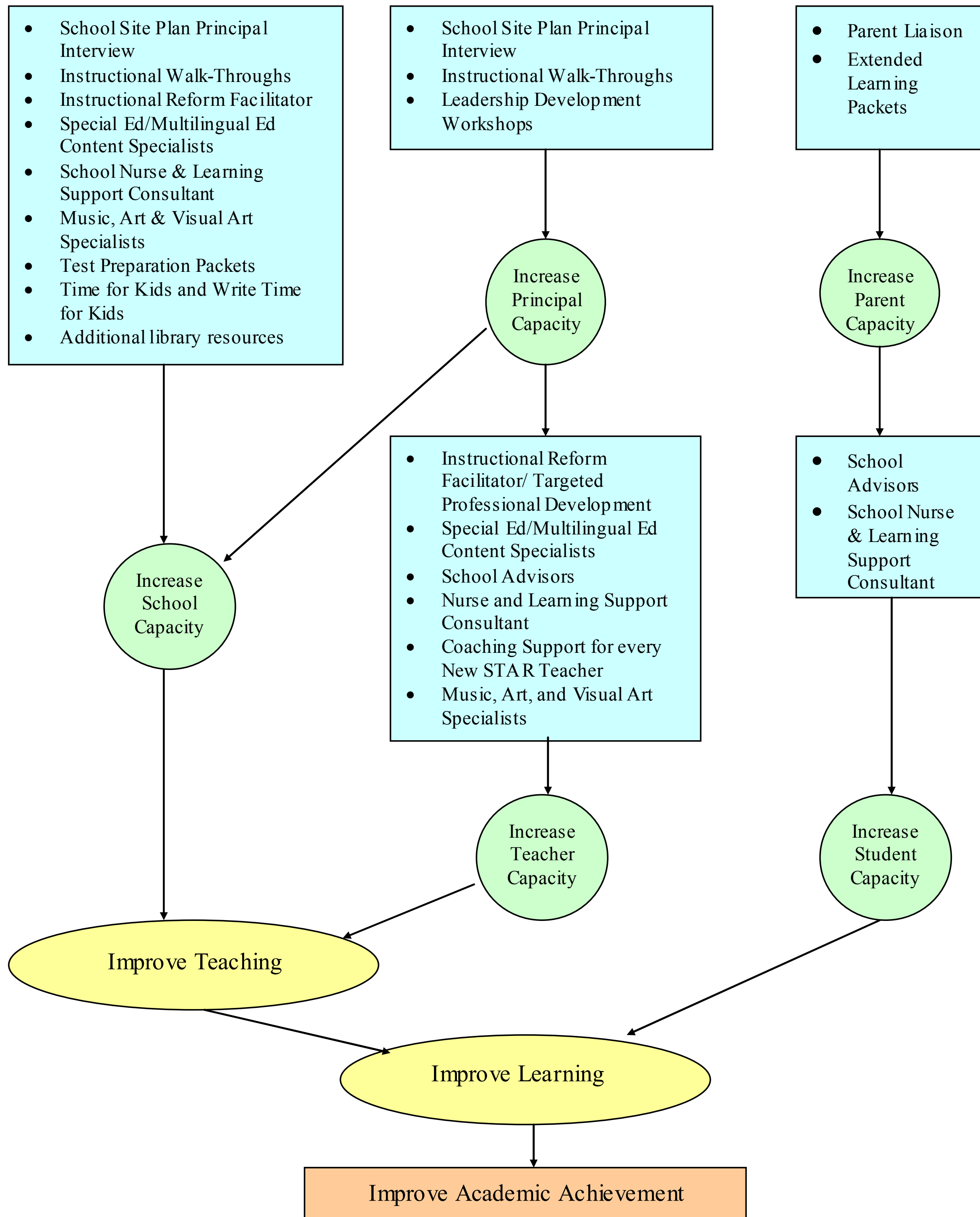
I look forward to receiving your response to this draft letter.

Very truly yours,

Principal

Source: Adapted from internal SFUSD document, cited in "Pursuing Educational Equity: Aligning Resources at San Francisco Unified School District," PEL-005.

Exhibit 5 STAR Concept Model



Source: District files.

Exhibit 6 Overview of Additional School-Site Personnel to Support Instructional Improvement

Issue	Intervention	School-Site Responsibility	District Office Responsibility	Successful School Outcome
Due to the large number of emergency-credential teachers and a mass of uncoordinated programs, underperforming schools need to focus on alignment and instructional improvement at the classroom level.	Instructional Reform Facilitators	Use Instructional Reform Facilitators to insure that all programs are coordinated with the academic plan and that teachers receive ongoing feedback and development on their instructional practice.	Develop a yearlong training schedule for Instructional Reform Facilitators so that they can lead these trainings at the school site.	Students at STAR schools will experience programs that are coordinated to improve their learning opportunities. AND Students at STAR schools will attend classes in which instruction is continually improving.
Absenteeism and lack of substitutes at underperforming schools leads to missed learning opportunities for students.	Long-term substitute teachers	Use long-term substitutes to insure that students will not miss educational time when a teacher is out.	Train long-term substitutes during the course of the school year.	Students at STAR schools will have a prepared teacher in front of them every day of the school year.
Parent involvement is an untapped resource in most underperforming schools.	Half-time parent liaison	Use parent liaison to insure that the school welcomes parents to observe classes, participate in activities, and/or take on leadership roles.	Provide training opportunities for parents in the planned professional development institutes. Through the Director of Parent Affairs, support outreach efforts at the school sites. Provide research on best practices around parent involvement.	STAR schools will be places where parent partnerships are welcomed, valued, and integrated into the school community.
Students performing below grade level benefit from one-on-one reading and math tutoring.	Volunteer tutors for every child performing below grade level	Assign volunteer tutors to students who need focused instructional support. Insure that teachers provide tutors with specific information and activities targeted to students' academic needs.	Recruit and train a corps of volunteers for STAR school students.	Students at STAR schools will receive targeted and tailored instruction from an adult tutor.
Middle school students need counselors who can focus exclusively on issues of truancy and student behavior. Currently assigned elementary school advisors do not tend to truancy and student behavior issues.	Middle School Advisors Realignment of Elementary Advisors' job descriptions	Use a Middle School Advisor to insure that students are reporting to school on time and that absences are justified and properly documented. Use Elementary School Advisor to insure that students are reporting to school on time and that absences are justified and properly documented.	Provide training and support for counseling services.	Students at STAR schools will be in school on time every day. There will be a coherent system for tracking student absences and implementing consequences when necessary.

Source: District files.

Exhibit 7 Overview of Additional District Support for Instructional Improvement

Issue	Intervention	School-Site Responsibility	District Office Responsibility	Successful School Outcome
Underperforming schools usually do not have a coherent academic plan which serves to coordinate and focus resources toward goals.	Academic Plan Reviews and Revisions	Insure that the school has a working academic plan and prepare to present it to a team of central office staff. Revise and resubmit the academic plan as suggested by central office staff. Insure that the academic plan is a living document by sharing it with teachers, parents and community members.	Convene a cross-functional team of central office resource people to give comprehensive feedback at the time of the interview. Support the revision of academic plans where needed by providing additional expertise and research information. Hold quarterly progress check meetings with principals and School Site Councils (SSCs) and support instructional improvement on an ongoing basis.	STAR schools will have a strong academic plan that is understood by the principal, SSC, teachers, parents and central office staff.
Academic services for special education and bilingual students at underperforming schools are usually far below the need.	Additional district-level special education and bilingual education content specialists assigned to each STAR school	Insure that academic programming for special education and bilingual education students includes high standards for these students and meets compliance standards.	Hire additional special education content specialists and assign them to specific STAR schools. Hire additional bilingual and migrant program specialists and assign them to specific STAR schools. Provide expertise in the areas of best practice research and curriculum to support school sites' efforts to serve special education and bilingual students.	Special education and bilingual students at STAR schools will meet high academic standards.
Underperforming schools must have principals who are focused on instructional leadership in order to bring about whole school change and high student achievement.	Leadership Development for Principals	Attend monthly leadership development workshops.	Design monthly leadership development workshops to build capacity for instructional leadership.	All STAR schools will be led by a principal who has mastered the skills of instructional improvement at the school level.
Teachers and staff at underperforming schools often have varied understandings of the school's curriculum and assessment measures.	Targeted professional development	Insure that teachers and staff have a common understanding of the school's standards, assessment, and curriculum.	Provide professional development opportunities targeted to meet the needs of STAR schools' teachers and staff.	STAR schools teachers and staff will be trained to build their capacity for improvement at the classroom level.

Issue	Intervention	School-Site Responsibility	District Office Responsibility	Successful School Outcome
Students at underperforming schools often have few opportunities for structured after-school learning.	Review of after-school programming and planning for additional opportunities	Inventory after-school programming opportunities offered for students and the quality of those programs for improving student achievement. Collaborate with district personnel to design an enhanced after-school programming plan.	Survey after-school programming opportunities via other city departments. Collaborate with school site to design an enhanced after-school programming plan.	STAR students will have access to strong after-school programming options.
Students at underperforming schools do not often have access to summer school programming.	Review of summer school programming and planning for additional opportunities	Inventory summer school programming opportunities offered for students and the quality of those programs for improving student achievement. Collaborate with district personnel to design an enhanced summer school programming plan.	Survey summer school programming opportunities via other city departments. Collaborate with school site to design an enhanced summer school programming plan.	STAR students will have access to strong summer school programming options.
Students who attend underperforming schools often enter kindergarten with inadequate skill development.	Preschool programming	Collaborate with district to develop a plan for on-site preschool services over the next three years.	Collaborate with school site to develop a plan for on-site preschool services over the next three years.	STAR school kindergarten students will enter with school-readiness skills.

Source: District files.

Exhibit 8 Costs of STAR Intervention at Selected Schools, SY 2006

		STAR School			
		Glen Park	**McKinley**	**Sheridan**	**Galileo**
		K-5	**K-5**	**K-5**	**9-12**
Total School-Level Budget		**$1,433,405**	**$1,273,140**	**$1,057,743**	**$8,578,239**
STAR Resource	**Avg Cost**				
Instructional Reform Facilitator	$74,217	$74,217	$74,217	$74,217	$74,217
Site Support Sub	$40,017	$40,017	$40,017	$40,017	$80,034
Parent Liaision (0.5 FTE)	$52,260	$26,130	$26,130	$26,130	$26,130
Elementary / Middle School Advisor	$55,118	$13,780	$13,780	$13,780	$0
Art/Music / Planning Time for 4th and 5th Grade	$74,217	$37,109	$37,109	$37,109	$0
Learning Support Consultant	$72,249	$43,349	$28,900	$36,125	$0
School Nurse	$86,166	$34,466	$17,233	$34,466	$0
Test Prep. Packets		$588	$552	$432	$10,010
Monthly Library Books		$935	$935	$935	$662
Home/School Learning Packets		$2,058	$1,932	$1,512	$10,800
Time for Kids ($5/student)	$5	$1,470	$1,380	$1,080	$0
Total STAR Resources carried at Central Office		**$274,119**	**$242,184**	**$265,802**	**$201,853**
Supporting Assumptions:					
Projected Enrollment		294	276	216	2,100
Site Support Sub FTE		1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
Elementary / Middle school advisor FTE		0.25	0.25	0.25	0.00
Art / Music FTE		0.50	0.50	0.50	0.00
Learning Support FTE		0.60	0.40	0.50	0.00
Nurse FTE		0.40	0.20	0.40	0.00

Source: District analysis.

Exhibit 9 Change in SFUSD Performance on the California Standards Test, 2001–2005

	California Standards Test (CST) Change from 2001 to 2005 in Percent of Students at or above Basic							
	CST Language Arts 2001–2005				CST Mathematics 2002–2005[a]			
		STAR Only				STAR Only		
Grade Level	District—All Students	AA	L	ELL	District—All Students	AA	L	ELL
2	8%	7%	**17%**	**10%**	13%	**20%**	**17%**	**17%**
3	5%	**7%**	**14%**	**6%**	14%	**17%**	**27%**	**25%**
4	9%	**12%**	**19%**	**18%**	15%	**19%**	**23%**	**23%**
5	9%	**21%**	**17%**	**14%**	11%	**6%**	**17%**	**23%**
6	10%	9%	**14%**	5%	6%	0%	4%	5%
7	14%	**21%**	**19%**	**16%**	10%	4%	9%	**12%**
8	12%	9%	**15%**	**18%**	--	--	--	--
9	-1%	**15%**	**19%**	**15%**	--	--	--	--
10	1%	**3%**	**16%**	**8%**	--	--	--	--
11	7%	5%	**20%**	**17%**	--	--	--	--
Total	8%	**12%**	**17%**	**13%**	12%	12%	**16%**	**17%**

Source: District files and casewriter analysis.

[a]CST mathematics exams for grades 2–7 were administered for the first time in 2002. Students in Grades 8–11 are administered end-of-course mathematics tests based on their class enrollment.

Bold text indicates improvement rate higher than the comparable district rate.

AA: African-American; L: Latino; ELL: English language learner.