

**Sylvan Park Elementary School
Implementation of High Priority
Schools Grant (HPSG) Action Plan, 2008-09**

October 2009

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I. Introduction and Methods

Sylvan, a Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) elementary school with 836 students, is located in Van Nuys. In 2008-09, the ethnic composition of the student body was 94% Hispanic, 2% White, 2% African-American, and 4% Other. In addition, 62% of the students were English Learners and 90% of the school's students were eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), a proxy for low socio-economic status.

Participation in HPSG

Sylvan entered the High Priority Schools Grant (HPSG) process in 2006-07 as a Decile 2 school with mixed trends in student achievement. Public *Works*, Inc. facilitated the needs assessment and plan development process in conjunction with Sylvan's District School Leadership Team (DSLTL).

Sylvan then selected Public *Works*, Inc. (PW) from a list of State approved providers to serve as the school's external evaluator beginning in Fall 2007. The overarching purpose of HPSG is to raise student achievement in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. Sylvan Park's HPSG grant application focused on actions intended to refine the standards-based instructional program in place at the school to address underlying reasons for underperformance. In particular, the HPSG Action Plan identified the following school improvement priorities:

- 1) Implement after-school and/or Saturday intervention programs.
- 2) Focus school-wide, grade-level, and vertical team (by track) professional development (including psychomotor time).
- 3) Fund a part-time Intervention Coordinator.
- 4) Fund a part-time English Language Development (ELD) coach/coordinator.
- 5) Fund one teacher position for ELD/ELA needs of newcomers and ELD students in levels 1-2.
- 6) Expand the tutoring program for at-risk and EL students.
- 7) Enroll all faculty in required AB466 training in Mathematics in their respective grade-level text.
- 8) Inform and involve parents in academic interventions.

Evaluation Activities and Methods

As part of its contract with Sylvan to evaluate the HPSG grant, PW has provided the school with a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data related to school improvement efforts. The following key evaluation-related tasks were completed in the 2008-2009 school year:

- Summative Achievement Data: PW delivered a presentation to the staff of Sylvan Park in September 2008. The data presentation provided an analysis of summative achievement data for the years 2005-2008 including Academic Performance Index, Adequate Yearly Progress, and the California Standards Test results.

Detailed English/Language Arts and Mathematics CST skill strand data by grade level was also presented to staff (see **Appendix A**). This data is used in this report to examine student achievement trends at Sylvan Park so as to set a context for grade level professional development and teacher collaboration.

- After-School Intervention Observations: Two representatives from PW conducted classroom observations of the After School Intervention program, focusing on English Language Arts. The HPSG Steering Committee members received written feedback summarizing general observations, areas of strength, as well as areas that can be expanded upon and/or improved.
- Staff Survey: Staff at Sylvan Park were surveyed in April 2009 during a regularly scheduled faculty meeting. A total of 41 surveys were completed, representing an 79% response rate. Respondents were asked to respond to statements in nine areas based on a four-point Likert Scale (4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree). Respondents could also reply with “Don’t Know.” Survey responses were integrated with focus group summaries and provided insight into the faculty’s perception of areas of strength and weakness in school operations. Complete survey data are available in **Appendix B** of this report.
- HPSG ILT Meeting: PW representatives attended monthly HPSG Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meetings focused on monitoring the execution of monthly objectives tied to improving student achievement. The ILT was comprised of school administrators, content coaches, and coordinators. Meetings focused on review of data, planning professional development and collaboration, and aligning other HPSG functions including provision of targeted coaching support and academic intervention services.
- Facilitation of grade levels’ implementation of common lessons: PW facilitated multiple meetings with teachers during grade level professional development. Training centered on developing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at each grade level. To provide concrete guidance for grade level PLCs, PW trained teachers on a Cycle of Inquiry based on a) identifying a focus that reflects student needs based on analysis of formative and summative data; b) matching research-based instructional strategies to the agreed upon focus; c) developing common lesson plans that identify how a key standard(s) will be taught to improve student achievement in the agreed upon focus; d) examining the effectiveness of the common lesson via classroom observations, formative assessment data, and analysis of student work using protocol; and e) reflecting on the process and implications for ongoing collaboration and professional growth. The lesson plan template used is included in Appendix C.
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- Conducting focus groups and interviews: PW conducted focus groups and interviews with teachers, administrators, coaches, and coordinators at Sylvan in the Spring of 2009. A copy of the protocols used for the site visit focus groups and interviews is included in **Appendix D**.

Report Organization

This evaluation report is organized as follows:

- **Section II** presents an assessment of progress in the core instructional program. This section includes summative student achievement data for 2006-2009, as well as a discussion of survey and focus group data related to instructional practices.
- **Section III** presents findings from Sylvan Park's academic support and after-school and Saturday intervention model that focused on addressing the needs of underperforming students in English/Language Arts.
- **Section IV** presents information on the staff support, including teachers' reactions to professional development on the Professional Learning Communities (PLC)/Cycle of Inquiry.
- **Section V** presents Sylvan's focus on parent involvement, outreach to parents and communication on intervention criteria, schedule, and linkage to core instruction.
- **Section VI** presents conclusions and recommendations based on the aforementioned improvement priorities and findings as detailed in preceding sections.

II. Core Instructional Program

Achievement Data

In accordance with the HPSG growth targets, Sylvan is expected to meet growth targets for the Academic Performance Index (API). As shown in Table 1 below, Sylvan consistently met school-wide and subgroup API growth targets since in 2007 and 2008. In 2009, only the Hispanic subgroup met API targets; school-wide and other subgroups increased but at a rate lower than mandated under State accountability. It is important to note that the API measures school progress using a growth metric; *decreasing* the percentage of students scoring in the lowest proficiency levels (Far Below Basic and Below Basic) of the California Standards Tests (CST) in English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics is a heavily weighted factor in calculation of the API.

Table 1: Base API Scores and Targets 2006-2008

	2006 Base API	2007 API Growth	Met 2007 Target?	2007 Base API	2008 API Growth	Met 2008 Target?	2008 Base API	2009 Growth API	Met 2009 Target?
School-wide	652	692	Yes	686	696	Yes	694	697	No
Subgroups									
Hispanic	653	653	Yes	683	691	Yes	689	696	Yes
Economically Disadvantaged	651	651	Yes	684	691	Yes	689	693	No
English Learners	643	643	Yes	664	673	Yes	673	678	No

Source: California Department of Education

Sylvan Park has not been successful in terms of meeting Federal Accountability targets. In 2009, none of the AYP targets were met in either English/Language Arts or Mathematics. As an attainment metric, AYP measures school progress in terms of the propensity of all students to meet grade level standards as measured by the CST. The only significant progress under AYP occurred among EL students in English/Language Arts (14% more students scoring proficient).

Table 2: AYP in English Language Arts and Mathematics, 2007-2009

	English Language Arts					Mathematics				
	2007 AYP	2008 AYP	2009 AYP	Net	Met 2009 Targets?	2007 AYP	2008 AYP	2009 AYP	Net	Met 2009 Targets?
School-wide	27%	29%	30%	3%	No	42%	42%	43%	1%	No
Subgroups										
Hispanic	26%	28%	29%	3%	No	42%	41%	43%	1%	No
Economically Disadvantaged	27%	28%	29%	2%	No	42%	41%	42%	0%	No
English Learners	10%	24%	24%	14%	No	37%	37%	38%	1%	No

Source: California Department of Education

Achievement on the California Standards Test (CST) in English Language Arts has improved. Since 2006, 16% more students scored Proficient or Advanced and 18% fewer students scored Below Basic or Far Below Basic. Moreover, Sylvan's subgroups have also benefited from increased proficiency in English/Language Arts

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including Economically Disadvantaged (14% increase), English Learners (6% increase), and Students with Disabilities (5% increase).

Table 3: CST Data in English Language Arts, 2006-2009

	English Language Arts				
	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net
All Students					
Number Tested	770	680	630	631	-139
% Advanced	5%	5%	7%	11%	6%
% Proficient	14%	19%	18%	24%	10%
% Basic	33%	37%	39%	35%	2%
% Below Basic	25%	24%	20%	18%	-7%
% Far Below Basic	23%	16%	15%	12%	-11%
English Learners					
Number Tested	549	403	358	344	-205
% Proficient and Above	10%	9%	11%	16%	6%
Economically Disadvantaged					
Number Tested	725	645	582	566	-159
% Proficient and Above	19%	24%	25%	33%	14%
Students with Disability					
Number Tested	96	81	82	80	-16
% Proficient and Above	5%	0%	9%	10%	5%

Source: California Department of Education

Table 4: CST Data in Mathematics, 2006-2009

	Mathematics				
	2006	2007	2008	2009	Net
All Students					
Number Tested	771	680	630	631	-140
% Advanced	12%	16%	19%	25%	13%
% Proficient	22%	24%	24%	26%	4%
% Basic	26%	24%	25%	26%	0%
% Below Basic	30%	27%	26%	17%	-13%
% Far Below Basic	10%	8%	6%	7%	-3%
English Learners					
Number Tested	549	403	358	344	-205
% Proficient and Above	28%	26%	27%	37%	9%
Economically Disadvantaged					
Number Tested	726	645	582	566	-160
% Proficient and Above	35%	40%	42%	49%	14%
Students with Disability					
Number Tested	96	81	82	80	-16
% Proficient and Above	10%	10%	20%	19%	9%

Source: California Department of Education

Similarly, student achievement in Mathematics has also greatly increased. Since 2006, 17% more students scored Proficient or Advanced and 16% fewer students scored Below Basic or Far Below Basic. Moreover, Sylvan's subgroups have also benefited from increased proficiency in Mathematics including Economically Disadvantaged (14% increase), English Learners (9% increase), and Students with Disabilities (9% increase).

Table 5 below displays the scores of English Learners at Sylvan on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). Administered annually to all EL students, the CELDT categorizes EL students into one of five ELD levels. As shown below, the percentage of EL students has declined by 130 students (29% decrease). Simultaneously, the percentage of EL students scoring in the top proficiency levels (Advanced/Early Advanced) on the CELDT has remained unchanged since 2006. The percentage scoring Intermediate and Early Intermediate has slightly decreased by 2%, with 2% more Beginning students.

Table 5: CELDT Data, 2005-06 to 2008-09

	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	Net
Number Tested	576	548	463	446	-130
Language Proficiency					
Advanced	10%	4%	5%	12%	2%
Early Advanced	29%	23%	21%	27%	-2%
Intermediate	43%	43%	52%	40%	-3%
Early Intermediate	13%	22%	16%	14%	1%
Beginning	5%	8%	22%	7%	2%

Source: California Department of Education

However, as shown in Table 6, more than 50% of EL students improved at least one CELDT level annually (AMAO 1). This represented a 5.4% improvement since 2005-06. Sylvan exceeded the AMAO target of 51.6% in 2008-09. Moreover, the percentage of EL students meeting the minimal criteria for attainment of English language proficiency (AMAO 2) increased by 16.6% to 46.3% (again exceeding the AMAO 2 target of 30.6%).

Table 6: Title III Accountability, 2005-06 to 2008-09

	N of CELDT takers	% prior year data	Annual CELDT Growth			Attainment of English Proficiency		
			N in Cohort 1	N met AMAO 1	% met AMAO 1	N in Cohort 2	N met AMAO 2	% met AMAO 2
2005-06	576	95.5%	550	275	50.0%	323	96	29.7%
2006-07	548	96.9%	531	303	57.1%	276	97	35.1%
2007-08	465	98.3%	457	265	58.0%	255	83	32.5%
2008-09	446	97.5%	435	241	55.4%	272	126	46.3%
Net	-130	2.0%	-115	-34	5.4%	-51	30	16.6%

Source: California Department of Education

Structuring Grade Levels into Professional Learning Communities

In 2008-09, PW provided training for Sylvan Park’s teachers (grades 2-5) on restructuring grade level collaboration in line with the guiding principles of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The three “big ideas” associated with PLCs include¹:

1. Student-Centered: Educators must focus on what students have learned and not merely what has been taught;
2. Collaborative: Educators must work collaboratively, making public what have heretofore been private instructional decisions; and,
3. Accountable: Educators must accept accountability for shared student success, analyzing data on student progress and reflecting on how best to use data to inform continuous improvement efforts.

To operationalize the PLC concept, Sylvan teachers were trained on the Cycle of Inquiry, a five-step process for operating as an effective PLC. The steps in the Cycle of Inquiry include:

1. Identifying a focus that reflects student needs based on analysis of formative and summative data;
2. Matching research-based instructional strategies to the agreed upon focus;
3. Developing common lesson plans that identify how a key standard(s) will be taught to improve student achievement in the agreed upon focus;
4. Examining the effectiveness of the common lesson via classroom observations, formative assessment data, and analysis of student work using protocol; and
5. Reflecting on the process and implications for ongoing collaboration and professional growth.

In Step 1, PW presented summative achievement data for 2005-2008 to all teachers. Based on the analysis of data, teachers were instructed to identify objective/focus at each grade-level. In ELA, grade levels focused on Word Analysis and Vocabulary Development (grades K-2) and Reading Comprehension (grades 3-5) standards. These standards are heavily weighted in the ELA Framework as well as the CST. In Mathematics, grade levels focused on Number Sense standards for the same reasons. Copies of the CST skill strand data used to identify these foci are included in **Appendix A** of this report.

Next in Step 2, teachers were asked to select a set of common instructional strategies that would be used to help students achieve mastery on these standards. In particular, teachers received training in the nine “Marzano” strategies which rank

¹ Richard DuFour, “What is a ‘Professional Learning Community?’” *Educational Leadership*, 61 (8), pp. 6-11 (May 2004)

instructional strategies in terms of the research based behind them.² Teachers also received information on a re-ranking of these nine instructional strategies in terms of their effectiveness among English Learners.³

In Step 3 of the Cycle of Inquiry, Sylvan teachers were asked to collaboratively design common lessons that integrated research-based instructional strategies for targeting standards in the agreed upon foci. Each grade level presented draft lessons plans and accepted constructive critique from their peers prior to lesson delivery. In follow-up weekly psychomotor time⁴, teachers were able to continue PLC style collaboration and receive additional training from content coaches on how to improve teaching and learning.

Overall, the focus on purposeful collaboration had a positive effect. Focus groups with teachers clearly showed that faculty were aware of their grade-level focus. For example, all respondents cited their focus as targeting Basic and Below Basic students in Reading Comprehension (High Frequency words K-1 and Blending/Dictation at 2-3) during Independent Work Time (IWT). Similarly, 98% of staff surveyed said that within their grade-level teachers followed a consistent plan to identify student needs and target those needs. Additionally, 93% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Within my grade level, teachers regularly analyze student assessment results in order to modify instruction.” Given that this instruction is often targeted to the California Standards, it’s important to note that staff felt that their students understood the California Standards to which they were being held accountable. When asked to respond to the statement “Within the classes offered by my grade level, students understand classroom expectations (i.e., they understand what standards they are being held accountable for)” 87% either agreed or strongly agreed.

The work within PLCS also stimulated teachers to incorporate more scaffolding and differentiation techniques into teaching. According to survey results nearly all (92%) of teachers agreed that within their grade-levels, teachers were delivering differentiated pacing and/or additional instructional time for students. For example, both focus group and survey data suggest that Sylvan teachers are employing SDAIE and ELD techniques during daily classroom instruction. When provided with the statement “Within my grade level, teachers regularly use SDAIE and ELD techniques in daily classroom instruction” on the staff survey, 88% of staff either agreed or strongly agreed. Similarly, a majority of staff agreed that implementation of Independent Work Time (IWT) which is set aside time for student differentiation improved, with all teachers noting that 80-90% of their grade-level implemented IWT on a regular basis during the year (3 times a week). Teachers indicated they felt

² R. Marzano et. al., (2001) *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research Based Instructional Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

³ Hill, J.D., and K.M. Flynn (2006). *Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

⁴ Psychomotor is time when students are supervised by teaching assistants and/or other certificated employees in order to allow time for targeted teachers to participate in collaboration during the regular school day. Using HPSG funds, Sylvan provided funding for two hours per week of psychomotor time for each grade level.

supported by their coaches through regular observations of IWT, as well as the drafting of norms (i.e., Must and May-dos). For example, one teacher commented, “Coaching assistance during the first two weeks was instrumental in helping me understand methods to aid me in running IWT seamlessly.”

Nonetheless, staff at Sylvan were most likely to name “Serving the Needs of English Learners” as an area in need of improvement (39%). This finding may reflect the fact that teachers came away from the PLC collaboration with a greater understanding of the need to teach to standards, rather than merely to deliver lessons from the adopted textbooks. It also indicates a greater understanding of the need for scaffolding and differentiation in order to provide all students with access to the rigor of the State standards.

Strengths

- Staff are using data, both formative and summative, to guide instruction.
- Teachers became aware of their grade level foci and received set-aside time for ongoing training and collaboration.
- PLC collaboration has raised awareness of the need to teach to the rigor of the standards in a purposeful, collaborative manner.

Areas for Improvement

- Deepening the level of rigor in the classroom so that “first best teaching” assists more students in mastering key standards in ELA and Math.
- Continuing to collaborate around common pedagogical approaches linked to the teaching of standards, particularly shared definitions of scaffolding and differentiation for struggling students.
- Continuing to provide intensive and strategic support to students in the subgroups most at-risk of not meeting accountability targets (i.e., English Learners and Students with Disabilities).
- Increase the rate of academic growth in order to meet State (API) and Federal (AYP) accountability targets.

III. Academic Support & Intervention

In 2008-09, HPSG funds were used to provide after-school academic intervention twice a week during 45-60 minute sessions. These intervention sessions were held in small groups of 4-8 students per teacher. Students were homogeneously grouped according to their demonstrated skills and knowledge on a diagnostic exam, with referral to English Language Arts intervention taking precedence over that of Mathematics. The following criteria were used to refer students for intervention:

- Prior year CST scores (Below Basic and Far Below Basic students were prioritized)
- Open Court Reading (SOAR) assessments (Strategic and Intensive students)
- Teacher recommendations at the end of the year
- Performance in intervention during the previous year

The impetus for the intervention program was the perceived inadequacy of existing district-funded intervention programs. These were seen by most faculty and staff as either not academically oriented or purely tutorial in nature, and often based on large teacher: student ratios that precluded effective intervention teaching.

Approximately 160 K-5 students were referred to HPSG-funded academic intervention (see Table 7). Teachers staffed after-school intervention on a voluntary basis and typically taught their own students. As such, academic intervention was more prevalent on some calendar tracks than others (see Table 8).

Table 7: HPSG Intervention Participants by Grade Level, 2007-08

K	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
20	30	18	44	18	30

Table 8: Number of Teacher Volunteers for Intervention

Track A	Track B	Track C	Track D
5	2	3	8

Intervention staff were given the discretion to utilize whatever curriculum necessary, as long as they focused on either pre-teaching and/or re-teaching the key standards. Teachers most commonly noted use of the following curriculum: Open Court Reading’s intervention text, *Voyager*, for grades 2-3; and in grades 4-5 some staff implemented the OCR intervention guide, as well as the Kaleidoscope series.

According to survey data teachers overwhelmingly agreed that the criteria for identifying and referring students for intervention was clear (89% of teachers agreed with both the clarity of criteria for identifying as well as referring). Similarly, focus group respondents were much more enthusiastic regarding the structure and purpose of intervention this year. All indicated they felt the focus on re-teaching/pre-teaching of key standards provided students with additional assistance and more importantly increased their confidence during daily instruction. As one teacher put it, “*The increase in confidence is huge, because it helps them understand that they can be successful if they try harder.*” To triangulate this focus group data,

PW asked survey respondents to rate their agreement to the following statement: “there is a notable difference in the academic progress of students that participate in intervention.” Over half (58%) of the respondents noted a difference in students’ academic progress by agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement.

PW attempted to assess the effectiveness of HPSG funded academic intervention by collecting Student Online Assessment Reports (SOAR) in ELA for Quarters 1-2 for all after-school intervention participants, along with a comparison group of 250-300 non-intervention students that meet the same academic achievement patterns as those students in intervention. However, district-level tensions between the teachers’ collective bargaining unit (United Teachers of Los Angeles) and the district management over looming budgetary cutbacks and staff layoffs resulted in many teachers “boycotting” formative assessments. As such, the data intended to evaluate the HPSG after-school intervention program was limited and incomplete. This evaluation was, therefore, unable to determine the impact of after-school intervention participation on student outcomes.

PW did, however, conduct observations of the after-school intervention program in April 2009. A total of six lessons were observed, which accounted for nearly half of the intervention classes in session. PW observed ELA lessons in grades 2-4 (all 5th grade teachers were absent on both days of observation). During these observations, special attention was placed on the delivery and participation of the teacher and students in the intervention lesson, as well as overall classroom management (i.e., beginning promptly and teacher preparedness).

Based on our observations of ELA intervention lessons the following findings were notably positive:

- In all intervention lessons observed there was evidence that the lesson was prepared in advance. This was evident in the way in which teachers transitioned students from small group activities to independent work with ease. For example, in ELA lessons, the teacher previewed vocabulary, guided students through fluency tests, and finally had students read passages.
- Moreover, lessons began promptly and time during intervention was used efficiently. For instance, in a few classes the teacher used time during the story to discuss how to make inferences from the story and why making inferences is a crucial element to reading.
- Teachers engaged all students in the lesson by expecting all students to participate in the activity and/or discussions. On average, there were six students per intervention class. The small group setting also facilitated the teachers’ ability to involve all students by allowing the teacher to connect with each student. There were regular comprehension checks throughout the lesson as well.

In terms of areas for ongoing improvement, PW noted the following:

- During some of the intervention lessons, the teachers did not give sufficient time for students to formulate their own ideas around the concept. For example, the teachers moved on after asking students to demonstrate the

concept verbally without asking for students to explain their reasoning. Given the ratio of students to teacher, the learning objective for the intervention should have allowed students to spend time understanding concepts that they normally don't have time to discuss and/or explain in a full class context.

Strengths

- Sylvan successfully established its own academic intervention program which was highly targeted, based around homogeneous groupings in a small teacher: student ratio, and focused on data-driven foci. Approximately 160 students were able to benefit from a program that would not have been possible to fund without HPSG.
- Diagnostic assessments to identify the group students were successful in targeting intervention to student need.
- The focus on pre-teaching/re-teaching served to motivate teachers to participate; flexibility with curricula was instrumental in increasing student access to after-school intervention.

Areas of Improvement

- Intervention programs funded by HPSG relied on teachers to staff the program. As such, access to the intervention programs was not guaranteed. Many more students were eligible, but staff did not agree to participate. Going forward, more staff representing all grade levels and tracks should be recruited to staff academic intervention.
- There is still a need to accurately examine the “added value” of student participation in academic intervention. The lack of formative assessment data due to teacher refusal to administer the district's benchmark tests compromised the evaluation's ability to carry out this task. Going forward, data collection and analysis must be prioritized.

IV. Staff Support

Professional Development

Public Works, Inc helped plan and facilitate professional development on the Cycle of Inquiry for teachers. Teachers received extensive professional development on developing common lessons in line with the guidelines for Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Teacher collaboration was aimed at providing teachers with time to link instructional strategies to upcoming lessons in both English Language Arts and Mathematics, then providing time for them to observe the lesson being instructed and analyze corresponding student work.

According to survey respondents, Sylvan's professional development is aligned with school-wide improvement goals and related to areas where student academic performance needs improvement. When asked to respond to the statement "Professional development is related to areas where student academic performance needs improvement," 89% of staff either agreed or strongly agreed. Additionally, 87% agreed with the statement "Professional development offerings are aligned with school-wide improvement goals."

Similarly, focus group respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the Cycle of Inquiry process was important to their professional growth as teachers, because it yielded important data. For instance, teachers commented that based on their peer observations they discovered that a notable cross-section of teachers were struggling with the direct instruction portion of the lesson. Specifically, teachers struggled with properly introducing a lesson, allowing more time for student interaction (i.e., student talk) and modeling. According to respondents, "*Direct instruction is still a major issue at Sylvan and must be a school focus.*" Concurrently, survey analysis indicated that professional development this year highlighted effective teaching practices (95% of staff either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Professional development highlights effective teaching practices").

Despite these benefits of engaging in a Cycle of Inquiry, all focus group respondents noted changes were needed in the structuring of the Cycle of Inquiry process. Namely, the length of time it took to complete an entire cycle and the calendaring of professional development needs attention. Nearly half of respondents indicated that they and some of their peers felt as though the Cycle of Inquiry activity was hyper focused on producing the "perfect" lesson, which caused other portions of the process to be rushed, specifically analyzing student work. Teachers would like more structured activities around analyzing student work. For instance, a few grade-levels used multiple choice tests, rather than constructed response and felt as though the data was less useful. Also, many teachers noted feeling burned out given simultaneously participating in the Cycle of Inquiry and preparing for testing.

Teacher Collaboration

Survey respondents answered questions related to teacher collaboration during psychomotor most positively. According to responses, grade level meetings were

occurring regularly, were well attended, and focused on classroom instruction and reviewing data. Table 9 highlights these findings from surveys with staff.

Table 9: Survey Items on Grade Level Meetings (N=41)

	% Agree
Grade level meetings occur at least twice per month.	80%
Grade level meetings are well attended.	83%
The time during psychomotor is focused on instruction and regularly reviewing formative assessments.	49%

Focus group respondents indicated that psychomotor time could be improved in terms of lengthening the time devoted to planning and analyzing data. For example, these activities often consume the first hour and part of the second hour, which is not as well attended. As one respondent put it, *“The same teachers are always staying the second hour to finish the activity, while the same teachers continually leave.”* Also, focus group respondents noted the lack of emphasis on analyzing formative assessment data due to teachers neglecting to turn in their data out of protest. As one focus group participant voiced, *“Some teachers used it [boycott] as an excuse to be lazy about using data that is useful.”*

Coaching

This year, coaching activities focused on assisting teachers with structuring IWT through providing demonstration lessons and observations. All respondents found this process extremely helpful, including veteran teachers, many of whom noted it caused them to find new methods for consistently providing IWT. Many of the teachers felt it was the most lasting information they received from coaches. Most (79%) teachers indicated that novice teachers were supported by veteran staff and/or coaches. During focus groups, respondents noted they would like more access to coaches during class-time through demonstration lessons, as was done for modeling IWT.

Strengths

- Engaging in a Cycle of Inquiry was useful because it allowed teachers to collect data that was useful for them, especially as it related to areas that need improvement in their school and/or grade level.
- Teachers felt that collaboration with their peers was successful and grade level meetings were regularly set and well attended by many teachers.
- Coaching on IWT through demonstration lessons and observations were well-received by staff.

Areas of Improvement

- Teachers wanted more time to analyze student work during their Cycles of Inquiry.
- Teacher boycotts prevented the collection of consistent data around which to make decisions and build a Cycle of Inquiry. The availability and accessibility of the teams’ data is critical for this kind of work to be successful.

V. Parent Involvement

In 2008-09, communication with parents was largely focused on instructional quality and consistency, academic intervention, and parenting education. Staff members indicated that the school emphasized outreach to parents. The majority agreed that Sylvan regularly communicated with parents (specifically, 97% agreed with the statement “Parents receive communication from this school at least monthly”) and also provided parents with parent education in order to support learning at home (90% agreed with the statement “Parent education and training is focused on helping parents support learning at home”). Below is a description of activities offered to parents through Sylvan:

Curriculum/Instruction

- The school’s ELD coordinator provided workshops in the mornings/evenings for parents on the relation between ELD portfolios and report cards.
- Parent meetings were held on CELDT guidelines and assessment results were presented to parents during parent-teacher conferences.
- Sylvan's Literacy Coordinator met with parents of third grade students scoring Below Basic or Far Below Basic on the CSTs to review ELA standards and provided them with information on reinforcing vocabulary development and literacy in the home. Similarly, parents were reminded of the importance of regularly reading to their children at home.

Academic Intervention

- Sylvan communicated through parent letters, phone calls, and school meetings the availability of after-school and/or Saturday academic intervention services and programs. Additionally, the school made efforts to personally contact parents of students who were referred to intervention through the Parent Center, Connect Ed telephone message service, as well as during parent-teacher conferences.
- A parent newsletter was sent home every month in English and Spanish to inform parents of events happening in and around the school community and to give information on various topics such as how to help your child improve in literacy, English Language Acquisition, testing, behavior, bullying, and how to communicate with school officials.
- On-going meetings were held with parents through the Student Study Team (SST) process.
- Parent meetings were held on Sylvan’s HPSG-funded academic intervention

Strengths

- Parents had several opportunities to participate in meetings and workshops that covered topics of interest to them. Those whose children are scoring lowest on the CSTs were provided with the most support and information.

Areas of Improvement

- Despite these efforts to involve parents in the education of their children, Sylvan’s staff agreed that the school could improve parental presence at school activities and events. In fact, only 61% of staff agreed or strongly

agreed with the statement “There is a strong parental presence at school activities and events.” Engaging parents and encouraging their attendance at school-wide events is an area that can be continually improved by school staff.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

This section of the report provides summary conclusions on HPSG implementation in 2008-09, the second year of a three-year grant for improving student achievement. Recommendations are provided to assist Sylvan in refining HPSG implementation and ensuring that goals in the HPSG Action Plan are met.

Core Instructional Program

In 2009, Sylvan Park experienced a slow down in academic growth compared to progress 2006-2008. Despite modest improvements in student achievement, Sylvan was not able to move large numbers of students into proficiency in English/Language Arts. Put another way, growth is occurring, but the overall level of attainment is below the goals outlined in Sylvan’s HPSG Action Plan (see Table 10). At the same time, goals for EL redesignation and proficiency in Mathematics were either met or exceeded.

Table 10: Summary of School Performance Relative to HPSG Goals (N=631)

Area	2009 Improvement Goal	Actual Achievement	Difference
English Language Arts CST	46% of students school-wide scoring Advanced or Proficient in 2009	35%	-11%
CELDT	Reclassify 7% of EL students annually	7%	0%
Mathematics CST	44% of students school-wide scoring Advanced or Proficient in 2009	51%	7%

- Recommendation 1:** Continue to focus on decreasing the proportion of students scoring in the lowest levels of achievement in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. Augment these efforts with more targeted assistance to English Learners in order to meet federal accountability targets and HPSG Action Plan goals. Focus specifically on meeting ELA targets.

Academic Support and Intervention

Sylvan was successful in designing and delivering after-school intervention to approximately 160 (mostly English Learner) students focused primarily on achievement in ELA. After-school intervention offered targeted assistance to students referred on the basis of clear entry criteria. These students were provided with additional instructional minutes focused primarily on standards in the areas of Word Analysis and Vocabulary Development and Reading Comprehension. Staff appreciated the opportunity to teach their own students in small, homogeneous groups.

- Recommendation 2:** Continue to deepen and refine after-school academic intervention funded through the HPSG. In particular, continue communicating the message that academic intervention is intended to provide needy students with opportunities for pre-teaching (scaffolding)

and re-teaching (differentiation) of key standards. Encourage teachers to focus on allowing time for conceptual understanding, given the benefits of the small group setting. Seek to involve more teachers and retain existing after-school participation of staff so that these services can be extended to more students. Compile and provide formative assessment data for after-school intervention participants to teachers and parents in order to showcase the benefits of after-school intervention.

Staff Support

During 2008-09, Sylvan provided teachers with multiple opportunities for collaboration, peer observations/lesson study, coaching, and other instructional support. Teachers appreciated the regular time set aside during psychomotor to work in grade level teams. Teachers also received professional development on the Cycle of Inquiry and used this cycle to collect data on their practice and identify areas in need of improvement.

- ***Recommendation 3:*** Continue to engage in a Cycle of Inquiry and identify areas in need of improvement. In addition to spending time on common lesson plans, pay more attention to the examination of student work, perhaps through the development of structured protocols and rubrics. Continue providing coaching support to teachers, focusing more on novice teachers.

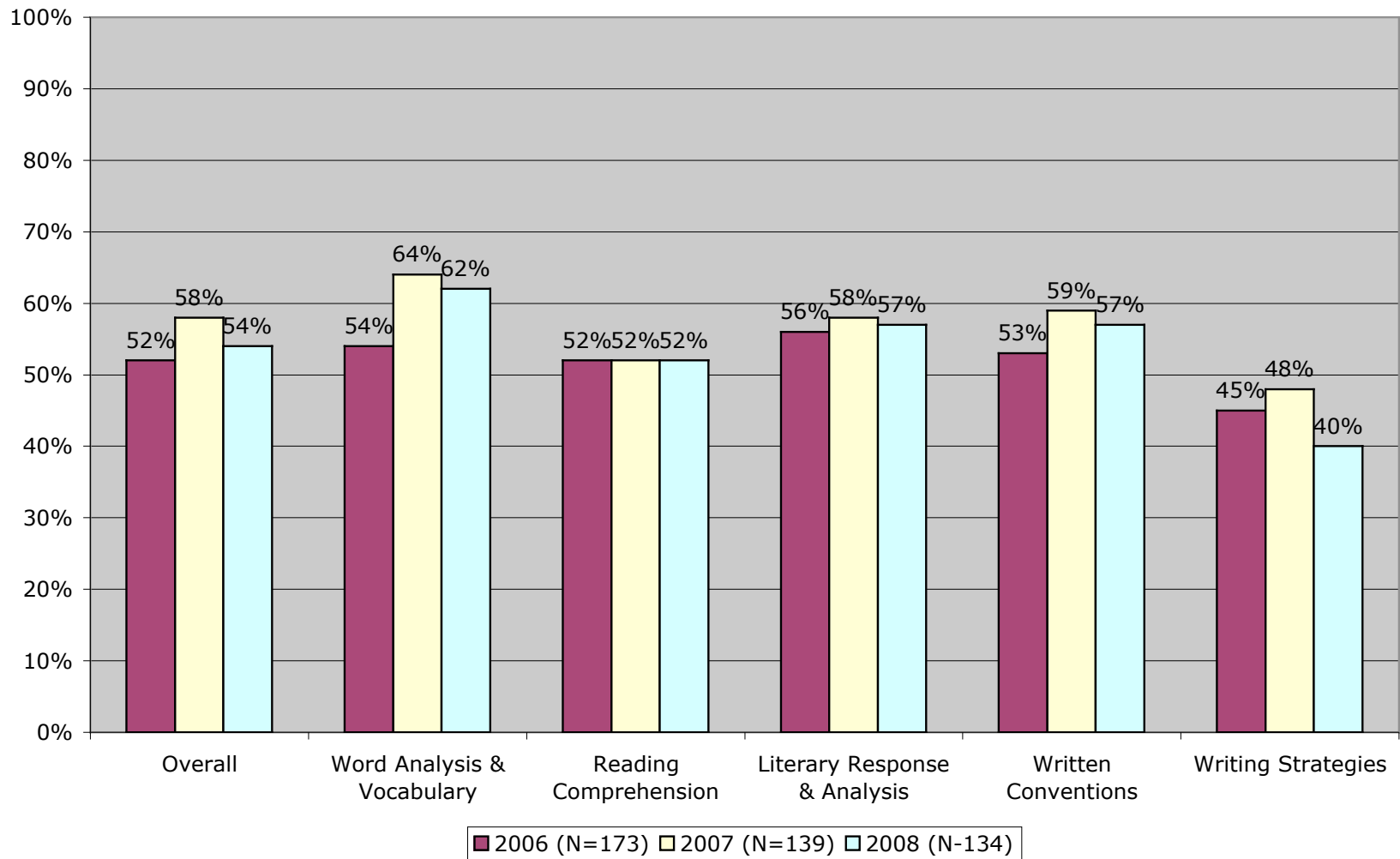
Parent Involvement

In 2008-09, Sylvan provided multiple venues for parents to learn about the core instructional program and opportunities for student participation in academic intervention and other specialized targeted assistance. School staff viewed parent outreach efforts quite favorably. Nonetheless, there is widespread acknowledgement that the number of parents participating in school activities and events could be significantly increased and that this would likely benefit student achievement.

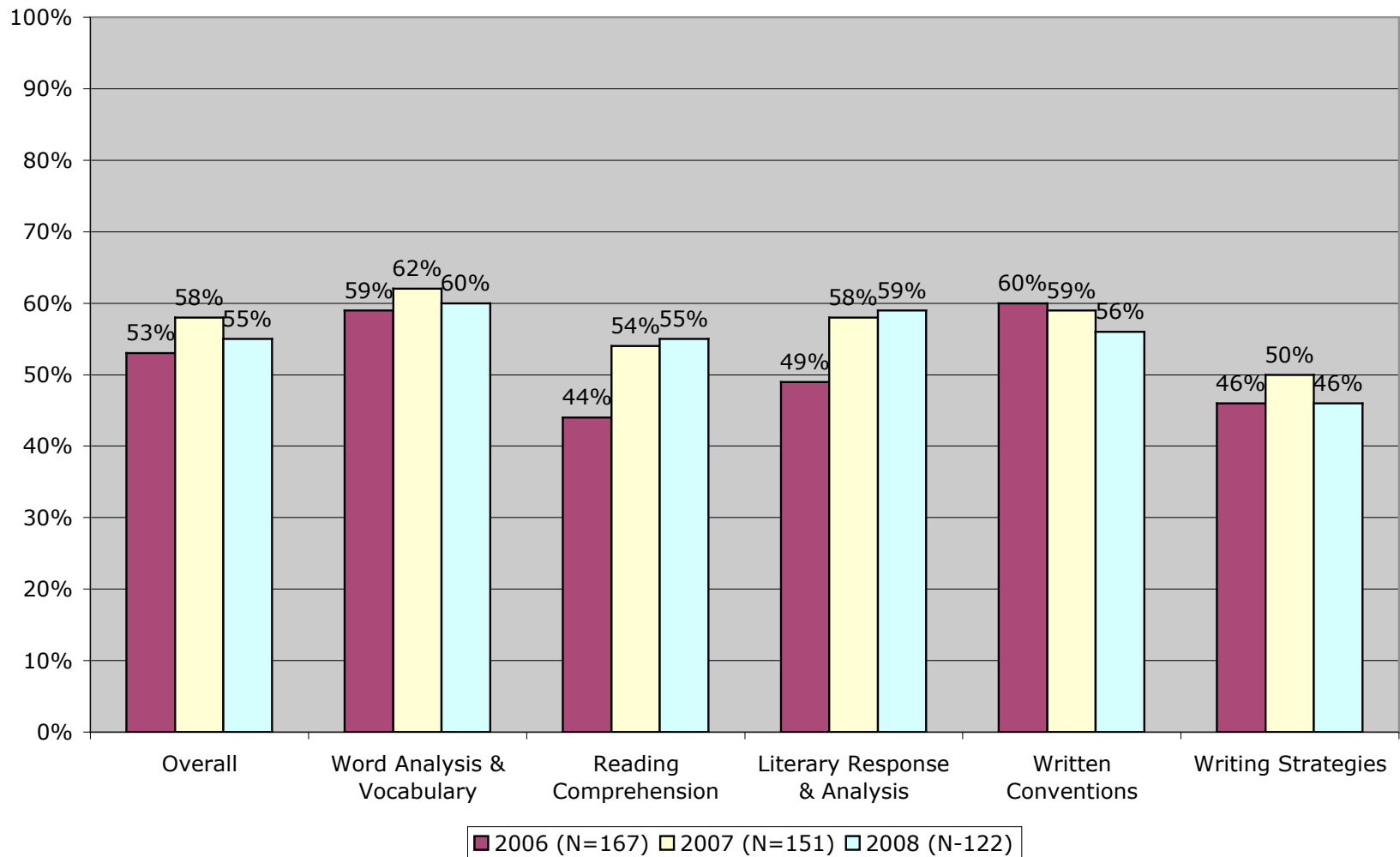
- ***Recommendation 4:*** Continue to provide forums, meetings, and trainings for parents tied to school-wide instructional goals for improving student achievement. Expand parent outreach to target parents of students in the upper grades (3-5), focusing on increasing parental understanding of assessment data on student progress and how to participate in supporting/reinforcing student learning at home. Try new methods of engaging parents and encouraging them to attend school events and activities.

Appendix A:
Skills Strand
Data

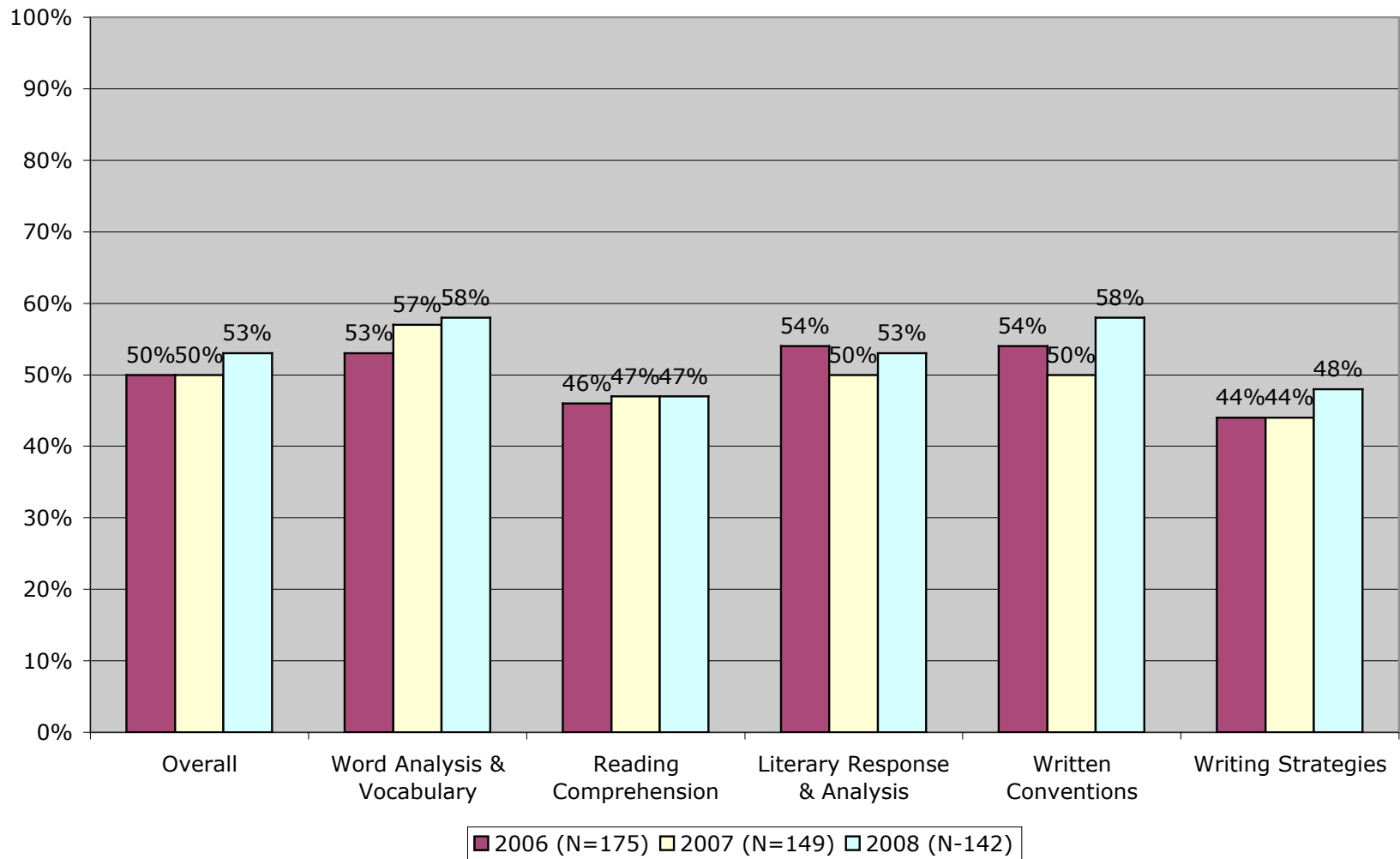
Sylvan Park ES: CST-ELA Skill Strands 2006-2008 (Grade 2)



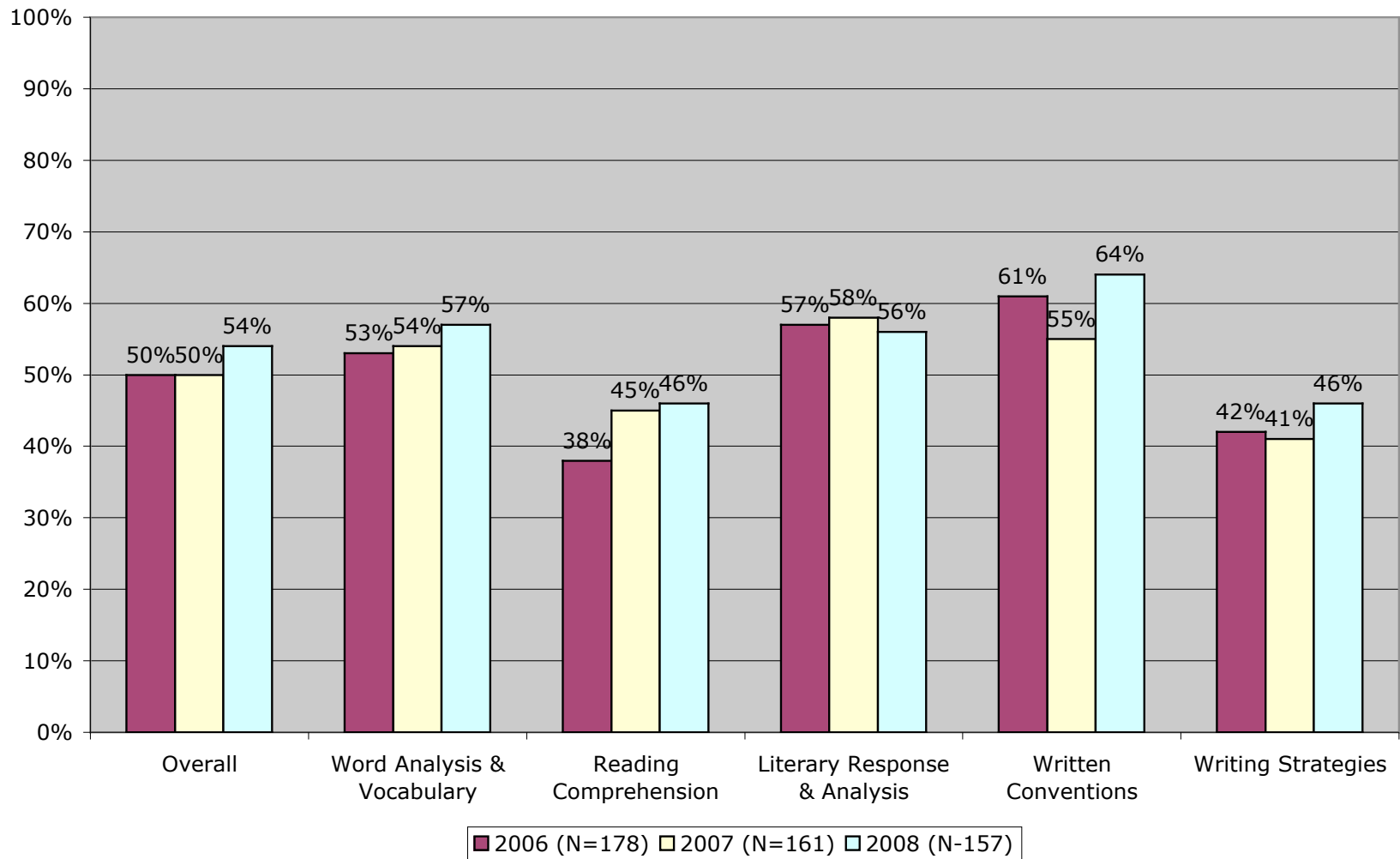
Sylvan Park ES: CST-ELA Skill Strands 2006-2008 (Grade 3)



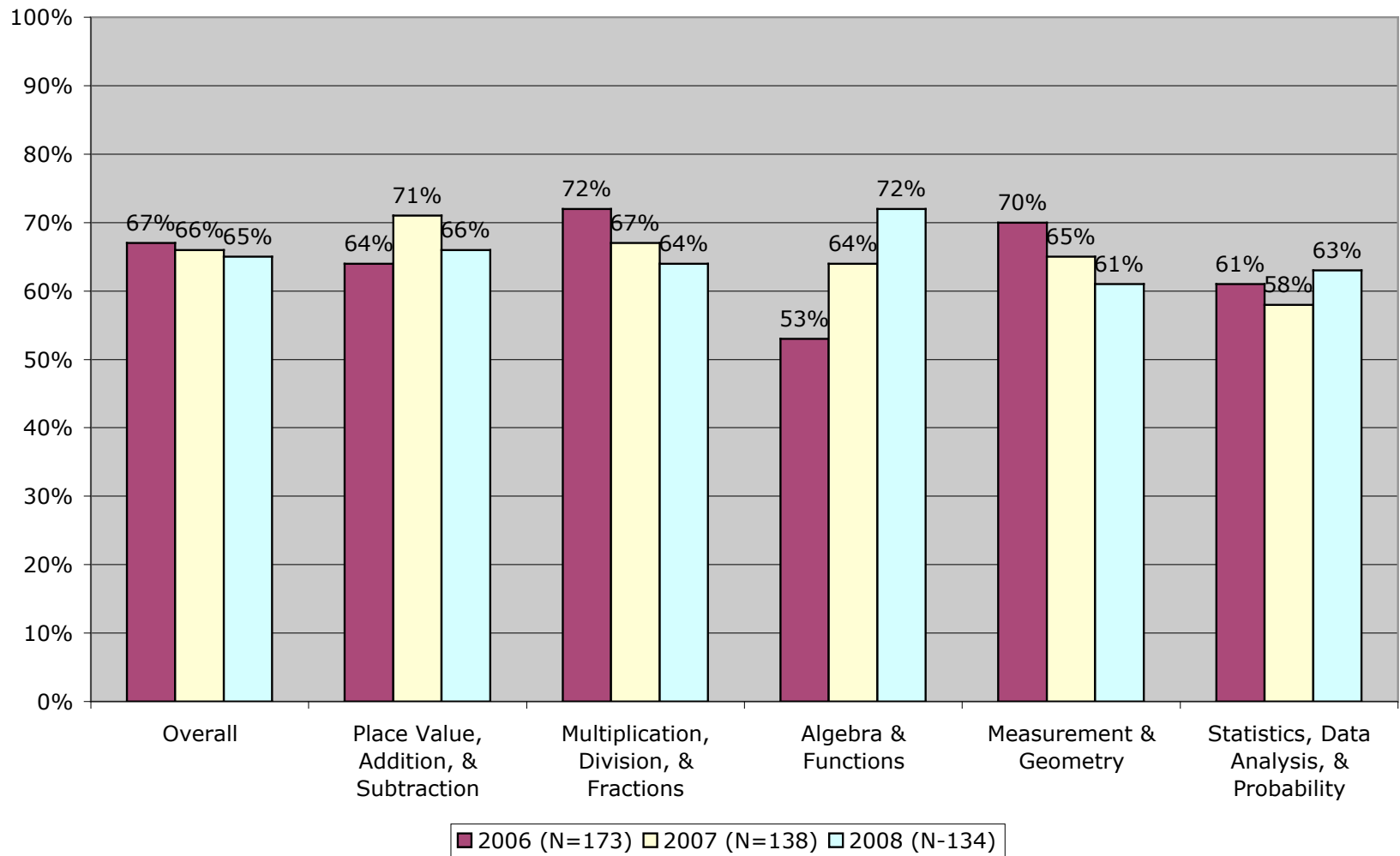
Sylvan Park ES: CST-ELA Skill Strands 2006-2008 (Grade 4)



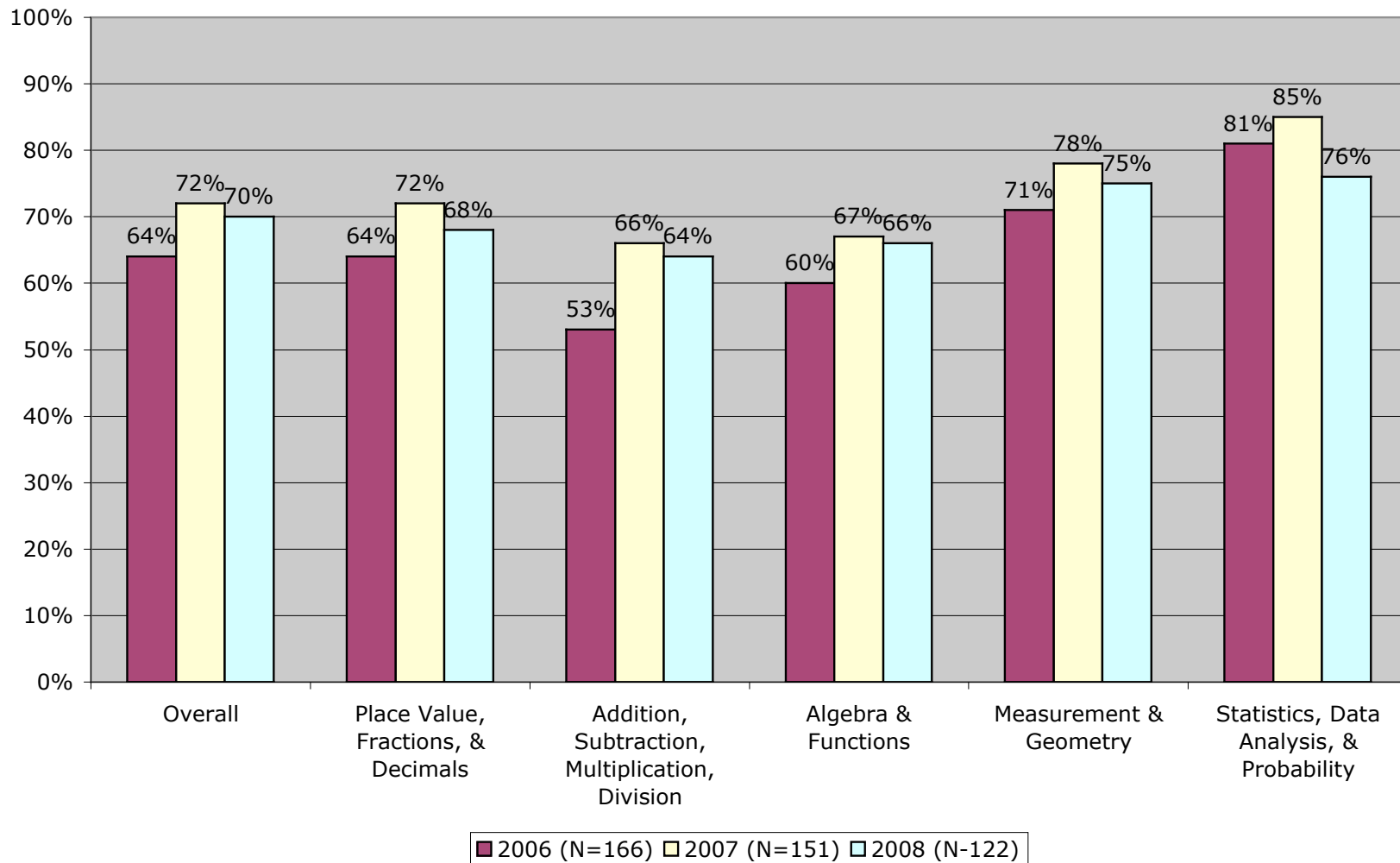
Sylvan Park ES: CST-ELA Skill Strands 2006-2008 (Grade 5)



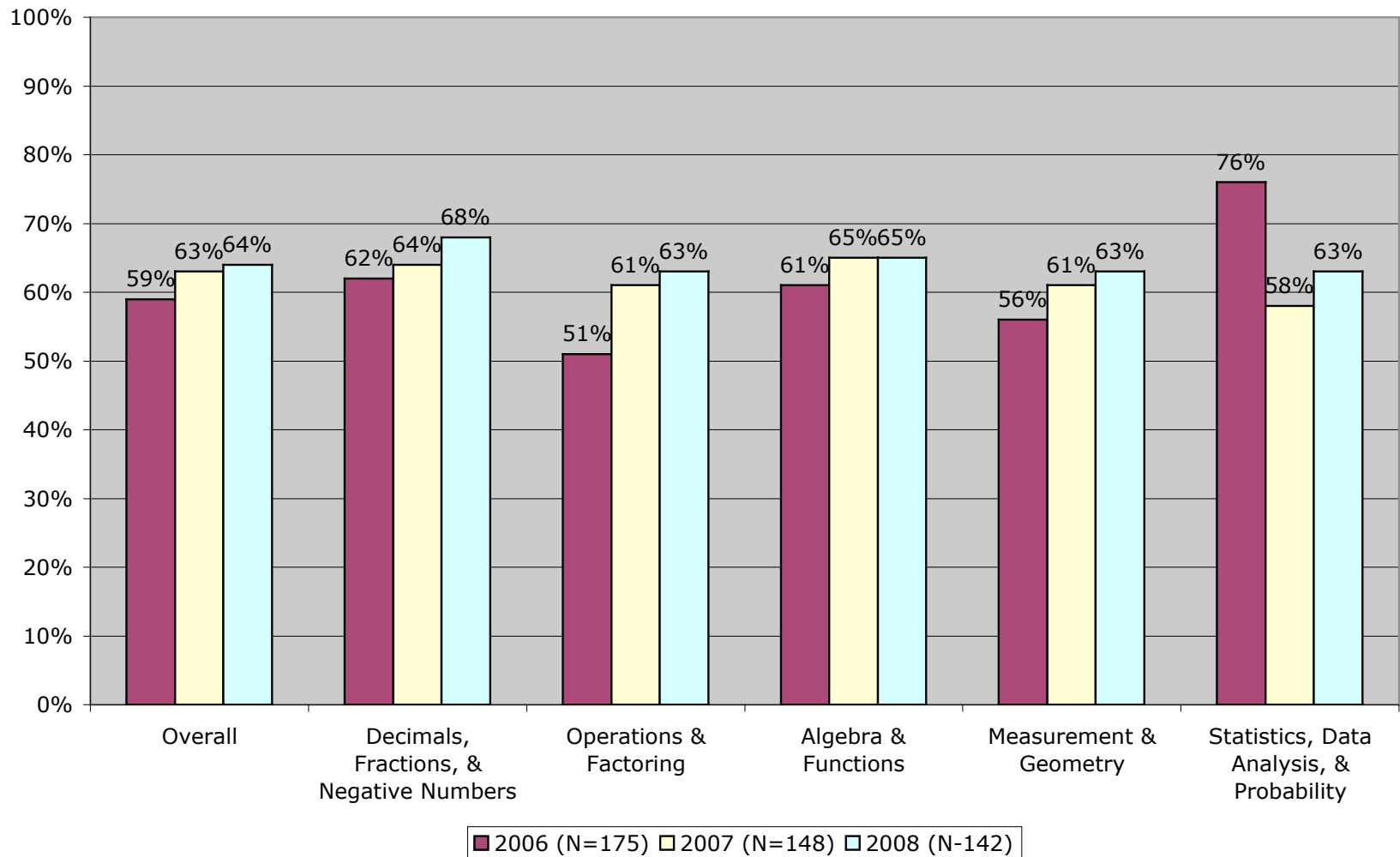
Sylvan Park ES: CST-Math Skill Strands 2006-2008 (Grade 2)



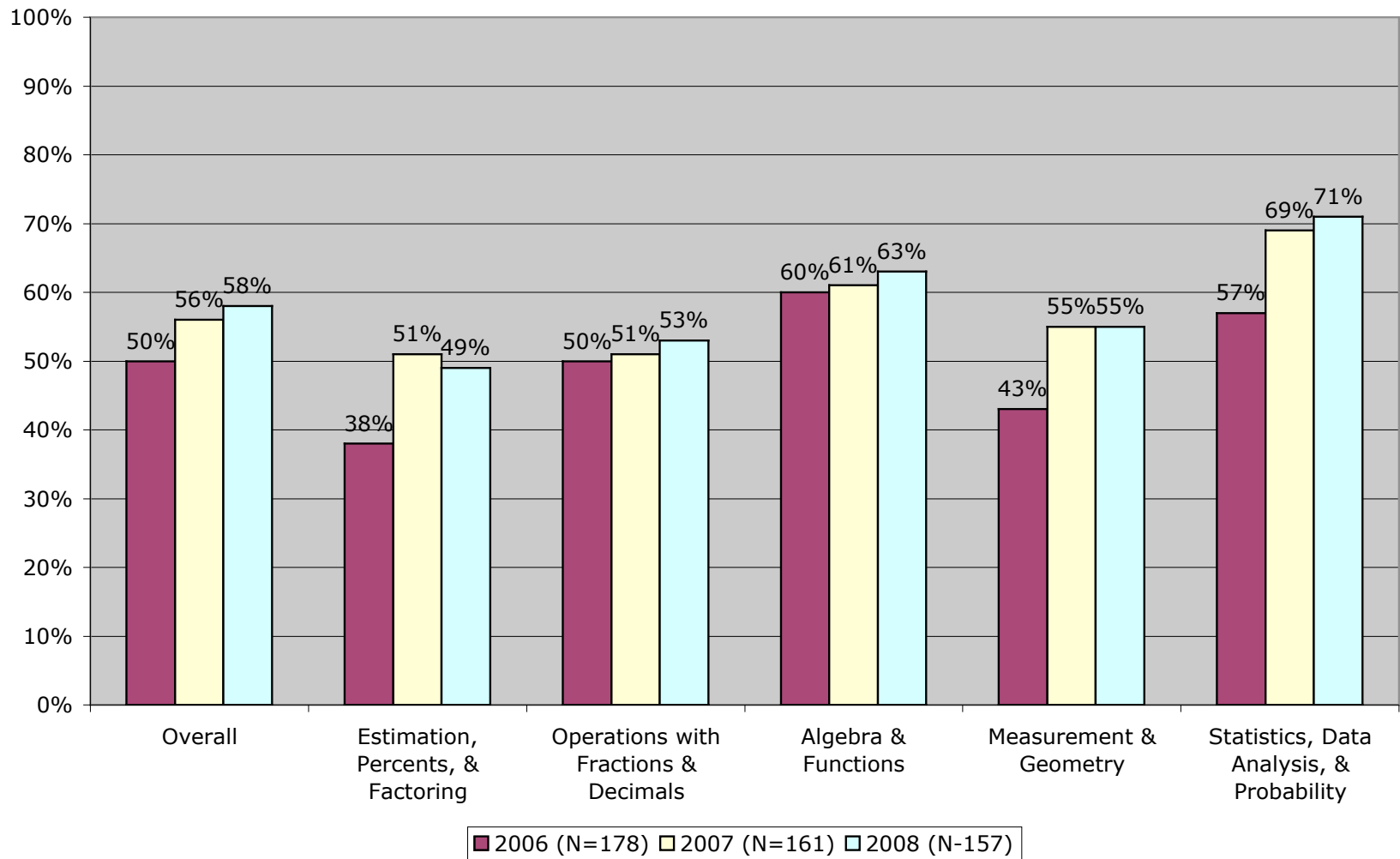
Sylvan Park ES: CST-Math Skill Strands 2006-2008 (Grade 3)



Sylvan Park ES: CST-Math Skill Strands 2006-2008 (Grade 4)



Sylvan Park ES: CST-Math Skill Strands 2005-2008 (Grade 5)



Appendix B: Survey Data

Sylvan Park Elementary School, HPSG Staff Survey (N=41)

As you may know, Sylvan Park Elementary is receiving a High Priority School Grant (HPSG), which provides an additional \$400 per student for three years (funding won't be available in 2009-10). Public Works, Inc. is Sylvan's external evaluator for the grant. In order to continue collecting, analyzing, and using data to drive school improvement, we are conducting a survey of teachers and other staff. All information that you provide will remain private and confidential. Please do not write your name on the survey. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please return completed surveys to Mr. Banos. Thank you for your help!

Directions: Please circle the appropriate number to indicate your responses to the following statements.

1	2	3	4	DK
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't Know

Standards-based Instruction

1.	Within my grade level, teachers understand the linkage between curriculum and States standards.	2%	0%	27%	71%	0%
2.	Within my grade level, teachers follow a consistent grade level plan to identify students and their specific targeted learning needs.	2%	0%	54%	44%	0%
3.	Within the classes offered by my grade level, students understand classroom expectations (i.e., they understand what standard they are being held accountable for).	0%	5%	63%	24%	7%
4.	Within my grade level, teachers deliver differentiated pacing and/or provide additional instructional time for students based on subject matter competence.	2%	5%	63%	29%	0%
5.	Within my grade level, teachers regularly use SDAIE and ELD techniques in daily classroom instruction.	5%	2%	49%	39%	5%

Assessment

6.	Within my grade level, teachers use common standards and criteria for analyzing student work.	2%	2%	49%	46%	0%
7.	Within my grade level, teachers regularly analyze student assessment results (SOAR) in order to modify instruction.	2%	5%	44%	49%	0%
8.	Within my grade level, teachers are using rubrics as part of classroom instruction.	2%	7%	42%	37%	10%
9.	Within my grade level, multiple assessments are used to measure student progress.	2%	5%	56%	32%	5%

Intervention

10.	There is a clear set of criteria for identifying students in need of intervention.	2%	7%	42%	47%	0%
11.	There is a clear process for referring a student for intervention.	2%	7%	27%	61%	2%
12.	Intervention is designed to address specific academic weaknesses and transition students back into regular classroom instruction.	2%	7%	37%	54%	0%
13.	There is a notable difference in the academic progress of students that participate in intervention.	5%	19%	58%	17%	0%
14.	Teachers have input into intervention curricula and programs.	5%	22%	42%	27%	2%

Sylvan Park Elementary School, HPSG Evaluation Report, 2008-09

1 Strongly disagree 2 Disagree 3 Agree 4 Strongly agree DK Don't Know

Professional Development

15.	Professional development is related to areas where student academic performance needs improvement.	0%	10%	62%	27%	0%
16.	Professional development offerings are aligned with school-wide improvement goals.	0%	12%	63%	24%	0%
17.	Professional development highlights effective teaching practices.	0%	2%	66%	29%	2%
18.	Professional development promotes greater alignment of instruction with academic standards.	0%	2%	71%	24%	2%
19.	Teachers have been trained to deliver instruction appropriate to EL students.	0%	5%	58%	37%	0%
20.	New teachers are supported and encouraged by veteran staff and/or coaches.	0%	10%	37%	42%	10%
21.	I participated in a demo lesson and/or peer observation.	2%	0%	24%	71%	24%

Instructional Materials and School Resources

22.	Every student in my classroom has access to a Board adopted textbook that is standards aligned.	2%	0%	0%	98%	0%
23.	I have access to an adequate supply of supplemental instructional resources (e.g., curricular intervention materials).	2%	0%	48%	83%	0%
24.	I have access to an adequate supply of basic classroom supplies (e.g., paper, pencils, etc.)	2%	0%	10%	88%	0%
25.	The school library has an adequate supply of books and other educational resources.	0%	2%	30%	67%	0%

Teacher Collaboration/Psychomotor

26.	Grade level meetings occur at least twice per month.	2%	2%	45%	80%	0%
27.	Grade level meetings are well attended.	2%	0%	12%	83%	2%
28.	The time during Psychomotor is focused on instruction and regularly reviewing formative assessments.	5%	5%	41%	49%	0%
29.	Psychomotor meetings include time for lesson planning and reflection related to effective teaching strategies.	5%	12%	32%	49%	2%
30.	Psychomotor meetings include the discussion and analysis of student work.	2%	15%	41%	41%	0%

School Culture/Climate

31.	I understand the school's instructional foci and/or improvement goals.	2%	5%	51%	41%	0%
32.	I have access to information about major school decisions.	2%	5%	61%	32%	0%
33.	This school encourages teacher leadership and initiative.	2%	10%	50%	35%	0%
34.	This school has a strong leadership team that guides instruction and the implementation of reform.	2%	2%	51%	41%	2%
35.	I am clear about my role and accountability for improving student achievement.	2%	0%	43%	54%	0%

Sylvan Park Elementary School, HPSG Evaluation Report, 2008-09

1
Strongly disagree
2
Disagree
3
Agree
4
Strongly agree
DK
Don't Know

Parent Involvement

36.	Most parents feel comfortable interacting with teachers at this school.	2%	2%	71%	15%	10%
37.	Parents receive communication from this school at least monthly.	2%	0%	24%	73%	0%
38.	Parent education and training is focused on helping parents support learning at home.	2%	0%	34%	56%	7%
39.	This school encourages parent leadership and initiative.	5%	12%	34%	39%	10%
40.	There is a strong parental presence at school activities and events.	7%	24%	44%	17%	7%

Personal Views on Teaching (teachers only, please)

41.	I can handle most discipline problems that arise in my classroom.	2%	5%	30%	60%	2%
42.	I have the ability to teach all students to high achievement levels.	2%	2%	55%	40%	0%
43.	I am making a difference in my students' lives.	0%	2%	40%	55%	2%
44.	I am confident in my ability to effectively teach special education students in my classroom.	0%	26%	46%	15%	13%
45.	I am confident in my ability to effectively teach EL students in my classroom.	3%	0%	34%	63%	0%

Areas Most in Need of Improvement

Directions: Check the top three areas where you feel the school is most in need of improvement.

46.	Instructional quality and Consistency	24%	55.	Parent Education	24%
47.	Professional Development	26%	56.	School Relationships with Parents and Community	8%
48.	Serving the Needs of English Learners	39%	57.	Relationships between parents and teachers	11%
49.	Academic Support and Intervention for Students	13%	58.	Curricular Access & Equity	5%
50.	School Governance and Decision-Making	13%	59.	Student Guidance & Counseling	29%
51.	School Leadership and Vision	8%	60.	School Safety	8%
52.	Collaboration Among Staff	18%	61.	School Cleanliness/Appearance	11%
53.	Assessment Practices/ Evaluation	18%	62.	School Homework Policies	11%
54.	Instructional Materials	3%	63.	School Discipline Policies	29%

Respondent Characteristics

64. Stakeholder Group
(Teachers Only)

- a) Administration -10%
- b) Classroom Teacher - 83%
- c) Coordinator/Coach - 7%
- d) Counselor - 0%
- e) Classified - 0%

65. Years at School

- a) 2 years or less - 3%
- b) 3-5 years - 13%
- c) 6-10 years - 35%
- d) More than 10 years - 48%

66. Years Teaching

- a) 2 years or less - 0%
- b) 3-5 years - 11%
- c) 6-10 years - 30%
- d) More than 10 years - 59%

67. Grade Level (Teachers Only)

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| a) Kindergarten | b) 1st | c) 2nd | d) 3rd | e) 4th | f) 5th |
| 16% | 16% | 32% | 16% | 8% | 12% |

Thanks again for your participation. Questions regarding the survey should be directed to Public Works, Inc.
90 North Daisy Ave., Pasadena CA. 91107 626-564-9890.

Appendix C:
Lesson Plan
Template

Lesson Plan Template

Dept/Grade Level: _____ Content/Subject: _____ School: _____

Standard/Lesson Objective: _____

Curriculum Reference: _____

Big Ideas/Key Concepts of Unit:	Academic Vocabulary Associated with Standard/Unit
Example Assessment Stems (How is this assessed on CST?)	Needed Background Skills/Prerequisite Knowledge:
How will you elicit student engagement and academic language?	What materials or resources do you need to teach this lesson well?

Lesson Segments (suggested)	Details for each Lesson Segment (what will this look like?)
Anticipatory Set – How will you “hook” the students, focusing attention creating an organizing framework for the new learning?	
Intentional and Explicit Scaffolding – How will you access prior knowledge and pre-teaching necessary skills? What kinds of advance organizers might help students access rigorous standards?	
Direct Instruction and teacher modeling – How will you deliver new learning? How will you model academic expectations and show the end product for student work?	
Checking for Understanding – How will you determine whether students understand what has been taught?	
Guided Practice – How will students demonstrate that they have grasped new learning through an activity or exercise under your direct supervision?	
Closure – How will you help students organize and reflect on conceptual learning to form a coherent picture and eliminate confusion?	

<p>Independent Practice – How will you reinforce mastery of content/skills? Application of conceptual knowledge and skills in other relevant situations?</p>	
<p>Reteaching – How will you re-teach the standard/objective for struggling students?</p>	
<p>Student Work – What student work product will be assigned? How will you know that you have effectively addressed the rigor of the standard(s)? When will it be available to review with your grade level?</p>	

Appendix D:
Site Visit
Protocol

Sylvan Park Elementary School HPSG Site Visit Protocol for Interviews and Focus Group

Core Instructional Program

- Is there a consistent grade level plan to identify students and their specific targeted learning needs? *Probe: What is your grade level focus? Is it data driven? Is this process different from previous year?*
- Do teachers augment curriculum when necessary in order to thoroughly cover State standards. *Probe: Do teachers understand they can no longer rely on the text as a means of teaching standards?*
- Are teachers delivering differentiated pacing and/or additional instructional time for students based on subject matter competence (e.g., for Advanced, Benchmark, Strategic, and Intensive students)? *Probe: Are you using Independent Work Time (IWT) differently this year compared to previous years? Why or why not?*
- Where should your school/grade level focus in 2009-10?

*** Make sure to address ELA, ELD, and Math throughout**

Academic Support/Intervention

- Are you staffing after-school intervention? If yes, do you serve your own students or those of other teachers? If not, have you referred students for intervention?
- What curriculum do you utilize for teaching intervention?
- Have you seen a difference among students who are involved in academic intervention programs? *Probe: Is the focus of intervention on pre-teaching and/or re-teaching?*
- What, if anything, would you like to see done differently with after-school intervention in 2009-10?

Teacher Support/Coaching

- What role do the coaches play in psychomotor or ALT meetings?
- What is the most beneficial aspect of having a content area coach? Where has coaching helped you personally?
- How might you improve your school's coaching model in order to support teachers in both content knowledge and application of pedagogy?

Teacher Collaboration/Professional Development

- How much time is allocated for teachers to collaborate on lesson delivery, assessment data, analysis of student work, etc. Are these meetings productive? Focused? Outcome oriented?
- Has your grade level regularly reviewed formative assessment data in ELA and Math? *Probe: how are these data used to guide teacher discussions? What "transfers" in terms of changed practices in the classroom?*
- What professional development topics/focus would you like to see at your school next year?

