Partners in School Innovation
Annual Report 2007-08
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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As Partners in School Innovation (PartnersSI) begins its 15th year, I want to thank you for helping us achieve another year of breakthrough results (see page 2). Transforming the quality of urban public schools is achievable and the momentum for improvement is building, both within our districts and around the country.

As a result of PartnersSI’s side-by-side work with teachers, principals and district leaders this year, more than 1,000 students are now reading at grade level. More teams of teachers achieved outstanding results for their grade levels than ever before. More principals developed new skills through our leadership networks. More schools achieved gains in literacy. And more district leaders made significant shifts in the way they support principals and teachers.

This year, we expanded our partnership with San Jose Unified School District and Applied Materials by tripling the number of supported downtown elementary schools from 4 to 12. These schools have since achieved their greatest gains since California started measuring reading progress. San Francisco Unified School District hired a new district leadership team whose vision for educational equity is aligned with ours, and PartnersSI’s work is at the heart of their strategic plan for district change. Finally, based on the strength of our work and vision for the future, we were invited to launch a partnership with New Leaders for New Schools in Oakland Unified School District.

We are poised for the future and mindful of what it takes to get there. As social sector organizations attempt to replicate effective programs on a wider scale, few accomplish this without sacrificing their quality. PartnersSI faces an even greater challenge because we implement a research-based approach to continuous improvement that has to be skillfully adapted to produce results in complex urban school districts. PartnersSI has developed an increasingly effective strategy for meeting this challenge. Our approach to hiring outstanding talent, diligently documenting what approaches work best in specific conditions and feeding that knowledge back into our program positions us well to help schools and districts achieve breakthrough results. Our unique combination of a relentless focus on student achievement, an explicit commitment to racial equity and an unwavering orientation toward continuous learning and improvement enables us to be at once pragmatic and visionary. PartnersSI provides a service that could benefit any low-performing school in the country.

We simply could not have accomplished what we have, nor be positioned to grow for the future, were it not for your financial support, commitment and belief in PartnersSI. Through your generosity, we have made good on the promise of providing high quality public education to hundreds more children each year. Thank you for contributing to changing the opportunities that life will hold for our children.

Sincerely,

Becky Crowe Hill
PARTNERS IN SCHOOL INNOVATION SNAPSHOT

WE ARE
Leaders working to transform the public education system.

WE BELIEVE
Eliminating educational disparities is the single most powerful lever to achieve individual life opportunities, thriving communities and social justice.

WE FOCUS ON
- **Results** — High impact leadership, teaching and learning
- **Equity** — Increased opportunities for low-income African-American and Latino students
- **Systems Change** — Innovation from the classroom to the district

WE IMPROVE

- **DISTRICT SYSTEMS** >> **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP** >> **CLASSROOM TEACHING**

  - Impacting leadership and teaching
  - Aligning vision, strategy and actions
  - Supporting rigorous, targeted instruction

**PartnersSI Schools Achieve Breakthrough Results**

- 5 of the top 10 elementary schools with the largest reading gains in Santa Clara County (out of 241) participated in PartnersSI leadership networks in 2008.

- From 2003 to 2008, Grant Elementary achieved the largest reading gains of any school in Santa Clara County serving predominantly low-income students.

- In 2008, Olinder Elementary had the second highest reading gains of all the elementary schools in Santa Clara County.

- In 2008, Monroe Elementary had the second highest reading gains among San Francisco Unified’s low-performing schools.
**OUR IMPACT**

**PartnersSI Schools Double State Literacy Gains**

Average Annual Gain in Students Reading at Grade Level (in percentage points)

- PartnersSI Schools: 4.5
- CA Schools**: 2.2
- PartnersSI Latinos: 5.6
- CA Latinos**: 2.6
- PartnersSI English Learners: 5.1
- CA English Learners**: 1.3
- PartnersSI Low-Income Students: 4.3
- CA Low-Income Students**: 2.5

*Students who score Proficient/Advanced on the California Standards Test in English Language Arts
**CA comparison figures represent the average annual gain in the state for the past three years

**9 (of 13) PartnersSI Schools Outperform Similar Schools on the Academic Performance Index (API)* in 2008**

API Point Gains

- 2007-2008 PartnersSI Schools
- Similar Schools**

*The Academic Performance Index is the state measure for the academic performance and growth of schools
**As defined by the California Department of Education

PartnersSI schools over time make significantly greater API gains than California elementary schools (21 versus 12 points).
George Washington Carver is a predominantly African American public elementary school in San Francisco's Bayview/Hunter's Point neighborhood. The majority of Carver's students live in poverty and about half reside in public housing projects. What characterizes Carver students, though, is the sheer resilience and energy they bring to school when adults challenge and support them academically and socially. “They’ve been through more in their 5 years than I have in my 38 years,” Ms. Whipple, a 2nd grade teacher says, “If you hook them, they’re going to learn...All you have to do is figure out how.” Sharing this conviction, PartnersSI’s Jaime Kidd immediately went to work with Ms. Whipple and fellow teachers, supporting them to improve their practice to engage students and accelerate reading levels so students could be fully prepared to succeed in 3rd grade and beyond.

“Jaime had a tenacious and subtle way of facilitating the collaboration of the 2nd grade team. She trained and coached us without us even knowing it. Every week Jaime, the other teachers and I would set our student learning goals and she would check in the week after to see if we met those goals. We learned to anticipate the highest priority skills students needed to have for the next year and made sure we taught these in a sequence that made sense.”
—Page Whipple, 2nd grade teacher, Carver Elementary

“The PartnersSI team probably doesn’t even know how invaluable it’s been. The School Improvement Fellows were a serious resource working with teachers to make sure they never lost ground.”
—Emily Wade-Thompson, Principal, Carver Elementary

“We IMPROVE TEACHING TO GET BREAKTHROUGH RESULTS

“One teacher, Page Whipple, switched from Kindergarten to 2nd grade this year. She already came with a strong belief in students and wide range of teaching strategies. So I channeled my support into building her knowledge of the 2nd grade literacy standards. Together, we used this knowledge, along with student data, to set rigorous academic goals and plan instruction to help students meet their goals.”
—Jaime Kidd, PartnersSI School Improvement Fellow

Above: Ms. Whipple and Jaime work with a 2nd grade student.
Right: School Improvement Fellows, Leroy Gaines and Jaime Kidd, who supported Carver teachers this year
Ms. Whipple’s African American Students Outperform Peers in San Francisco

Carver Elementary Highlights in 2008

- Carver’s 2nd grade tripled San Francisco Unified’s average gains in 2nd grade students reading at grade level.
- Carver made a 23-point gain compared to an 18-point gain in similar schools as measured by the Academic Performance Index.

“The PartnersSI team probably doesn’t even know how invaluable it’s been. The School Improvement Fellows were a serious resource working with teachers to make sure they never lost ground.”

—Emily Wade-Thompson, Principal, Carver Elementary
Walking into a weekly 4th grade team meeting at Washington Elementary in downtown San Jose, one hears laughter, candid reflection and feedback and disciplined planning. The three 4th grade teachers work together in a high-performing team. After working side-by-side with PartnersSI’s Jesse Hinueber and a literacy coach the year before, now the teachers independently identify trends in student learning, brainstorm on instructional improvements and design upcoming lessons around clear, measurable objectives. As a result, this year 4th grade English Learner and Latino students significantly outperformed their peers in the district and state. The teachers model the kind of leadership and collaboration that produces results and inspire their colleagues to take the same approach.

"Jesse helped us to streamline our focus and goals, to make them seem attainable. He really got to know our students to help us plan effective teaching strategies. His observations provided us with invaluable feedback. I never felt nervous when he observed us because he usually found strengths in us we never saw and showed us how to use these to improve our teaching."
—Lori Valenzuela, 4th grade teacher, Washington Elementary

"Jesse has earned the respect of the staff because of his willingness to tailor his work to Washington’s needs. He has also led the charge in standards-based curriculum planning and walkthroughs and lab classrooms; all [these] components have had a deep impact on the school, as teachers break away from working in isolation and move toward greater collaboration."
—Maria Evans, Principal, Washington Elementary

"It’s rewarding to envision a high-performing team, help to develop that team, and then step back to see it operating as you imagined. My role has been to bring in concrete structures, systems and ways of achieving success that teachers were capable of implementing already, but needed guidance around. Over the past two years I’ve seen Washington Elementary become a place where there’s depth in getting to know students, of digging into data, of planning and of making changes to better serve our kids."
—Jesse Hinueber, PartnersSI School Partnership Director
When teachers recognize that knowledge for improvement is something they can generate, rather than something that must be handed to them by so-called experts, they are on a new professional trajectory. They are on the way to building a true profession of teaching, a profession in which members take responsibility for steady and lasting improvement.

Hiebert and Stigler (2004)

“Jesse helped us to streamline our focus and our goals, to make them seem attainable….He usually found strengths in us we never saw and showed us how to use these to improve our teaching.”

—Lori Valenzuela, 4th grade teacher, Washington Elementary
In 2007 PartnersSI launched an innovative partnership with San Jose Unified and Applied Materials. Our success with individual San Jose schools for over five years led to the expanded district-level partnership. We collectively committed five million dollars to generate dramatic improvements in San Jose’s downtown schools over a three-year period. This joint investment is already achieving results, as demonstrated by unprecedented student learning growth for Latino students and English Learners.

“We have been fortunate to partner with Applied Materials and PartnersSI and have jointly developed best practices and a focus on improving literacy throughout our schools...PartnersSI has forged a solid and focused collaboration with San Jose Unified in analyzing data to improve teaching and learning. We are on the cusp of breaking the cycle of despair that often permeates high poverty schools and raising expectations and opportunities for many of our students. There is an excitement and energy that is observable at our schools where PartnersSI and the school district are forging a cooperative team to move the bar of success for students.”
—Don Iglesias, Superintendent, San Jose Unified School District

“Applied Materials’ unique partnership with San Jose Unified School District and PartnersSI is a critical element of our Education Initiative strategy and serves as a model for public-private collaboration. We are heartened by the impressive academic gains achieved to date and commend PartnersSI for their steadfast dedication to educational equity.”
—Mark L. Walker, Managing Director, Global Community Affairs, Applied Materials

“We’re learning important lessons about leveraging a public-private partnership to increase student achievement across a district. With a combination of intensive on-site work and leadership networks with a broader group of schools, we’re developing cost-effective ways to spark system-wide impact.”
—Becky Crowe Hill, Executive Director, PartnersSI

Above and left: School leaders at PartnersSI’s leadership networks
Leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning. Leadership effects are largest where the learning needs of students are most acute. *Leithwood and Louis (2004)*

PartnersSI Schools Make Dramatic Reading Gains over a Typical 3-Year Partnership in San Jose

Grant Academy Accelerates Achievement During Partnership

Olinder Makes Dramatic Gains

“...There is an excitement and energy that is observable at our schools where PartnersSI and the school district are forging a cooperative team to move the bar of success for students.”

—Don Iglesias, Superintendent, San Jose Unified School District
CUTTING EDGE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Our team of innovative educators works daily with key stakeholders across the educational system. We test established theory on the ground and capture effective practices to show the field what it will take to close the achievement gap.

“As a funding partner, Cowell can provide our grantee districts and schools serving English Learners in northern and central California with the means to access supporting resources for improvement; but first, the resources themselves must be developed. In that regard, PartnersSI’s ELD Initiative is planting a much-needed seed. The Initiative represents a unique combination of expert focus on a critical part of the solution – Systematic ELD instruction – and sustained support for high-quality implementation. We have been encouraged by the early results in the pilot schools, and we are encouraged to think that the Initiative is generating insights and tools that will eventually benefit teachers and students in many other communities.”

—Ken Doane, Senior Program Officer, The S.H. Cowell Foundation

“Great schools require effective leaders. We believe PartnersSI’s leadership development work will result in more high impact leaders with the skills, competencies and fortitude to improve schools and increase student achievement. Our grant to PartnersSI is an investment in a rigorous, strategic and smart approach that is benefiting Bay Area schools and yielding valuable lessons for the field.”

—Lin Ishihara, Senior Program Officer, The W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation
With the support of the S.H. Cowell Foundation and the Morgan Family Foundation, PartnersSI launched the English Language Development Initiative in 2006 in collaboration with Susana Dutro, a leading English Language Development expert and founder of E.L. Achieve, to implement a robust approach to accelerate the achievement of English Learners in low-performing Bay Area schools.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

• **Increased Expertise**: We trained over 250 teachers and leaders from San Jose and San Francisco Unified in systematic English Language Development.

• **Improved Assessments**: We developed a bank of assessments to measure English language acquisition throughout the school year – the first of its kind in the state.

• **Accelerated Achievement**: English Learners in the pilot research and development school sites of the Initiative made significant gains on the 2007 California English Language Development Test (CELDT).

With the support of Applied Materials, The Walter & Elise Haas Fund, the E. Richard Jones Family Foundation and The W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation, PartnersSI’s Leadership Development Initiative aims to develop and support effective and results-oriented leaders to close the achievement gap in our partner districts. This Initiative is a multi-pronged effort in partnership with our districts, the San Francisco School Alliance and the UC Berkeley Center for Urban School Leadership.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

• **Improved Leadership**: Through our leadership networks, we have built the skills and confidence to close the achievement gap in over 100 district leaders, principals and teacher leaders from over 50 low-performing elementary schools across San Jose Unified, San Francisco Unified and Campbell Union School Districts.

• **Clear Leadership Examples**: We created case studies and vignettes to provide concrete portraits of highly effective school leadership for the field.

• **Expanded Leadership Pipeline**: More than 20 teacher leaders who received PartnersSI’s professional development have since moved into administrative positions.
WE DEVELOP EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

With over 250 PartnersSI alumni in the field, we cultivate talented change agents who go on to make an impact and spread our innovations to improve public education.

Lynn Liao, former Board member (‘99-‘01) and AmeriCorps Partner (‘97-‘98)
Currently: Senior Director, The Broad Residency, The Broad Foundation

“I joined PartnersSI having worked in business and on a variety of social sector issues, but never K-12 education. Within a month, I knew my career would be spent working to improve urban education. I was captured by the passion, energy and intellect of the PartnersSI community, who taught me it is within our collective reach to help all students achieve.”

Tina Trujillo, former Evaluation Specialist and School Partnership Director (‘01-‘03)
Currently: Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Education, University of California, Berkeley

“Working for PartnersSI deeply impacted my career trajectory…I learned valuable lessons from school and district leaders about the challenges to fostering equitable learning experiences for all students while building schools’ capacity to sustain change. This learning drove me to pursue my current research agenda, which explores the ways in which educational leaders in high poverty, high minority settings strive to improve teaching and learning within today’s accountability policy environment. Internally evaluating PartnersSI’s impact on schools also impressed upon me the importance of reformers and instructional leaders reflecting on their work and establishing long-term goals and plans.”

Jennifer Kuhr, School Improvement Fellow, Class of 2008
Currently: Aspiring Principal, New Leaders for New Schools, Bay Area

“PartnersSI has played an integral role in my career path to become a school leader. I couldn’t imagine a better preparatory program to provide both the theoretical and the practical framework for school reform to set me up as an aspiring principal. The leadership experience I’ve acquired at my school site and during our professional development days are what truly set me apart as a New Leaders for New Schools candidate during the application process.”

Kristin Ohnstad, School Improvement Fellow, Class of 2008
Currently: Director of Operations, Teach for America, Bay Area

“PartnersSI put me in a perfect storm of opportunity: a critical mission, a tremendous challenge and the unparalleled opportunity to do something great…Success for our kids is tangible and real. You just have to know what you’re looking for. Then go after it with everything you have.”
In San Francisco Unified School District there is a renewed energy and commitment from the new district leadership to close the achievement gap. SFUSD’s strategic plan and performance management system is aligned with our vision for achieving educational equity, enabling us to deepen our effectiveness as a key partner in transforming the district’s low-performing elementary schools.

We continue into the second year of a three-year partnership with Applied Materials and San Jose Unified School District in an effort to transform the 12 lowest-performing elementary schools in downtown San Jose. With nearly 75% of the district’s English Learners in these schools and only 27% of English Learners at grade level compared to more than 70% of Asian and White students district-wide, we aim to reduce this disparity and create a thriving system of schools to serve the community.

PartnersSI launches a strategic partnership with national organization, New Leaders for New Schools, in Oakland Unified School District. We are combining our continuous improvement approach with the bold and effective leadership of New Leaders principals in order to develop a model that demonstrates how strong leadership and teaching leads to breakthrough student learning results in urban public schools.

In Campbell Union School District, we enter year 2 of providing consulting services through leadership networks – a cost-effective model that is demonstrating its power to achieve dramatic student learning gains.
Partners in School Innovation gratefully acknowledges those who invested in our work between August 1, 2007 and July 31, 2008.

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MISSION
To enable public schools in high-poverty San Francisco Bay Area communities—serving students of color and English Learners—to achieve educational equity through school-based reform.

VISION
Partners in School Innovation envisions a thriving system of urban schools that fosters the growth of all of its students and eliminates the achievement gap by creating vibrant places to teach, learn and grow, with rigorous standards and an unwavering focus on results.

2007-08 Partner Districts and Schools
San Francisco Unified School District
George Washington Carver Elementary School
El Dorado Elementary School
Fairmount Elementary School
Junipero Serra Elementary School
Monroe Elementary School
Sanchez Elementary School

San Jose Unified School District
Almaden Elementary School
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Campbell Union School District
A 12-School Leadership Network Partner

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