

# DOINGWHATWORKS



Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## Moving Turnaround Efforts Forward

Edgemont Elementary School, California • June 2008

Jackson Elementary School, California • June 2008

Topic: Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools

Practice: Improved Leadership

### Highlights

- Principal Brad Huebert used assessments at the class, grade, and school level, to guide decisions about instruction.
- Huebert identified key staff members who would support his decisions and help move the school in the right direction.
- Principal Melissa Bazanos expanded her school's individualized reading program, which set reading goals for students, and rewarded achievement by congratulating students during morning announcements.
- Bazanos used assessment portfolios that followed students from grade to grade, which allowed the school to alter assessments as students improved or curriculum changed.

### About the Sites

Edgemont Elementary School

Moreno Valley, CA

### **Demographics**

84% Hispanic

10% Black

4% White

1% Asian

95% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

68% English Language Learners

3% Special Education

The current principal started in this role in 2005 and began to extend the strategies for school turnaround that the previous principal put in place. She developed a strong core of teacher-leaders who supported the improvement efforts. Key actions taken were:

- Embed teacher training into the school day
- Work closely with the school leadership team
- Present parents with data on their child's progress
- Put a full-time counselor in place
- Train teachers with a set of model lessons
- Establish professional learning communities

### **Jackson Elementary School**

**Sanger, CA**

### **Demographics**

81% Hispanic

13% White

4% Asian

1% Black

77% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

19% English Language Learners

13% Special Education

The current principal came during the turnaround process and built on earlier successes to continue to improve student achievement. He made several significant changes:

- Helped teachers understand all students can learn
- Developed a three-tier intervention program for the school

- Established a leadership team
- Focused on strong staff communications
- Implemented strategies to provide explicit instruction with an ongoing assessment plan
- Increased opportunities for teacher learning
- Redeployed, reassigned, and terminated teachers

## Full Transcript

Heuber: My name is Brad Huebert. I am the Principal at Jackson Elementary in Sanger, California.

Bazanos: Hi, my name is Melissa Bazanos. I am the Principal of Edgemont Elementary School in Moreno Valley Unified School District.

Huebert: I did step in a year after the turnaround process began, and my role was to continue the things that were set in place, to garnish the support that I needed from both the District Office and from the school community to make those changes stick, and then to improve upon those changes. When I became principal at the school, there were a couple of things that had been set in place that I needed to go ahead and make sure continued and improved, and a couple of things that were set in place was going back to the focus on instruction in terms of a standards-based system of instruction and delivery.

Bazanos: I became principal three years into the turnaround process. The most important part of this was for me to use the plans that had been implemented at the onset of the turnaround process, such as the action plan that was created when this high priority grant began. There was also the academic program survey was completed, and that was something that I was able to use the corrective actions in order to make sure the school continued to move forward.

Huebert: When I became principal at Jackson Elementary, we also focused on assessments, both in the classroom and as a grade level and as a school, because assessments really needed to drive the curriculum and at that point they were not. They were used to report progress to parents. So our focal point changed; we needed to go ahead and focus on the data we received from the assessments to drive our instruction and to determine our next course for our instruction.

Bazanos: Scheduling was one of the big things that had started prior to my becoming principal, and then we continued to move forward with that. There were also quite a few programs that had been implemented. One of them was the Accelerated Reader program. That program assigned students a reading level based on their abilities, and then students were then able to choose books at their own reading level. And then they worked with a team of teachers to do goal setting. They were rewarded for their performance on their reading; they had their name announced during morning announcements. It became a big incentive program

for them. So that was a program that we continued, and when I became principal, we expanded it in that we converted our entire school library into an accelerated reader library.

Huebert: For people to buy into the vision that I had for the school and for the school community, they had to know where we were going. It wasn't enough just to tell them to go. We had to know where we were headed. So, my communication started with laying out my vision. Folks needed to know how we were going to get there and where we were going.

Bazanos: Something else that had started prior to my becoming principal was schoolwide assessment portfolios. This was all contained in a folder that followed the student from grade level to grade level as they progressed, and it enabled the teachers to see the growth of any particular student. When I became principal, this process continued and has evolved so that as curriculum changes or as students improve, we alter the types of assessments they are given, and the assessments keep growing along with the students.

Huebert: In my first year as principal there, one of the things I think was most critical to my success and to the school's success was understanding who our key players on staff were—who were the tipping points, so to speak, in each of the grade levels. By understanding which staff members would help to maintain the momentum of ideas and visionary focal points that we were moving in the direction of, it was really important to identify those key people that would support me and help the school move in that direction.