

Long Beach Unified School District, Calif.

District Profile

Rank among U.S. school districts (by size):	32
Number of schools:	93
Number of students:	87,499
Number of teachers:	4,076
Per pupil expenditure*:	\$8,753

Student Characteristics:

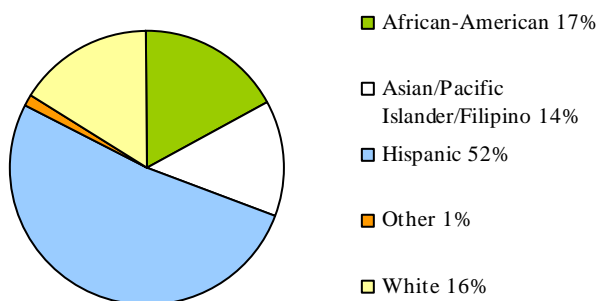
Percent eligible for free and reduced-price school lunch:	68%
Percent designated as English language learners:	24%

Superintendent: Christopher J. Steinhauser was appointed superintendent of Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) in 2002. Steinhauser is a 21-year veteran of the district, where he began as a teacher and has since served as a vice principal, principal and director of special projects services. Prior to his appointment as superintendent he served as deputy superintendent.

Governance: The five-member board of education is elected by geographic area to serve four-year terms.

Teachers union: Teachers Association of Long Beach (TALB)

Student demographics:



* Total expenditures per pupil in 2006-07. Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Student Achievement

- In 2008, Long Beach outperformed other districts in California serving students with similar income levels in reading and math at all school levels (elementary, middle, high school), according to The Broad Prize methodology.
- In 2008, Long Beach's African-American, Hispanic and low-income students achieved higher average proficiency rates than did their state counterparts in reading and math at all school levels. Only six of the 99 eligible districts with comparable data did this well with their respective student subgroup populations.
- Between 2005 and 2008, Long Beach narrowed achievement gaps between its Hispanic students and the state average for white students in math at all school levels and in middle and high school reading. For example, the gap between the district's Hispanic students and the state's white students narrowed by 9 percentage points in elementary school math.
- Between 2005 and 2008, Advanced Placement exam participation rates and passing rates in core subjects for African-American and Hispanic students increased in Long Beach. Of the 91 districts that had comparable data for at least one of these student groups, only nine districts achieved such increases (for available subgroups in both participation and passing rates).
- Between 2006 and 2008, SAT exam participation rates and average scores for Hispanic students rose in Long Beach. During this period, the average score rose from 910 to 933, while participation rates increased from 19 to 22 percent.

High Impact Factors Behind this Success

- **Long Beach supports teachers and students with a common, higher-order thinking, core pedagogy that outlines specific expectations and instructional requirements.**

Years ago, LBUSD put in place a district-wide reform strategy to provide students with continuous rigorous learning and teachers with continuous teaching expectations. Referred to as the “Long Beach Way,” this strategy involves the methodical use of data to constantly improve teaching and learning, while supporting staff with adequate professional development opportunities along the way. This strategy was born when the district settled on a mix of bottom-up, top-down leadership that sought to empower staff at all levels to participate in reform. Central to the “Long Beach Way:” school leaders never push teachers and other staff faster than their exacting professional development system allows.

One result of the effort to bring continuity to teaching and learning is the district-wide use of a “common lesson plan,” which gives educators in all grades and subjects a shared language to use in discussing and improving teaching and learning. The common lesson plan is rooted in the philosophies of the Essential Elements of Effective Instruction (EEEE), a range of research-based strategies (including active participation, checking for understanding, classroom management, reinforcement theory, behavior modification, and differentiation). The district believes that when moving from lesson to lesson, teacher to teacher, or grade to grade, students will retain more academic content when the structure of the lesson is consistent.

Common lesson plans contain student learning objectives, as well as references to the state standards. For example, classroom visitors will see posted objectives that, in the case of English Language Learner (ELL) students, include both learning and language objectives. In many classrooms, student work is posted and labeled with state standards, including the standard taught and the learning outcome achieved. In some instances, multiple posted standards identify cross-disciplinary content and skills addressed by the lesson.

A signature teaching tool in Long Beach schools is “Thinking Maps,” a way to organize content and identify relationships between ideas. Students here quickly become familiar with eight different types of Thinking Maps. For example, the “Circle Map” consists of two concentric circles: in the middle of the circle, students put all the key ideas about the topic; and the outside of the circle is saved for everything they know about those ideas. A “Tree Map” is used for classification and organization.

The district requires that teachers use Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) to help all students, not just ELL students, “because strategies for ELL students are good strategies for all students, not just those who are struggling with the English language,” said one district administrator. SDAIE strategies include, for example,

building prior knowledge, multiple intelligences, language sensitivity and interactive learning, such as manipulatives and visuals.

During a teacher's first two years in the district they receive extensive training and support in how to apply EEEI and SDAIE. District- and school-level instructional leaders conduct walk-throughs to provide new teachers feedback on their use of these strategies and the process of evaluating teachers is also linked to their effectiveness in implementing EEEI and SDAIE.

Long Beach also encourages teachers to use other research-based instructional strategies such as two-column Cornell note-taking (a tool for organizing information in a class lecture by which notes are divided into two sections, with the actual notes on the right side and "key points" on the left) and a district-developed academic vocabulary to allow students to participate in discussions at advanced levels. The district's instructional philosophy seeks to push students beyond knowledge and comprehension to analysis and evaluation.

- **The district provides students with individualized learning opportunities.**

From elementary school through high school, students have opportunities to opt in to programs that interest them, from magnet programs to small learning communities (SLCs) within the district's six comprehensive high schools. Students are able to rank-order their preferred high schools and SLCs that matches their personal, career and/or academic interests. Approximately 40 percent of all Long Beach students opt to attend a school outside of their home region. The district also uses assessment information to help place students in courses that best meet their individual academic learning styles.

The district employs a comprehensive response-to-intervention process to ensure differentiated teaching in the classroom, not only for struggling students but for students requiring enrichment. The differentiation process, which arranges students based on their assessment results, allows teachers to create flexible student groups within the classroom, to identify student strengths and weaknesses, and to re-teach content where it is needed. During one classroom visit, for example, a teacher displayed a stack of 30 spelling quizzes—each slightly different, tailored to the skill level of each particular student.

On a daily basis, teachers also use data informally to assess individual students' instructional needs through student questioning, dipsticks (short classroom activities to elicit student responses) and other informal assessments.

- **Long Beach provides objective feedback for teachers via classroom walk-throughs that are aligned to school and district goals.**

Classroom walk-throughs are conducted regularly by teams that include district staff, principals and other school-based staff with relevant area expertise. The observed teacher receives feedback on their instruction and classroom practice. District staff are also able

to use walk-through results to identify trends across schools and to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and professional development.

Slightly different protocols are used for elementary, middle and high school walk-throughs depending on initiatives going on in those grades, but the core elements are the same and the process is highly systematic. For example, all walk-through protocols: 1) identify a specific area upon which observers should focus their observations, 2) require a pre-walk-through discussion for observers to review the context of the focus area, 3) provide a standard feedback form upon which to collect results, 4) require a team debriefing about findings, and 5) establish a process to share findings with school staff.

Walk-throughs serve multiple purposes. At the beginning of the year, walk-throughs provide a baseline performance measure. Then, additional walkthroughs conducted regularly throughout the year measure changes in practice and provide feedback to increase teacher effectiveness. Walk-through teams look for evidence that teachers are working toward school goals and grade-level priorities and are applying new practices learned during professional development. Results help evaluate the effectiveness of professional development, improve existing professional development courses, inform future professional development offerings and determine how curriculum specialists and coaches will be used.

- **Through the district’s “grow-your-own” teacher and leadership development programs, student achievement goals drive the recruitment, selection, hiring and placement of staff.**

To build a supply of potential teachers, Long Beach has partnered with local colleges (more than 80 percent of hires come from local colleges) where many district administrators teach. As a result, future Long Beach teachers who are college students are exposed to district practices years before they apply for positions. Because of the district’s resulting large applicant pool, there is limited need for extensive external recruitment outside of the area.

The human resources department screens teacher applicants, reviewing background checks, employment history and credentials, before adding them to the candidate pool. Applicants who pass the screening process undergo an interview during which district staff assess whether they have individual characteristics and qualities that make them likely to succeed in an urban setting. The highest rated teacher candidates are then referred to school sites for local interviews.

While principals can access the entire pool of applicants, the district human resources department still makes specific applicant recommendations for open positions based on its knowledge of each school’s culture. Because of the large applicant pool, principals can be selective when hiring teachers.

Once a teacher is hired, they participate in the district's New Teacher/Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Project, a central component of the district's professional development strategy. The project provides beginning teachers with a comprehensive program, including two-years of required training sessions that enhance their instructional strategies and ensure a standards-based instructional program that meets the needs of diverse students. BTSA also connects novice teachers with exemplary educators in an effort to provide curriculum and pedagogical strategies, as well as emotional and psychological support.

Long Beach also develops high-performing teachers for placement as principals. To ensure the district is tapping candidates with the most leadership potential, all principals are asked to recommend one teacher per school year. Teachers can also apply to the program. Twelve to 15 candidates are accepted annually into the Aspiring Principal Program.

Selected teachers must successfully complete introductory coursework prior to beginning the program. Aspiring principals then continue to do extensive coursework while they participate in leadership internships that enable them to shadow a high-performing principal throughout the school year while serving in their current capacity as assistant principal. Once placed, new principals participate in the New Principal Induction Program, which includes personal coaching and professional development aligned to school and personal needs.

Nearly all school leaders are developed internally. Over the past seven years, only four out of 69 new principals were recruited from outside the district.

- **Long Beach undergoes continuous improvement that is fueled by extensive student data analysis and comprehensive evaluation of progress under reforms.**

This is the essence of the Long Beach Way—methodical improvement, with ongoing modifications to professional development and student support as called for by student data. The district's wide array of assessment information is used to inform program evaluation, board recommendations, and professional development. District-wide programs and initiatives in LBUSD often begin as successful pilot programs, led by a single individual or school. Once they are determined to have a significant positive impact on student achievement through review of data and multi-level comprehensive evaluations, these programs are strategically rolled out on a larger scale.

For example, the district's hallmark math instruction program (MAP2D) began in a single classroom and now spans elementary and middle schools district-wide. When evaluating the effectiveness of MAP2D, the district knew the success of the program hinged on whether teachers effectively applied the new program once they were in the classroom. To monitor the fidelity of implementation, the district's curricular staff developed 24 teaching practice criteria that correlated with MAP2D's success. Then, a team of observers sat in on classes to assess those teaching practices. One finding: when

teachers were paired with coaches, they more effectively implemented the new math program. As a result, the district committed to putting coaches in all new MAP2D schools.

- **The district keeps the community engaged and involved.**

Long Beach reforms started when local business concerns grew regarding the loss of the community's traditional industries and the education of its citizens. The district developed its mission, vision and strategic plan goals over many years, reflective of its slow and steady approach to careful reform. Through surveys, public forums, committee meetings and task forces, the district gathered extensive input from thousands of stakeholders to ensure that the strategic plan goals reflected district and community priorities.

Today, a wealth of community and business partnerships support the district, both as active participants in developing school-based programs and as resource contributors. Business and community leaders, as well as district administrators and school-based personnel, collaborate to develop strategies to achieve district goals, meeting regularly to review progress and make necessary changes to ensure success. "We don't hide things that aren't going well," said one district administrator, "we're open about the entire process."

Typical of The Long Beach Way, the board of education and the district have a transparent, collaborative relationship and work together to keep the community informed.