

# White Paper Series

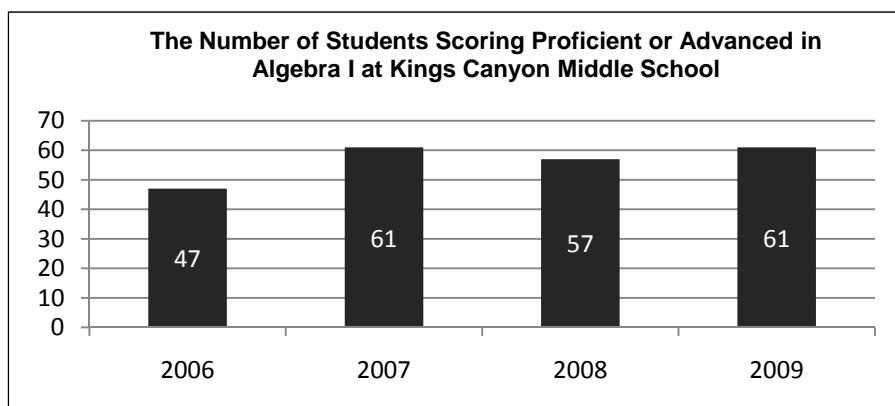
Kings Canyon Middle School

Fresno Unified School District

Fresno, California

The  
Leadership  
and Learning  
Center™

**Kings Canyon Middle School ELA and algebra scores have risen in both grades since 2006 according to data from California standardized tests.**



## Issues

- School leaders wanted to improve the ability of teachers to analyze student data and use the results to build on instructional practices.
- Kings Canyon educators needed to embrace state standards—the California Learning Standards—as a foundation for teaching instruction.
- The school sought to build its internal capacity to train new teachers and provide follow-up assistance for classroom educators.

## Solutions Provided by The Leadership and Learning Center

- Kings Canyon educators have received training in The Center seminars, *Data Teams* and *Data-Driven Decision Making*. These seminars have provided teachers the tools to collaboratively analyze student data, create measurable indicators, implement intervention, and track progress.
- The Center’s seminar, *Making Standards Work*, has helped Kings Canyon educators identify Power Standards and create standards-based performance assessments directly aligned with the California Learning Standards.
- Kings Canyon Middle School partnered with other schools to receive certification training from The Center for its leaders. Today, these leaders conduct training at Kings Canyon on their own, and they continue to utilize and build on the information acquired in The Center’s certification training.

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## **1.0 Executive Summary**

Kings Canyon Middle School is part of the Fresno Unified School District located in the San Joaquin Valley in central California. The school serves about 1,000 seventh- and eighth-grade students. For four years, Kings Canyon Middle School partnered with The Leadership and Learning Center. As a result, the school has made significant gains on California standardized tests. Since 2006, the school's scores have risen in both grades in algebra, English language arts, science, and history.

Under the guidance of Kings Canyon Middle School leaders, teachers have put into practice several professional development strategies to attain and maintain these test gains. Through its partnership with The Leadership and Learning Center, Kings Canyon Middle School has developed a professional development plan focused on standards and data analysis with implementation strategies that directly reflect the needs of the school and its defined goals. Moreover, Kings Canyon and The Center worked specifically to provide teachers with strategies that they could apply in the classroom without delay. As a result, Kings Canyon Middle School has made great strides in improving teacher instruction and increasing student achievement.

## **2.0 The Needs of Kings Canyon Middle School**

Kings Canyon Middle School began its partnership with The Leadership and Learning Center in the 2002-2003 school year. Kings Canyon principal, Clark Mello, was familiar with the work of The Center's founder, Douglas Reeves, and knew that The Center could have a significant impact on the school.

Prior to its partnership with The Center, Kings Canyon had not embraced the California Learning Standards as a foundation for teaching and had little consistency in its professional development efforts. In addition, although there were many strong teachers at the school, the faculty worked in isolation with little opportunity for collaboration with colleagues in a regularly scheduled manner. Kings Canyon teachers also needed greater ability to analyze and utilize student data to guide and improve instructional practices. It was critical to improve the staff's focus on student performance data. Furthermore, Kings Canyon has had a growing English language learner (ELL) population for the past 10 years, which today constitutes 30 to 35 percent of the student body. This percentage of ELL students affects every aspect of planning in terms of professional development and teaching methodology.

In response to these issues, Kings Canyon Middle School leaders made the decision to work with The Center to create and implement a professional development plan that aligned directly with the school's student achievement goals and met the needs of staff. Throughout the four years that Kings Canyon has worked with The Center, the school built significant internal capacity to provide professional development and made improvement in its instructional practices.

### 3.0 The Role of The Leadership and Learning Center

Working with The Leadership and Learning Center, Kings Canyon Middle School created a long-term comprehensive professional development plan that incorporated several Center seminars and aligned directly with the school's goals. Each component of the plan involved innovative teaching strategies and the use of student performance data to determine progress.

Over four years, the professional development plan has included the following seminars and services:

**Power Standards and “Unwrapping” the Standards** (now combined with *Making Standards Work* and retitled *Engaging Classroom Assessments*): *Power Standards* and “Unwrapping” the *Standards* are one-day seminars designed to assist educators in utilizing classroom standards. Power Standards are a subset of the complete list of standards for each grade and for each subject. They represent the essential “safety net” of standards that each teacher should ensure that all students learn prior to leaving their current grade. Students who acquire this “safety net” of knowledge and skills will exit one grade better prepared for the next grade.

In the seminar, “Unwrapping” the *Standards*, Kings Canyon educators learned a powerful practice that they can use to effectively teach the California content standards (Power Standards) to their students. Participants “unwrapped” these standards and determined the Big Ideas or enduring understandings from the standards. Next, they wrote Essential Questions to guide instruction and assessment and discussed ways to “work smarter, not harder” by involving their colleagues in the “unwrapping” process. Participants also had an opportunity during the seminar to deepen personal understanding of the process by practicing and applying the methods. Finally, attendees acquired strategies to implement “unwrapped” standards in their instruction immediately.

**Making Standards Work:** *Making Standards Work* (recently updated, now titled *Engaging Classroom Assessments*) provided Kings Canyon teachers with the strategies to create standards-based performance assessments that directly aligned with the California Learning Standards. In turn, these assessments provided an effective means to improve student performance in the classroom and on high-stakes standardized tests. Kings Canyon participants learned why performance tasks with accompanying rubrics for assessing student proficiency are so powerful.

**Data Teams and Data-Driven Decision Making** (recently updated, now titled *Decision Making for Results*): These seminars provided Kings Canyon attendees the tools to differentiate between unnecessary student data and the relevant data that they should use to drive instruction. Additionally, participants learned new strategies to collaboratively analyze student data, create measurable indicators, implement intervention, and track progress.

The primary goal of The Center's *Data Teams* seminar is to maximize effective instructional practice via constant monitoring of prescribed materials. This seminar works in conjunction with The Center's *Decision Making for Results* seminar. Together, these seminars give participants the tools to analyze relevant student data effectively in collaborative teams. Results are applied not only to inform instruction for individual students, but also to evaluate and improve core general education practices and the overall effectiveness of interventions.

The Leadership and Learning Center consultants customized each *Data Teams* seminar to align with the needs of Kings Canyon teachers.

**Effective Teaching Strategies:** This one-day Center seminar focused on providing Kings Canyon educators with an overview and modeling of effective instructional strategies along with concrete, customized examples that teachers could use immediately in their classrooms. Participants received assistance in planning the implementation of strategies for an actual upcoming unit of instruction, and in how to share strategies and coordinate each strategy with other Center seminars.

**Implementation Visits:** The Center's professional development associates and Kings Canyon leaders recognized that focusing on implementation was essential for the success of school change and improvement. At Kings Canyon, each on-site visit by a Center associate focused primarily on the implementation of practices from the *Data Teams* and *Effective Teaching Strategies* seminars.

**On-Site Certification Training:** Kings Canyon leaders invested in professional development sustainability by certifying teacher-leaders to guide professional development and teach The Center's seminars within their own school and district. On-site certification enabled Kings Canyon to build internal capacity and save money toward future professional development. In 2005, the school teamed with five other schools across two school districts to arrange certification training in The Center's *Data-Driven Decision Making* seminar.

## 4.0 Kings Canyon Middle School Results

The state of California uses the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program to measure student learning in grades 2 through 11. STAR is designed to help schools understand how well they are preparing their students. It is a high-profile accountability tool and decisions about specific schools and students are often based on the results.

The STAR program\* includes:

- The California Standards Tests (CSTs)—a series of standards-based assessments
- The California Modified Assessment (CMA)—a standards-based test for many students with individualized education programs
- The California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA)—a test for students with significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to take the CSTs or CMA
- The Standards-Based Tests in Spanish (STS)—tests for students who either received instruction in Spanish or were enrolled in the United States for less than 12 months

The California Standards Tests are a series of standards-based assessments developed to measure whether students are mastering the specific skills defined for each grade by the state of California. The CSTs are given in English language arts in grades 2 through 11; math in grades 2 through 7; science in grades 5, 8, and 10; and history-social science in grades 8 and 11.

CST results show the level of a student's proficiency in each of the subjects tested. Students receive one of five ratings on the tests: advanced, proficient, basic, below basic, or far below basic. The goal is for all students to score at or above the proficient level.

Kings Canyon Middle School has made significant gains on STAR:

- The percentage of students in grade 7 who scored proficient or advanced in English language arts and math has risen every year since 2006.
- The percentage of students in grade 7 who scored proficient or advanced in English language arts has doubled between 2006 and 2009.
- The percentage of students in grade 8 who scored proficient or advanced in algebra, history, English language arts, and math has risen every year since 2006.

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\* Prior to 2008-2009, the STAR also included the California Achievement Test, a national norm-referenced test.

Kings Canyon Middle School leaders recognize that results of professional development are not measured by test scores alone. According to the principal, Clark Mello, teachers have made significant progress in the use of effective teaching strategies and the use of student data.

Results of other Center professional development efforts include:

- Today, seven years later, the Fresno Unified School District has put together a rigorous system to help track student and school performance data. Teachers are able to access current data to immediately inform instruction with ease.
- Kings Canyon teachers have become more serious and more selective regarding professional development initiatives. Because of its partnership with The Leadership and Learning Center, Kings Canyon teachers have become wary of “drive-by” workshops and other short-term, quick fixes. Furthermore, Kings Canyon leaders have seen a positive shift in attitude toward professional development among teachers. Teachers recognize the merit of research-based, proven, targeted teaching strategies that are tied to the results of careful data analysis.

## 5.0 Lessons Learned at Kings Canyon Middle School

Kings Canyon Middle School and The Leadership and Learning Center recognize the following specific lessons as important contributors to King Canyon's success.

**Involvement of Classroom Teachers:** Kings Canyon leaders recognized that the school would see better results in professional development by involving teachers in the process of planning and implementing each Center seminar. As a result of this involvement, The Center customized each seminar based on the teachers' specific needs and on-site follow-up visits were focused directly at the classroom level.

**Build Internal Capacity:** In 2005, Kings Canyon Middle School teamed with five other schools across two school districts to receive training in The Center's *Data-Driven Decision Making* certification seminar. Now, Kings Canyon Middle School has the ability to carry on training in this seminar using its own staff.

**Build on Results:** Leaders at Kings Canyon realize that some of their early efforts at data-driven decision making were simplistic. According to the principal, Clark Mello, "The benefit [of data analysis] came from involving teachers in the process of watching the results numbers. Today, eight years later, our district has put together an amazing system to help track student and school performance data. Teachers are able to access current data to immediately inform instruction easily. However, I still remember the early efforts of administering monthly pre- and post-tests and then painstakingly charting the results."

**Focus on Implementation:** Kings Canyon leaders ensured that the benefits of each seminar would be sustained and have lasting impact by scheduling implementation visits at the school. This process allowed classroom educators to have direct access to The Center's professional development associates to address specific challenges and receive direct feedback at the classroom level.

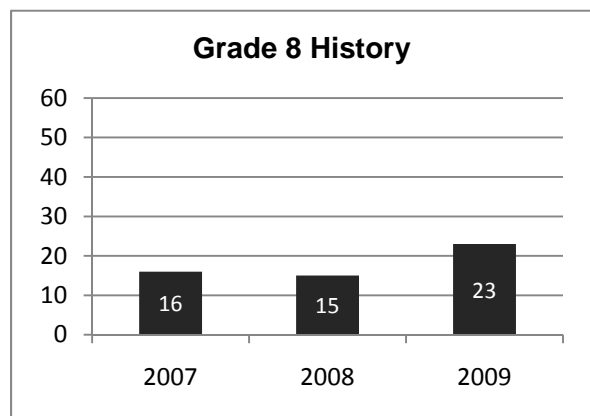
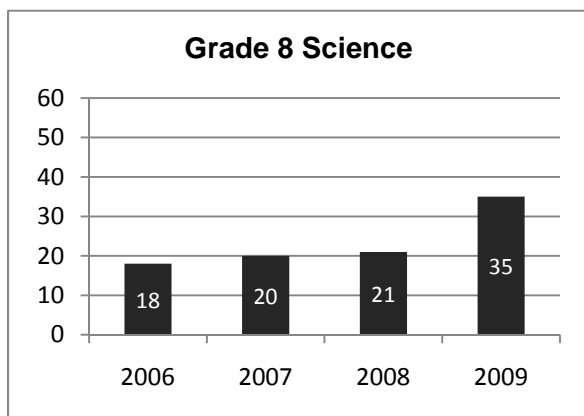
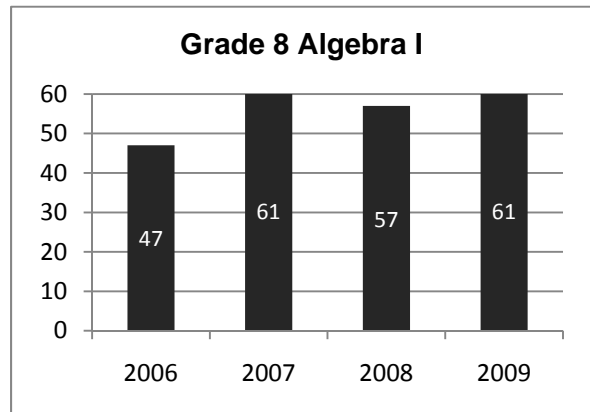
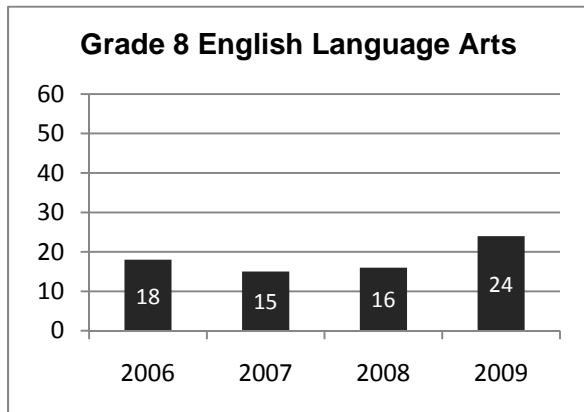
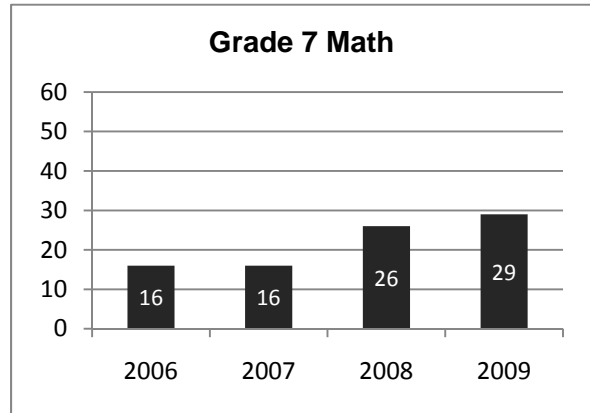
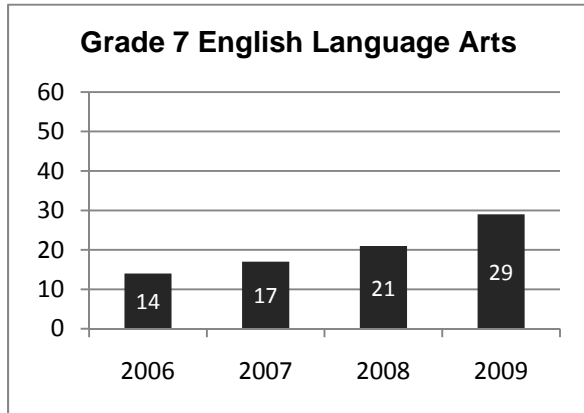
Kings Canyon Middle School continues to use Leadership and Learning Center resources by using its internal capacity for professional development built through its successful partnership with The Center. Today, The Center continues its work throughout the state of California to improve teaching practices and ensure the academic success of the state's students.



# Appendix One

## Kings Canyon Middle School STAR Results

### Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Above 2006–2009



## Appendix Two

### Kings Canyon Middle School STAR Results by Subgroup

#### Percentage of Students in a Designated Group Scoring Proficient or Above in Comparison to Students in the General Population

Subgroup	Grade 7 English Language Arts	Grade 7 Math
All Students	39%	29%
Females	31%	24%
Males	28%	32%
African American	46%	27%
Asian	28%	39%
Filipino	N/A	N/A
Hispanic or Latino	28%	23%
Economically Disadvantaged	30%	28%
English Learner	6%	17%
Fluent—English Proficient and English Only	42%	34%
Migrant Education	29%	34%

Subgroup	Grade 8 English Language Arts	Grade 8 Algebra I	Grade 8 Science	Grade 8 History
All Students	24%	61%	35%	23%
Females	25%	64%	28%	18%
Males	22%	58%	42%	28%
African American	35%	N/A	30%	19%
Asian	30%	70%	48%	29%
Filipino	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hispanic or Latino	19%	51%	28%	19%
Economically Disadvantaged	24%	61%	35%	23%
English Learner	3%	57%	21%	2%
Fluent—English Proficient and English Only	32%	62%	40%	32%
Migrant Education	22%	83%	43%	21%

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