

Stanford University's Partnership Schools Initiative: Developing Schools for State-of-the-Art Practice

Background

Stanford's Teacher Education Program (STEP) prepares teachers in collaboration with nine local reform-oriented high schools serving diverse student populations in the Bay Area, located in districts ranging from San Francisco to San Jose. Stanford's new elementary teacher education program is also beginning to develop such partnerships with a set of local school districts as well. Like teaching hospitals in the medical profession, these professional development schools (PDS) develop and demonstrate leading edge practices while training novices and supporting the development of veteran teachers and administrators.

The PDS initiative was part of a major redesign of the STEP program in 1998. In response both to the constant challenges of teacher education and to recent, pressing demands to assist in nearby communities, the STEP redesign focused on four goals:

- To develop a coherent program organized around professional standards and a common vision of good teaching;
- To strengthen knowledge about how to teach challenging content to diverse learners;
- To support stronger links between theory and practice through tight connections between students' coursework and clinical work; and
- To contribute to the re-shaping of local teaching and schooling by creating powerful opportunities for student and teacher learning.

The Partners

Stanford's Teacher Education Program currently prepares about 70 secondary and 20 elementary candidates in a master's degree program that includes a strong emphasis on content pedagogy and teaching diverse learners, and a year-long, tightly connected clinical experience. Since 1998, STEP has been recognized nationally and internationally as a leader in the field. Among recent recognitions:

- Stanford's Education School was rated #1 in the nation by U.S. News and World Report in 2009, with its secondary teacher education program ranked one of the nation's best.
- Stanford was selected as one of 11 universities nationally to be selected by the Carnegie Corporation of New York to join the Teachers for a New Era initiative, aimed at enabling leading edge teacher education programs to set even higher standards for excellence in teacher education.
- STEP was highlighted as one of 4 outstanding teacher education programs in Arthur Levine's *Educating School Teachers* report in 2006. The report cited, in particular, STEP's coherent, integrated, comprehensive, and up-to-date curriculum that includes a sustained level of field experience; a strong connection between theory and real classroom situations; high graduation

standards; commitment to the program and students from faculty and administrators; and, recognition from schools that hire its graduates and experts who assess them.

- In 2007, STEP was highlighted as one of the top ten teacher preparation programs in the country by the George Lucas Education Foundation.
- Stanford's School of Education is one of 4 leading U.S. graduate education programs selected to participate in the new Leonore Annenberg National Teaching Fellowship – a “Rhodes Scholarship program for teaching” launched by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation to support high-ability student teachers who will teach in high-need schools.

The nine partnership high schools include both new, small schools, some of them started with Stanford's assistance, many of them by alumni of the teacher education program, and longstanding, larger high schools involved with STEP and the School Redesign Network at Stanford in creating small learning communities and redesigning their programs. All serve large numbers of low-income students, new immigrants, and students of color and are focused on equity-oriented practice aimed at developing higher order thinking and performance skills. All are sites for developing best practice, training student teachers, and conducting research. The schools include:

Downtown College Prep (DCP), San Jose – DCP is a new, small (400 students) public high school, started by a graduate of the STEP program, which serves students who will be the first in their families to attend college. Two-thirds of its students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch; 95% are Latino, and 33% are English language learners. Although 82% of 9th graders read below the 7th grade level when they enter, 100% of them are accepted to four-year universities when they graduate. Among the graduates 81% are currently on track to earning a four year degree. The faculty, many of whom are also STEP alumni, has developed a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum with strong supports – including academic literacy courses and supports for English language learners – embedded in an approach that supports student resilience and independence.

East Palo Alto Academy (EPAA), East Palo Alto – East Palo Alto Academy was launched by Stanford faculty in 2001 in a low-income, all minority community near the university that had lacked a public high school for 25 years. Stanford faculty members from the Education school, Medical school, Law school, and College work with the school to provide students with a strong education, health care, and other supports. Launched by a STEP graduate and staffed substantially by STEP alumni, the school has dramatically transformed students' opportunities with a college preparatory, project-based curriculum organized around performance based assessments, and a personalized design. More than 90% of students go onto college, as described further below.

Eastside Prep, East Palo Alto - A tuition-free private school supported entirely by donors, Eastside Prep, also launched by a STEP graduate and staffed by STEP alumni, serves 200 low-income, minority students in grades 6 through 12, The school aims to prepare every graduate for a four-year college or university, a goal thus far met with 100 percent success. Graduates have attended Stanford University, Pomona College,

University of Pennsylvania, Tufts University, Princeton University, U.C. Berkeley, Columbia University, Amherst College, Yale University and Harvard University.

Fremont High School, Sunnyvale - Located in the heart of Silicon Valley's high tech industries in Fremont High School District, Fremont High serves a diverse population of 1900 students, of whom 35% are Latino, 29% Caucasian, 16% Asian, 14% Filipino, and 4% African-American. Roughly 28% of the students are English Learners. Improvements in achievement have occurred as the school has been involved in exploring a variety of school redesign activities, including personalized learning communities, science reforms, and and mathematics literacy across the curriculum.

Gateway High School, San Francisco – Led by a STEP graduate, Gateway High School is a small urban charter school committed to academic excellence through personalized, student-centered learning. Founded in part to serve the needs of students with learning disabilities, Gateway combines a rigorous academic program with an approach where the individual talents and strengths of its students are identified and supported. Among its 440 students, about 75% are students of color (25% Latino, 22% African American, 22% Asian, 4% Filipino, and 2% other).

June Jordan School for Equity, San Francisco – June Jordan School for Equity was launched when a group of teachers, parents, and community members engaged in a community organizing campaign to convince the school district to open a small school for low-income students of color who often drop out of school. Founded in 2003 by STEP graduates who were supported by the Stanford School Redesign Network, June Jordan serves a predominantly low-income student body of whom 92% are students of color (35% Black, 32% Latino, 11% Chinese, 15% Other Asian, and 6% White). Three-fourths are 1st generation college bound. The school combines an innovative college preparatory curriculum organized around social justice issues and civic engagement with highly personalized instruction, achieving extraordinary outcomes. Of its first graduating class in 2007, 95% were admitted to college, and 73% to four-year colleges including Yale, Dartmouth, and Smith as well as a wide range of California public campuses.

Hillsdale High School, San Mateo – Working with the Stanford School Redesign Network and the STEP program, Hillsdale started its redesign process in 2003, with equity as a major cornerstone. Under the guidance of a visionary principal (a STEP graduate), the student-centered, teacher-led redesign resulted in a change from a comprehensive high school of 1,200 into three small learning communities of 400 students each. A site for many student teachers, Hillsdale hired large numbers of STEP graduates during these years to help fuel the reforms, and has seen successive gains in achievement since its redesign, increasing its similar schools ranking on the state Academic Performance Index (API) from the 2nd decile to the 7th decile from 2003 to 2007 and its API scores by more than 100 points, with a gain of more than 200 points (on an 800 point scale) for economically disadvantaged students. Ninety-eight percent of the students at Hillsdale are admitted to higher education, and half attend four-year colleges. Hillsdale was named a California Distinguished School in 2007 and one of the nation's top 100 high schools by *Newsweek* magazine in 2009.

Sequoia High School, Redwood City - Sequoia High School is a comprehensive high school serving more than 1500 students of whom most are low-income and 75% are students of color (61% Latino). The school has experienced steadily improving achievement after launching a redesign initiative under the leadership of its dynamic principal, another STEP graduate. The school introduced personalized learning communities in 9th grade, team planning, and an International Baccalaureate program in 11th and 12th grades. Over three years, its API rank increased from the 5th to the 7th decile as compared to similar schools.

Summit Prep High School, Redwood City – Summit is a new small public school launched in 2003 by a graduate of Stanford’s Principal Preparation program and staffed largely by STEP graduates. The mission of this small public high school of 375 students is to prepare a diverse student population for success in four-year colleges and to be thoughtful, contributing members of society. About half of the school’s population is students of color; about 1/3 are Latino. The school uses an untracked interdisciplinary project-based curriculum to prepare students for college, and 100% of graduates exceed the University of California entrance requirements. Teachers loop with their students for two years whenever possible. On the state academic performance index Summit has achieved nearly the highest score possible, ranking in the 10th decile overall and among similar schools.

These partnerships that make it possible to develop a coherent program of teacher education in which coursework and clinical work are connected and jointly co-constructed by the school and university faculty. They also make it possible for Stanford faculty to work closely with school faculties on curriculum reform, school redesign, professional development, and joint research.

The schools also work together as a Council of Partnership Schools to share practices and engage in mutual research and improvement. The Council meets monthly to discuss school needs, student teacher progress, and mutual goals. These discussions have resulted in professional development initiatives on the improvement of mathematics instruction, exchange visits to look at classrooms engaged in reforms of mutual interest, targeted assistance from STEP faculty for curriculum and teaching improvements, joint work on performance assessment, and a research group developing and testing curriculum for differentiating instruction.

Stanford believes the development of partner schools is critical to powerful teacher education because candidates must see and experience high-quality, equitable practices, as well as reading about them, if they are to learn to enact them. In addition, a coherent learning experience demands that clinical experiences and formal courses be interwoven and mutually reinforcing. To facilitate this:

- STEP teacher candidates are in their school placements with expert cooperating teachers for the entire school year.
- Subject matter methods courses reflect practices like those used in the partner

schools are taught simultaneously with student teaching.

- Stanford organizes curriculum supports for the schools, including shared work in areas like science instruction – drawing on a biological preserve associated with the university, math instruction, writing instruction – augmented by writing centers the university has launched in several schools, and work on differentiated instruction.
- Teachers in the partner schools receive access to free courses taught by Stanford faculty in their content areas; they plan and engage in shared professional development around critical areas of practice; and they are trained as mentors to support beginning teachers.

All of the schools have experienced steadily rising achievement. Below we highlight one of the schools that represent distinctive approaches and substantial improvements in outcomes for students as a direct result of the Stanford partnership.

East Palo Alto Academy (EPAA)

East Palo Alto Academy High School was launched as a charter high school by Stanford faculty in 2001, in collaboration with the Ravenswood School District and Aspire Public Schools. Later Stanford created a non-profit organization – Stanford New Schools – which took on responsibility for the charter and added a K-8 elementary school as well. Both schools train student teachers and serve as PDS sites.

EPAA was the first public high school located in the community since 1976. The previous high school – then nearly 100% African American – had been closed in 1976 as part of a desegregation plan. For three decades EPA high school students were bussed to other communities. Fewer than half typically graduated from high school, and only 6% of the community's members gained a college degree.

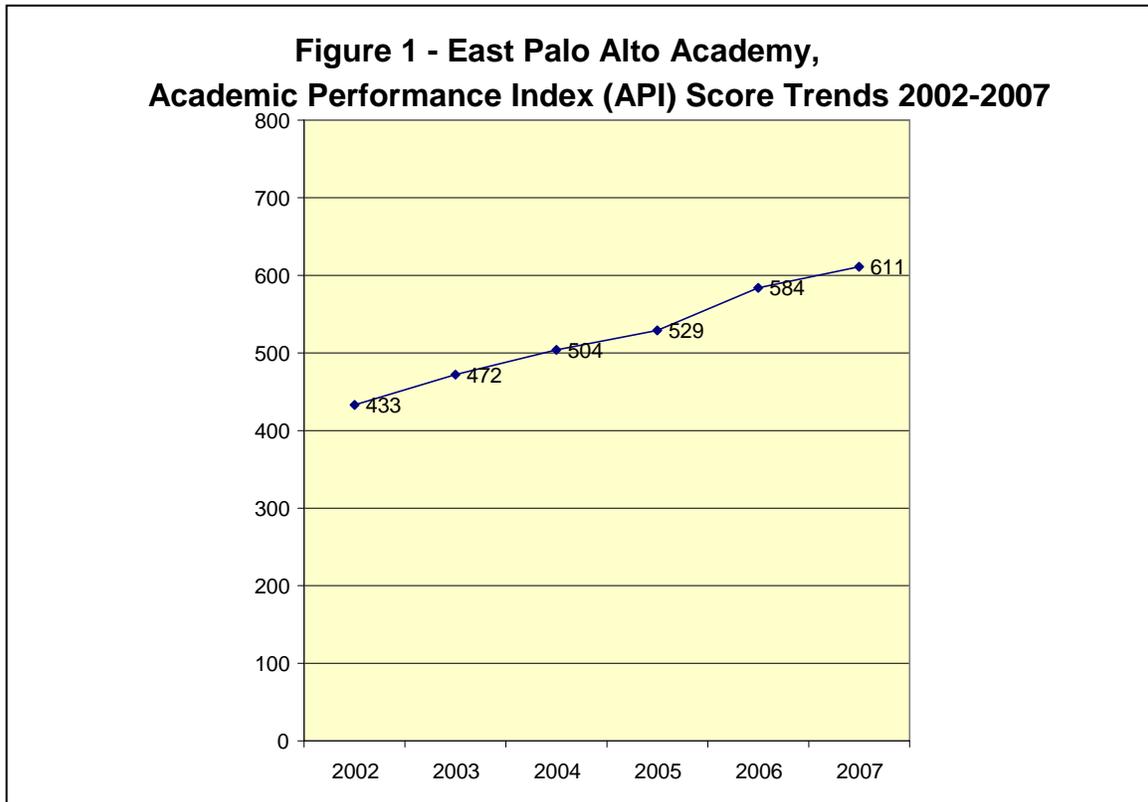
Now that a large number of new immigrant families have joined the historic black community, the population of East Palo Alto Academy, like that of the city itself, is roughly 70% Latino/a, 20% African American, and 10% Pacific Islander. More than 90% of students are low-income, most are English language learners, and two-thirds of parents have less than a high school education, one of the lowest parental education levels in the state.

In the new East Palo Alto High School, which serves about 300 students annually, California Department of Education statistics show that more than 90% have graduated each year,¹ and more than 90% of graduates are accepted to postsecondary education. Each year since its first graduating class, the proportion admitted to 4-year colleges has increased, from just over 30% in 2005 to 50% in 2008. Students have been admitted to all of the University of California campuses, including the most competitive, most of the

¹ The state-reported graduation rate is adjusted for transfers.

California State University campuses, and a range of private and out-of-state colleges, including Smith College, Santa Clara University, and the University of Colorado.

The school admits all interested students by lottery, without admissions requirements. Despite the fact that students arrive at the high school about 3 to 4 years below grade level in reading and mathematics, on average, the school has sharply increased achievement from the lowest level in the state in 2001 – scoring in the bottom 10% on the state academic performance index (API) – to the 70th percentile in relation to schools serving similar populations of students.



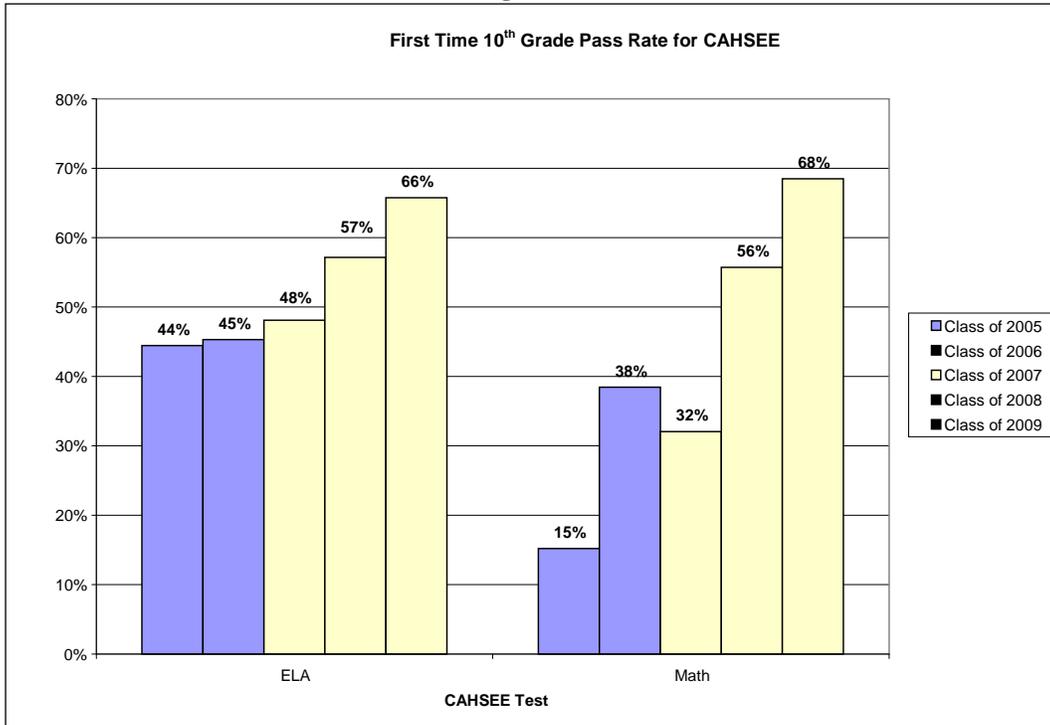
The school’s academic performance and its most recent gain of 27 points on the API were much greater than that of schools serving comparable students, designated by the state as “similar schools.” According to the California Department of Education (CDE), these schools had an API of 582 in 2005-06, which remained unchanged in 2006-07.

With curriculum reforms and mentoring supports provided by Stanford, achievement has increased across the board: for example, 10th grade pass rates on the state exit examinations increased by more than 50% in English language arts and by 400% in mathematics (see figure 2), and increases in proficiency rates on the state tests more than doubled in every subject area at every grade level.

These gains have been accomplished by providing a rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum in a personalized setting in which teachers plan and teach collaboratively,

working in grade level teams; every student has an advisor responsible for serving as an advocate and family liaison; teachers are highly trained and become National Board certified; and instruction is based on adaptive pedagogy and authentic assessment with tailored academic supports to meet student needs.

Figure 2



Whereas only 22% of Latino graduates and 24% of African American graduates in high schools across the state typically complete the “A-G” requirements for eligibility for the University of California and the California State University systems, 46% of EPA seniors did so in 2007 – a proportion even greater than the 39% of white high school graduates who meet these requirements in California. And EPAA’s Early College program, started in 2005-06 with support from Stanford and nearby Canada College, has enabled nearly half of the school’s students to take college courses while they are still in high school.

Perhaps the most telling success is that, in annual surveys, more than 95% of parents report that their children are getting an excellent education, are well-known by their teachers, and are well-prepared for college. As one noted, echoing the views of others, “Teachers here have done a wonderful job educating our students.”