

*“A Community School and Language Development Center”:
A Consistently High Performing School
for English Language Learners*

Josiah Quincy Elementary School Case Study

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This case study is a part of the report ***Learning from Consistently High Performing and Improving Schools for English Language Learners in Boston Public Schools***. The report and its companion report, ***Improving Educational Outcomes of English Language Learners in Schools and Programs in Boston Public School***, are part of a larger project, Identifying Success in Schools and Programs for English Language Learners in Boston Public Schools, commissioned by the Boston Public Schools as part of the process of change set in motion by the intervention of the state and the federal governments on behalf of Boston's English language learners. This qualitative retrospective case study, based upon interviews, document review, and observations, shares key themes found in one school identified for its consistent, multi-year out-performance of like schools in ELL outcomes during SY2006-SY2009. The purpose of the case study is to share and illustrate key lessons that may be adapted and applied in other school contexts for the education of ELL students. For more information on the methods used in this case study, please see the full report, ***Learning from Consistently High Performing and Improving Schools for English Language Learners in Boston Public Schools***; Chapter 1 includes an overview of the study and methods and the Detailed Methods Appendix provides a complete description, including the identification of the site using multiple regression analysis and the qualitative methods used to study the site once selected. The full reports are available at www.cce.org and www.umb.edu/gastoninstitute.

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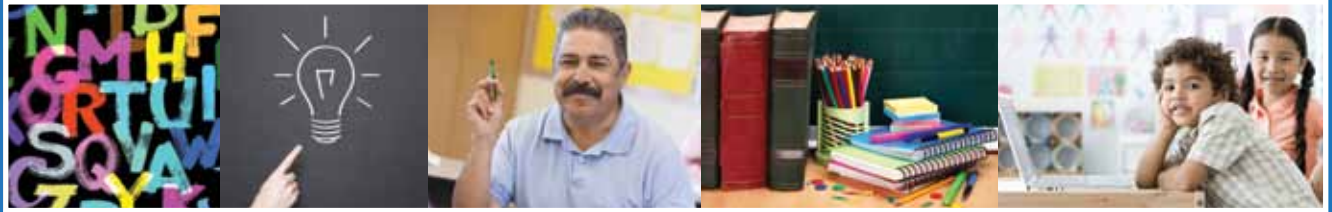
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CHAPTER



**“A COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND
LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT CENTER”:
A CONSISTENTLY HIGH PERFORMING SCHOOL
FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

A School Context

The Josiah Quincy Elementary School is a K-5 elementary school located in Chinatown, close to the center of Boston. During SY2009, the school served 829 students; 60% were native speakers of Chinese dialects and 46% were students of limited English proficiency (LEPs). In the school as a whole, 64% of students were Asian⁷, 13% were Black, 13% were Latino, and 8% were White. Students are assigned to the school according to the BPS student assignment plan⁸ and the school is one of two BPS elementary schools with a Chinese-specific SEI program for LEP students.

Of the 334 (88%) LEP students who took the MEPA in April 2009, 41 (12%) students were at MEPA Level 1, 14 (4%) were at MEPA 2, 64 (19%) were at MEPA 3, 128 (38%) were at MEPA 4, and 87 (26%) were at MEPA 5. Table 2 illustrates the general distribution of students' level of English proficiency at each grade.

The Quincy School uses student MEPA scores as well as classroom work to assess students' English language proficiency levels following district guides. ELL students are grouped by MEPA level into SEI classes at each grade level. As an elementary school, the SEI teachers have self-contained classrooms where they teach all subjects except the specialty classes. The two Language Acquisition Team (LAT) facilitators, who are full time SEI teachers, work closely with the administration to create class lists where there are models of stronger students for less strong students. A key to ELL student progress in language development is that approximately 90% of students stay at the school from K-5. As a rule, the school staffs MEPA Levels 1 and 2 classrooms with teachers who are certified in ESL. According to multiple interviewees, during the study period, the majority of teachers had also completed the 4-Category Trainings. The LAT Facilitators reported that the school's goal has been to mainstream students by the end of third grade. Students who are at MEPA Level 4 or higher usually transition to a general education classroom, with

Table 3.1. Quincy School Enrollment Defined by Native Language, English Language Proficiency, and ELL Program Participation, SY2009

Total	All Quincy (829)				
Native Language	Native English Speaker (NES) (269) (32%)	Native Speakers of Other Languages (NSOL) (560) (68%) ^a			
Language Proficiency	English Proficient (EP) (451) (54%)			Limited English Proficient (LEP) (378) (46%) ^b	
	NES	NSOL-EP (98)(12%)	FLEP (84) (10%)		
Program Participation	Not in ELL Program (578) (70%)			Not in ELL Prog (127) (16%)	In ELL Prog (251) (30%)
^a Native speakers of Chinese dialects were 89% of NSOL and native speakers of Spanish were 3% of NSOL. Other languages were all 1% or less of NSOL.					
^b 344 (91% of LEP students) were native speakers of Chinese dialects.					

Table 3.2. MEPA Levels of Quincy LEP Students by Grade, SY2009 (April 2009 MEPA)

	MEPA Level 1	MEPA Level 2	MEPA Level 3	MEPA Level 4	MEPA Level 5
Kindergarten	39 (71%) ^a	-	-	-	-
Grade 1	- ^b	-	31 (51%)	16 (26%)	-
Grade 2	-	-	-	25 (40%)	30 (48%)
Grade 3	-	-	-	45 (70%)	11 (17%)
Grade 4	-	-	-	24 (47%)	21 (41%)
Grade 5	-	-	-	17 (42%)	18 (44%)
^a Within the grid is the percentage of all LEP students in the grade at the MEPA level.					
^b In this chart, to better illustrate the trends in distribution, data is not reported for categories where n<10.					

continued support of SEI teachers. In Grades K-3, there are consistently two SEI classes per grade, there is typically one SEI classroom in both fourth and fifth grade, though in some years there may be two per grade depending on the student needs.

During SY2009, there were 56.7 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members at the Quincy School for a student-teacher ratio of 14.1 to one (BPS ratio was 12.8 to one). Eleven FTE teachers (19%) were teaching ELL-related assignments. Ninety-eight percent of all FTE teachers were licensed in their assigned position, which was the same as the district average, and 89% of core classes were taught by highly qualified teachers, a lower percentage than the district average of 96%. In terms of the racial make-up of the teaching staff, 41% of teachers were Asian, 14% were Black, 4% were Latino, and 41% were White.⁹

In SY2009, the percentage of students from low-income households was lower than BPS district rates for both students of limited English proficiency and those who are English proficient. For Quincy students of limited English proficiency the rate was only three percentage points lower (88.1% compared to 91.6% of LEPs in BPS) but 19 percentage points higher than English proficient students at Quincy (69.0%). At 4.2%, the mobility rate at Quincy for all students was considerably lower compared to BPS students of limited English proficiency (9.8%) and English proficient students (8.1%).

In terms of engagement outcomes, in SY2009 attendance at Quincy was 2.8 percentage points higher than BPS rates, and rates of suspension and grade retention were similar between Quincy and the BPS Elementary School average with students of limited English proficiency having slightly lower rates of suspension and higher grade retention

Table 3.3. Selected Student Indicators, SY2009^a

	Quincy LEP %	Quincy EP %	BPS ES LEP %	BPS ES EP %
Low Income (% Eligible for free/reduced-price lunch)	88.1%	69.0%	91.6%	77.4%
Mobility (% not in the same school for October and June)	4.2%	4.2%	9.8%	8.1%
Students with Disabilities	16.7%	12.0%	17.6%	20.1%

^a LEP = Limited English Proficiency; EP = English Proficient; BPS ES = Boston Public Elementary Schools

Table 3.4. Selected Student Outcomes, SY2009^a

	Number of Quincy LEP Students with Data	Quincy LEP %	Quincy EP %	BPS ES LEP %	BPS ES EP %
Median Attendance	378	98.9%	97.8%	96.1%	95.0%
Suspension	378	1.1% ^b	2.9%	2.0%	3.3%
Retained in Grade	322	5.6%	2.8%	6.0%	4.1%
Passed ELA MCAS ^c	94	87.2%	96.9%	64.9%	80.0%
Proficient in ELA MCAS	94	38.3%	68.8%	13.3%	39.6%
Passed Math MCAS	95	86.3%	93.2%	61.8%	76.3%
Proficient in Math MCAS	95	48.4%	68.2%	17.8%	34.1%
Passed Science MCAS	43	72.1%	91.2%	45.1%	72.0%
Proficient in Science MCAS	43	14.0%	56.9%	5.3%	21.7%

^a LEP = Limited English Proficiency; EP = English Proficient; BPS ES = Boston Public Elementary Schools
^b Data for this cell is n<10.
^c MCAS data includes grades 3-5 for ELA and mathematics and grade 5 for science. While case study site selection looked at MCAS proficiency in ELA and mathematics only for students at MEPA Levels 3 and 4, here the purpose is to present outcomes for the school as a whole, thus we include all test takers as well as pass and proficiency rates.

rates compared to English proficient students. Academically, Quincy students performed relatively well on the MCAS tests compared to the BPS Elementary School averages, though many students still did not meet the benchmark for proficient. Pass and proficiency rates for Quincy students of limited English proficiency were lower compared to their Quincy English proficient counterparts, but generally higher when compared to BPS students of limited English proficiency and even those who were English proficient. The MCAS pass and proficiency rates for Quincy students of limited English proficiency were all more than 20 percentage points higher than BPS students of limited English proficiency with the exception of Science proficiency rates which were only 8.7 points higher. Compared to BPS English proficient students, Quincy students of limited English proficiency performed the same or better except on Science proficiency rates.

While the Quincy School had slightly favorable student indicators when compared to BPS in SY2009, our selection methods included controls for demographic variables. By using this method, the Quincy School emerged as a school with ELL student outcomes that were better than expected compared to schools with similar student bodies during SY2006-2009. The purpose of this study was to understand other non-quantifiable factors which may begin to explain the Quincy School's favorable outcomes.

The character of the Quincy School is shaped by being a community school rooted in the Boston Chinese community. Chinese culture and language are integral to school programs. For example, in the course of study all students study Mandarin as a specialty class (e.g., art, physical education) and throughout the school Chinese history and culture are visible in the displays of student projects. External partnerships connect students, including ELL students, to multiple services and opportunities for support and enrichment during and beyond the school day as well as within and beyond the Boston Chinese community. Partners during SY2006-SY2009 which continue today range from those in the neighborhood, such as the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC) and Chung Wah Academy afterschool programs and the Tufts Medical Center and Dental Clinic, to partners such as City Connects (formerly Boston Connects),¹⁰ which helps run the student support structures. Through the adjacent South Cove Health Center, a doctor conducts weekly health classes in the second grade classrooms, students perform in events at the clinic

(such as for Chinese New Year), and the school nurse also works closely with the clinic.

The former Principal retired in 2009 after leading the school for 10 years, and the current Principal was in his second year at the school at the time of the site visit. Though he has ideas of future directions for the school, he noted that the structures and culture of the school had not changed in any radical ways compared to the SY2006-2009 study period. The mission of the school has been consistent:

We seek to provide a challenging academic program that gives all students the means to meet high standards and achieve their best, to foster sound habits of mind and action, and to instill in our students such virtues as integrity, respect and self-discipline.

When the former Principal became the leader at the school in SY2000, the school already had a good reputation in the BPS district and in the community for having good outcomes compared to other district schools. She was from the Boston Chinese community and arrived eager to bring the school to the next level of success.

*The whole reason I came back to the Quincy School [in 1999 was] to show that we can have quality public education, and that we know how to do this.... It is too hard and too much for any one person to do, but we can do it together.... It has to be the whole school and the whole child.
– former Principal*

The former Principal had a strong vision of educating the whole child and taking a whole-school approach to improving practice and ensuring that every student is being served well. She was the leader in 2002 when Question 2 was passed, which resulted in a switch from Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) to Sheltered English Immersion (SEI).¹¹ When asked what changed because of Question 2, she reflects:

We made minor adjustments to what we teach in compliance with Question 2, but not how we teach. We kept all of the bilingual teachers and eliminated the teaching of Chinese literacy. We continued to use Chinese to explain new concepts to students who need it to help them understand so they don't lose content as they learn English.... We also increased the teaching of Mandarin as a specialty to all students so that there is value added from the learning of the Chinese Language in the whole school.
– former Principal

The school's response to Question 2 illustrates a deliberate, mission-driven approach keeping student learning central when adapting to changing contexts – a theme present throughout this portrait of the Quincy School.

B Key Themes in Success with Educating English Language Learners

Many of the themes that underlie the Quincy School's success with ELL students align with general best practices for any high performing school; however, the application of general best practices for educating ELL students also has unique characteristics. For example, developing high-functioning, robust professional learning communities will serve all schools well, but the content of the learning communities at Quincy focused on language development and academic language to meet the specific needs of the student population. The Principal communicated her vision for the school in concrete ways developed over time, beginning before the study period. The Principal's vision supported the building of sustainable teacher and school practices that successfully served English Language learners from SY2006-SY2009 and which continue to function and evolve today. Key themes include:

- A Community School with Understanding of the Whole Child
- Leadership for Collaboration with a Focus on Language Development
- Dedicated Teachers who Know What Works in the Classroom

Theme 1: A Community School with Understanding of the Whole Child

The Quincy School is a community school with cultural connections to the Chinatown community, a staff with significant Chinese cultural and linguistic ties, and a system of community-based, culturally proficient wrap-around services for children.¹² Chinese cultural ties directly affirm Chinese culture for students of Chinese descent and, for students of other backgrounds, expose them to a new culture. A comprehensive system of services is important for all students, and ELL students in particular benefit specifically from additional English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC) for both students and parents.

Support for Positive Cultural Identity Development

When speaking of culture, the current Principal says that in SY2011 all SEI teachers, all para-professionals, and four or five regular education teachers speak Cantonese and/or Mandarin. Though not all current faculty were at the school during SY2006-2009, only two or three teachers joined the faculty in SY2010 and SY2011 and thus the composition did not change drastically between the study period and site visit; the practices described here aim to represent the pedagogical approaches faculty have developed – and continue to develop – over the course of their teaching practice. For example in SY2009, the faculty composition reflected that the school places value on shared cultural background and experience: the school's proportion of Asian teachers (41.4%, compared to BPS 4.6%) mirrored the proportions of Asian students at Quincy (64%, compared to BPS 8.5%).

Teachers emphasized that it is important to get to know the students in order to determine what each student needs. Communication with teachers in the earlier grades is important in getting to know students and families. Next, assignments early in the year that help students tell their stories serve the multiple purposes of engagement, academic learning, and building relationships.

When asked what advice the group of experienced SEI teachers would give to a new SEI teacher, one teacher said:

First of all ...you need to know the student's background, get to know them, and also, secondly, you need to give them a sense that they can trust you. Once they feel comfortable with you, of course they can trust you and you can learn more from them.

– SEI teacher

By asking questions and having the students share about themselves, the teacher has an opportunity to identify students' strengths and weaknesses and individual interests. Many teachers also draw upon their own experiences as English learners.

All the [SEI] teachers in our school do have the background experience of what the child is experiencing now, because we have all grown up that way. I learned my English this way.... My parents didn't speak English at all.... We truly have the experience of what the child is experiencing now.

– SEI teacher

Teachers of Chinese descent thus draw upon their own shared experience to add meaning to the cultural knowledge of the child. Chinese teachers share their instinctive cultural proficiency with colleagues who are not Chinese through collaboration, modeling, and acting as a resource. Chinese staff members also serve as models for students.

And for me to be able to go back and forth, and show them how valuable that is.... It absolutely helped kids learn, when they see the Principal can speak the language, and it's not so much that they can speak Chinese, but it's the notion that it's okay, that what you bring from home is valuable; it's just that you also need to learn the English language.

– former Principal

Since SY2003, all students also study Mandarin at least once a week.

[Chinese students learn about] their own culture, and the family feels that their culture is being acknowledged in the school.... And then, the school always tries to encourage other cultures to learn Chinese by offering maybe some basic Mandarin courses, and vice versa, by offering English to our second language learners, to our Chinese parents.

– current Principal

Language is a priority and the school makes it clear to parents that the school expects students to learn another culture through language and in turn, to appreciate and respect all other cultures.

Building Relationships with Families

Parents who were interviewed say they chose the school for a variety of reasons including the SEI program, the location, and because of the presence of the Chinese culture, which parents of Chinese-descent want their children to know.

When we came here, we didn't know the American education system and how to choose a school. We live in Chinatown and this school is here near my house, so I chose this school.

– Immigrant parent of student in SEI program

There are Mandarin classes, which not many schools have, and they celebrate Chinese New Year and culture in this school. The kids have the opportunity to see it and feel it. I think that is most important....We are immigrants and we follow Chinese traditions in daily life and it's good for the kids to learn it in school as well. Parents don't always have the time or knowledge to teach children about Chinese history.

– Parent of Chinese-American Student

The SEI teachers and parents said that parents of ELL students feel comfortable and welcome at the school. Both partly attributed this good relationship to the strength of the school community and their ability to communicate in the Chinese dialects of their parent community. Teachers mentioned adjusting their scheduling to families' convenience – for example meeting on Mondays when many

restaurants are closed. They also call parents in the summer before school starts to ask the parents about their child's school experience the previous year. Speaking to a student's previous teachers also provides key information about both the student and the family.

[Teachers] work closely together, and we work closely with families... So I have full attendance on the parent-teacher conference, and that's why I know the kids so well. And when they move on, and when they move up, the teachers will come to us and say, 'Oh, this child needs this, this, this, and they have this kind of family issues.'

– SEI teacher

Teachers spoke knowledgeably about many Chinese ELL students' home values and practices. They demonstrated a keen awareness of parents' high expectations for their children's performance on the MCAS, while trying to educate them about other educational outcomes that may be more representative of their children's progress. One teacher reported giving high marks for effort, to show parents that low grades can be correlated with high effort when the test is not appropriate for the student's level of English proficiency. Another strategy is using portfolios to show progress from term to term. This allays parents' anxiety that their children are not working hard enough.

Cross-grade communication among SEI teachers is important because teachers have developed relationships with families. Bilingual teachers can communicate with parents or grandparents who only speak a Chinese dialect. Additionally, many teachers give their home and cell phone numbers to families, a practice which contributes to trust and strong relationships.

For Chinese immigrant families who do not know the American education system well or at all, they like that the school is in Chinatown and provides a bridge through community connections and Chinese language materials. Families who drop off their child in person are able to see teachers regularly. Short face-to-face communications, even if brief, contribute to strong relationships.

Parents speak of the school as a community school with afterschool programs, workshops for parents, and swimming lessons for students. According to parents and current administrators, the School Site

and Parent Councils are active and have representation from ELL families. The Parent Council works closely with the administration, the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), and parents to plan events, activities, and programming at the school, including:

- Partnerships for Programming: Sports and Scholars, Boy and Girl Scouts, afterschool programs, swimming lessons
- Academic Events for Families: open house, literacy and math nights, class publishing parties from Writers Workshop
- Social Events: Diversity Show, ice skating, hiking, circus, holiday celebrations, teacher appreciation, potluck dinner

These activities, which were operating during SY2006-SY2009, enhance programming at the school, keep families informed about their child's progress, and create time for staff, families, and students to get to know each other. Translated materials and a monthly newsletter are key strategies for communication about upcoming activities and important information. Additionally, the Parent Council has conducted parent surveys to gauge interest in Parent Council activities and services and to find different means of communication for parents who are less involved. The school has offered parent workshops in the morning and evening on how parents can help students through storytelling, reading to kids, encouraging independent reading. There is also a course for parents of children who are native speakers of languages other than English about how to advocate for their children.

Community Partners Extend Academic Learning, Provide Enrichment, and Support Students' Social, Emotional, and Health Needs

Partnerships help the school connect students to a variety of services and opportunities ranging from academic support to experiences that help students explore their talents and gifts. Programs include the afterschool programs, such as Red Oak and Chung Wah, the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC), Big Brothers and Big Sisters, swimming lessons, a girls group and tutors from Suffolk University. Due to language differences, school-based matches often work better for ELL students than some other off-site programs such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters, which do not have Cantonese or Mandarin speakers or resources for translators. Fortunately, Chinatown community organizations offer enrichment programming for Quincy

School students. Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC) is a well-established family-centered organization in the community, originally formed by parents and community leaders to have a voice in the design of the Quincy School complex in 1969 (Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, 2011).

Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center is really great about creating programs specifically for English language learners. One of the directors has started a mentoring program between students at the upper school who were English language learners and had immigrated to the US in elementary school and pair[ed] them up with ... the fourth-graders recently immigrated to the United States who are still learning English.

– City Connects coordinator

The location of the school makes it possible to connect Chinese-speaking ELL students to programs where their native languages are being spoken because of the proximity of all these community resources.

As a community school, the building space has traditionally been shared with community programs. South Cove Health Center, a medical clinic that employs Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Toisanese speaking health care workers, shares the building with the Quincy School. Serving the Chinatown community and beyond, the health center contributes to the Quincy School as a multi-service center for Chinese residents. During afterschool hours, two of the more than eight different afterschool programs in which Quincy students participate operate in the Quincy School building.

Chung Wah Academy. The founders' goal was to enhance the quality of life of the Chinatown community through education. Many immigrant parents need to work and thus need afterschool care for their children. The Chung Wah Academy provides academic support, especially with homework. The original idea when the organization began in 1999-2000 was to teach Chinese language and culture, but as they grew and also realized that students needed help with their homework, the Academy formed a partnership and moved to the Quincy School in SY2005. According to a representative, the key is to create a safe and nurturing environment that allows students

to focus. Many former and current Quincy staff work at the program, which provides continuity for students who attend the Quincy School during the regular school day. About 120 of the students at the Quincy School attend Chung Wah, which also offers classes on Saturday.

Red Oak (BCNC). The Red Oak afterschool program is one element of BCNC, which works with families to provide multiple services that connect all ages to appropriate services from preschool through adult education. Red Oak is an EEC licensed afterschool program for school aged students 5-13 that serves about 100 students, approximately 85 of whom are from the Quincy School and about 25% of whom are ELL students. The program uses a holistic approach, with time for activities that offer enrichment and build students' capacity work together as well as for homework and studying. The program aims to help ELL students in a number of ways by providing:

- Academic support that bridges school and homework, which especially supports parents who are working, in school or learning English themselves
- A safe environment for children of working parents
- Opportunities to practice through pairing of LEP students and stronger speakers

Three or four group leaders, who are also mentored by Quincy teachers, speak Cantonese or Mandarin, which is helpful in communicating with parents and working with students. The team discusses each individual student's academic and social progress, and they compare notes with teachers when they meet.

IN DEPTH:

Connecting Students and Families to Community Partners

The community partnerships of the Quincy School are maximized by working with another key partner, City Connects. City Connects (formerly Boston Connects), which the school began working with at the start of SY2008, brings a systematic, evidence-based approach to student support. At the beginning of each school year, the two City Connects coordinators at Quincy guide all teachers through a whole class student by student review to identify the academic, social, emotional, and health needs of each individual student. During the review process, the teacher and City Connects coordinator designate a tier of either 1 (no risk), 2A, 2B, or 3 (intense risk). At the end of the year, the teachers and coordinators complete another whole-class review to see whether a student's risk assessment has changed.

Based on the review, each student has a support plan with a tailored mix of services and enrichment based on the needs of the student. Some elements of a student support plan are based at the school during the school day, such as student support teams, which also bring in community partners, such as consultants from Tufts Psychiatry, while others extend beyond the school day. According to an administrator, the process allows administrators to "take these concerns off teachers' plates" by providing additional support which helps teachers focus on teaching and learning. The City Connects coordinators also act as bridges for enrichment and support between the school, parents, and community organizations for afterschool and week-end programs. The coordinators maintain relationships with contact people from the different school-based and out-of-school organizations and, in turn, connect families to these agencies.

Evaluation reports have shown that the approach is particularly effective for ELL students. For example, in literacy where ELL students exhibited the greatest literacy outcomes, ELL third graders at schools participating in City Connects achieved similar report card scores as already proficient students in non-City Connects schools (Boston College, 2009). Though not yet the topic of evaluation, one reason for the success of City Connects with ELL students may be that the intervention systematically addresses each child and for ELL students there may be more barriers in terms of language and culture that keep ELL students from accessing services and enrichment. The infrastructure of City Connects lowers these barriers by enabling trained coordinators to connect families and students to an array of supports from enrichment to finding an Asian counselor. This process ultimately helps students and family figure out "how to do school." City Connects, a Boston community partner, enhances Chinatown neighborhood and other community partners by connecting students to community opportunities.

Theme 2: Leadership for Collaboration with a Focus on Language Development

Over time, the teaching staff developed a deep understanding of language development and the development of academic language. To understand how the staff developed their understanding requires an exploration of both the process of shifting teachers' mindset about how they work together and the ways in which they gain content knowledge. More than just providing professional development, the Principal created structures and habits that made it safe for teachers to collaboratively examine their practice and apply their learning to improve their practice.

Whole-School Structures for Robust Professional Collaborative Culture

Key school structures including a representative Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and grade level meetings (GLMs) allowed for clear decision-making and communication during the study period. A complementary School Culture Committee has also been operating since around SY2006 to ensure a safe environment for students and teachers. These structures helped the school build a professional collaborative culture which, in turn, allowed the school to engage in essential topics such as language development. Led by the Principal, in the years prior to and during the study period, the staff engaged in a cycle of learning about language acquisition and key instructional practices for differentiating instruction for both ELL and English proficient students. Relevant learning in a collaborative setting unified the school staff in adapting practice to align with the vision of educating the whole child.

As was the case during the study period, all teachers have planning and development time while their students have specialty classes (swimming, art, computers, science, and Mandarin). Once a week, common planning time is used for official Grade Level Meetings (GLMs), which include all SEI and general education teachers from the grade. The ILT shapes the agenda of the GLMs and there are clear lines of communication from the GLMs to the ILT. During GLMs teachers typically use protocols for Looking at Student Work (LASW), score writing work together, or look at writing prompts. Topics of discussion may include whether a piece of work should be scored at a 2 or a 3 on the writing rubric or what a prompt did or did not elicit and why. In some years, such as during the time teachers were undertaking and applying lessons from the 4-Category Trainings in SY2006 and SY2007, time was spent in study groups on a focus area such as topic development in writing.¹³

The ILT and GLMs became institutionalized structures which continue to guide the current work of the school.

[The grade teams] are telling [the ILT] that we need more time for teachers to look at our data, to analyze the data, to spend more time to come up with ideas of how to use our resources to make things work.... We want to spend time focusing on how to look at students' work and using the data. We also need to have more training on how to use different means to make the instruction [helpful to every] student.

– current Principal

In addition to GLMs, most teachers eat lunch together daily and plan lessons together during common planning time. The "open space" classroom design also gives teachers opportunities to interact during class periods. When new teachers arrive veteran teachers take on a "nurturing neighbor" role in offering support.

IN DEPTH:

Instructional Leadership to Engage Staff in Deep Examination of Practice

Creating Structures and Building Buy-in

Upon her arrival in 1999, the former Principal restructured the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) to include two teachers from each grade level representing the bilingual (now SEI), special education, and specialist staff. The team focused on literacy, math, and their intersections, because even for math concepts, language acquisition plays a key role in comprehension for English language learners. The Principal led the ILT in looking at data and setting the agendas for the Grade Level Meetings (GLMs). She also facilitated GLMs with the ILT teachers until teachers were ready to proceed on their own.

Over time I built up professional development focusing on language development ... for every single teacher, not just bilingual teachers... unless teachers are confident, and feel safe to examine and question, kids are not going to [either]... I wanted there to be a child focus, a professional learning community, and shifting that culture is the most important piece. Without that, you cannot have people learn.

– former Principal

The goal was to have teachers who were intellectually engaged, understood how to go beyond superficial analysis of data and really look at student work, wanted to learn, and were not afraid to open up their practice (approximately three years).

Cultivating a Disposition for Teacher Learning

Through a partnership with Northeastern University's Urban Teacher Program, teachers earned vouchers for having a student teacher in their classrooms. Using all of the vouchers, three courses each in math and literacy were offered for graduate credit. After 80% of teachers participated, SEI and regular education teachers were open to participating in 4-category training.

I knew that before the state mandated the 4-Category training that all teachers need to have a deeper understanding of language development, regardless of what classroom they are in. So my vision and goal for the school has always been, 'Wouldn't it be great if every single teacher has that understanding?'... And the best thing is that you have enough practices and structures across the whole school so that students are not confused and you don't lose learning time. And it took a long time to convince teachers that they need to let go, and look at what are some of what we call 'non-negotiables'.

– former Principal

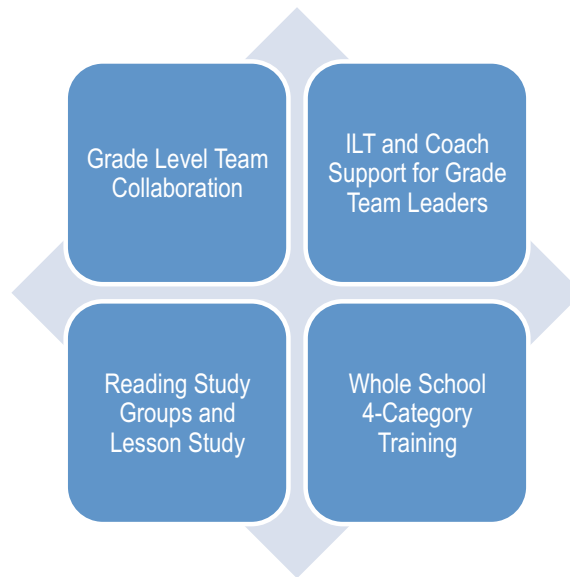
Quincy teachers and leadership continue to talk about the non-negotiables in their classrooms. These practices and others are discussed in depth in the Theme 3: Dedicated Teachers Who Know What Works in the Classroom section.

Integrating Learning into Practice

The school leadership, structures, and culture all encouraged teacher learning and supported teachers in making changes to their practice as a result of their learning. The integration of theory (in formal professional development, graduate classes, and study groups) with practice (through collaboration during GLMs) allowed willing teachers to go deeper into the concepts and ask real question about how students learn.

Categories 1, 2, and 4 of the 4-Category Training were offered to the whole staff around SY2005 and SY2006 through the services available from the BPS Office of English Language Learners. A majority of all teachers (~80% according to the former Principal) participated. Graduate credit was available for some components, which allowed the facilitators to push teachers to read the literature and reflect in writing on what they were learning and how it shaped their practice, in turn leading teachers deeper into the concepts. Teachers, the former Principal, and the provider of the trainings spoke of several key practices – many which are examples of practices recommended by the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) – they believe improved or shifted as a result.

Figure 3.1. Matrix of Professional Development and Collaboration



Developing Higher Order Thinking and Literacy

- Going beyond thinking of literacy as the component parts of reading, speaking, listening, and writing to integrating the “big themes” of literacy (questioning, understanding, thinking, and generating ideas) across content areas
- Questioning strategies to guide student learning and engage students in inquiry

Effective Instructional Planning and Practice

- Teaching language and content together, focusing both on the content areas as well as the structures of the English language, rather than “dumbing down” content
- Structuring lessons with clear objectives to clarify, not simplifying curriculum

Nuances of Language Development and Development of Academic Language

- Exploring the roles of background and prior knowledge
- Examining little words, such as “any” and “many” that control for inference

Some teachers also note that although some of the practices were already part of their repertoire, the time and space to review best practices and reflect during GLM time furthered their understanding and ability to implement those practices. The ILT plays a continued role in maintaining a sustained focus on key practices. During SY2006-SY2009, for example, the ILT conducted learning walks at all grade levels, where members of the ILT observed classrooms together and discussed what they saw, to identify and share best practices. One result was renewed focus on increasing the use of academic language to support vocabulary development.

IN DEPTH:

Sample School Professional Development Plan (Quincy Elementary School Archive, 2003)

The following is the list of focus areas from the Quincy School's professional development calendar included in the SY2004 Whole School Improvement Plan (WSIP). Grouping structures ranged from whole school to grade level teams to other teacher groups and were facilitated by coaches, bilingual and general education teachers, the Principal, and ILT members. According to multiple members of the Quincy staff, work done in the years prior to SY2006-2009 laid the foundation for the school's practices in educating ELL and non-ELL students.

- Effective mini-lessons on reading strategies that deepen thinking and promote understanding
- Vocabulary development
- Integrating the SIOP framework with workshop teaching
- Problem solving Inquiry group (math priority 1)
- Priority 1, 2,3 WSIP: Focus on Math
- Priority 1, 2, 3 WSIP: Integration of workshop teaching and SIOP

Theme 3: Dedicated Teachers Who Know What Works in the Classroom

The understanding of language development, academic language, and the elements of literacy developed through professional learning were manifest in the classroom and school culture. Quincy staff¹⁴ often expressed that much of good SEI/ESL teaching for ELL students is simply good practice: having clear objectives and expectations, pre-teaching, creating time for academic talk, exposure to rich literature, using all four modalities, and providing visuals. Teachers make the effort to know their students and figure out the ways each student learns best.

Within the paradigm of considering the needs of the individual child, there were specific practices that supported ELL students. Moreover, several Quincy staff pointed out that in an urban school, “good teaching for ELL students is good teaching for all,” because of the high number of low-income students who are native English speakers, but still lack exposure to and practice with academic language. For example, while oral language development is a key focus for ELL students in early grades, native English speakers also benefitted from focused attention on oral academic language, which prepared students for writing. The Readers’ and Writers’ Workshop model created opportunities to both elicit student ideas and model how those ideas translate into academic language. Through our on-site data collection, in which 14 classroom observations were conducted in Spring 2011, we noted that many of the instructional practices for ELL students described in our interviews were still prominent in most classrooms – not only SEI classrooms predominantly for ELL students but also general education/special education classrooms with fewer ELL students. In this section we focus on practices that were mentioned multiple times and in a combination of at least two of the following: in interviews about SY2006-SY2009, in professional development documents from before and during the study period, and in SY2011 observations.

High Expectations through Common Curriculum and Pedagogy

At each grade level, Quincy students learn the same curriculum. The units have common objectives and vocabulary and all students experience rich literature, no matter what their reading levels. The curriculum is typically also organized by themes (i.e., at the Kindergarten level: going to school,

community, etc.) which are aligned to what the general education classrooms do, though SEI teachers might choose different books. Key practices such as turn and talk and oral storytelling allow student at all levels to engage.

The Workshop model of teaching is used in all grades and classrooms, including SEI classrooms. The model provides a common approach to pedagogy and creates a focus on writing. The model involves a cycle of a 15-minute mini-lesson on the rug, small-group assignment or discussion, independent work, large-group time to present to peers and get feedback/critique, and revision. As one teacher said, “students need to read their own writing.” Regardless of a student’s level, students have to apply the same literacy strategies, though there are modifications for students at early English proficiency levels. For example, while storytelling might start in Chinese and with drawing, the key is that students tell their own story and then start to write in English. Interviewees report that the model benefits ELL students by providing more time to interact using English. The teacher can observe responses of students and give additional attention to those who need it. Additionally, other classes or parents are often invited to publishing parties (~monthly) for student books, papers, and journals.

In the curriculum and workshop model, teachers create constant exposure and opportunities for students to use, see, and write with academic language. A set of “non-negotiable” practices expected across classrooms are agreed upon by the staff. These include:

- Readers and Writers workshop notebook or folder
- Math notebook (and use of TERC curriculum)
- Fresh anchor charts with daily read-alouds
- Published work
- Classroom rug area
- Word walls

As grade level teams work to design their own curriculum and lessons, they develop the capacity of their own team members to share common practices.

IN DEPTH:

Teacher Reflection on the Collaborative Lesson Planning (Office of English Language Learners Archive, undated)

“Just as we have been speaking of the importance to give students time to practice what we want them to learn, it was such a rewarding experience to practice creating lessons as a grade level team. Sitting together, we realized how important the language included in the lessons was in order for students to follow along clearly. We kept stopping ourselves to ask the following questions:

1. Is the language included explicit enough?
2. Have we thought about what types of visual artifacts we could include to further explain vocabulary being taught?
3. If the instructions and language is explicit for English Language Learners, are we “dumbing” down for the more proficient students?

Having this time to plan was so valuable. How can we create more planning time like this more consistently throughout the school year?”

Flexibility to Scaffold and Differentiate within the Shared Framework

When speaking about best practices for teaching ELL students, the teachers spoke about the importance of flexibility. The teacher’s role is to determine what each student needs to access the curriculum and to then provide those supports. The process begins with pre-testing or using data to determine a student’s reading level and fluency and then place the student into the appropriate group. While still working from within the established framework, it is important to go from the student’s level and interest and move on from there. As one SEI teacher said, “Whatever curriculum we get, it doesn’t matter; as long as we can adapt and scaffold, we’ll teach the standards in the frameworks. Our end goal is clear.”

In all classes, the goal is to address the student’s level by scaffolding. Teachers are cognizant of the students’ MEPA levels and differentiate appropriately. Teachers report that there is relatively more modeling and guided exploration and less indepen-

dent work in the SEI classrooms, which they know from sharing practice in Grade Level Meetings. For example, in one assignment, students at lower MEPA levels might copy a definition, while students at higher MEPA levels would be expected to put it into their own words; however within the lesson all students would be expected to make connections to their own ideas. To support ELL students in expressing their own ideas, SEI classes tend to use more graphic organizers to help students show and organize what they know. Teachers report that activities using physical movement also help many ELL students learn and that simple songs with rhythms, repetition (with he, she, for example), and pictures are all key strategies at early English proficiency levels.

Classes typically have a dynamic range of English proficiency levels. No matter what the levels of the students are, everyone has a task and the expectation of all is the same. The level of their work may depend on where they are, but they are expected to grow and learn.

One thing I feel makes our program so successful is we have the flexibility to go from where the kids need... If the kids can start writing, I let them do the writing. They can read? Go ahead and read. But for those kids who are still learning the [alphabet], fine, we'll do the same book, but they have to identify the letters in that text by looking at the pictures. I mean, this is the flexibility that we all have. It's the same thing with the Writers' and the Readers' Workshop. I'm doing it my way.

– SEI Teacher

There is an element of trial and error in figuring out what works with an individual or group of students. Teachers draw upon their experience and that of their colleagues in choosing from an array of practices that they use in their classrooms. For example, at lower English proficiency levels, typically in the early grades, repetition to internalize patterns in the English language is a key strategy. By chanting songs in a Kindergarten class, students who may not even be familiar with the concept of the alphabet learn phonics.

At all levels of English proficiency, teachers focus on creating context for student understanding and skill development. Teachers remind themselves to assume students are learning something for the first time and design lessons to build students' background knowledge. Scaffolding applies to the building of content knowledge as well as to teaching key skills – such as writing, a skill which is often the last to come both for ELL students and native English speakers. For example, writing a biography of a famous American starts with a chart for gathering information, a prompt to write two sentences, then a paragraph and then by the end students build to writing a three-paragraph biography.

Lessons consistently engage all senses and include visuals, sound, hands-on activities, and movement. In classrooms labeled posters and word walls reinforce the use of academic language. Lessons are also structured to allow time for students to access the material in all language modes: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Reading strategies by grade, questioning techniques, and models of peer interaction such as turn and talk and pair work are used consistently across classrooms.

Strategic Use of Students' First Language and Culture

The Quincy School succeeds in making the climate, curriculum, and community gatherings to be culturally relevant for Chinese students. The school building is replete with Chinese themes, from greenery to lighting to artifacts from school plays decorating the principal's office. Chinese festival and cultural celebrations such as Fall Feast and Chinese New Year are celebrated with families and assemblies throughout the year.

As noted in the example of using Chinese storytelling to help an early ELP student express ideas that lead to writing, Chinese is used strategically to build bridges to English language development and literacy. Teachers said it is helpful to know Chinese language and culture when trying to understand why a student might express an idea in a certain way.¹⁵

By third grade, most ELL students have reached some level of English fluency, though Chinese language is still used to define terms when appropriate. One teacher gave an example from a past class nearing proficiency.

One year we're doing voting on, "What is your favorite ice cream? Do you like to eat garlic ice cream?" My entire class raised their hand. Then translation is needed, because I know that they only hear ice cream, they didn't hear garlic... When I say ["garlic" in Chinese] ... they say, "Eww!" ... It seems like an everyday word, but if you are a second language learner, what do you know about garlic? No one ever used the word garlic in the school or at home. So that a situation like this, we do not say, "Okay, let's go pick up the dictionary." Right away, we just translate it. It really helps save so much time. I knew, "Okay, you misunderstood that. That's not what I mean. This is what I meant in Chinese."

– SEI Teacher

Teachers emphasized that vocabulary development through decoding context clues is also an important skill, but it is best when used with certain vocabulary in the appropriate situation.

IN DEPTH:

Teacher Reflection on Building Academic Language (Office of English Language Learners Archive, undated)

“Just this past year, I have gotten better at schema building. This strategy is crucial for language development for English Language Learners. Schema building provides the appropriate academic or formal vocabulary that the students are struggling to grasp and retain. Using their native language English Language Learners can often explain in great detail what is happening in a given situation or summarize their thoughts, however, these students are using language and vocabulary that is familiar and accessible to them. As a teacher, giving them the “replacement” vocabulary brings students vocabulary from a tier one to a tier two. Every time a child shares information in class, a teacher has the opportunity to create a meaningful conversation and learning opportunity to increase and develop their language. When my students are sharing out information in class, I use this time to paraphrase their responses and then record it on an anchor chart, but written in academic language. This way, the student’s thinking is still present, yet it is transformed into grade level appropriate language.”

C Conclusions and Lessons for Other Schools

Case studies have the advantages of providing multiple perspectives on a context or organization, rich description of practice, and information for discussion and learning. The story of the Quincy School is unique to Quincy, because of its location, history, players, and circumstances. However, this case study described practices that may be “tried on” by other schools through adaptation and refinement to their own contexts. The key practices identified in this in depth analysis of the qualitative data collected from the school include:

The school is integrated into the surrounding community and staff understand students’ culture

Situated in the Chinatown community, the Quincy School’s significant proportion of staff of Chinese descent supports the positive cultural identity of Chinese students. As an SEI Language Specific school, Quincy Chinese teachers can draw upon their own experiences and knowledge of Chinese language to accelerate students’ acquisition of literacy in the English language. The school also

has the advantage of being a resource for Chinese families. The cultural competence found in this school has implications for other schools:

- An SEI Language Specific program may focus more resources on understanding one culture and language
- An SEI Language Specific program, implemented with quality, allows students and teachers that are from the same culture and speak the same language to use L1 strategically without hindering the acquisition of English
- Understanding the major language groups and their educational expectations, both from the families and of the schools, is important to tailoring SEI programs to student needs.

School leadership had both long-term vision and the capacity to build buy-in among the staff

The groundwork for the school's success for ELL students took leadership with a clear mission and vision and an understanding that change takes time and teamwork. While the teachers at the Quincy School have always been dedicated, the commitment to working together to learn and implement new practices and instructional approaches elevated the level of practice. Implications of these findings for school leaders include:

- The patience and planning it takes to build the buy-in for a culture of high academic expectations for all
- Qualified SEI and general education teachers who deeply understand language development and the development of academic language through category training and the follow-up support to implement key practices
- Commitment to professional development structures such as grade level teams and the time to build teacher capacity

Teachers were provided support to put professional learning into practice

The interviews provided a lens into the development of ELL instructional practices over time, and the SY2011 observations confirmed what teachers and administrators said about the thought put into the consistency of instruction across classrooms and over time. In addition, they use evidence-based classroom strategies for ELL students such as variety of teaching modes, student groupings, visuals, explicit vocabulary development, and clear classroom routines and procedures to ensure language acquisition. This school's consistent implementation of high-quality instructional practices for ELL students has implications for other schools:

- School leaders need to be systematic about combining high quality, focused professional development with the time, space, and incentive for teachers to collaborate around how to put their learning into practice
- Key content areas include high-quality instructional practices to support language development and the development of academic language

- A list of "non-negotiable" practices agreed upon by the Principal, ILT, and teachers
- Aligned curriculum for ELL students and general education students along with collaboration time to plan lessons.

The school staff made a commitment to educate the whole child

An education for ELL students and other students should go beyond academics and include social support services, and opportunities for enrichment. School partners such as Chung Wah Academy, Red Oak, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, City Connects, Tufts Medical Center, and the South Cove Health Center support teachers in considering each child's individual needs. Afterschool programs and partnerships to bring outside organizations into the classroom and school space help create an environment where ELL students and other students, along with their families, can access academic support, adult learning opportunities, physical and mental health services, and engaging extracurricular experiences. Implications of these findings include:

- The community school model works because it provides partnerships that are neighborhood-based, of easy geographical and linguistic access. At the same time, the extension of partnerships beyond the immediate geographic proximity opens up opportunities for afterschool clubs and activities beyond academic support.
- Opportunities for ELL students that are integrated with the school curriculum through communication with academic teachers can extend academic learning.
- The staff or networking capacity to identify afterschool and summer learning opportunities that are of interest to ELL students can be important.
- Parent involvement in creating opportunities for socializing and outreach to families can advance the school's mission.

In summary, this case study of the Quincy School illustrates the key elements in one school's journey to creating a school culture and institutionalized practices and structures that support continuous learning for teachers and promote high achievement for its ELL students. The vision, commitment, and hard work, led by strong leaders, resulted in the school being identified as the one of two elementary schools in Boston consistently performing at higher than average levels with its ELL students.

⁷ Most of the Asian community at Quincy is of Chinese descent. "Asian" is used to be consistent with the race categories of the BPS data used for the study.

⁸ Under Boston's student assignment plan, the city is divided into three geographic "zones" (East, West, and North) for elementary and middle schools. Students may apply for: schools in the zone in which they live; schools in other zones if the schools are within their "walk zone"; and K-8 schools citywide. The assignment algorithm prioritizes applicants within a one mile "walk zone" for elementary schools and entry for siblings of current students.

⁹ The data on teacher qualifications come from the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/teacher-data.aspx).

¹⁰ The Quincy School has worked with City Connects since SY2006. In SY2012, fifteen Boston Public Schools and six Springfield Public Schools are using the City Connects model of student support, which was developed at Boston College.

¹¹ Question 2 in Massachusetts was part of the U.S. English movement that spearheaded successful ballot referendum initiatives in different states under the slogan "English for the children." Referendum Question 2 was adopted by voters in Massachusetts in November 2002. It became law as Chapter 386 of the Acts of 2002 and was implemented in September 2003. In Massachusetts, transitional bilingual education (TBE) programs were overwhelmingly replaced with sheltered English immersion (SEI) programs whose main purpose is to teach English language acquisition and content instruction at the same time, with the goal of transitioning English Language Learners into regular programs after one year.

¹² The key themes of this analysis reflect the practices occurring during SY2006-2009, though the analysis is based upon interview and other data collected in SY2011. When multiple sources of data – including interviews with current staff members who were already at the school during SY2006-2009, documents from the study period, the interview with the retired Principal from SY1999-2009, and observations conducted in SY2011 – indicate that current practice is consistent with practice during SY2006-2009, the present tense is used.

¹³ In the past, the staff has used the Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) model in study groups. CCL was a Boston Plan for Excellence initiative which began in the early 2000s (for more information see <http://www.bpe.org/schools/ccl>). By SY2011, CCL coaches were no longer supported because of budget decisions.

¹⁴ The Quincy School staff members are hired according to district policies. In BPS, applicants are able to apply to posted positions in specific schools and subject areas. The application and hiring process is centralized, though principals (and in some cases, a school leadership or hiring committee) typically have input once district eligibility requirements are met.

¹⁵ The importance of students' native language applies not only to students who speak Chinese; according to the current Principal. As the population has recently changed, with more Latino students enrolling at the school, at least one teacher who speaks Spanish has been hired.

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