

LESSONS FROM THE CLASSROOM

Initial Success for At-Risk Students



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A Report on the Quality Education Investment Act
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What is

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is part of a series of reports from a comprehensive, ongoing evaluation of the Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) funded by the California Teachers Association and conducted by Vital Research, LLC. This report includes a comparative analysis of Academic Performance Index data for QEIA schools and non-QEIA schools as well as findings from an action research project in 22 QEIA schools statewide that was intended to uncover lessons learned from the first three years of the reform.

Overall, QEIA schools had greater gains in API than did their non-QEIA counterparts. On average, for 2009/10, QEIA schools experienced a growth of 21.2 points on the API, 6.8 more points (47.2% higher) than the comparison group of non-QEIA schools. Since QEIA began in 2007/08, QEIA schools have experienced a growth of 62.7 points, compared to 49.3 points in non-QEIA schools. Additionally, API growth score data suggest, that on average, QEIA schools are making greater gains in API with African-American and Hispanic students, English Language Learners, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students than similar, non-QEIA schools.

The action research project revealed ten key lessons learned from QEIA schools regarding QEIA implementation:

LESSON 1	<i>School goals for QEIA were consistent with the purpose and intent of the legislation.</i>
LESSON 2	<i>School implementation plans were largely focused on class size reduction (CSR), professional development, collaboration time, and the adoption of curricular interventions.</i>
LESSON 3	<i>Although somewhat challenging to implement and maintain, class size reduction enabled teachers to focus on classroom instruction.</i>
LESSON 4	<i>Professional development decisions in higher API growth schools were made in collaborative teams with teacher input, leading to greater satisfaction among stakeholders.</i>
LESSON 5	<i>Higher API growth schools had more focused professional development in core content areas.</i>
LESSON 6	<i>Higher API growth schools used student data to guide professional development decisions.</i>

LESSON 7 *Higher API growth schools engaged in more teacher collaboration to develop lesson plans, create common assessments, and analyze student data.*

LESSON 8 *School site councils in QEIA schools are approving school budgets; influence on other decisions and stakeholder involvement varies considerably by school.*

LESSON 9 *The exemplary administrator requirement has not been fully realized in QEIA schools.*

LESSON 10 *QEIA has provided valuable resources during the state budget crisis, but schools are still facing financial challenges.*

These early lessons from the field are promising and suggest that QEIA has been a catalyst for increasing teacher collaboration, improving instruction, and strengthening the quality of professional development in several schools.

INTRODUCTION

Background on QEIA

Senate Bill 1133 established the Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) of 2006 for the purpose of implementing the Proposition 98 settlement agreement between the California Teachers Association (CTA) and Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell, and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. QEIA was designed to provide nearly \$3 billion over seven years (beginning in 2007/08) to 488 low-performing schools in the bottom two deciles.^{1, 2} Schools had the option to apply for funding in the Regular Program or the Alternative Program. The Regular Program was intended to reduce class sizes, improve teacher and principal training, ensure instruction by qualified teachers, provide more school counselors, increase parental involvement through school site councils and give schools the flexibility to support programs that best fit the needs of their students. The Alternative Program (25 high schools only) enabled schools to craft their own local responses to school reform and determine their own goals, implementation activities, and benchmarks for success. Each year of K-12 implementation (beginning in 2008/09), QEIA schools receive \$500 per K-3 pupil, \$900 per student in grades 4-8, and \$1,000 per student in grades 9-12. For the 2007/08 year, schools received two-thirds of this amount to assist them in planning and preparing for program implementation. Schools have a three year phase-in period to reach full program implementation. During the first year of program implementation (2008/09), each school had to make progress towards final implementation targets, reaching one-third of the distance between initial status and final goal. In 2009/10, schools should progress two-thirds toward the final goal, with full program implementation required by the end of 2010/11. In the following years, schools are expected to maintain the targets they have attained.

Overview of Methods

This report is part of a series of reports from a comprehensive, ongoing evaluation of QEIA funded by the California Teachers Association and conducted by Vital Research, LLC. This report includes an analysis of Academic Performance Index data for QEIA schools as well as findings from an action research project intended to uncover lessons learned from the first three years of the reform. The school profiles in this report were provided by staff from the California Teachers Association.

¹ Since QEIA began, two participating schools withdrew, and one school was closed. During 2008/09, 13 schools were added through a waiver application to the CDE, bringing the current number of QEIA schools to 498.

² QEIA also provides funding to community colleges for career technical education and high school transition programs.

Academic Performance Index Data (API)

API data in this report are available through the California Department of Education website.³ Data were extracted for 482 QEIA schools (301 elementary schools; 129 middle schools; 28 regular program high schools; and 24 alternative schools) and a comparison group of 731 non-QEIA schools (API Decile 1 and 2 schools that were eligible for QEIA funding in 2006/07, applied for QEIA funding, but did not receive funding – 551 elementary schools; 67 middle schools; 113 high schools). Any QEIA schools that withdrew, were closed, or were admitted to the program through a waiver were dropped from analysis. Average API growth scores and percents were computed for each year, beginning in 2004/05, to examine trends.

Action Research

This action research project was intended to uncover key lessons learned from 22 schools during their second year of implementation of the Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA). A purposeful sample of elementary, middle, and high schools across the state of California was visited from February 2010 to June 2010 as part of this project. Schools were selected to represent the range of QEIA schools across the state in terms of school type, geographic location, population type (e.g., rural/small town, large city, midsize city, etc.) and API performance in 2009. Twenty-one districts statewide were represented; API growth ranged from -49 to 98. Table 1 provides an overview of the schools selected for this project.

³ Data files used include API base and growth files (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ap/apidatafiles.asp>)

Table 1. Overview of Participating Schools

CRITERIA	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
School Type	
Elementary	11
Middle	6
High-Regular Program	3
High-Alternative Program	2
API Performance	
Higher Growth	9
(API growth in 2009 was at least 5 points greater than the average growth for all QEIA schools; Range = 27 to 98)	
Lower Growth	9
(API growth in 2009 was at least 5 points less than the average growth for all QEIA schools; Range = -49 to 16)	
Average Growth	4
(API growth in 2009 was within 4 points of the average growth for all QEIA schools; Range = 18 to 19)	

Nearly 250 school stakeholders participated in data collection. The principal and two teacher leaders from each school were interviewed (N=22 and N=44, respectively); teacher focus groups comprised of a representative sample of teachers were conducted in each school. School support staff, district administrators, parents, and community members were invited to share their experiences with QEIA implementation during “drop-in discussions.” Interviews, focus groups, and drop-in discussions were focused on examining 1) Initial goals and plans for QEIA in each school; 2) Implementation activities; 3) Roles of various stakeholders in QEIA; 4) Perceived impact of QEIA on schools; and 5) Key challenges to implementation.

Data were collected by trained staff and leaders from the California Teachers Association. Vital Research staff facilitated the project, trained data collectors, developed site visit materials and instruments, coordinated visits, and analyzed all data.

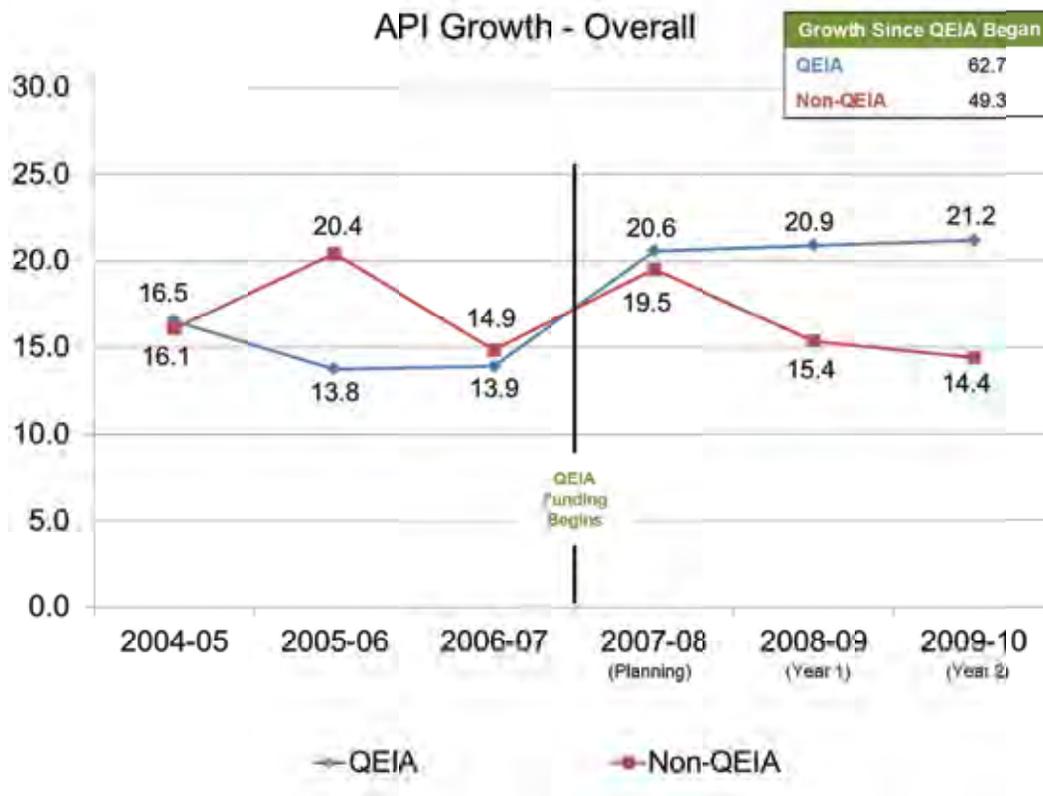
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE INDEX DATA

API Growth Scores – Overall

While it is important to note that 2009/10 was only the second year of implementation and additional longitudinal research is needed to examine the effects of QEIA over time, initial school performance data are promising. On average, for 2009/10, QEIA schools experienced a growth of 21.2 points on the API, 6.8 more points than the comparison group of non-QEIA schools (Figure 1).

Since QEIA began in 2007/08, QEIA schools have experienced a growth of 62.7 points, compared to 49.3 points in non-QEIA schools (Figure 1).

Figure 1. API Growth – Overall



API growth scores for elementary schools have increased since QEIA began in 2007/08; growth scores in non-QEIA elementary schools have declined slightly over the last three years (Figure 2).

In middle schools, QEIA schools experienced greater growth score gains in 2009/10 compared to non-QEIA middle schools (Figure 3). Additionally, since QEIA began, QEIA middle schools have experienced a growth of 52.6 points, compared to 46.4 points in non-QEIA schools.

API growth scores have remained relatively stable in QEIA regular program high schools over the last three years. Average growth scores in alternative program high schools have increased over the last three years (Figure 4).

Figure 2. API Growth in Elementary Schools

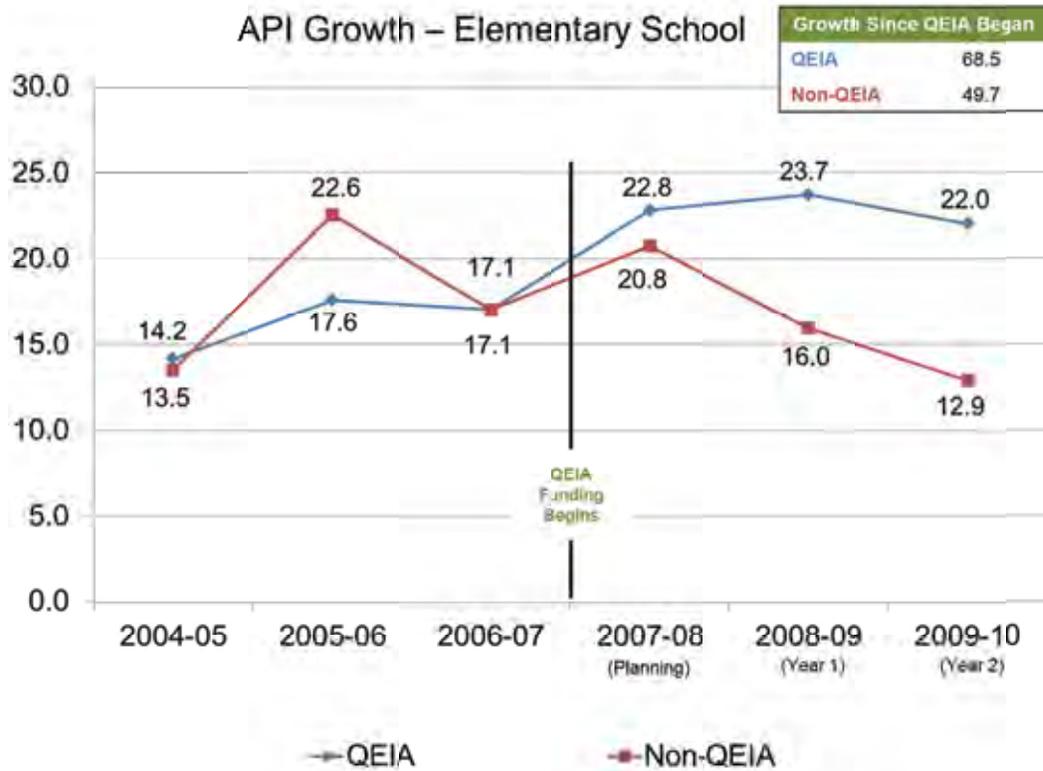


Figure 3. API Growth in Middle Schools

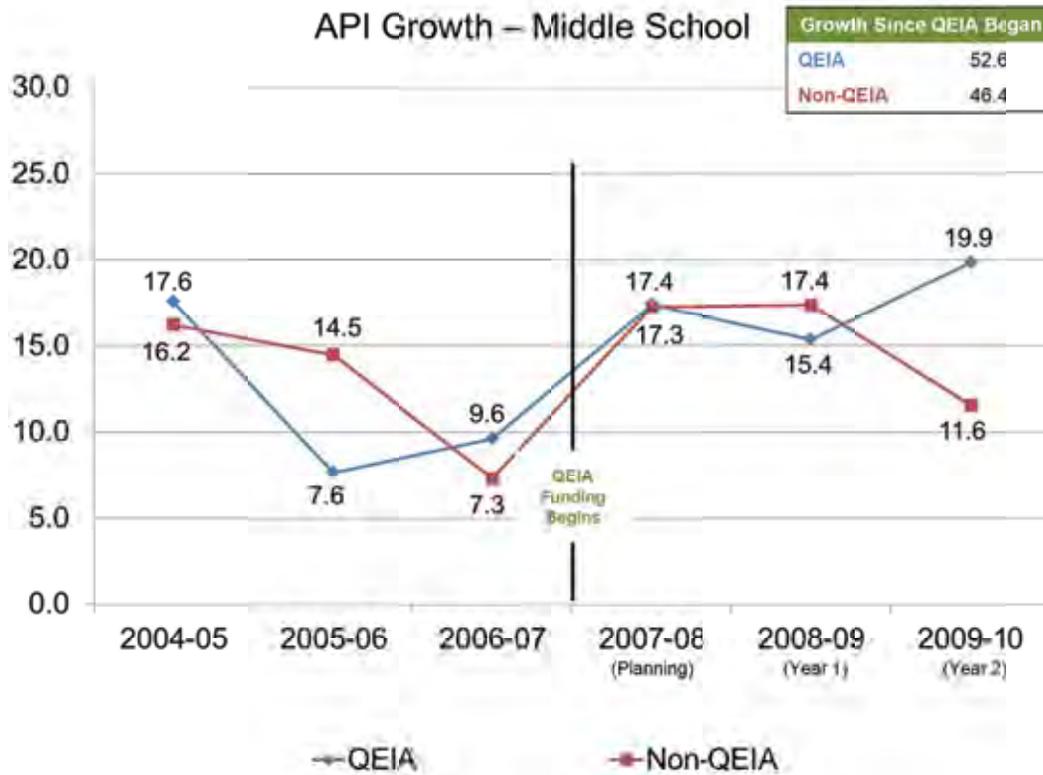
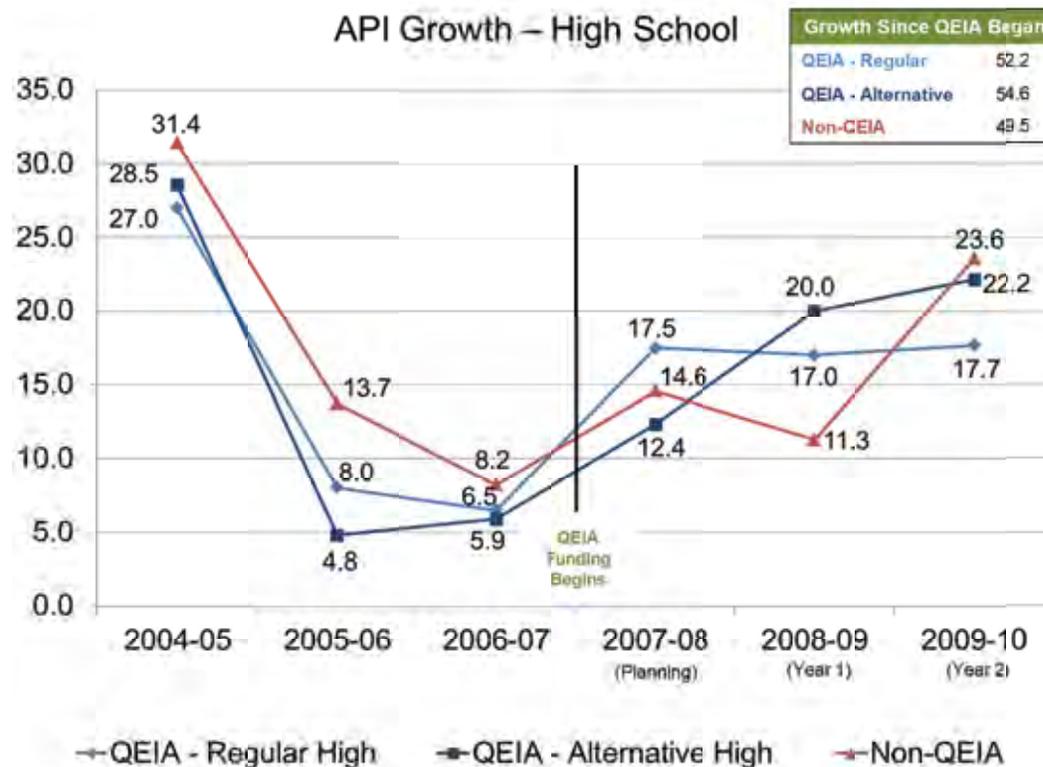


Figure 4. API Growth in High Schools



Percent Meeting API Targets

The percent of QEIA elementary schools meeting their API targets increased from 68% to 76% in the first year of funding and has remained stable; the percent of non-QEIA elementary schools meeting API targets has declined from 74% in 2007/08 to 63% in 2009/10 (Figure 5).

In QEIA middle schools, the percent meeting API targets increased from about 70% in the first two years of QEIA funding to 74% (Figure 6).

In high schools, both QEIA and non-QEIA schools met their targets at similar rates for 2009/10 (Figure 7).

Figure 5. Elementary Schools Meeting API Targets

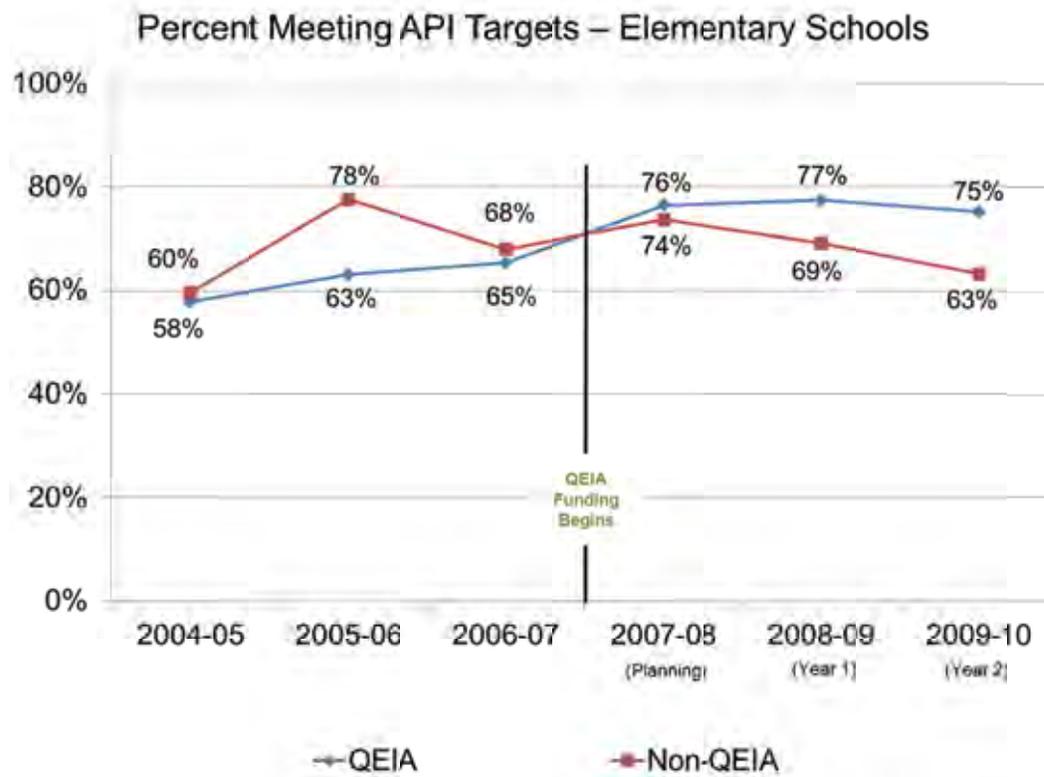


Figure 6. Middle Schools Meeting API Targets

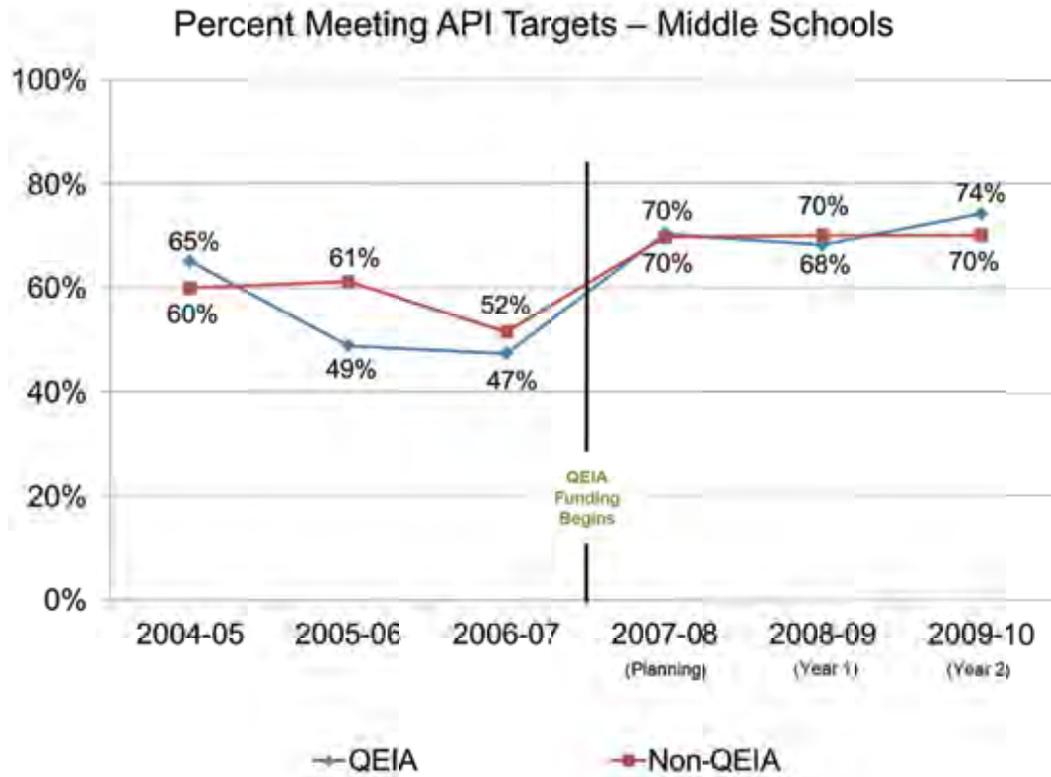
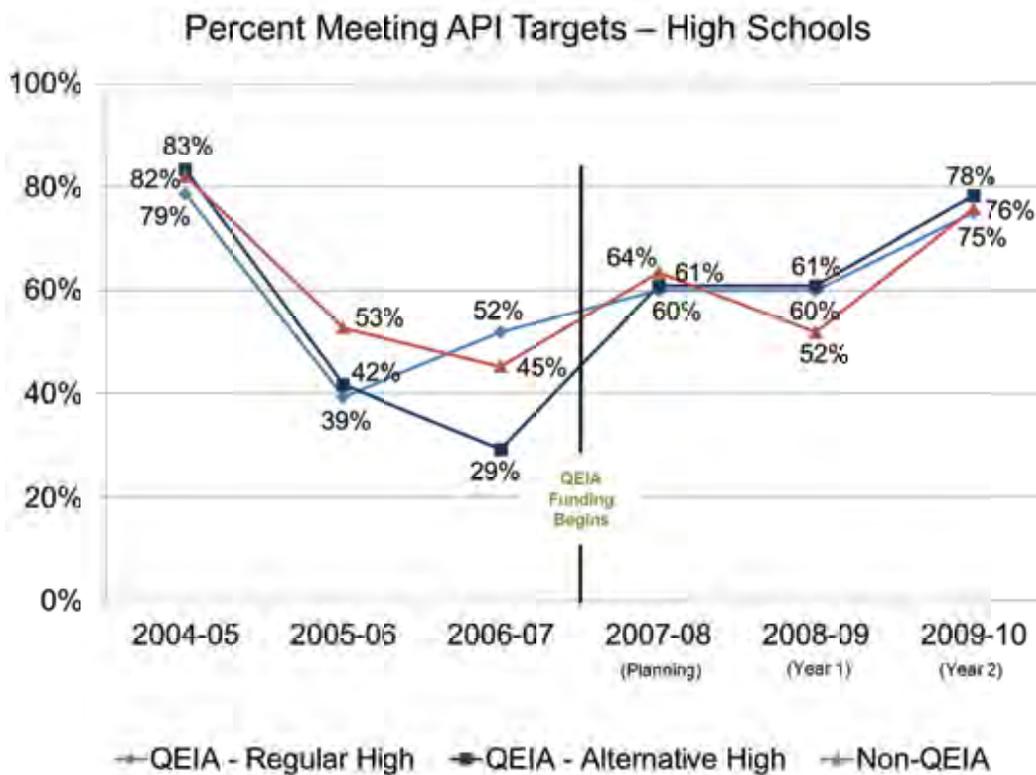


Figure 7. High Schools Meeting API Targets



API Growth Scores – Subgroups

QEIA schools like other Decile 1 and 2 schools are serving predominantly African-American and Hispanic students, as well as large numbers of English Language Learners (ELL) and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. API growth score data suggest that on average, QEIA schools are making greater gains in API with these subgroups than they were prior to QEIA funding and greater gains than their unfunded counterparts.

Since QEIA began in 2007/08, the overall API growth for African-American students was 52.4 points, compared to 40.7 points in non-QEIA schools (Figure 8). The overall growth score for Hispanic students across the first three years was 64.3 points in QEIA schools compared to 51.0 points in non-QEIA schools (Figure 9). API growth scores for both the English Language Learner and socioeconomically disadvantaged subgroups in QEIA schools were also higher than scores in non-QEIA schools. The overall growth score for English Learners in QEIA schools was 12.3 points higher at 61.9 points compared to 49.6. The overall growth score for the socioeconomically disadvantaged subgroup in QEIA schools was 63.6 points compared to 50.4 points in non-QEIA schools (Figures 10-11).

Figure 8. African-American Subgroup

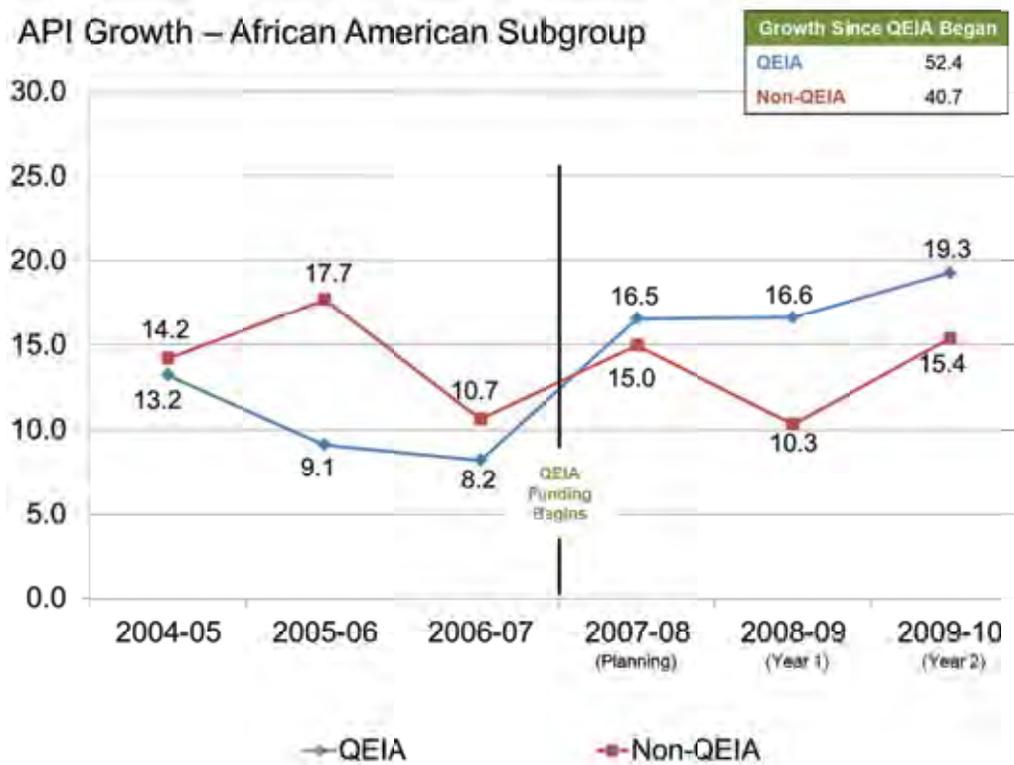


Figure 9. Hispanic Subgroup

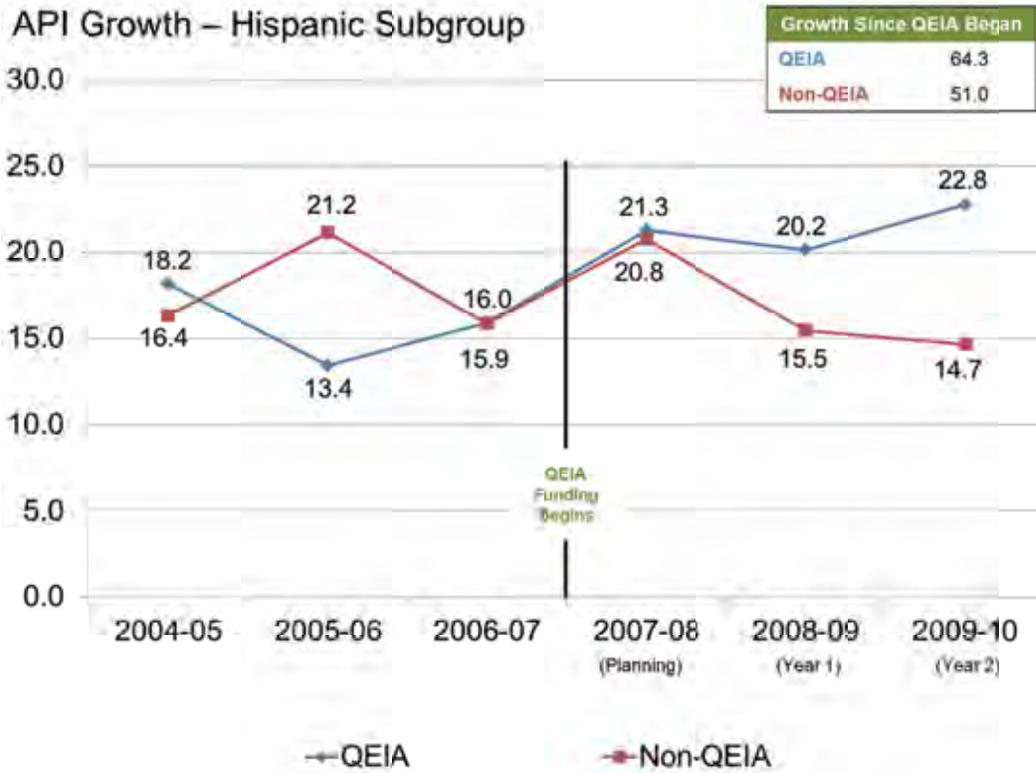


Figure 10. English Language Learner Subgroup

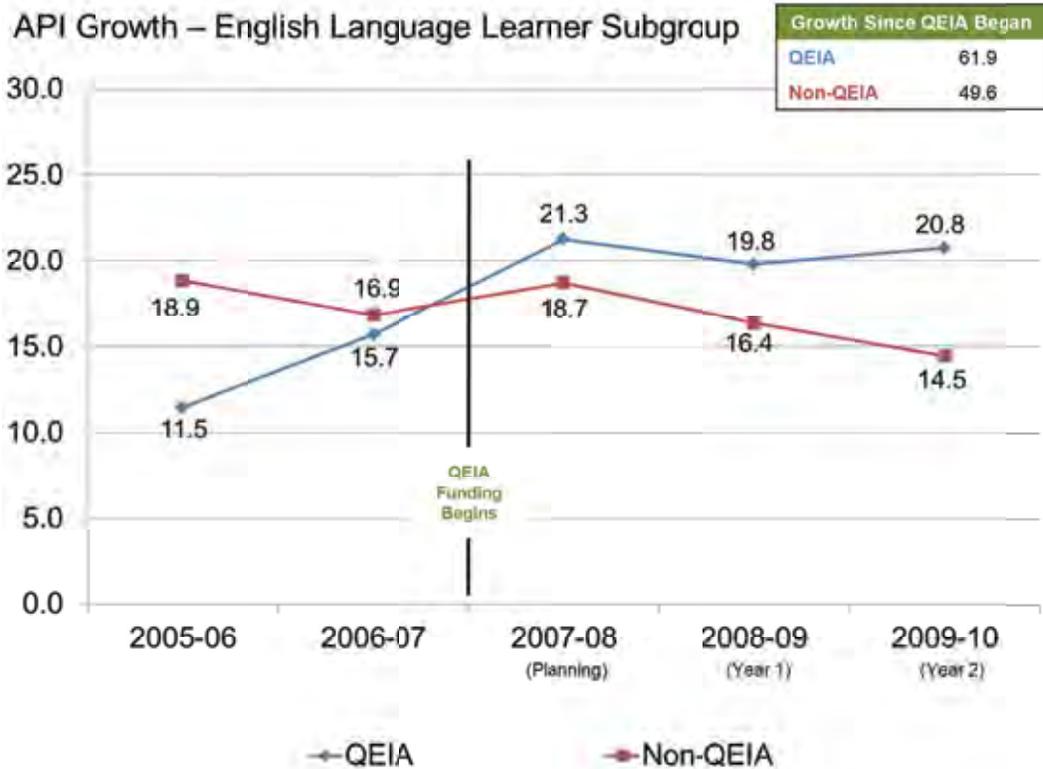
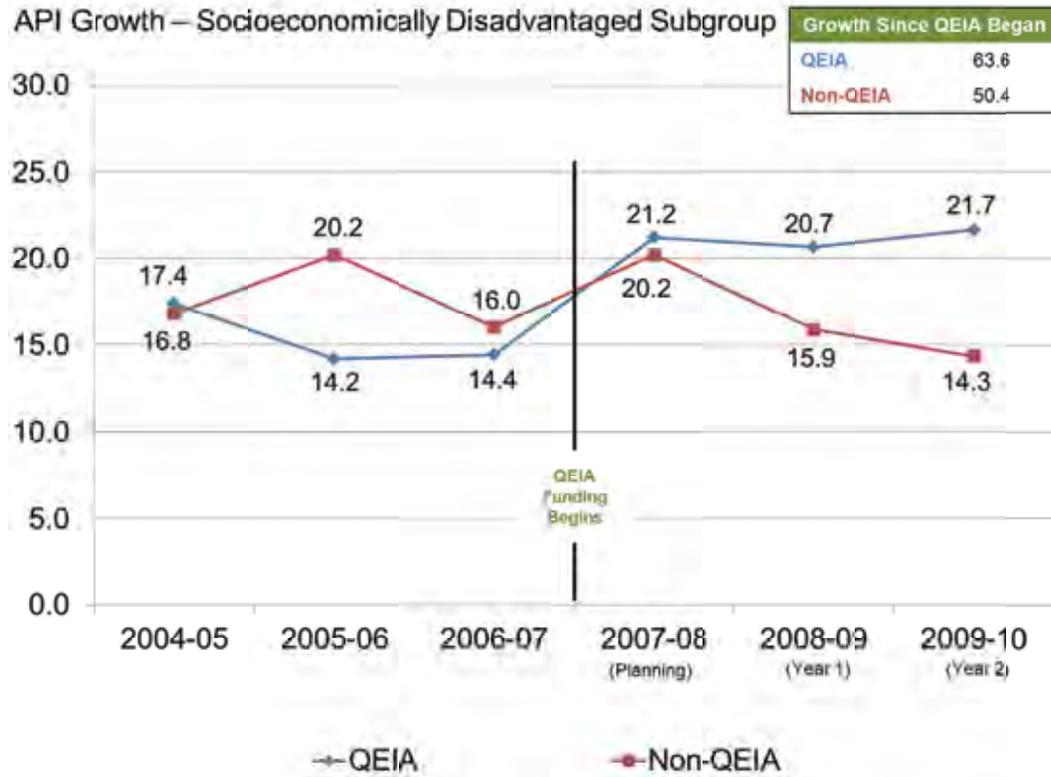


Figure 11. Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Subgroup
 API Growth – Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Subgroup



LESSONS LEARNED

LESSON 1

School goals for QEIA were consistent with the purpose and intent of the legislation.

The most common goal noted by schools was class size reduction: at least one interviewee at all but one of the regular program schools cited class size reduction as a key goal of QEIA at their school. For example:

Principal *“Close achievement gap through lower class size.”*

Teacher *“To minimize the student achievement gap by reducing class sizes and providing professional development.”*

Teacher *“To improve test scores and reduce class sizes.”*

Principal *“The CSR has been a big goal for our school.”*

Principal *“Class size reduction. Make our students more successful with small class sizes...Small numbers in the classroom help make more students successful.”*

Teacher *“To reduce class size in the core areas and improve student achievement.”*

The second most frequently noted goal was student achievement. Principals and teachers discussed “closing the achievement gap,” “improving test scores,” “increasing the percent proficient,” “getting out of PI status,” and “raising student performance.”

All but one of the higher API growth schools cited improved professional development as a key QEIA goal for their school (compared to five out of nine lower growth schools). Higher growth schools also tended to put more emphasis on increasing teacher collaboration as a key goal of QEIA than lower growth schools (44% compared to 11%, respectively). Finally, three higher growth schools mentioned that increasing parent involvement was a goal for their school; no lower growth schools cited parent involvement as a key goal.

The two alternative program high schools were both focused on improving student achievement and raising graduation rates. One school emphasized improving professional development whereas the other sought to raise matriculation rates and the number of students who meet A-G requirements.

LESSON 2

School implementation plans were largely focused on CSR, professional development, collaboration time, and the adoption of curricular interventions.

The first year of QEIA funding for a majority of regular program schools was spent on gearing up for class size reduction in upper elementary grades, middle schools, and high schools. Existing facilities were examined and reworked, portables were considered, class schedules were rearranged in middle and high schools, and staff were interviewed and hired.

Teacher *“One of the first things that happened is that facilities were checked to make sure we had enough room for classes.”*

Principal *“We had high class numbers – up to 35 – so our #1 focus was to lower class size.”*

Teacher *“We rearranged our campus for CSR. Increased facilities and classrooms.”*

Teacher *“We hired a couple of English teachers and a math teacher to reduce class size.”*

Implementation plans for many schools also focused on identifying new curriculum or interventions to support student achievement. Schools adopted new writing and math curricula, put additional tutoring sessions in place for students, adopted interventions for ELL students, and restructured the day to support more pullout support for struggling students. Additionally, QEIA implementation during the first three years emphasized professional development for teachers in the various curriculum programs and interventions.

A few schools used QEIA funds to support new technologies (e.g., Smartboards, computer labs, etc.) and training in those technologies. A couple of schools worked on strengthening parent involvement such as working with a local university on a comprehensive parent involvement plan, “Neighborhood evenings,” “Coffee breaks with the principal,” and “School yards sales.”

Higher API growth schools (7 compared to 3 lower API growth schools) shared the efforts they had made during the first years of implementation strengthening collaboration among teachers. A few schools restructured the day to support common preparation times; other schools implemented professional learning communities. Two schools implemented team teaching to support struggling students. One school implemented a comprehensive peer coaching and observation plan to encourage collaboration and sharing among teachers. For example:

Teacher	<i>“Implemented peer coaching – we observe other grade levels. We have access to each other’s data and do lesson studies.”</i>
Principal	<i>“Professional learning communities were started...common prep times and standards were set.”</i>
Teacher	<i>“Focused on collaboration. Established deep conversations at each grade level regarding student work.”</i>
Teacher	<i>“This caused us to work as a team and collaborate. We share students moving through the grade level and address specific skills and language levels.”</i>

The two alternative program schools also focused their implementation on freshman academies/houses that could be expanded schoolwide over time.

SCHOOL PROFILE

Fairbanks Elementary School

<http://fairbanks.twinriversusd.org>

DEMOGRAPHICS: 380 students. 86% qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. 39% are English learners. 33.3% are Asians. 33.1% are African-American. 21.6% are Hispanic. 6.3% are Pacific Islander. 3.8% are white.

ACADEMIC GROWTH: The school's Academic Performance Index score of 754 reflects a surge of 108 API points over the past two years of QEIA enrichment. In that time, the school became one of the 20 QEIA schools gaining 100 or more API points statewide and is setting its sights on the 800 API benchmark score set for all California public schools.

QEIA AT WORK: K-3 class sizes are 20 students or fewer, while 25 or fewer children occupy classrooms for grades 4-6. Hired with part of the estimated \$264,000 in QEIA funds the school gets this year, the new part-time intervention teacher identifies students early on who need extra help. Professional development is more relevant now and increases the efficacy of teachers. Teachers have more time for collaboration. The school has a gardening club and intervention classes at every grade level, with targeted programs like "Imagine Learning" for English learners. Together, school staff and parents are meeting the goals of the school's vision statement: **"We will become skilled at engaging children to reach their fullest potential by nurturing a love of reading, encouraging inquisitive minds, and fostering family and community involvement."**

PRAISE FOR QEIA: *"The class size reduction is a blessing. The staff here absolutely needs to be applauded. This really is a family. We have quite a few teachers who are very in tune with how their students are achieving. The teachers here are gems."*
—LaTonya Derbigny PRINCIPAL

"QEIA provides the resources and focus needed to fundamentally improve student learning." —Frank Porter SUPERINTENDENT

"QEIA is allowing our class sizes to remain small. For that we are grateful. We're fortunate to not have 35 students in our classrooms." —Teri Leo TEACHER



LESSON 3

Although somewhat challenging to implement and maintain, class size reduction enabled teachers to focus on classroom instruction.

QEIA legislation requires funded schools to achieve and maintain small class sizes in all core subjects. In grades K-3, class sizes are limited to 20. In grades 4-12, classes in core subject areas must be reduced to an average of 25 students per class, or five fewer students at the grade level than existed before QEIA, whichever is lower.

Many school stakeholders talked about the various challenges (e.g., space, facilities, managing enrollment, etc.) associated with reducing class size in upper elementary grades, middle schools, and high schools. Some principals and teachers noted that the requirements for grades 4-12 were complicated, and particularly challenging for small schools.

Despite challenges, higher API growth schools cited class size reduction as one of the key factors that contributed to changes in teaching practices at their schools. Class size reduction enabled teachers to spend more time with the “neediest, at-risk” students, differentiate instruction, and spend less time on classroom management issues. As explained by stakeholders:

Principal *“Class size reduction has allowed us to identify and assist...the kids that were blending into the walls. Class size reduction has also improved classroom management; we have fewer disciplinary issues in the upper grades.”*

Teacher *“CSR has allowed us to do more one-on-one instruction with students.”*

Teacher *“Class size reduction. Teachers have learned to group students with the purpose of differentiating instruction.”*

Teacher *“Our instruction is more aligned because of CSR.”*

LESSON 4

Professional development decisions in higher API growth schools were made in collaborative teams with teacher input, leading to greater satisfaction among stakeholders.

One of QEIA’s core requirements for regular program schools involves developing a coherent plan for the professional development of teachers and paraprofessionals. Additionally, each teacher at a QEIA-funded school is required to complete an average of 40 hours of professional development per year. One-third of paraprofessionals at QEIA-funded schools must complete some professional development each year.

In higher growth schools, professional development decisions were typically made by structured, collaborative grade-level teams or leadership teams (e.g., professional development committee, instructional leadership team, curriculum committee, etc.) with teacher participation. For example:

Principal	<i>“Made by the leadership team, with teacher input.”</i>
Teacher	<i>“Through the Academic Leadership team and approved by the School Site Council.”</i>
Teacher	<i>“The Instructional Leadership Team makes professional development decisions.”</i>
Teacher	<i>“I lead a curriculum committee, and we plan for professional development throughout the year.”</i>

In lower growth schools, teachers reported having input on professional development decisions either through surveys, faculty votes, suggestions through department chairs, grade-level leaders, or instructional coaches, or through individual requests for professional development. Compared to higher growth schools, these decision-making processes tended to be less structured and formalized.

Moreover, in five lower growth schools, teachers noted that professional development tended to be district-mandated or administrator-driven. One teacher explained, “Seems top down, administrator-driven. A little more teacher input this year. But mostly the administration determines the staff development.” In contrast, no teachers in higher growth schools reported that professional development decisions were primarily made by district or school administrators.

Teachers in all nine higher API growth schools as well as teachers in four of the nine lower growth schools were highly satisfied with the quality of professional development they received. Teachers noted that when professional development was offered on the school site and directed by teacher input, the quality was generally better and more relevant. As explained by teachers in interviews:

Teacher *“The ones we have picked have been great. The district trainings are not great... too fast. The professional development we have chosen can be implemented in the classroom.”*

Teacher *“When we have a say-so it’s better... PD on site is much more relevant to us.”*

Teacher *“Teachers are more receptive because they chose the professional development. The district trainings are not as effective.”*

Principals in higher growth schools were also more satisfied with the quality of professional development received by teachers than those in lower growth schools (89% compared to 56%). Principals in higher growth schools described their professional development as “top quality,” “excellent,” “fantastic,” and “the best.” Furthermore, when asked about the factors leading to success in their schools, stakeholders in higher API growth schools commonly mentioned their professional development as being critical to school change.

SCHOOL PROFILE

Miraloma Elementary School

www.miralomasf.com

DEMOGRAPHICS: 360 students. 21% qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. 46.9% are white. 14.9% are Asian. 11.5% are Hispanic. 8.1% are African-American. English learners are 7.6% of enrollment.

ACADEMIC GROWTH: The school's Academic Performance Index score of 865 is well above the 800 API benchmark set for all California public schools. With the last two years of assistance from QEIA, the school's API score has risen 55 points.

QEIA AT WORK: Miraloma was able to excel with proven reforms like smaller class sizes and extra resources that mean teachers have more time to collaborate, and to find ways to be more creative and effective. The \$225,000 in estimated QEIA funding this school year continues to fund reading coaches and a learning support professional who functions like a social worker on campus. Other extra resources include academic intervention teachers, cutting-edge professional development training for educators, a poetry instructor and individualized math and reading programs. Students raise chickens in a garden where growing vegetables is part of learning. A school once shunned by the neighborhood now has a waiting list to get in.

PRAISE FOR QEIA: *"QEIA has made a huge difference. When you have smaller class size, children get more attention from the teacher. Studies show kids work better in small groups. With 23 students in fourth grade, we actually have enough space to move around, to have diverse instruction. I can diversify my teaching a lot more because I have a little bit more time with each child."*
—Rebecca Stewart TEACHER

"The teachers are fabulous. Our focus remains on taking each individual student and giving them the resources to take them wherever they can go." —Leslie Acosta-Bhattacharya PARENT

"What QEIA has helped us do at Miraloma is reach our academic goals without having to sap money from other programs. Our kids are happy, they are really happy." —Ron Machado PRINCIPAL



LESSON 5

Higher API growth schools had more focused professional development in core content areas.

Higher API growth schools were more likely to report having focused plans for schoolwide or grade-level professional development in core content areas. School stakeholders cited one or two key areas for professional development in core content areas such as Math, Reading, and Writing. This focused professional development was part of a professional development plan for the school and was typically offered schoolwide or to entire grade levels. For example:

Principal	<i>“Grades 2-5 were trained in Swun Math last year. Next year, kindergarten and first grade will be trained. We are very pleased with the professional development.”</i>
Teacher	<i>“We have received professional development in writing and math (chosen by staff and paid out of QEIA funds).”</i>

In contrast, lower growth schools were engaged in numerous types of disjointed professional development rather than having focused, coherent plans for schoolwide or grade-level trainings. A few school stakeholders explained:

Principal	<i>“All teachers can go to professional conferences (RTI, PLC), Freshman Transition conferences, staff development, Edgecraft, and Smart Board. Some of the staff development dealt with Tier 1 and Tier 2 instructional practices and enrichment for kids. Fifteen teachers will be going to Hollywood in June for PLC training.”</i>
Teacher	<i>“A group is working on an overall plan on PD. They’ll develop an overarching plan. We constantly need to make improvements... We don’t have a very good long term plan for PD in this district or on this site. We are aware of this and this group will change it.”</i>
Teacher	<i>“Language arts training. Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) focus—and training provided to help teachers use VAPA techniques in many curriculum areas. Last summer some teachers went to LA for training. This summer some will go to Las Vegas (classroom management or Language Arts). One teacher felt she had to get her professional development on her own outside class, and at her own expense.”</i>

SCHOOL PROFILE

Woodrow Wilson Senior High School

www.wilsonmules.org

DEMOGRAPHICS: 2,200 students. 80% qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. 22% are English learners. 94% are Hispanic. 3% are Asian. 2% are African-American. 0.4% are white. Special education students are 12% of the population.

ACADEMIC GROWTH: Wilson, home of the Mighty Mules, has truly embraced the innovation, parent focus, student intervention, and strong teacher collaboration that are part of the QEIA program. The school's modest Academic Performance Index score of 612 reflects an increase of 28 API points over the past two years of QEIA enrichment, but doesn't tell the full story of this urban high school.

QEIA AT WORK: Having eight counselors on campus – thanks to \$2.7 million in estimated QEIA funding this school year alone – means each has a caseload of fewer than 300 students, compared to California's average statewide ratio of 945 to 1, the highest in the country. The national average is 477 to 1, according to the California Department of Education. Class size maximums are mostly 27 or fewer students, in line with another QEIA priority. Wilson students all enjoy one of several "smaller learning communities" during high school, where they have access to a counselor and the same group of teachers over four years assigned to vital learning areas such as the health sciences, performing arts, visual arts, business and technology, environmental and urban studies, and a social justice academy that promotes giving back to the community. Professional development training for the 160 faculty members is sharper and more relevant, and teachers have much more time to collaborate with each other and with the many parents who use the school's parent welcoming center as a resource.

PRAISE FOR QEIA: *"The tutoring assistance and smaller class sizes that QEIA provides are tremendous resources. They give our students the chance to succeed that they deserve."* —**Christina Quimiro** TEACHER

"Wilson is a family. We listen, we inquire. We are developing as colleagues who seek to understand other viewpoints by building relationships and listening – a lot." —**Mylene Keipp** INSTRUCTIONAL COACH

"It has definitely made a difference to have more counselors, thanks to QEIA. Our counselors actually have time to meet and counsel students about college, their homework, any problems they are having. They get to know students' families. QEIA gives them more time to reach out." —**Ursula Rosin** PRINCIPAL



LESSON 6

Higher API growth schools used student data to guide professional development decisions.

According to principals and teachers in higher growth schools, professional development decisions were largely based on an analysis of student data. Schools crafted their professional development plans and goals based on student needs. As explained by teachers and principals in higher growth schools:

Teacher *“The Leadership Team uses data and diagnostic tests (School City) to see which areas the students are lacking in.”*

Teacher *“Based on student need...after reviewing data.”*

Teacher *“We look at data and areas of greatest need. I present this to the principal. We then plan PD areas around these topics.”*

Principal *“We analyze data to find shortfalls.”*

Lower growth schools were less likely to cite student data as a key influence on professional development decisions. In fact, 78% of higher growth schools analyzed data to guide professional development decisions; only one lower growth school reported using student data to inform professional development decisions (11%).

SCHOOL PROFILE

John Muir Elementary School

www.mcsd.k12.ca.us/sections/schools/Muir

DEMOGRAPHICS: 500 students. 86% qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. 55.4% are Hispanic. 21.4% are white. 11.6% are African-American. 8.8% are Asian. 25% are English learners.

ACADEMIC GROWTH: The school's Academic Performance Index score of 806 is above the 800 API benchmark set for all California public schools. With the last two years of assistance from QEIA, the school's API score has gone up 74 points. John Muir is now one of the highest-performing campuses in the Merced City School District.

QEIA AT WORK: The ongoing QEIA funds - an estimated \$312,000 this year alone - are making a huge difference in these times of statewide education cuts. John Muir classes are smaller for more individualized learning: a maximum of 20 students in K-3 classrooms, and 25 in fourth and fifth grades. QEIA paid for an additional teacher to expand a reading deployment program, and funded a week of teacher training before the school year began that focused on academic programs for the school's English learner students, and on aligning state standards with a new math textbook. QEIA pays for substitutes who cover classes while faculty meet often to collaborate, and funds improved professional development that includes the nine teachers who are UC-Merced Writing Project fellows mentoring other colleagues. Today, the school's third-grade student proficiency rate in English language arts is now 60% (the state average is 44%), up from 28% in 2006. The fifth-grade math proficiency rate is now 65% (state average: 60%), up from 22% in 2006.

PRAISE FOR QEIA: *"Money matters when it comes to school improvement, and collaboration is critical. Collaboration is key to student success at John Muir. QEIA has given us time during our work day to examine student data, share effective strategies and plan for instruction. Reflecting, analyzing and planning are keys to being thoughtful, and without collaboration time, essential elements of instruction are often missing."*—**Teresa Pitta** TEACHER

"Parents really appreciate QEIA and the resources it brings to John Muir. It really does make a big difference. Other schools in the district have lost smaller class sizes. We have been able to keep our class sizes small. We know how important that is."

—**Paul Chambers** PARENT



LESSON 7

Higher API growth schools engaged in more teacher collaboration to develop lesson plans, create common assessments, and analyze student data.

Both teachers and principals in higher growth schools reported more grade-level, department, and interdisciplinary teacher collaboration than their counterparts in lower growth schools. Teachers in five higher growth schools were provided with the time to meet in grade-level teams, professional learning communities, or curriculum teams to collaborate, develop lesson plans, create common assessments, and/or analyze student data (55%), compared to teachers in two of the lower growth schools (22%).

Moreover, when asked about the factors that contributed to success at their schools, teachers in higher growth schools often cited increased teacher collaboration. Sample comments from teachers included:

Teacher	<i>“This year, the main focus was collaboration on lesson plans.”</i>
Teacher	<i>“More collaborative time for teachers. Common assessments.”</i>
Teacher	<i>“Analyzing data, creating assessments, interdisciplinary teams.”</i>
Teacher	<i>“Teacher collaboration. Meet in curriculum teams.”</i>
Teacher	<i>“Felt the need for more grade-level collaboration...very big...use substitutes to allow for meetings.”</i>
Teacher	<i>“Collaboration with colleagues – input when analyzing student data. Time to do this.”</i>

SCHOOL PROFILE

Martin Elementary School

www.sausd.us/martin/site

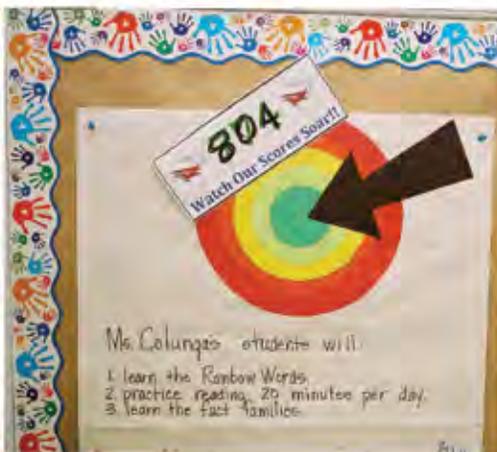
DEMOGRAPHICS: 752 students. 94% qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. 76% are English learners. 98% are Hispanic. 1.2% are white.

ACADEMIC GROWTH: The school's Academic Performance Index score of 779 is nearing the 800 API benchmark set for all California public schools. With the last two full years of assistance from QEIA, the school's API score has risen 84 points. The score has gone up 165 points since 2006, the second-highest increase in the district during that period.

QEIA AT WORK: Martin Elementary had the second-highest increase in API scores this year in the Santa Ana Unified School District, which has made \$160 million in budget cuts over the past seven years. Martin's K-3 class sizes remain small, thanks to the estimated \$482,000 in QEIA funding for this year alone, and there are 24 or fewer students in fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms. Every Wednesday is faculty collaboration day, when educators share strategies and examine what's working. Professional development is more relevant and focused on instruction and state academic standards. The school improved so much that it exited the punitive "Program Improvement" status last year that came from the federal No Child Left Behind law. A strong spirit of teamwork energizes the campus, and the push for excellence was reflected on the school's public billboard: "Success is the standard! It is up to us all!"

PRAISE FOR QEIA: "QEIA has had an impact. QEIA has allowed us more time for planning, professional development and data analysis. With district support, our students' effort, teachers' dedication and parent support, our school has been able to improve student achievement. Our staff believes in our kids. Our teachers work so hard and are so focused on helping all students achieve."
—Lisa Gonzales-Solomon PRINCIPAL

"I have 25 students in my classroom. I am able to learn about their life histories and use that to my advantage to teach. The biggest difference is getting to know the students personally – and understanding where they're coming from. With smaller classes, I am able to pinpoint those students in need." —Antonio Magaña TEACHER



LESSON 8

School site councils in QEIA schools are approving school budgets; influence on other decisions and stakeholder involvement varies considerably by school.

Teachers and principals were asked how much influence their school site council had on decision-making at their sites. Thirteen out of 22 schools indicated that their school site council made decisions related to the budget. Comments from teachers and principals included:

Teacher *“The school site council (SSC) has a lot of influence and they are very aware of the issues surrounding the budget and QEIA.”*

Teacher *“It’s a body that has been empowered virtually because they hold the purse strings. They have a lot of say on how money is being spent. Biggest influence on how money is spent. It has significant power.”*

Principal *“Budgets are created by the principal–group process for approval.”*

Principal *“We have SSC meetings and vote on what we’re going to do with our budget.”*

According to teachers, the influence of the school site council on other school decisions varied considerably from site to site. Some school site councils were responsible for ratifying school site plans, gathering staff input, and proposing alternative solutions to school problems/issues. Others had little to no influence on school decisions. The extent of involvement in the school site council of various stakeholder groups (e.g., parents, teachers) also varied considerably by site. In some schools, teachers noted that parents were rarely involved in school site council meetings; in other schools, teachers described parents as being “informed,” “supportive,” and “asking a lot of questions.” Perceptions of teacher involvement also varied. Teachers in some schools noted a lack of teacher involvement and inclusion in the school site council; teachers in about a third of the schools noted they were encouraged to participate and present ideas. For example:

Teacher *“We’ve had outspoken parents on the SSC, but it varies from year to year.”*

Principal *“No real antagonistic parents. Parents are supportive. A real team approach.”*

Teacher *“Parents trust us as professionals. They usually don’t question. They do not want to know more. Parents are supportive.”*

Teacher *“The whole process is transparent. The meetings are open. They are receptive to the teachers’ opinions.”*

Teacher *“SSC parents aren’t as active as teachers on SSC, but it works very well.”*

LESSON 9

The exemplary administrator requirement has not been fully realized in QEIA schools.

Under QEIA, districts are required to define criteria and ensure that exemplary administrators are in place at QEIA schools and provide professional development for an administrator that is similar in quality and rigor to the Administrator Training Program (Assembly Bill 430). There are no specific hour requirements for the professional development that should be provided to administrators.

Principals were asked whether districts had defined criteria for exemplary administrators. Only six out of 22 principals were aware of any specific district criteria; one principal indicated that the district was “working on it”; and the rest did not know whether such criteria existed or indicated that their districts had not developed criteria. Principals who were aware of district-defined criteria indicated that criteria were based on the following:

Table 2. Exemplary Administrator Criteria

EVALUATION CRITERIA	NUMBER OF PRINCIPALS
Superintendent and/or Board Input	4
Leadership Standards	3
End of Year Evaluations	3
Test Scores	1

It is important to note that the majority of teachers interviewed (73%) were satisfied with their principals’ performance. They described principals who were lifelong learners, instructional leaders, and consensus builders. Comments from teachers included:

Higher Growth Schools	<p><i>“She is a lifelong learner and willing to try something new. We’re up to 730 when we started at 300-something.”</i></p> <p><i>“She is transparent and a strong student advocate.”</i></p> <p><i>“Would follow him anywhere.”</i></p>
Average Growth School	<p><i>“Our principal is a 10. She is an instructional leader that takes the time to assist you to be a better teacher.”</i></p>
Lower Growth School	<p><i>“As a manager, you’ve got to have people behind you. The staff wants to have a strong leader. She is phenomenally organized. She is fantastic.”</i></p> <p><i>“Knows curriculum. Sees the gaps. Looks to implement the very best.”</i></p> <p><i>“He is one of the best leaders I have ever worked for.”</i></p>

LESSON 10

QEIA has provided valuable resources during the state budget crisis, but schools are still facing financial challenges.

QEIA provided schools with valuable funding that allowed them to either sustain or reduce class size and continue to move forward with components of school site improvement plans when other schools in their districts were unable to. In spite of the extra funding, teachers reported that QEIA schools still experienced reductions in staff, which, in turn, affected teacher morale. School stakeholders also described feeling apprehensive about the state budget crisis, its potential impact on future QEIA funding, and upcoming district budget cuts that had not yet been made. A few stakeholders noted that their district offices had withheld QEIA funds from schools, used QEIA funds to supplement the general fund, or reduced other school allocations and replaced those funds with QEIA dollars. In a few lower API growth schools, budget cuts limited professional development and classroom materials. For example, teachers and principals commented:

Teacher *“It has impacted morale due to pink slips and layoffs. We are scrambling to find money. We are down to bare bones. Our students need it.”*

Teacher *“Now the challenge is the budget crisis and knowing exactly where and how much we are being cut and figuring out how to best use the money.”*

Teacher *“No, not yet, but I’m concerned about what happens after the QEIA money is gone. Class size is increasing in non-QEIA schools.”*

Teacher *“Yes, we are always concerned that it’s going to be taken away. We are worried that they are going to lose sections due to budget cuts. We are trying to be sure it can be sustained when the money is gone.”*

Principal *“We’ve had to pay for things that district categorical funds used to pay for. Not supplanting but keeping things that would otherwise go away, like instructional aides.”*

Teacher *“Not as many staff developments.”*

Teacher *“At this point, we don’t have the budget for classroom materials.”*

Moreover, several stakeholders expressed concern about how to sustain class size reductions and other interventions in the long term or when QEIA funding ceases. As explained by one teacher: “We’re worried that the QEIA money will just stop. When schools start doing well, the money gets pulled away. We won’t be able to sustain the changes.” A principal commented: “If we lose QEIA funding, we are not quite ready to sustain this.”

SCHOOL PROFILE

Madison Middle School

<http://ousdms.ousd.k12.ca.us/madison>

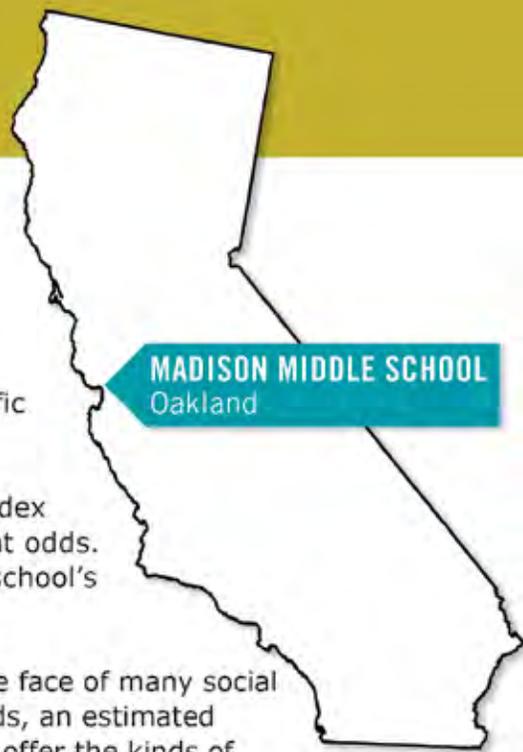
DEMOGRAPHICS: 306 students. 90% qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. 32.5% are English learners. 62% are Hispanic. 31.4% are African-American. 4.4% are Pacific Islander. 1.8% are Asian. 0.4% are white.

ACADEMIC GROWTH: The school's Academic Performance Index score of 728 represents remarkable progress against great odds. With the last two full years of assistance from QEIA, the school's API score has risen 103 points.

QEIA AT WORK: The progress at Madison has happened in the face of many social challenges, such as high poverty and crime rates. QEIA funds, an estimated \$246,000 this school year alone, keep class sizes small and offer the kinds of enrichment that teachers say make students eager to come to school and learn. A teacher was hired just to help English learners. More technology in classrooms includes the interactive "SMART Boards" with Internet connections. The Family Resource Center offers workshops for parents on gang awareness, college readiness, the School Site Council and the English Learner Advisory Council. Teachers confirm that professional development is more relevant and beneficial, meeting another QEIA requirement. The extra funding helps Madison meet its goals spelled out on its website: to address the "intellectual, psychological, emotional, physical, social, and ethical needs of our young people. We aim to teach all students learning strategies and study skills like critical thinking, effective communication, and goal planning that will ensure their success in high school, college, and the future."

PRAISE FOR QEIA: "The QEIA guarantee in class size reduction is helping me manage my classrooms much more efficiently and allows me to spend more one-on-one time with students. In addition, it is easier to grade students' work and to provide individualized feedback to them since the volume of sheer paperwork has been reduced by the smaller class sizes. Many of my teacher friends who work at other sites have class sizes that are well over 30 students each." —Dale Kim TEACHER

"QEIA has been phenomenal for our school. We would not have been able to have the progress we have seen without it. Having smaller class sizes makes a huge difference for us. We are creating a very nurturing environment here. Our students feel safe. And they know it's all about the learning." —Lucinda Taylor, Ph.D. PRINCIPAL



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This report provides findings from a comparative analysis of Academic Performance Index (API) data from QEIA and non-QEIA schools and a modest action research project focused on the initial planning year and first two years of implementation of QEIA from a small sample of QEIA schools.

Overall, QEIA schools had greater gains in API than did their non-QEIA counterparts. Additionally, API growth score data suggest that, on average, QEIA schools are making greater gains in API with African-American and Hispanic students, English Language Learners, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students than non-QEIA schools.

In our action research project, we learned that our participating schools have school goals that are aligned with the intent and the purpose of QEIA, and they are implementing educational interventions targeted at improving the performance of their struggling students.

Furthermore, schools that achieved higher API gains during the first year of program implementation focused their efforts on improving teacher collaboration. Such efforts enabled teachers to work together in teams to analyze student data, create common assessments, and craft educational interventions.

Moreover, school stakeholders believed that class size reduction enabled them to focus on instruction rather than classroom management. Teachers felt they were able to work more closely with their struggling students and differentiate instruction appropriately.

Finally, we learned that professional development plans in schools with higher API growth were generated with teacher input, cohesive, data-driven, and focused on core content areas. Such an approach resulted in professional development that was relevant and useful for teachers.

These early lessons from the field are promising and suggest that QEIA has been a catalyst for increasing teacher collaboration, improving instruction, and strengthening the quality of professional development in several schools.

NOTES

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**The
Six Times Table**

Exercise One

(a) 20	(b) 33	(c) 54	(d) 25	(e) 37	(f) 24
$\begin{array}{r} 20 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 120 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 33 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 198 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 54 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 324 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 25 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 150 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 37 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 222 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 24 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 144 \end{array}$
(g) 208	(h) 354	(i) 443	(j) 512	(k) 362	(l) 501
$\begin{array}{r} 208 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 1248 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 354 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 2124 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 443 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 2658 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 512 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 3072 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 362 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 2172 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 501 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 3006 \end{array}$
(m) 6520	(n) 2325	(o) 5450	(p) 7562	(q) 2650	
$\begin{array}{r} 6520 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 39120 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 2325 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 13950 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 5450 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 32700 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 7562 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 45372 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 2650 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 15900 \end{array}$	

Exercise Two

(a) 225	(b) 534	(c) 217	(d) 503	(e) 210
$\begin{array}{r} 225 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 1350 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 534 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 3204 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 217 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 1302 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 503 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 3018 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 210 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 1260 \end{array}$
(f) 303	(g) 515	(h) 432	(i) 314	(j) 227
$\begin{array}{r} 303 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 1818 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 515 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 3090 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 432 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 2592 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 314 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 1884 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 227 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 1362 \end{array}$
(k) 704	(l) 154	(m) 326	(n) 552	(o) 456
$\begin{array}{r} 704 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 4224 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 154 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 924 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 326 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 1956 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 552 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 3312 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 456 \\ \times 6 \\ \hline 2736 \end{array}$

