

CALIFORNIA'S GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY
District Case Studies of Professional Capital

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fresno Unified School District

—one of five case studies of school districts—

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Introduction

In the past 10 years the Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) has undergone a solid and steady transition from a dysfunctional, “broken and broke” system to a more coherent and energized one. Financially, the district was in very bad shape, at risk of running out of cash within a year and on the verge of bankruptcy and state takeover. Currently, Fresno is one of the most fiscally sound districts in the entire country and has achieved high student retention and graduation rates. This case study seeks to capture the approach and strategies through which FUSD has turned itself around.

The three concepts underpinning our analysis are professional capital, system coherence, and student success. Professional capital—comprised of human (the quality of the individual), social (the quality of interactions within a group), and decisional capital (the capacity to make good decisions based on professional judgment)—is the key asset that is invested, accumulated, and circulated to yield continuous growth and strong return in student and adult learning in an education system.¹ Where professional capital is the asset to be developed and circulated, system coherence is about the clarity of the key priorities and strategies in the minds, hearts, and hands of educators, staff or faculty at all levels of the system. While system alignment is about how structures and processes are organized and put into place to advance a system’s agenda, coherence is the development of shared mindsets across the system. Increasingly, we see student success, especially around deep learning and narrowing achievement gaps, as part and parcel of professional capital and coherence. They should be seen as a mutual feed that promotes deep learning on the part of adults and students in the system.

This short report begins with an overview of FUSD, identifying some of the key conditions and strategies that have allowed the district to cultivate professional capital and develop system coherence. It shares the findings from data collected in March and October 2015 which included a review of approximately 30 documents; interviews and focus groups with the superintendent and his executive cabinet, 5 instructional supervisors, and school principals of 9 schools (3 elementary, 3 middle and 3 high schools); observations in classrooms in 3 schools (1 elementary, 1 middle, and 1 high school), one principal council meeting, two professional learning sessions (one for teacher leaders and one for school principals), and one luncheon event where the superintendent reported on FUSD’s progress. It concludes with a series of key lessons and focused recommendations to further the development and circulation of professional capital in this district.

Fresno Unified School District in a Nutshell

The Fresno Unified School District is the fourth largest school district in California, serving the second poorest city in the United States. It offers education to 72,000 students through 65 elementary schools, 17 middle schools, 8 high schools, 6 alternative Schools, and 3 Special Education Schools. Its highly diverse population is reflected in the more than 55 languages spoken by Fresno students and their families. The majority of students attending schools at Fresno are Hispanic (66%), whereas 14% are Asian and Pacific Islander, and 9% African American. One in every four students in Fresno is an English Language Learner, and 84% qualify for free and reduced-price lunch. Childhood poverty rates

¹ Hargreaves, A. & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: transforming teaching in every school*. New York/Ontario: Teachers College Press/Ontario Principals’ Council.

in FUSD are among the highest in California, with nearly one in two children living in poverty, a much higher proportion of concentrated poverty than similarly sized school districts in the state such as Long Beach (26%), Sacramento (32%), and Los Angeles (31%).

In 2004, the district was in very bad shape financially, at risk of running out of cash within two years. The district had 51% of its schools in the bottom 10% of performance among all schools in California, and one of the highest dropout rates in the Nation (over 23%). That year, a Task Force assembled by the Superintendent of the time created a report entitled *Choosing Our Future: A Community Wide Call to Action*.² Based on the lessons learned from ‘benchmark districts’ in California (i.e., similar in size and demographics to Fresno but performing at higher levels), outlined key recommendations to revamp the district. With participation from a wide range of community and stakeholders, the report created positive movement to rebuild FUSD. A young superintendent, Mike Hanson, was recruited to lead the huge and ambitious endeavor of district turnaround outlined in the report. Hanson continues to be the superintendent of FUSD and *Choosing Our Future* continues to orient system wide improvement at FUSD.

Life in Fresno is not easy for many of its residents; a high degree of street and domestic violence creates high levels of stress. In the midst of violence, remarkably clean, organized, and peaceful schools have become havens of safety and stability. We consistently heard teachers, principals, and school leaders say that “no matter how chaotic and messy the life of students might be out there, when they come to school they enter a safe place.” Despite their difficult context, FUSD has steadily increased student retention and graduate rates. Still, it is widely acknowledged that these important improvements have not yet been accompanied by comparable improvements on measures of student learning. Nevertheless, everywhere we visited, we heard consistent narratives about the key priorities and corresponding strategies of the district, about students being at the center of everyone’s work, and about the personal commitment and deep pride in being part of this district. FUSD has become a highly energized and increasingly coherent system.

Building a New System from Scratch

Setting the Foundations: Governance and Focus

The Advisory Task Force behind *Choosing Our Future* knew that the situation at FUSD was so critical and the problems so interconnected that progress would be impossible unless the various aspects of FUSD’s dysfunction were addressed simultaneously. Creating the basic organizational structures to run the system was a fundamental first step to initiate the ambitious district turnaround in Fresno. Hanson assembled an executive cabinet to steer the district renewal. The central office was restructured, changing more than 70 percent of the district’s organizational chart in the process. Board elections were reformed from an at-large system to a system that ensured regional representation of the main geographic areas of the city.

² FUSD Superintendent’s Advisory Task Group, January 2005. Available at <http://www.fresnobl.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/ChoosingFutureFinal.pdf> (Accessed Dec 17, 2015).

Starting in 2006, the superintendent, Board members, and the executive cabinet undertook intensive and high quality training on policy development, financial planning, and effective management with the Center for Reforming School Systems. As a result of this training, the Board goals, core beliefs, commitments, theory of action, as well as a set of policies on management oversight, constituent services, and Board operations were created. Hanson recognized the importance of “staying together” and he has since ensured constant and transparent communication with the board and senior leadership individually and as a group. Constant communication and consistency in Board decision making processes have created stable and reliable governance in the district, providing a solid foundation and sustained direction for system improvement for over a decade in FUSD.

From Broke to Fiscally Sound

A first step to take the reins of finances in Fresno was to centralize the district’s budget. The new vision and goals established by the Board offered a basic point of reference for members of the executive cabinet to identify projects or initiatives that were not aligned with, or not effective in advancing the district priorities, namely, keeping kids in school and ensuring they stayed all the way through college. Through constant communication and continuous cycles of review among members of the executive cabinet, a culture of shared accountability was established whereby each member of the cabinet was expected to present and defend their body of work to the others. This culture of shared accountability made it possible for the executive cabinet to identify and cut services as needed.

Over the past couple of years, an additional and important aspect of the financial strategy has been to directly link school improvement plans with budget planning. Historically, budget planning at FUSD had been used as a financial tool, separate from developing the school plan.

By constantly reviewing services and programs against the district priorities, by adopting a form of zero-based budgeting, and by adopting a new human resources strategy, the district was able to cut approximately \$140 million dollars – of which it has not had to replace more than one or two million. Currently, FUSD is amongst the most fiscally sound districts in the U.S.

Navigating Labor Relations

The combination of financial restructuring at FUSD and the financial crisis of 2008 brought about serious tensions between FUSD and the teachers union, which further complicated matters. By constantly modeling transparency and honesty, Hanson and the board have established a decent working relationship with the union. Contention in the public sphere continues, but without dramatically disrupting the trajectory of system improvement.

Fostering Family and Community Engagement

The development of strong community partnerships has been a crucial aspect of the culture of FUSD over the past decade. To begin with, *Choosing Our Future* emerged as a result of and triggered enormous community participation. Important partnerships established between the district and the wider community include an ongoing relationship of shared accountability for student success with the housing authority, the Economic Opportunity Commission, and local Integrative Health Enterprises, as well as the creation in 2008 of a Constituent and Family Services Office to gather and handle family complaints and questions. Parent University, an award-winning program created four years ago with the intention of educating families to become advocates for their children’s education, is the most prominent family engagement initiative in FUSD having served approximately twenty thousand parents from Fresno.

A Smooth Incorporation of the LCFF

The fiscal stability, governance, and community engagement developed at FUSD since 2005 created an organizational environment that was ready to integrate the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) into the existing structure. The executive cabinet acknowledge a lot of work has been required to implement LCFF, but there's a shared perception among senior leaders that the overall process of implementation has been relatively smooth, and that LCFF is beneficial for the district. By the time LCFF arrived in Fresno, the financial office and the academic office already had a long history of constant and consistent communication and a shared vision centered on keeping students in school and on track to get to college. The LCFF template was consistent with the district's agenda, but it also enhanced the work of the district by requiring the identification and incorporation of measurable outcomes. LCFF, according to district leaders, has enhanced the use of data to drive system improvement. Rather than a distraction, LCFF offered FUSD the opportunity to get into granular details to make sure the new state funding mechanism was aligned with the work of the entire system.

System Coherence

System coherence refers to the clarity of the priorities and strategies of a school system, not in theory, but in the minds and hearts of participants at all levels of the system. It is fully and only a subjective phenomenon as in our core definition of coherence: the shared depth of understanding about the nature of the work.³ We quickly noticed that faculty across the system—from schools to the central office—talked in similar ways about the key priorities and corresponding strategies of FUSD. We consistently heard that students were at the center of the work. People spoke of their commitment to and pride in the district. Fresno leaders openly acknowledge that system coherence is a work in progress, yet the degree of system coherence achieved to date, which can be perceived within a couple of days of visiting the district and talking with staff across the system is worth noting. Key aspects of the organizational culture and structure in FUSD that help explain the degree of system coherence achieved so far include:

- **Strong, stable, connected leadership.** The Board and senior leadership of FUSD have remained been very stable, allowing the district to keep a consistent direction for over a decade and enabling the development of a strong organizational culture that places students at the centre of district activities. The executive cabinet operate as a collegial and connected leadership team who talked often about the strong rapport and *esprit de corps* that has been created among them as well as the candor that exists in the team to hold each other accountable.
- **Flat leadership structure.** Relative to the size of the district, the central office is small. It is organized in seven offices run by a total of 7 chief officers and 34 directors. Only 4.1% of the district budget goes to administration, compared to the statewide average of 5%, and 7% in neighboring districts. Also, offices that have traditionally operated separately from schools and

³ Fullan & Quinn (2017).

from each other (i.e., finances, human resources and operations) have been intentionally connected with the everyday work of schools and classrooms.

- **Instructional supervisors.** At the time of our first visit in March 2015, the district structure to support schools was undergoing an important transition from a supervisory to a capacity building role with the intention of bolstering school ownership of local site plans and to foster a culture of improvement rather than compliance. Instructional supervisors see their role as understanding each school and school leader well enough to adapt their support accordingly. The intent is that interventions release responsibility to lead school improvement to principals and teachers themselves, at a pace that is appropriate for each school; review of data on school and student performance is a key component of the work; and, the tone of interventions in schools is one of modeling new practices and holding conversations with school leaders rather than merely making recommendations.
- **Constant and consistent communication, vertically and laterally.** Deliberate communication strategies have been developed to foster ownership of these among district staff. Instead of being on the side doing their own thing, the departments of finance, human resources and operations at FUSD have established clear connections between their services and supports and the everyday lives of students and teachers. The level of communication within the cabinet and among departments has created a common language and mindset that is immediately evident.
- **Principal Council and Principal General Meetings** are intentional structures developed at Fresno for regular communication between the superintendent and school leaders, and Instructional Supervisors serve as 'spokespersons' of the district with schools, responding to many of the questions teachers and school leaders have, or at least directing inquiries to the right person/department.
- **Regional structure.** For the past three years, Fresno schools have been organized in seven regions (each supported by an instructional supervisor, but led by principals themselves). The regional structure and meetings allow principals to consult and share with each other about challenges they're facing and strategies they're trying out; many principals continue this work informally outside these meetings. This is creating what we call *systemness*—a state where every educator, staff or faculty feels a connection to schools beyond their own and for the larger system.
- In addition to regions, schools are also organized in **Accountable Communities** based on data trends, where principals work together to establish common performance goals, discuss themes of common interest, share challenges and consult with each other. The regional structure and principal ACs are helping to develop common language and practices across schools, creating some consistency of school experiences for students who move from one school to another within the district.
- **Reducing distractors.** Fresno, a city with some of the largest concentrated poverty in the country, is fertile ground for the eruption of media controversies and other issues that test the ability of the district to stay focused on strategic priorities. Superintendent Hanson has developed an intentional approach to these situations, using them as opportunities for learning and growth. The core approach of FUSD leadership with regards to distractors is to

examine them carefully, crafting and delivering thoughtful responses, and moving on to the next task.

- **A culture of learning.** The intentional learning stance taken by the district and school leaders is a notable feature of FUSD. In our focus groups, participants articulated clearly what they were doing and why, while identifying key areas for improvement, and they talked openly about learning alongside their peers and others. The constant interaction between the central office and schools and the learning frame adopted by system leaders, creates a vehicle for continuous improvement.
- Staff across the entire system in Fresno seem to have developed a **sense of comfort with trying to do things differently and learning from failure**; and, they are getting better as a result. Such habits are important markers of a healthy culture of organizational learning. *Productive struggle* was a term we heard repeatedly among school and system leaders in reference to the necessary confusion and struggle required for learning and development. Such productive struggle seems to become an acceptable part of the process of figuring out how to get better at FUSD.

Professional Capital

When human, social and decisional capital are strong, it is because they are feeding on each other. If any one is weak, the other two are undermined. Simply put, you can't have coherence if any one of the capitals is weak; efforts to strengthen coherence and professional capital must go hand in hand. The first five or so years of capacity building under Mike Hanson (2006-2010) were mostly human capital oriented (e.g., offering training aimed at developing the skill and knowledge of individual teachers or training school leaders to give good feedback to individual teachers). A shift towards building social capital started in 2009 with the creation of Accountable Communities (FUSD's version of Professional Learning Communities) in schools, and later on with the creation of school regions whereby leaders and teachers from different schools work with each other on identifying key challenges and building solutions collaboratively. Laser-like attention to improving decisional capital is still in its initial stages.

Attracting and Developing Human Capital

A particularly important aspect of the district turnaround effort at FUSD was creating a Human Resource strategy where there was none. Hanson hired Kim Meccum as Associate Superintendent for Human Resources and Labor Relations. She led the creation and implementation of a robust HR strategy for the district. A 5-year strategic plan was developed to build a solid and stable teacher pipeline. This strategy included developing a partnership with Fresno Pacific and Fresno State University to chart continuous development for teacher education, all the way from pre-service to tenure, as well as initiating a teaching academy to attract students into the teaching profession. This partnership resulted in an infusion of the new culture of collaboration that was prioritized in the district in university teacher education programs: universities started to shift from individualistic teacher preparation programs to more collaborative team-based approaches.

The strategy to cultivate human capital at FUSD aimed at increasing the stability of the teaching force and improving conditions for teaching and learning. To achieve this, Meccum and her team identified

major obstacles to teacher hiring and retention, and worked backward, clearing the obstacles while building incentive systems to attract and retain teacher talent. They also created special incentives to attract teacher talent, particularly in hard-to-fill positions such as Math, Science, and Special Education, and they started to have an active presence in job fairs, taking a proactive stance towards recruitment. Working closely with the Chief Financial Officer to look at HR metrics such as projected enrolments, available teacher candidates, upcoming openings of teaching positions, FUSD was able to start hiring in January, which allowed them to hire high quality candidates, letting them know that they would have a place in the district in the coming school year. In addition, the district was able to work with the teachers' union to remove a contract clause that allowed teachers to change schools mid-year—a common problem that created serious disruptions and instability in Fresno classrooms.

Developing the human capital of school and district staff at Fresno has been a priority from early on in Hanson's tenure. A Professional Learning Department was created to design and deliver professional learning opportunities for teachers, school leaders, and classified staff, focusing on areas such as teaching, skillful leadership, team building, and effective feedback. Professional learning has evolved into focused, high quality experiential learning opportunities for teachers, school and district leaders alike.

Attracting and developing talent at FUSD includes future school and district leaders. FUSD has invested heavily in teacher leadership. Currently, there are lead teachers in schools who get some additional pay and release time to support instructional improvement and collaboration in schools. The district has also been intentional about growing its own new generation of system leaders through admin credentials and Master's degree programs co-taught by professors at Fresno State University and FUSD leaders, for example. Through this program Fresno has cultivated a cohort of future administrators. Hanson and his team have strategically sought out, identified and attracted talent for system leadership positions. For example, three former principals who turned tough schools into high performing schools have been promoted to higher leadership positions in the district.

In the view of senior leaders at Fresno, two major statewide policies—class size reduction and the Peer Assistance Review (PAR) process to grant teacher tenure—complicated matters for FUSD in ways that still continue to affect the quality of its teaching force. In a district where a rich pool of highly qualified teacher candidates was not yet available and there was no HR strategy, California's class size reduction policy led to hiring a lot of people too quickly without many quality controls. The PAR process, launched across California in 2001 to evaluate and grant tenure to teachers, led to questionable hiring and tenure decisions because PAR teachers responsible for writing teacher evaluations were not necessarily strong on instruction themselves. In order to deal with tenured teachers who may not have had sufficient opportunities to learn effective instruction and commit to continuous learning, an issue the district continues to face to this day, Hanson and his team have created professional learning opportunities, targeted improvement initiatives for consistently underperforming schools,⁴ and a culture of organizational learning to create positive pressure for improvement; yet, the executive cabinet acknowledges that his is not enough. The team has been working with the union to encourage early retirement or finding other measures to remove from classrooms any teachers with consistently poor performance. Coupled with this has been communicating clearly to principals that they will have the support of the district when they identify cases of, in the words of Hanson, "not necessarily

⁴ See School Improvement Grants: Progress Report from America's Great City Schools. (Council of the Great City Schools, 2015).

criminal acts, but criminally bad instruction.” This is forging a culture of ‘internal accountability’⁵ that creates positive pressure for improvement.

Developing Social Capital

Unlike human capital, social capital is a ‘coherence maker,’ that is, it directly develops a shared sense of the nature of the work. Strategies to develop social capital in Fresno have been in existence for a relatively short time. The most prominent strategies are the creation of accountable communities for teacher collaboration, professional learning communities of school principals, a new regional structure for collaboration between schools, and cross-panel professional learning involving principals and teacher teams together.

Inspired by a visit from FUSD leaders to a nearby district, Accountable Communities (ACs) in schools were promoted with the intention of enhancing the collective capacity of schools for continuous improvement. The organization of school schedules to create time for ACs vary from school to school. Currently, ACs serve as a key structure to support the understanding of and implementation of Common Core Standards. A district-wide protocol has been developed to offer an overall structure to their activities. This protocol is organized around four guiding questions: 1) what do we want all students to learn? 2) How will we know they have learned it? 3) How will we respond when learning has not occurred? 4) How will we respond when learning has already occurred?

School and district leaders at FUSD acknowledge that teacher collaboration in ACs has not yet reached consistency and the desired degree of depth and impact in all schools. There are still ACs where teachers continue to wait for indications from the principal, or where the default coaching practice continues to be strictly focused on individual teachers. At the same time, there seems to be a shared understanding about next steps to enhance the effectiveness of ACs, including establishing cycles of collaborative inquiry based on relevant evidence on student outcomes and opportunities; directly connecting teacher collaboration to changing instructional practice; fostering the capacity of principals and teachers to support effective collaboration; and shifting from a culture of compliance to one of collaboration. Enhancing the quality of teacher collaboration in ACs is currently one of the main areas of focus of Instructional Supervisors. Through their regular interaction with their schools and among themselves, they are developing key commonalities and common tools in their support to schools.

The development of social capital among school leaders has been another professional learning priority at FUSD. Principals get together in their own Accountable Communities to share challenges, identify possible solutions and address common problems of practice. The new regional structure is another major strategy to develop and circulate social capital within and among schools. Although a very recently implemented strategy, it has created almost immediate buy-in from principals and holds

⁵ Fullan, M., Rincon-Gallardo, S. & Hargreaves, A. (2015). “Professional Capital as Accountability.” *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 23(15).

Elmore, R., Ableman, C.H., Even, J., Kenyon, S., & Marshall, J. (2004). “When Accountability Knocks, Will Anyone Answer?” In Elmore, *School reform from the inside out*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press: 133-199.

promise as a high leverage strategy to improve school performance over the next few years—especially if it gets linked directly to continuously examining and refining instructional practice to maximize its impact on student learning.

Professional development is currently undergoing an important transition from a human capital orientation to a social capital orientation. Whereas teachers and principals attended PD sessions separately in the past, the professional learning department is working on identifying the points in time when principals and teachers can be convened together and learn alongside each other.

The development of social capital in FUSD also includes the creation of partnerships and networks with other districts. FUSD has made it a regular practice to visit, consult with, and learn from high performing districts in California such as Sanger, Long Beach, and Garden Grove. Social capital is not just about collaborating, but doing so in a way that continuously examines existing instructional practice in view of evidence of student learning and creates conditions for its improvement. FUSD continues to grow in this respect.

Cultivating Decisional Capital

Decisional capital refers to the professional expertise developed over time to make good decisions—instructionally and otherwise. Many of the current support structures and practices underway in Fresno explored in this report are moving in the direction of cultivating decisional capital throughout the system. Many of the supports offered by the district to principals and teachers are intentionally designed to gradually releasing responsibility to make the core decisions for instructional and school improvement to teachers and principals themselves.

Recently, FUSD has developed and launched an extensive real-time data system, the School Quality Improvement Index (SQII) to support data-based decision making in schools and across the district to “change conditions in the present.” The SQII is a sophisticated data system with multiple indicators of student achievement and opportunity aimed at offering students, teachers, and administrators a multiplicity of measures to identify areas of improvement. Some of the most powerful features of SQII include: indicators for school and system leaders “to change conditions in the present;” real-time data accessible to every teacher, school and system leader, which makes it possible for schools and the system to identify areas of improvement at a point when something can still be done about it; and, the wide range of information beyond simple measures of student achievement that offer a rich picture of the range of opportunities that can open up to students based on their academic trajectory

As part of the CORE (California Office to Reform Education) network, FUSD was granted a federal NCLB waiver in 2013 that exempts CORE districts from NCLB-mandated testing and accountability measures. In exchange, CORE districts committed to a School Quality Improvement Plan aimed at preparing all students for college and career, assuming accountability to eliminate disparity and disproportionality across five key dimensions: academic performance, academic growth, academic completion and retention, social emotional, and culture and climate. The SQII is organized in these five dimensions and includes a second tier of data that seeks to capture the conditions required for students to be able to do well across these 5 dimensions. Although the SQII system is currently viewed by teachers and administrators as overwhelming, there seems to be shared agreement on its potential

and the need to develop confidence to use it—a process that will take time, but will be worth the investment.

Accountable Communities are perhaps the most important system-wide structure to develop decisional capital at FUSD. However, structures for teacher collaboration have so far fallen short of substantially shifting the instructional core—what teachers and students do when they interact with each other in the presence of knowledge—in any consistent manner across the entire system. While we observed some powerful examples of highly engaging pedagogies for deep learning during our first visit to Fresno, these remain discrete and isolated cases. Although FUSD has made very important progress with regards to some measures of student success, especially retention, graduation rates, and AP and A-G enrollment, no substantial or sustained improvements have been achieved on student *learning* indicators. The key to the puzzle lies in the relative stability of the instructional practice district-wide over the past decade, despite multiple positive changes of structures and practices surrounding the instructional core.

The strategies to develop professional capital in Fresno described in this report are getting increasingly closer to penetrating and shifting the instructional core and we can anticipate that once they do so in a large enough numbers of schools, significant improvements on student learning will follow. Furthermore, some schools in Fresno have achieved improved student learning outcomes against tremendous odds. Capitalizing on the school improvement expertise already available within the district will be crucial to bring about and accelerate the long awaited improvements in student learning at Fresno. But for this to be effective will require zeroing in on proactive, and developing corresponding collective efficacy.

Key Lessons and Strategic Recommendations

Fresno Unified School District has undergone a substantial transition from broken and broke system to a more coherent, energized, and fiscally sound system. The district has achieved this by cultivating strong working relationships with the Board, the union, and the larger community; by creating a stable district structure where there was none; and, cultivating a culture of collaboration, communication and learning across the entire organization. The district's achievements so far, however, could be attained without addressing the instructional core in any substantial way. The next stage in FUSD's improvement journey requires: 1) a sustained and committed focus on substantially improving instructional practice in classrooms, and 2) a continued and relentless effort to deepen system coherence. We offer some recommendations to advance in these two directions below.

Zeroing In on Ensuring Effective Instructional Practice

Develop a district-wide definition of powerful pedagogy and make it visible across the system.

Establish mechanisms to ensure that expected pedagogy is not only modeled with principals and even teachers, but also brought to the classroom.

Continue to invest time and effort in sharpening the focus and enhancing the effectiveness of accountable communities.

Sharpen the focus of principal PLCs to deliberately influence constant examination and improvement/refinement of instructional practice.

Support continuous practice of use of SQII data to identify key areas of improvement, examine possible causes, and design, try out and refine interventions/solutions. Deliberately and continuously simplify SQII data and its user friendliness.

Develop strategies to enhance the visibility of and spread existing exemplary practices in Fresno classrooms and schools that have consistently demonstrated improved outcomes.

Enhancing System Coherence: Take Stock

Stay the course—regional work, instructional supervisors, use of data for improvement, introduction of challenging content and complex text in all classrooms, right on. Avoid temptation of new, flashy initiatives.

Take stock of where the district is in its evolution. Review the overall state of play. Take an inventory of current initiatives and decide on what could be deleted or lessened. Continue to identify and weaken sources of system disjointedness and overload as perceived by end users – students, teachers, school leaders. Consider how a new consolidation could be achieved.

Note

This is one of five district case studies of Professional Capital under the title of *California's Golden Opportunity*.

The five case studies are:

1. Corona Norco Unified School District
2. Fresno Unified School District
3. Long Beach Unified School District
4. Twin Rivers Unified School District
5. Whittier Unified School District

In addition, there are three supporting documents:

1. California's Golden Opportunity: A Status Note
Michael Fullan & Team
November 2014
2. A Golden Opportunity: The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence as a Force for Positive Change
Michael Fullan & Team and California Forward
January 2015
3. California's Golden Opportunity: LCAP's Theory of Action—Problems and Corrections
Michael Fullan & Team
July 2015

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*Endnote

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Glossary

ACSA: Association of California School Administrators

API: Academic Performance Index (former California student assessment program)

CaEdpartners: California Education Partners

CCEE: California Collaborative for Educational Excellence

CCSEA: California County Superintendents Educational Services Association

CDE: California Department of Education

COE: County Office of Education

CORE: California Office to Reform Education

CSBA: California School Boards Association

CSEA: California School Employees Association

CTA: California Teachers Association

CFT: California Federation of Teachers

LASSO: Local Agency System Support Office

LCFF/LCAP: Local Control Funding Formula/Local Control and Accountability Plan

SBE: State Board of Education