

Central Falls
School District

Findings and Recommendations
from the

Central Office Review for Results & Equity

conducted in partnership with the
Annenberg Institute for School Reform and the
Rhode Island Department of Education

prepared by the



December 13, 2005

Central Office Review for Results and Equity

In January 2005, the Central Falls School District (CFSD) began working with the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University and the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) on a Central Office Review for Results and Equity, or CORRE – a five-step process developed by the Institute’s School Communities that Work Task Force on the Future of Urban Districts. CORRE was developed to help school districts examine the ways in which their central offices provide leadership and support for continuous improvement of teaching and learning so that they may ensure results and equity for each child in every school.

CORRE helps a district to:

- acknowledge the current state of student academic achievement;
- determine the effectiveness of central office policies and practices that impact student achievement; and
- develop appropriate action steps that can strengthen central office capacity to support schools in their efforts to help students achieve high standards.

This review, conducted by Institute staff, is not an audit, a consultant report, an external review, or any other practice commonly done *to* districts. Rather, it is a process designed to build capacity in collaboration *with* a school district and its community. To help build that local capacity, the review is intentionally guided and carried out by a CORRE Team composed of various district stakeholders, who collect and organize data to inform a set of findings about central office practice. A more detailed description of the CORRE process appears in Appendix A.

This report contains the results of the Central Falls CORRE Team members’ collaborative work.

The CORRE Process in Central Falls

In March 2003, representatives of the Annenberg Institute and RIDE convened a meeting of superintendents from three Rhode Island districts to introduce them to CORRE and to invite each district to participate. One of those participants was former Central Falls superintendent Dr. Maureen Chevrette, who, upon hearing about CORRE, accepted the offer extended to Central Falls. The three superintendents agreed to conduct their reviews one after the other, with Central Falls electing to go last in anticipation of its move from state oversight to independent control. In spring 2004, Dr. Chevrette communicated that she would be retiring and, at her urging, the Institute chose to postpone the review until a new superintendent was named.

In October 2004, staff from the Institute and RIDE met with current superintendent Dr. Patricia Watkins to reextend our offer to Central Falls. Dr. Watkins, on behalf of the district, accepted our invitation. During the remainder of the fall, plans were finalized and a CORRE Team was assembled consisting of central office leadership, teachers union leadership, teachers, a principal, school-based student support staff, community representatives, Institute staff, and RIDE staff (see Appendix B). In early February 2005 the Team met for an orientation session and began its work.

The CORRE Team's first task was to gather data to develop a shared understanding of what classroom instruction and student performance looks like in Central Falls. Team members visited schools, analyzed student-achievement data, and made meaning of what they saw in both sets of data. The Team emerged from its analysis with a primary question that would guide the review: What is central office doing to support teaching and learning for all children?

To gain insight into this "guiding question," the Team crafted a set of interview questions based on question templates provided by Institute staff. Equipped with those questions, the CORRE Team and other district staff conducted thirty-two interviews and focus groups, speaking with 168 individuals from the district and the wider Central Falls community. Facilitators and note-takers for each interview or focus group were screened to prevent conflicts of interest or circumstances that could inhibit participants from being fully forthcoming. Institute staff conducted all interviews and focus groups with central office staff, teachers union leadership, and the Board of Trustees.

Institute staff gathered the notes from each focus group and interview, analyzed the data, and prepared a preliminary draft of findings. These tasks were done by Institute staff to maximize anonymity and to ensure the integrity of the process. The CORRE Team met in June 2005 to view and affirm the findings. Team members requested that one finding be reexamined and potentially reworded or omitted. Institute staff revisited the data, changed the wording of the finding in question, and, with the approval of the CORRE Team, worked with the superintendent and the teachers union president to reach consensus on final wording of the finding.

In January, a new “Action Team” will meet with Institute staff and Dr. Watkins to discuss the findings’ implications for central office policies, practices, and configuration. The results of that work, as well as CFSD leadership’s response to the Institute’s recommendations (see Recommendations section of this report) will be informed by the work of the Action Team.

A detailed timeline of the CORRE process in Central Falls appears in Appendix C.

Central Falls, Rhode Island, presents a unique context that we kept in mind as we developed our findings and recommendations. Central Falls is a small district with a surface area of less than 1.3 square miles and one of the highest population densities in the country. Within this small geographic area resides a city with a rich and proud history of receiving and nurturing recent immigrants that seek to make Rhode Island home. Today that legacy continues. Many residents of Central Falls are newcomers to either the United States or Rhode Island, joining a community where a language other than English is the primary language of many residents. Over 64 percent of Central Falls residents over the age of five speak a language other than English at home (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).

Central Falls also faces other notable challenges. Over 50 percent of residents twenty-five years old and over have less than a high school diploma (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Central Falls has the lowest per capita income in Rhode Island and ranks at the bottom of available property taxation per student (RIDE & CFSD 2004). These persistent economic shortcomings have made sustaining the public schools in Central Falls a continuing fiscal challenge.

This challenge came to a head in the early 1990s. Amid years of financial upheaval, the state of Rhode Island created the Central Falls Review Commission to examine and document the financial situation of the city. In its final report, the Commission recommended that the state assume the financing of the Central Falls school system. Acting on that recommendation, in 1991 municipal and state leadership came to an agreement, which was formalized in legislation stipulating that the state would take over financing and administrative control of the school district. A special state administrator would be appointed by the state to replace the city’s school committee and that individual would report to the commissioner of education.

From 1991 to 2003, RIDE acted as the district’s school board, taking responsibility for setting goals, ensuring legal compliance with state and federal laws and mandates, overseeing policy adoption, establishing controls to make school governance and management possible, maintaining fiscal accountability, and approving collective bargaining agreements. In June 2002, the Rhode Island General Assembly voted to end the state’s governing role in CFSD and to return control to the city, establishing an appointed Board of Trustees to replace the longstanding special state administrator. In June 2003, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education unanimously approved recommendations for CFSD’s first Board of Trustees.

During the twelve-year period under state oversight, Central Falls took several steps forward, such as raising teacher salaries and increasing various benefits to attract highly qualified teachers to the district. However, during the same period, other challenges and issues arose that contributed to relatively flat student-achievement levels until the last two to three years of state oversight. Today, the state continues to provide up to 90 percent of the district's revenues to cover the expenses of the school district. Without such fiscal support, the district would likely have to fold. It can be said that the state continues to sustain CFSD fiscally, but the district is still recovering from the long tenure of state control as it reestablishes the governing functions of the district. Recently, substantial gains in student achievement at all levels, but particularly in the elementary grades, have given grounds for optimism in the district.

REFERENCES

- Rhode Island Department of Education and Central Falls School District. 2004. "Central Falls School District and the Rhode Island Department of Education Since 1991." In *Progressive Support and Intervention*. Providence, RI: RIDE and CFSD (April).
- U.S. Census Bureau. 2000. *Table DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000, Central Falls, Rhode Island*. PDF file no. 1604414140. Available for download at <www.census.gov>, Find an Area Profile with QuickFacts link ("Select a state to begin": select "Rhode Island"; "Select a city": select "Other places not listed": "Enter a city or town": type in "Central Falls.")

Findings from the CORRE Team

How are the Central Falls School District's students doing?

For an overview of student performance from 2002 to 2004, please see Appendix E: Student-Performance Data.

1. There appear to be a large number of referrals made to special education, and that number seems to be increasing each year. Some are concerned that a portion of those referrals may be inappropriate.
 - ◇ Some teachers reported resistance to putting ESL children in special education, even when they demonstrated learning difficulties in their native language.
 - ◇ In contrast, other professional staff expressed concern that ESL students were being referred to special education because of the need for language support, without evidence of a disability.
2. Nonetheless, most respondents consider special education students to be "well served." But no link has been made between special education services or accommodations and student achievement.

3. Principals and teachers indicated that students receiving ESL services were too isolated from mainstream or general education students from whom they could benefit linguistically.
4. Teachers, other professional staff, principals, and even students described student behavior as a problem in the district.

What are the Central Falls School District's expectations for student academic performance?

5. Higher student achievement and success are priorities that are clearly expressed by the district's senior leadership, but many teachers described increasing test scores as the district's priority.
6. Still, expectations for student academic performance appear mixed. A handful of respondents reported that there are high expectations for students, but many more believe that expectations are low for all students in the district, particularly for low-income students and English language learners.
7. Parents see students having very little homework, particularly at the high school, and many of them are concerned about social promotion – the practice of promoting students because of their age rather than their academic readiness to advance.
8. Many teachers asserted that few students were underserved. They indicated that most are well served, given students' circumstances.

What is the Central Falls School District doing to *support high-quality instruction*?

9. While acknowledging that schools vary in their strengths and weaknesses, parents seem to find greater satisfaction with the elementary schools in general than with the middle school or high school.
10. Teachers and principals expressed uncertainty about how to lead classes in which students display various levels of ability and knowledge. Teachers, principals, and other professional staff want support to differentiate both instruction and assessment for individual students.
11. There is a need for more recently published textbooks or other appropriate texts. Teachers spoke of having textbooks for only a fraction of their students; testing materials not arriving in time for standardized examinations; and having access to books that only addressed students who were equipped with a particular set of academic skills, which presented an obstacle to differentiated instruction.
12. School-based staff desire more supports for addressing behavior problems early, before they become bigger and harder to fix. In several cases, participants said they needed more behavior specialists.

13. Staff from across the district emphasized services and caring in providing social and emotional support for students. They did not report an equivalent emphasis on instructional quality.
14. Students report inconsistencies in instruction (e.g., making the content “interesting” or engaging) and in teacher behavior (e.g., explaining assignments, offering after-school help) in the secondary classrooms.
15. Community partners and parents expressed the view that teachers need additional preparation and support in dealing with students’ behavior and social problems.
16. Teachers, other professional staff, and principals all described professional development as fragmented and not clearly connected to their own work.
17. Teachers expressed support for common planning time: those that have it like it, and those who do not would like to have it.
18. Teachers, other professional staff, principals, and board members all described financial resources as inadequate in the district.
19. Teachers are concerned about student mobility and feel a need for a newcomer center in the district.
20. Respondents from across stakeholder groups noted technology shortages and challenges in central office and in schools, attributing these problems to years of neglect.

What is the Central Falls School District doing to *engage families and the larger Central Falls community*?

21. Schools vary in responsiveness to parents but, in general, the elementary schools include parents in decisions about their children’s education more consistently than do the secondary schools.
22. Teachers, principals, and board members all described the home-school liaisons as key supports linking home and school. Many suggested that there needs to be a home-school liaison in every building. Other professional staff were concerned that the role of the home-school liaisons was misunderstood by most teachers and principals, fearing that they are seen as translators and as the people who are solely responsible for parent engagement.
23. Parents and students value after-school programs and programs for young children.
24. Teachers felt that a lack of family support and involvement in their children’s education was a major impediment to student achievement.
25. Parents acknowledged that they need to offer more support to their children’s teachers.

26. Parents appreciate workshops offered by district staff, particularly when they have opportunities to participate in English classes.
27. Community partners referred to improvements in the cooperation between school-based educators and community/social providers.

In what ways does the Central Falls School District’s central office reflect a service orientation?

28. Principals and teachers felt that, in general, central office was responsive to their needs.
29. In terms of planning and coordination, however, principals described central office as reactive, not proactive. Both principals and teachers stated that communication from central office was not timely, thus leading to gossip and rumors as one of the first or only sources of information in the district.
 - ✧ Respondents expressed a desire for better planning and coordination of everyday and long-term efforts that are overseen or initiated by central office.
30. Respondents indicated that the new phone system is a strong communication support.
31. Teachers are hearing that what they are doing is not good enough and, therefore, feel that there is little respect for their work as professionals. They report that the work they have done in the past and the progress they have made is not acknowledged by the current administration. Community concerns about low student achievement have become a high priority for central office leadership, contributing to an increased pressure from central office on schools and teachers to perform.

What is the work culture like in the Central Falls School District’s central office?

32. Work load and changes in roles and responsibilities have made it difficult for members of the central office staff to view their accomplishments in a positive way and to anticipate how best to serve their district constituents. Many central office staff described themselves as “stretched thin.”
33. Central office staff struggle to know what others are doing and to stay informed about the initiatives designed to contribute to district improvement. Some feel isolated. Internal communication at central office is viewed as inadequate and is a concern of many.
34. Central office staff indicated a desire for greater inclusiveness in district planning and day-to-day operations, including opportunities to interact more directly with school administrators and teachers.

How well do governance policies and structures support the work of the Central Falls School District?

35. Some respondents indicated that most district policies are verbal understandings or longstanding traditions; they expressed a desire to have policies committed to writing and shared widely among district stakeholders.
36. The school system has run a deficit in the recent past.
37. Some respondents expressed the view that RIDE should have been more accountable in its oversight of the district.
38. A few respondents expressed concerns that the current composition of the Board of Trustees may violate the Rhode Island Constitution's separation of powers amendment.

Recommendations from the Annenberg Institute Based on the CORRE Team Findings

Maintain and Deepen a Central Office Service Orientation

Strong districts benefit from “servant leadership,” the act of leading by serving others. A strength of CFSD’s current leadership is its emphasis on meeting students’ learning needs to prepare them for successful futures. That invaluable asset can act as a lens to examine central office daily practice by framing the question: How does each central office action improve conditions for student learning and contribute to higher student achievement?

However, because central office staff do not work directly with students, a primary role of central office is to have a service orientation toward those who *do* work directly with children – principals, teachers, support staff, and families/parents. This orientation should be evident in the other roles of central office: translating district leadership’s major priorities (“big ideas”) for district employees and community residents; providing guidance, frameworks, and tools for executing districtwide initiatives; strengthening the skills and knowledge of those who work directly with students; and communicating with families/parents, school staff, and central office colleagues.

To maintain and deepen its strong service orientation, CFSD should consider implementing the following actions:

- Develop a shared understanding of the internal and external communication needed to support current and future reform initiatives. Attend to:
 - ✧ the types of communication (e-mail, face to face, voice to voice, paper, etc.) and/or what needs to be shared, broadly known, or discussed;
 - ✧ how often that needs to be shared and with whom;
 - ✧ the purposes of the communication (coordination, anticipation, planning, etc.); and

- ◇ which of those communications need to be multidirectional to be effective – that is, more than a one-way communication delivery of information, especially with families, students, and community residents.

Communication needs should be determined by meeting with principals and other staff and analyzing communication from central office around major events and priorities.

- Increase central office capacity to oversee the recruitment, hiring, induction, retention, and evaluation of personnel in the district and other personnel-related issues.
- Explore options to redesign and streamline responsibilities among administrative staff at central office to maintain a positive service orientation.
- Identify existing districtwide policies, making them explicit and committing them to writing in a policy manual that is easily accessible to teachers, principals, and central office personnel.

Increase and Broaden Instructional Capacity in the District

High-quality instruction is essential for high student achievement. In a district with a small central office, the instructional and operational roles that might be neatly defined and divided in a larger-staffed setting are shared among a few individuals. In such a context, building and communicating shared expectations for students, along with the instructional focus that will help achieve them, is key. This begins with district leaders. But it figures into the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of all central office and school staff. It is accompanied by a commitment to continuous improvement, which inevitably will require change. The challenge of meeting the learning needs of a diverse student body will involve the refinement of instructional practices and interventions to support every student, particularly special education students and English language learners. This is a challenge that confronts Central Falls.

For Central Falls to build on its recent academic improvements, CFSD should consider actions such as:

- Develop a shared understanding of existing expectations for students and align them to expectation levels that, when met, will prepare graduates for an array of postsecondary options and choices. Methods of surfacing expectations for students are:
 - ◇ convening student focus groups of recent high school graduates and students who recently left high school without a diploma, to hear what did and did not work for them and, for graduates, how well prepared they were for work and further education;
 - ◇ convening parent and community focus groups to hear their perceptions of expectations for students;
 - ◇ collecting and analyzing student work and teacher assignment samples from a cross-section of students (e.g., ESL, general, special education) in the elementary schools, as well as the middle and high school; and

- ◇ conducting student shadowing of a cross-section of students – one adult accompanying one student for his or her entire school day, then discussing what students were asked to do and learn academically.
- Make differentiating instruction, the practice of matching teaching strategies and curricular supports to student learning styles and needs, a districtwide priority to increase student-achievement levels and to meet the student learning needs of CFSD’s diverse student population.
- Ensure that there are adequate resources for high-quality differentiated instruction in all classrooms to support teachers and students in meeting high expectations. Areas that should be attended to include, but are not limited to:
 - ◇ access to technology (e.g., computers, Internet access, technology assistance and support);
 - ◇ provision of more recently published texts and supplementary texts and materials that are aligned with district standards to meet the diverse learning needs of Central Falls students, particularly special education students and English language learners;
 - ◇ access to various types of assessment materials; and
 - ◇ professional learning for teachers and administrators to acquire or hone skills and strategies to use the above resources to differentiate instruction.
- Devise and set in motion an intervention system with strategies to improve student behavior and achievement in a general education setting before a student is referred to special education or identified as requiring a placement in a separate setting. These strategies should be aligned with research and best practices and developed collaboratively with school-level staff.
- Review and revisit policies and procedures for student referral and placement in special education and ESL, giving specific attention to:
 - ◇ how students are diagnosed as needing special education or ESL services;
 - ◇ where referrals are originating (from inside or outside the district; from which schools, grade levels, and student demographic groups within the district); and
 - ◇ what instructional supports are offered through those services to raise student achievement.
- Consider how best to use technology (e.g., Internet; electronic editions of books, newspapers, and magazines) to complement the use of hard-copy materials in each school and classroom.
- Restore the technology infrastructure to meet those instructional needs.

Provide Supports for Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement is dependent on continuous learning. Central Falls has that kind of commitment to continuous improvement, as well as numbers of teachers with experience and high skill levels. This expertise may be tapped to broaden the reach of

good practice across the district. Research and field knowledge reveal that a key to improving student achievement is good instruction and that a proven method of improving instruction is to invest in the learning and development of teachers and principals. CFSD has taken many steps to invest in its teachers' and principals' learning. But more must be done to develop and sustain instructional conditions that will lead to stronger, sustainable results.

CFSD should consider actions such as:

- Make differentiating instruction a focus of districtwide professional development as a way to increase student achievement, address the needs of students that are struggling, and reduce the high referral rates to special education. CFSD should consider adopting instructional practices that cultivate school and classroom climates that facilitate learning, while also addressing behavioral issues.
- Provide common planning time for teachers. Time should be used to examine student work samples – data – to discuss students' assets and challenges and the instructional strategies to meet those challenges. Supplement that time with opportunities for administrators and teachers to learn about effective ways to work together so that common planning time is productive and focused on instruction.
- Utilize existing professional development workshops and seminars to complement common planning time and other daily opportunities for collaborative learning among teachers and administrators in schools during the school day.
- Provide opportunities for teachers and administrators to share promising and proven instructional and/or classroom management practices with peers in their buildings. A specific emphasis should be placed on classroom practice that has helped students reach achievement goals and/or improve classroom behavior.
- Continue to provide opportunities for all central office personnel to improve their professional practice.

Extend Learning Opportunities and Supports for Parents and Families

Partnerships between schools and families are vital to helping children reach their full potential. Such connections require intentional acts and consistent effort. When this work is initiated by a school system, it cannot be assumed that families will easily or naturally connect with a school. Those connections need to be facilitated. Some parents or family members may need support to fulfill the roles schools need them to play. Just as parents need to learn from schools, schools need to learn from parents. Additionally, parents and families need an opportunity to learn from and network with each other. These varied learning opportunities are the types of supports that can help parents facilitate academic learning at home, while feeling that schools are a resource for them.

CFSD should consider implementing the following actions:

- Define clearly the responsibilities and clarify the role of home-school liaisons and clarify their roles in facilitating linkages between schools and parents, both within the schools

and in home environments, being explicit as to the proportion of time they should spend playing the role of interpreter in schools during the day.

- Assess the interpreter needs of schools and determine ways of meeting those needs.
- Build on existing supports for families/parents to increase their capacity to foster academic learning at home, utilizing skills, expertise, and networks within schools and in the community.
- Provide additional supports and resources for principals and teachers to help them play a greater role in parent/family engagement.
- Create avenues for individuals and organizations from across the district to share effective strategies to engage hard-to-reach families in their children's education.
- Work to sustain existing partnerships with community organizations and city agencies and seek to create new partnerships to leverage community-based resources.
- Make every effort to increase availability of after-school programs, especially for young children (e.g., preschoolers and newcomers to the district).

Toward Action Steps

The CORRE findings and recommendations have been discussed in depth with the superintendent and staff from RIDE. Though there is much work to be done, the superintendent has embraced the findings and recommendations and has already taken actions in targeted areas. Future areas of emphasis will be aligned and embedded within the district's strategic plan and reflected in RIDE's ongoing work with the district.

The Institute encourages a commitment to regular and joint public reporting on how this partnership is facilitating progress in the district. We recommend that the district and RIDE, at a quarterly public board meeting, report on actions being taken, possibly coordinating with the Institute's follow-up with the district.

While many action steps to follow up on CORRE are management prerogatives, the Institute believes that other members of the CFSD staff and the wider community should be engaged moving forward. The district and community members who have participated in CORRE have demonstrated the capacity for hard work as well as the courage to ask hard questions. They should be among those considered as possible contributors to continuous-improvement efforts in the future. The district will be called on to tap these resources as it moves forward with the important tasks that have been set in motion by CORRE – tasks that will carry the Central Falls community closer to its goal of equity and excellence for all of its children.

What Is CORRE?

The Central Office Review for Results and Equity (CORRE) is a five-step process to help school districts evaluate the capacity of the central office to support high academic performance for all students in all the district's schools. Participants in CORRE identify high-priority issues in the district, examine quantitative and qualitative data about it, and develop plans and propose action for improvement.

CORRE is not an audit, a consultant report, an external review, or any other practice commonly done *to* districts. The CORRE process is facilitated by Annenberg Institute staff and consultants *in collaboration with* a district and its community. Districts that participate do so voluntarily, motivated by a strong desire to look closely at their central office practices and improve their work with schools.

CORRE was developed by School Communities that Work: A National Task Force on the Future of Urban Districts, created by the Annenberg Institute in 2000. The Task Force developed a vision for “smart districts” – urban education systems that have the capacity to achieve both results and equity for all their students, with no significant differences in achievement based on race, ethnicity, or family income. The Task Force concluded that there are three things a “smart” school system must do:

- Provide schools, students, and teachers with needed supports and timely interventions.
- Ensure that schools have the power and resources to make good decisions.
- Make decisions and hold people accountable, using indicators of school and district performance and practice.

The Task Force concluded its work with the publication in 2002 of the *Portfolio for District Redesign* – a series of tools, including CORRE, to help districts perform these three key functions. Building on the work of the Task Force, Institute staff have continued to expand understanding of key central office roles as part of these functions, including communicating big ideas, promoting a service orientation and a data orientation, increasing capacity, brokering partnerships, advocating for and supporting underserved students, and addressing inequities.

CORRE brings together a team of leaders from the district (central office staff, board members, teachers, principals), the community (community-based organization leaders, parent leaders, foundation officers), and consultants from outside the district who are experienced in content areas, systems and culture change, and leadership for learning. The team goes through the following steps.

Step 1. Preparation

CORRE Team members are chosen and receive an orientation facilitated by the Annenberg Institute team members. Meetings are scheduled. Institute and district liaisons prepare background information about the district for the team and begin to identify issues that CORRE might address.

Step 2. Developing Shared Understanding of the District and a Plan for Inquiry

The team discusses the background information about the district and visits schools to develop a shared experience of the district. The team then identifies and prioritizes key issues, sequences the inquiry, creates questions related to central office support of teaching and learning, and identifies key informants – usually including students, teachers, parents, principals, and community partners.

Step 3. Deepening Understanding

The team deepens its understanding of the key issue(s) by collecting data, which may include school visits, classroom observations, surveys, focus groups, shadowing of stu-

dents, and interviews with central office, parents, community members, school staff, or students.

Step 4. Compiling and Analyzing Data

The data is compiled, categorized, and analyzed by Institute staff. The team vets the findings – testing them, based on their own experience in the district – and draws conclusions about implications for central office practice and policy.

Step 5. Developing Action Steps

CORRE shifts from inquiry to action. Based on the feedback from the team in Step 4, Institute staff develop recommendations for action steps, drawing on a framework developed by the Institute that translates the functions of a smart district into key central office roles. These are presented to the team and the superintendent and, eventually, at a public meeting with the board of education. The recommendations may consist of next steps for the district as a whole or specific recommendations for the leadership of the district.

To review progress on the implementation of the action steps, the Institute conducts follow-ups two, four, and six months after the public report is issued. In some cases, the district deepens the post-CORRE relationship with the Institute by requesting support for implementation of one or more of the action steps.

CORRE as a Research Study

CORRE shares many of the qualities of a comprehensive research study. It is based on a conceptual framework; uses research tools – mainly interviews and focus groups – to collect data; and adheres to the strictest research ethics for dealing with human subjects.

CORRE differs from a comprehensive research study primarily with respect to sampling. Rather than basing focus group and interview lists on randomized sampling or related statistical methods, the CORRE Team (also not a statistically representative sample of the district/community, but representing many perspectives) draws upon its collective knowledge to identify participants. Furthermore, all the participants are volunteers, and thus the sampling of groups such as parents is often limited because their participation is usually subject to their availability.

The findings report perceptions across individuals and groups, such as teachers, parents, or principals, noting similar themes relevant to the roles/functions of central office. The subsequent recommendations for improvement build upon those themes.

The data derived from both interviews and the focus groups represent those individuals' perceptions about the focus area. These perceptions may or may not align with quantitative data. But making perceptions explicit is vital, both to convince the district of the need for change and to indicate the areas in which the district may need to improve its policies and practices.

CORRE Team Members

Central Falls School District Community

Jim Bernier, *School Social Worker, Central Falls High School*

Deanna Camputaro, *Visual Arts Instructor, Central Falls High School*

Angelo Garcia, *Director, Channel One*

Arlene Garrison, *Director of Special Education*

Kristen Hlady, *ESL Teacher, Calcutt Middle School*

Isabelle Lemieux, *Special Education Teacher, Calcutt Middle School*

Ann Lynch, *Principal, Hunt Early Learning Center/Cowden Elementary*

Mario Papitto, *Grants Coordinator*

Joany Santa, *Liaison Team Coordinator*

Jane Sessums, *President, Central Falls Teachers Union*

Joanne Vecchio, *Coordinator of Accounting Services*

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Frank Barnes, *Senior Associate*

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Appendix C Timeline for the Central Office Review for Results and Equity in Central Falls

September 2004 – December 2005

September 29, 2004	Meetings were held with leadership of the Central Falls School District (CFSD) and the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) to introduce CORRE.
November 2004	Arrangements for the process and a framework for naming members of the CORRE Team were solidified.
February 3, 2005	CORRE Team orientation meeting was held.
February 14–15	CORRE Team members visited schools to get a shared “feel” for the district. We examined and discussed student-achievement data, school demographics, and contexts for learning. We refined interview protocols to be used by team members to collect data.
March 29–31	CORRE Team members convened focus groups with teachers, principals, teacher leaders, parents, and community members. Annenberg Institute staff interviewed CFSD senior leadership, managers, administrative support people, and staff that provide supports to schools, students, and families.
April 29	Institute staff completed interviews with CFSD senior leadership, School Board members, and external partners.
May 2–June 10	Institute staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• analyzed data from thirty-two interviews and focus groups;• reviewed key CFSD documents and plans;• requested and analyzed additional data, mostly qualitative; and• developed draft findings for presentation to the CORRE Team.
June 21	Draft findings were presented to CORRE Team. Focus of preliminary response was articulated by co-chairs of the School Board. Areas of emphasis were: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• data-informed decision making; and• development of cultural proficiency in central office and school staff.
November 8	Institute staff met with Superintendent Patricia Watkins to discuss CORRE Team findings and Institute recommendations.
December	Institute staff met with Superintendent Patricia Watkins and RIDE staff to discuss CORRE Team findings, the Institute’s recommendations, and subsequent action steps.

About the Annenberg Institute

Appendix D

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform is a national policy-research and technical assistance organization. An independent center at Brown University, the Institute's mission is to develop, share, and act on knowledge that improves the conditions and outcomes of schooling in America, especially in urban communities and in schools serving disadvantaged children. As one of the only organizations in the country studying and working on the problem of education reform "at scale," the Annenberg Institute has responded to requests from school districts across the nation to assist them in creating whole systems of successful schools. With support from funders such as Carnegie Corporation, the Institute is currently working in cities as diverse as Sacramento; Portland, Oregon; Houston; and Boston. The Institute's efforts supporting Rhode Island school districts and communities are provided pro bono, as evidence of interest in supporting improvement locally, as well as nationally.

Appendix E Student-Performance Data

The following figures illustrate student-performance trends in CFSD. A careful examination of these data reveals some of CFSD’s strengths and challenges. The data also shed light on why different district stakeholders can hold different views about what is happening in Central Falls.

Figure 1. Math Performance by Race/Ethnicity and Support Program, 2002–2004

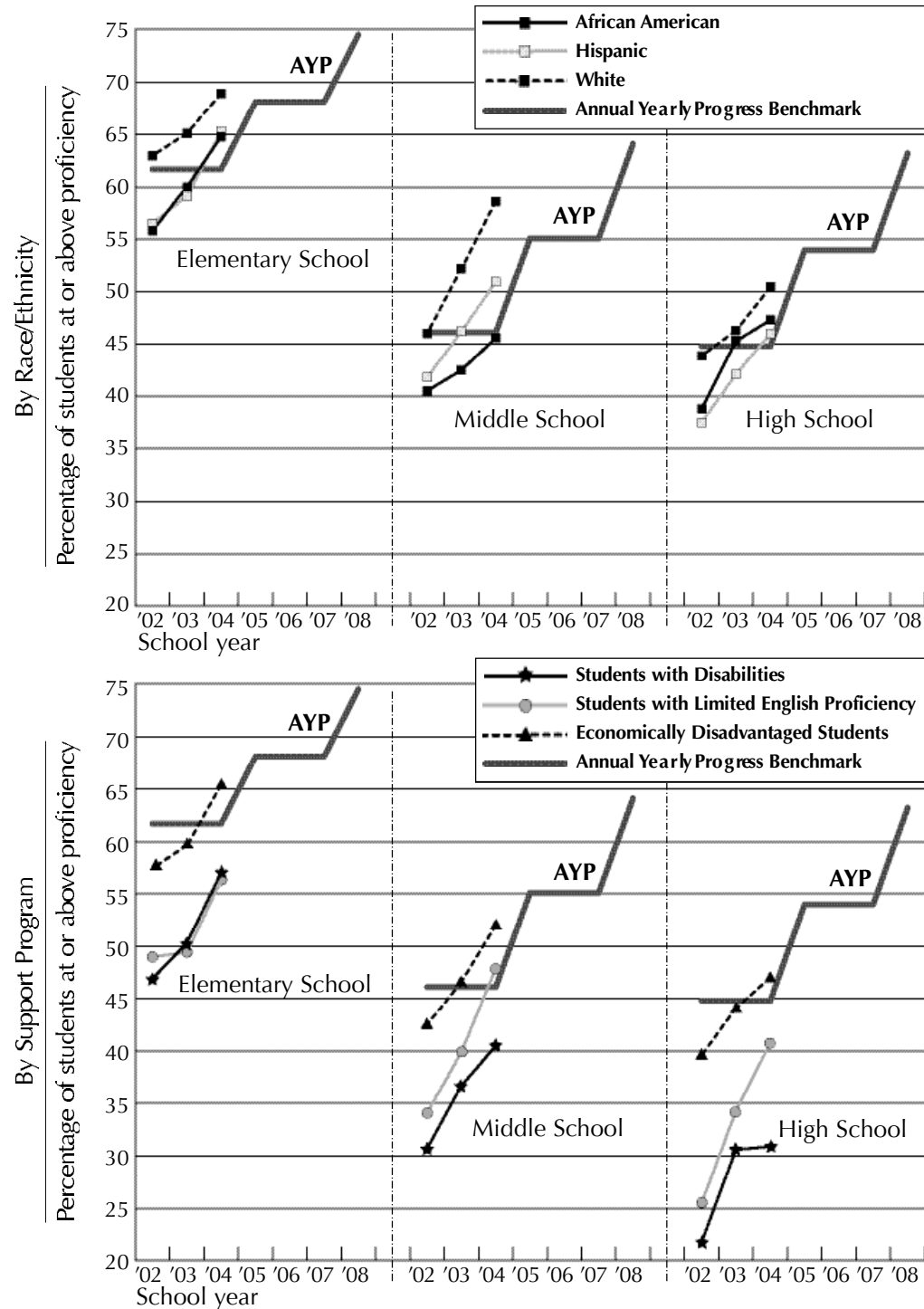


Figure 2. ELA Performance by Race/Ethnicity and Support Program, 2002–2004

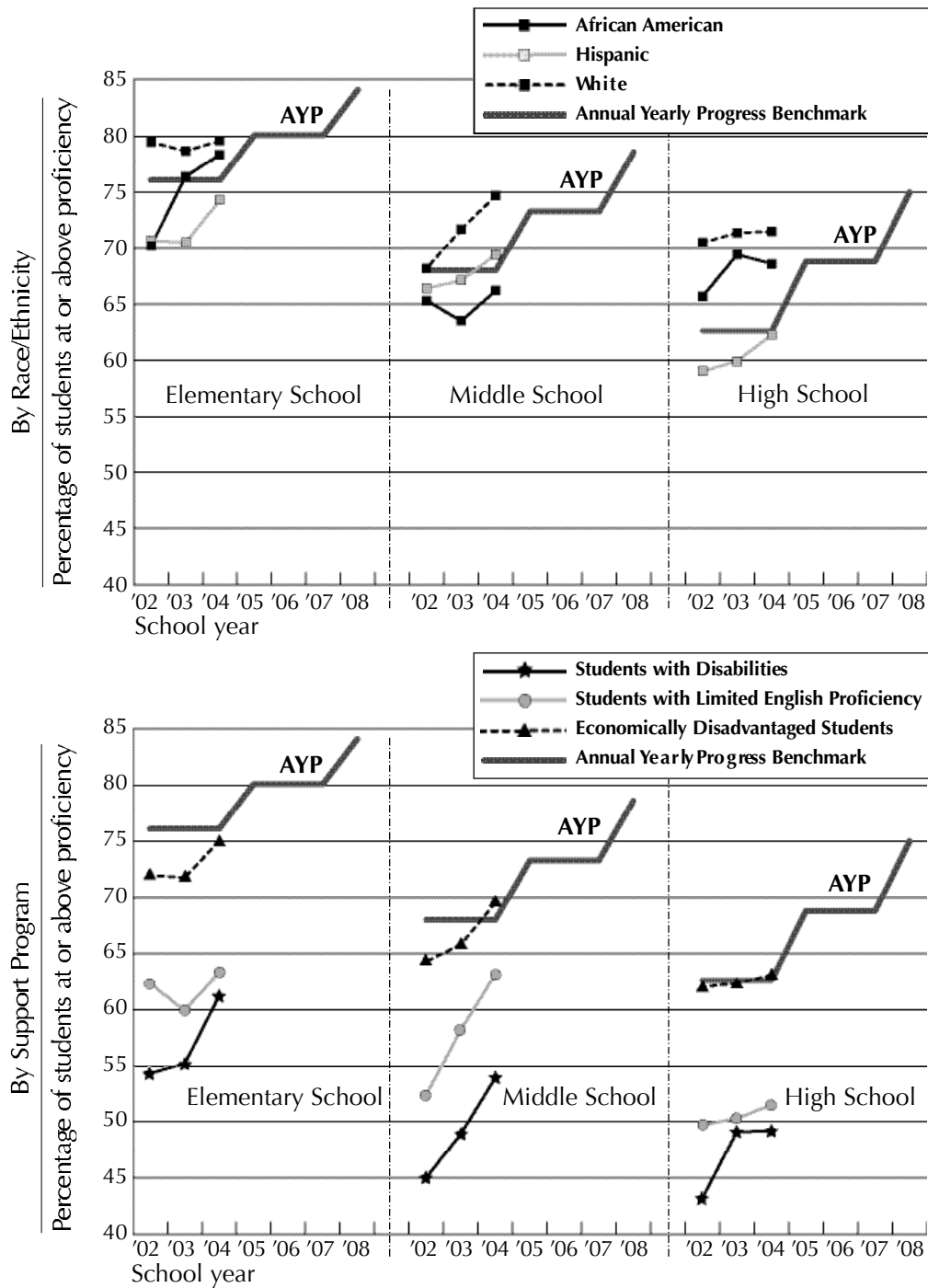


Figure 3. Math Performance: All Students by School Level, 2002–2004

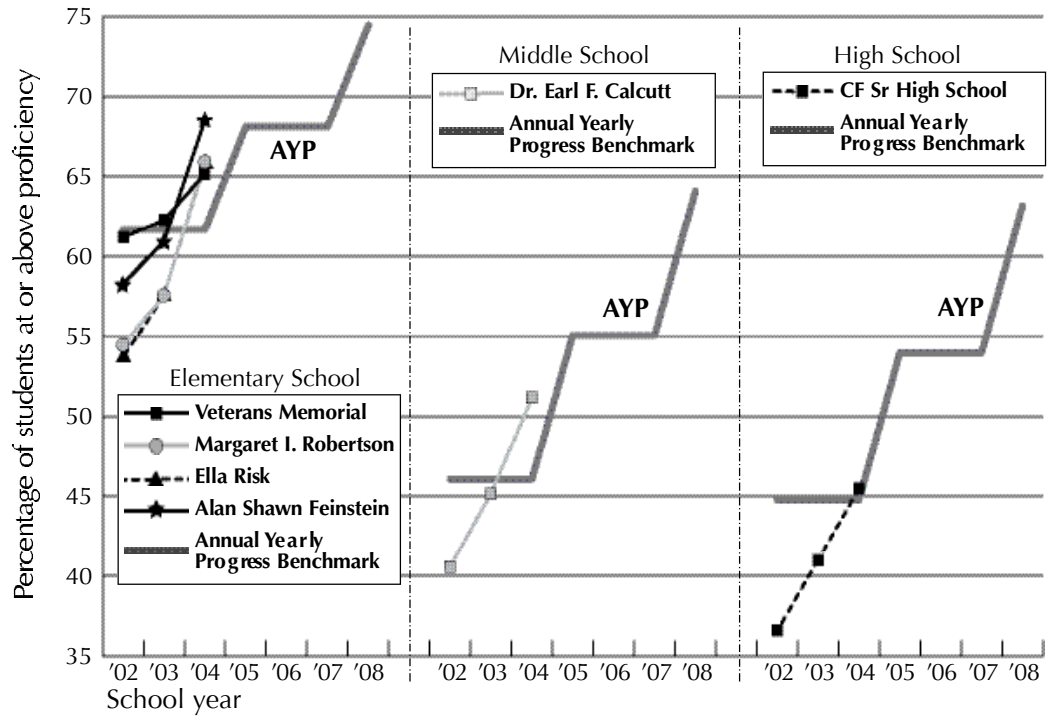
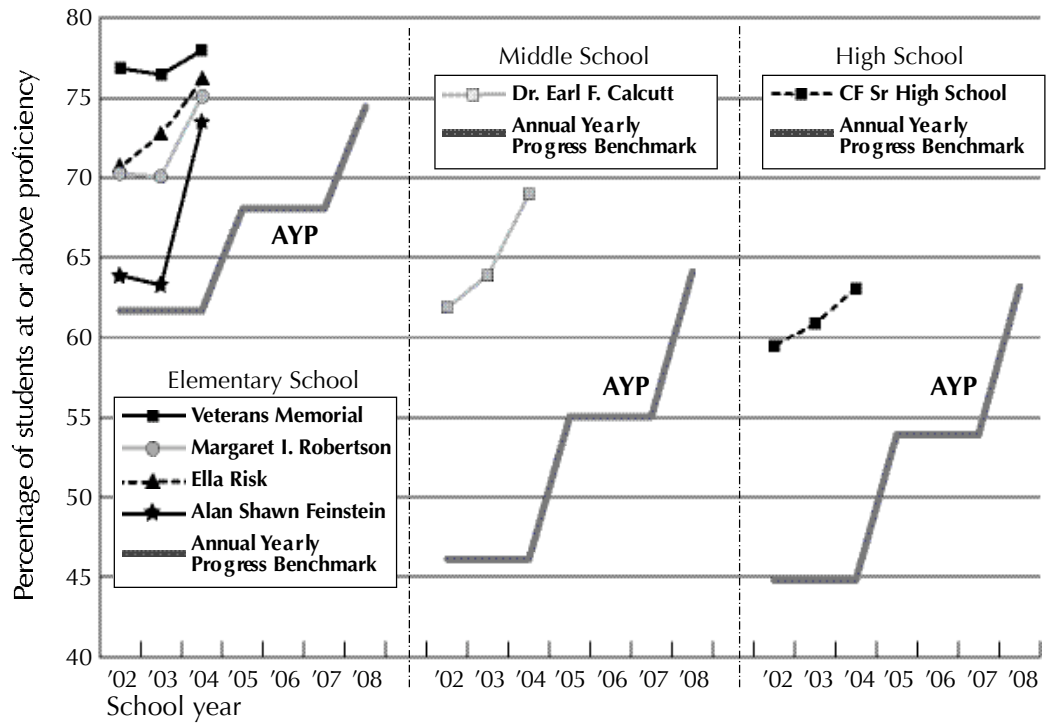


Figure 4. ELA Performance: All Students by School Level, 2002–2004



The data in the race/ethnicity breakdowns for elementary schools in Figures 1 and 2 show progress toward excellence and equity. Achievement gaps among racial and ethnic subgroups have been substantially closed, with all races and ethnicities performing close to or above Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks.

However, other trends revealed in the disaggregated data in Figures 1 and 2 give cause for concern.

- The race/ethnicity breakdowns for middle school and high school students in Figures 1 and 2 show that inequalities increase after elementary school.
- The breakdowns by support program show that, while progress toward excellence and equity are evident by *race and ethnicity* in elementary schools, *students with disabilities* and *students with limited English proficiency* are performing far below standard, including at the elementary level. This inequality further increases in middle and high school.

Figures 3 and 4 show performance of all students against AYP benchmarks for math and English language arts at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Again, there is evidence of both strengths and challenges in Central Falls.

The positive impact of the district's accountability measures is clear from the steep rise in student performance levels from 2002 to 2004. These figures show achievement levels that meet AYP benchmarks in math and are substantially above AYP benchmarks in English language Arts.

However, two trends should be noted:

- In the case of math, just as student performance has risen to the point of meeting or exceeding the AYP benchmarks for 2002 to 2004, the benchmark goes up, and student performance falls below AYP benchmarks again.
- While policy-makers may be satisfied that students are meeting or exceeding AYP benchmarks, things can look very different to parents. For instance, the math data show high school students meeting AYP for 2004 – a success from the point of view of policy-makers. But meeting AYP still means that only 45 percent of the district's high school students are proficient in math. Most parents are hungry for faster and greater progress.

Acknowledgments and Appreciation

The Annenberg Institute wishes to thank the Board of Trustees and the Rhode Island Department of Education for the opportunity to work with the Central Falls School District. We commend the members of the CORRE Team for their hard work and candor in undertaking the difficult task of examining the culture, habits, and practices of CFSD's central office and their impact on schools and those they serve. In particular, we would like to thank Central Falls superintendent Dr. Patricia Watkins for her support throughout this work and former superintendent Dr. Maureen Chevette for her role in bringing CORRE to Central Falls. Lastly, we would like to thank all the individuals who participated in focus groups and interviews, as well as the individuals from outside the CORRE Team who helped facilitate or interpret at focus group sessions.



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