

## CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE OF PRE K – 18 PARTNERSHIPS

### KERN COUNTY INITIATIVE FOR RECRUITING, PREPARING, AND RETAINING HIGHLY QUALIFIED AND EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

#### CASE STUDY FRAMEWORK

#### CONTEXT

**Who are the participants from K-12, community college, higher education, business and community? Which partners best represent the partnership? (Those italicized are most involved.)**

#### **Community:**

- *Kern County Office of Education (KCOE)*
- *Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning*
- *SRI International*
- *The James Irvine Foundation*
- *The Stuart Foundation*
- *WestEd*
- The City of Bakersfield

#### **Higher Education:**

- *California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB)*
- *Kern Community College District*
- West Kern Community College District
- National University
- Phoenix University
- Fresno Pacific University
- University of La Verne
- Point Loma Nazarene University
- Chapman University
- University of California, Merced

#### **K-12:**

- *Bakersfield City School District*
- *Kern Union High School District*
- *Panama-Buena Vista Union School District*
- 48 County-wide school districts

#### **What is the targeted population?**

The primary target of the initiative is to recruit, retain, and prepare high quality teachers in the county. Kern County serves over 149,000 students in 48 school districts. Poverty levels are high in the region with approximately 57% of K-8 students qualifying for free and reduced lunch in Kern County schools. All of the challenges associated with both urban and rural school districts are found in the region

Kern County also mirrors the statewide average of 14% of public school teachers lacking a full teaching credential. Furthermore, these under prepared teachers are disproportionately placed in low-performing schools and in schools with high percentages of minority and low-income students. (WestEd Assessment)

### **What is the focus and scope of the partnership?**

The goal is to make sure that every student has a qualified and effective teacher in school everyday. There is a need to identify more promising prospective teachers from the region and to equip them with the necessary skills they need for professional development and effectiveness in the classroom. There is also the need to retain quality teachers and recruit from across the region and beyond. Strategies must be employed to keep fully prepared and effective teachers in hard-to-staff schools. (Project Description)

### **What is the shared vision of the partnership?**

To have a fully credentialed and effective teacher in every classroom in Kern County.

### **What year did your partnership begin? What prompted the establishment of your partnership?**

Educational leaders in Kern County recognized the serious shortage of fully credentialed teachers in the region, with 15% working without a credential for the 2000-01 school year. In particular, hard-to-staff schools were exceeding 20% emergency permits. (Site visit summary)

At the same time, the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, with funds from the Stuart and James Irvine Foundations and support from SRI International, were seeking a region in California to pilot an effort to apply locally developed solutions to the teacher workforce crisis based on regional research and data. In April 2001, the Center partnered with the K-18 education leaders of Kern County in this significant effort to implement data-driven strategic planning for improving teacher development. (WestEd Assessment)

### **Who were the key participants and change-agents at its inception?**

In September 2000, CFTL received grants from both the James Irvine Foundation and the Stuart Foundation to support the Presidents and Chancellors Regional Database Initiative (PCRDI). CFTL hired Pamela Davis as Project Director, and the organization selected Kern County as the region to begin their project.

CFTL approached Jim Young, a native of Kern and Chancellor of the Kern Community College District for 21 years until his retirement in 1999. He took on the role as Project Liaison and provided a smooth program introduction through his connections with all the top educational leaders in the county (specifically the “Group of Six” to be explained in the Leadership section.)

Both Jim and Pamela were critical in using their local connections and long experience in education to move the project forward. (WestEd Assessment)

**What are the short-term goals of your partnership? What are its long-term goals? What is the timeline for the accomplishment of these goals?**

The initiative is committed to discontinuing the need for “Emergency Permits” and to have a fully-credentialed teacher workforce by 2006 or sooner. This will require an increase in the quantity and quality of teachers graduating from local institutions of higher education in order to meet the entire demand of the county’s K-12 schools on an ongoing basis. All uncredentialed teachers were required to enroll in an intern or pre-intern program by fall 2002. (WestEd Assessment)

The initiative has numerous objectives that fall under seven working committees:

- I. Teacher preparation
- II. Teacher pipeline
- III. Teacher recruitment and retention-
- IV. Hard-to-staff schools
- V. Special Education
- VI. Professional development
- VII. Research team

All of the objectives have start dates ranging from 2001 to 2003. They all pertain to the shared vision of the initiative. Many objectives will be on-going beyond the accomplishment of the primary goal of creating a fully-credentialed teacher workforce. The objectives will continue to address the full continuum of teacher development, including pre-service, induction, professional development and accomplished teaching.

**How is commitment demonstrated by each of the main partners?**

California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB) is the largest public institution of higher education in Kern County. It is committed to increasing the size of training programs to meet the needs of the school districts.

Kern County Office of Education (KCOE) provides professional development, research support, and policy coordination to all of the county’s 48 school districts.

Kern Community College District, like CSUB, is committed to offering more teacher preparation courses, and together with CSUB, providing a seamless transfer process.

Bakersfield City School District is the largest K-8 elementary school district in the state. Panama-Buena Vista Union School District is the third largest district in the county. Both districts have pledged to establish professional development schools within their districts. Kern High School District is the largest high school district in the state. Each of its high schools will have a Teacher Academy. Of the 48 districts in the region, these three districts are the major players in the Initiative, demonstrating strong commitment.

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (CFTL) is a public, not-for-profit organization whose primary focus is strengthening California's teacher workforce. The Center guides and sponsors research on teacher quality issues and was also the primary initiator of the partnership in Kern.

SRI International conducts research and evaluations on the design, implementation, and impact of a variety of educational programs.

The James Irvine Foundation is a non-profit, grant-making foundation that supports the PCRDI through its higher education program to encourage leadership in teacher preparation.

The Stuart Foundation supports the PCRDI through its program to strengthen public school systems so that all children and youth can achieve at high levels.

WestEd is a non-profit research, development, and service agency providing evaluation, technical assistance, support for curriculum, assessment, and policy studies across a wide range of educational programs.

**Please list the collaborative activities that the partnership is involved in? Which 3-5 programs would you describe as the partnership's showcase activities?** (Listed first in italics)

- *Using a data-driven decision making process, the development of countywide action plans that are revised and evaluated on an ongoing basis through the use of robust data and research.*
- *Extensive research on fully credentialed teachers.* This notably includes:
  - A survey of all teachers who discontinued teaching in Kern in 2001.
  - A survey of all not fully credentialed teachers in the county with an 80% response rate.
  - Development of the capacity to compile and analyze current year CBEDS data from all schools in all districts in the county to be used for strategic planning and evaluation of efforts.
  - Development of a Supply and Demand Model for projecting Kern County staffing needs.
- *Launching of Career Academies,* designed to promote teaching and education careers at seven high schools. Four more academies are scheduled to open this academic year.
- *Increased number of credentialed teachers by local universities.* The target growth rate is 15% per year until enough credentialed teachers can be produced to meet the needs of the region.
- *Establishment of A.A. degree programs in a number of places across the county.* This includes expanded degree offerings for teacher's assistants and bilingual aids in hard-to-staff areas in the county.

Other collaborative efforts include:

- Established a K-18 partnership, including private colleges and universities, with a steering committee and seven working committees.
- Organization of new professional development offerings to school districts in east Kern County, a traditionally underserved area including plans for a CSUB Extension School offering Saturday classes leading to a multi-subject credential.
- Established candidate-facing agreements among community colleges and institutions of higher education to facilitate a more seamless and timely path to a teaching credential.
- Established special education degree programs at Chapman University and Point Loma Nazarene University.
- Targeted new professional development opportunities in math and science in selected hard-to-staff schools to strengthen the instructional programs in these two critical shortage areas and to assist teachers in completing subject matter authorization requirements.
- Planned a colloquium with partners and a 150-member blue ribbon committee of community and education participants.
- Built an information clearinghouse and website to provide information on credential requirements, training programs, and employment opportunities.

## **LEADERSHIP**

**What is the organizational structure of the partnership? Please provide an organizational diagram, if available.**

The initiative consists of an executive committee, steering committee, and a blue ribbon committee composed of educators and community members. Starting with five, there are now seven working committees that report to the steering committee. The working committees handle the development of action plans in their respective area: the pipeline committee, teacher preparation committee, teacher recruitment/retention; hard-to-staff schools committee, special education committee; professional development committee, and the research committee. (Project Overview) See appendix A for an organizational diagram for the first year of the Initiative.

**Who are the leaders of the partnership? What are their position titles and where do their positions reside in terms of institution and division? Whom do they report to? What other positions do they currently hold or what did they do before their involvement in the partnership?**

Dr. Thomas Arciniega, President of CSU Bakersfield, chairs the Steering Committee. The Executive Committee includes himself, Dr. Walt Packard, Chancellor of the Kern Community College District, and Dr. Larry Reider, Kern County Superintendent of Schools, in addition to three district superintendents from the largest districts in the county: Mr. Bill Hatcher of Kern High School, Dr. Jean Fuller of Bakersfield City, and Mr. Doug Miller of Panama-Buena Vista. This “Group of Six” meets regularly to discuss the partnership and opportunities to collaborate.

The following individuals chair the current seven working committees:

Teacher Preparation- Co-chaired by Doug Miller, Superintendent, Panama-Buena Vista Union School District, and Sheryl Santos, Dean, School of Education, CSUB.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention- Co-chaired by Cathie Thompson, Director of Personnel, Kern High School District, and Adolph Wirth, Superintendent of the Fairfax School District.

Hard-to-Staff Schools- Chaired by Dennis Patrick, Assistant Superintendent, Personnel Services, Bakersfield City Unified School District.

Special Education Committee- Chaired by Pam Sanders, Administrator, Division of Special Education Services, Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office.

Teacher Pipeline- Co-chaired by Armando Vasquez, Director of Administration and Finance, Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office, and Bob Hayes, Assistant Principal, West High School.

Professional Development- Chaired by Merry McCalley, BTSA Coordinator, Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office.

Research Team- Co-chaired by Jesus Garcia, Research Services Coordinator, Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office, and Jim Young, Project Liaison.

### **Is there a primary leader or executive director to manage day-to-day activities?**

Jim Young, Chancellor Emeritus of the Kern Community College District, serves as the Project Liaison and handles the day-to-day operations and facilitates the progress of the project.

Pamela Davis, Project Director, works with the Center for Future of Teaching and Learning and the Kern County Partnership to supervise its success. She is the main liaison between the funding agent and the partnership.

Both Jim Young and Pamela Davis are included in the Executive Committee.

### **How is the partnership governed?**

The Steering Committee governs the initiative primarily by removing barriers to collaborating. It consists of 25 members including the Executive Committee, representatives from all the institutions of higher education in the county, Superintendents from a cross-section of schools in the county, assistant superintendents with interest or assignments in teacher personnel, directors with specific assignments in teacher training or professional development, and representatives from the California Teachers Association. (Project Overview)

### **How are decisions normally made?**

Specific objectives are not handed down by the Executive Committee. Rather, the full Steering Committee convenes to review data and select the core areas of action for the Initiative. In this way, the Initiative is not seen as the agenda of any single institution. The Steering Committee accomplishes most of its goals through the working committees, who in turn create their own objectives.

**Please provide examples of collaborative decision-making?**

The Steering Committee has been extremely effective in moving the project forward with an aggressive timeline. Everyone is able to give input on goals and key decisions, with a focus on what needs to be done, rather than on who is in control. There is no sense of competition among the members or battles over how many slots each organization should have on the committees. Strong leadership has been crucial to the initiative's success.

Three specific examples of collaborative work through the Initiative include:

CSUB and four private IHEs have mutually agreed to increase teacher preparation programs by a minimum of 15 percent a year until the gap between demand and supply of fully prepared teachers is closed. Their efforts have resulted in a 21 percent increase in the number of credential recommendations last year and a 42 percent increase over the last two years.

Articulation meetings have been held between the staffs at Bakersfield College and CSUB to create a clear and seamless pathway leading to a teaching career for transfer students.

A two and one-half year sequence of courses has been agreed to by both Taft College and Bakersfield College to ensure that the program established for instructional and bilingual aids in the hardest-to-staff areas of Kern will provide 48 units by fall 2005 to meet the requirements of NCLB and 60 units to meet the AA degree requirements by fall 2006.

**What are the normal communication patterns of the partnership?**

Members of the initiative are eager to support the project, share data, streamline the data process, share information, analyze needs and progress, and place personnel and resources where and as needed. (Site Visit Summary) Members stay in contact primarily with phone and email conversation, and through meetings. Minutes are sent out to those who are involved in the various committees whether or not they were able to attend.

The Group of Six has met regularly for close to 25 years and has fostered a spirit of communication and cooperation among its members. (WestEd assessment)

**How often do representatives of the partnership meet together?**

The committees meet with varying frequency. The Executive Committee meets four times per year, and the Steering Committee meets two times annually. The Blue-Ribbon Committee held one special meeting to critique the initial Initiative's Action Plan. The seven working committees meet with the following frequency:

- Pipeline Committee: two times per year.
- Teacher Preparation Committee: two times per year.
- Teacher Recruitment/Retention Committee: eight times in the previous year.
- Hard-to-Staff Schools Committee: bimonthly.
- Special Education Committee: just beginning as a separate committee and plan to meet bimonthly.
- Professional Development Committee: monthly, with a summer furlough.
- Research Committee: eight times per year.

**Is there significant involvement of top-level administrators, such as superintendents, and/or university and college presidents? What is their level of involvement?**

Dr. Arcienega, President of CSUB, has shown tremendous commitment to the initiative by increasing funding for the School of Education while needing to reduce or hold level the funding for all other departments at the university due to budget crisis. He states, “The School of Education is my number one priority at CSUB.” (Progress Report) Dr. Arcienega is the chair of the Steering Committee.

Dr. Packard, the Bakersfield Community College Chancellor, fully participates in the initiative as do key faculty members. He has supported the development and implementation of an education major that is articulated with the Liberal Studies program at CSUB.

Dr. Reider, the Bakersfield County Superintendent, contributes financial and personnel resources to the project. He has ensured that affected school districts, the community college, and CSUB have committee representation. Dr. Reider also provides technical and research support to the partners. In the first year, he committed 1.5 FTE for research work.

Dr. Fuller, Superintendent of Schools in the Bakersfield City Elementary School District demonstrates full participation with major stakeholders as well as with partners. Mr. Miller, Superintendent of Schools for the Panama-Buena Vista Union School District co-chairs the Teacher Retention Committee and regularly corresponds with Dr. Fuller. Together, they advocate for the needs of particular districts, to be addressed on the regional level.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

**What are the key indicators of success for your partnership?**

The primary indicators of success are: 1) completion of stated partnership goals and ongoing action plans to strengthen the teacher workforce; 2) reduction of emergency permit teachers; and 3) an increase in the number of credentialed teachers produced by higher education institutions in the region.

According to the Project Description, “We will have a sufficient number of fully credentialed and effective teachers to meet the demand for new teachers on an annual basis. Hard-to-staff schools will be compelling places to teach- places where accomplished teachers want to be. Student achievement will be significantly improved.”

### Outcome Indicators

- Number of graduates of public and private institutions of higher education (IHE) teacher preparation programs.
- Numbers of new teaching credentials issued by IHEs.
- Numbers of IHE graduates hired for teaching jobs at local schools.
- Numbers/percent of fully credentialed teachers at hard-to-staff schools.
- Retention rates of new teachers, especially at hard-to-staff schools.
- Number of fully credentialed teachers in the hardest-to-staff areas of special education, math and science.
- Number of teachers reaching accomplished teaching status as denoted by mentor status, National Board certification, community recognition and like indicators.

### Interim Indicators

- Numbers of new students entering teacher preparation programs.
- Increase in awareness of teaching/education careers among local students.
- Enrollment and ethnic diversity of teaching career academies at local high schools.
- Numbers of people applying to attend local teacher preparation programs.
- Numbers of people accessing information from the new clearinghouse.
- Changes/increases in budget commitments.
- Numbers of college students taking subject matter credential exams.
- Increases in faculty at IHE schools of education.
- Measures of public awareness of the Initiative.  
(WestEd assessment)

### **What are the criteria for determining effectiveness?**

The Kern County Office of Education has worked hard to streamline the data collection process on student achievement and teacher effectiveness. The partnership is strongly data driven. The annual California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) data and Professional Assignment Information Form (PAIF) data (described in more detail under the next heading) provide reliable measures of the Initiative's progress. The project is looking at teacher profiles to determine professional development needs, intern needs, and to promote retention.

### **What types of quantitative data are you collecting? How often is that data collected? How is it used?**

The region's public and private institutions of higher education that provide teacher preparation programs, as well as the High School Teacher Academies monitor the number of candidates, including underrepresented candidates, entering their programs each year beginning in 2002 to start a baseline.

The CBEDS data, including the confidential PAIF information for the second year, have been submitted directly to Research Services, KCSOS, from all 48 districts for fiscal year 2002-2003.

Normally this data is sent only to the state, where personal identifying information is removed before being returned to the counties and districts many months later. A study similar to the 2001-2002 report has been published and posted on the KCOE web site, showing credential data by school, enrollment, information on special education, status of first-year teachers, English language learners, ethnicity, poverty as measured by the percent of students on free and reduced meals, and API scores.

The Steering Committee is collecting data on hard-to-staff placements, incentive programs, and emergency permit vs. fully credentialed teacher percentages.

The Research Committee has analyzed demographic trends in student enrollment and teacher preparation in order to create a supply and demand model for teachers in Kern County. They have also collected data on training, recruitment, and retention of Kern's existing teacher workforce.

**What measures of student achievement data would be most appropriate to measure the success of your partnership?**

The Steering Committee is using K-12 student data to determine academic needs, and therefore teacher/classroom needs. In addition, the committee is measuring student placement scores for college against grades and exit exams for high school and persistence in general education courses.

Each high school is sending student achievement data to the Steering Committee and the County Office for planning use. Important measures include: SAT9 scores, completion of A-G requirements, high-school graduation and college-going rates. These measures serve to reinforce the primary indicators of success described earlier in this section.

**What qualitative data, stories, or anecdotal evidence of success have you collected?**

The initiative's action plan was driven by data compiled through input by local educators, faculty union, teacher training institutions, and the community. Input was also gathered from teachers who did not have full credentials and from veteran teachers who provided valuable data from which solutions have emerged.

The *Not Fully Credentialed Teacher Survey* has been instrumental in providing feedback to the CSUB School of Education. Comparison data with private universities has given the faculty recommendations for improvement to the teacher preparation program. The data will also provide for a rethinking of support services for under-prepared teachers, including the improvement of mentoring programs and communication of state content standards.

Anecdotal information from groups of superintendents in the region have indicated that the ability to hire multiple-subject credentialed teachers was not as difficult in 2002 as compared to the previous year. However, the pool of credentialed teachers in science, mathematics, and special education continues to be insufficient.

## RESOURCES

**Funding sources. What percentage of funding comes from hard and soft sources? What are your main sources of funding? What time lengths are associated with these funds? Please provide a detailed budget, if possible.**

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, with full support from the James Irvine and Stuart Foundations, has funded the start up of this project until October 2003. The Initiative is currently looking for ways to fund the project beyond this date. A small amount of funding is provided from local individuals.

The funders also provide resources for reports and the Spring 2002 colloquium on Teacher Recruitment and Retention, and the final draft of the strategic plan. Internal funders include all partnering institutions for personnel, technical assistance, and programmatic coordination. The County Office of Education is talented at funding state and national grants. They have donated thousands of dollars for printing costs.

**What physical resources does your partnership have? Such as buildings, access to meeting areas, program space, or equipment. Who provides those resources? Are they permanent or temporary?**

The partnership does not uniquely own or operate any physical resources, but has access to other educational institution, district, and county meeting space, duplicating services and resources that are willingly shared with the Initiative. The KCOE provides Dr. Jim Young with an office and support services.

Two examples of physical resources the partnership has influence over, but does not uniquely operate, are the Teacher Career Center at the Office of the Kern County Superintendent of Schools, and a Teacher Recruitment Center, located in Visalia.

**What are the staffing resources of the partnership? Administrative support staff, executive level staff, program specialists, etc. How many are full-time paid staff? How many part-time paid staff? And how many are given release time from their respective institution to be involved?**

Resources are provided to fund two staff members: Pamela Davis and Jim Young. Dr. Young is funded part-time for the initiative. Pamela was funded full-time for the first two years of the project. She is now funded part-time for Kern as she now spends time initiating the PCRDI in the tri-county region of Santa Cruz, San Benito and Monterey. During the first year, the Kern County Office of Education generously provided 1.5 FTE for research work. In the past year, they have provided approximately .75 FTE for research.

## MAJOR CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

**What challenges has the partnership been successful in overcoming? What strategies did you use to overcome or solve these challenges?**

Initially, there were reservations from the Group of Six about taking on the rigorous demands of the Initiative and whether or not it could be successful. The involvement of CFTL and Jim Young were crucial in mitigating these concerns.

An initial challenge of the Initiative was to have current and accurate data for effective decision-making. As stated in the Accountability section, all CBED data was sent from all districts directly to the KCSOS. In this way, the most current, raw data was immediately available instead of having it first channeled through the state. It is suggested that all software vendors receiving state funds should provide data reports back to the districts or county office of education in a timely manner.

Originally, the Initiative called for a committee specifically targeting hard-to-staff schools, but did not make sufficient progress in the first year. Subsequently, the committee was reorganized to include more teachers and administrators directly involved at the site level with hard-to-staff issues.

**What challenges is the partnership currently facing? What challenges do you expect to face in the future?**

Due to restricted budgets, Bakersfield Community College has had to rely on the local school districts to pay for faculty salaries in the newly established Associate of Arts degree programs. These programs are aimed at providing a pathway to teaching for many current teaching assistants and bilingual aides in this high minority, high poverty region of Kern.

The leaders of the Initiative have had repeated difficulty in recruiting the leaders of teacher unions to participate in the project. The Initiative wants to avoid stumbling blocks down the road with the unions on recruitment, placement, and training programs. The Initiative will continue to try and include union representatives in planning and implementation of the Initiative.

Duration of funding is important because funds have only been committed through October 2003. The Initiative will need to look at sustainability and the transition beyond the initial grant period. Continuity in staffing is highly desired, as well as continued involvement from CFTL.

In the future, the Initiative will need to focus more on teacher quality and professional development in order to significantly impact student achievement.

**What have been some of your successes to date?**

Overall, the Steering Committee and partnering institutions have shown tremendous success in working collaboratively towards objectives. Commitment has been demonstrated across and among all levels of the Initiative. The Initiative has opened new channels of communication among all educational institutions in the region, most notably between K-12 systems and higher education, and between public and private institutions of higher education.

The number of emergency permits has dropped dramatically from 1058 in 2000 to 276 in fall, 2002 (a 75% reduction). 200 of these remaining emergency permit holders expect to complete their credential work by January 2003.

The number of hard-to-staff schools has been reduced from 90 at inception of the Initiative in 2000, to 48 in 2002, and 35 in 2003.

The number and quality of permanent faculty is increasing in the School of Education at CSUB due to funding increases and the President's priority.

Seven High-School Teacher Academies have been established, with four more opening this academic year.

### **What are some effective strategies for partnerships that you have employed?**

Trust has been a longstanding characteristic among the largest educational institutions in the county. Meetings have been well attended with committed participation. "People are what make this partnership work, not the organizational chart."

Kern's use of current data to drive projects and decision-making has been crucial to moving beyond territoriality, emotions, and barriers. In order to get partner districts and institution buy-in, assurances were given up-front about the manner in which data would be disseminated.

Time for staff and faculty involvement in the Initiative is challenging to create. Many feel over-committed to internal, external, and community responsibilities. Therefore, meetings have been highly goal driven and solution focused. This has strengthened partner commitment, knowing that time at meetings will be well spent.

The most effective strategy for recruiting participation and commitment to the initiative was through personal, face-to-face contact. Jim Young, Pamela Davis, and the Group of Six all met in person with their staffs to ask for participation. Good communication was maintained with all stakeholders, including districts that were hesitant to participate at first.

## **CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

**Please provide us with 1 or 2 narratives regarding critical incidences that the partnership has encountered in terms of its inception, overcoming challenges, dealing with different institutional cultures, etc.**

The WestEd Assessment has outlined three critical success factors of the Kern County Initiative: involvement of external partners, development of committed, inclusive leadership, and widespread use of data.

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning was instrumental in "selling" the Initiative to the Group of Six by demonstrating the value of such a project. Beyond the encouragement

and leveraging of resources brought by external partners, SRI International laid the initial groundwork in collecting and reporting relevant data. “Jim Young and Pamela Davis, working on behalf of CFTL, were able to leverage their local roots and their independence to serve as honest brokers, progress monitors, and cheerleaders for the initiative.” Third parties have been instrumental in maintaining objectivity and in facilitating politically sensitive issues, while at the same time allowing the local leadership to determine the goals and timeline of the project.

Strong leadership has been another crucial factor in the Initiative’s success. Conditions were already desirable in Kern for the establishment of a partnership due to the already intact relationship of the Group of Six. Having the buy-in from the top educational leaders in the county was important for such a large-scale endeavor. Kern educational leaders also had a long-standing and trustful working relationship with one another. Once the case was made for the Initiative by CFTL, the Group of Six moved the project forward with great enthusiasm. Receiving commitment from all school districts, higher education, business people, and other community leaders instantly gave the Initiative tremendous credibility and momentum.

The use of data has been the central driving force behind the decisions of the Initiative. “The introduction of data put everybody ‘on the same page’ in understanding what the current situation looked like. Rather than waste time arguing about the facts, people were able to move quickly to discussing solutions.” Using data also brought educational leaders together to discuss important issues, some which had not been addressed for many years. The Kern County Office of Education, in partnership with SRI and other educational researchers, was paramount in completing large-scale data analysis. The use of current data was extremely important so that decisions could be made confidently and without question as to its accurateness due to age.