

# California Comprehensive Center (CA CC) High-Performing, High-Need School Profile

Prepared by CA CC partner, the American Institutes for Research

## Western High School Anaheim Union High School District

### Overview

Western is a large traditional public high school in the Anaheim Union High School District, which is comprised of 17 regular schools, including 9 high schools and 8 junior high schools (see Exhibit 3). Established in 1957, Western is the second oldest school in the district, and much of its campus retains the original buildings and facilities. Over the past five years Western has experienced a growth in student enrollment, and its current student population of about 2,100 reflects diverse backgrounds; 19 percent are English learners (ELs) and 47 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (see Exhibit 2). With over 80 teachers, the staff at Western is also diverse, with a mix of veteran and new teachers. In addition, Western has a higher teacher-student ratio (27:1) than the statewide high school average (22:1), and fewer staff, in particular administrators and clerical staff (see Exhibit 5).



**Exhibit 1. School API Rankings\* 2004-05 Through 2007-08**

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Statewide ranking	5	7	7	8
Similar Schools ranking	9	10	10	10

\*Statewide rankings range from 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. Similar Schools rankings compare an individual school's API to 100 schools in its comparison group. Schools are divided into 10 equal groups from the lowest (1) to the highest (10).

Source: Academic Performance Index, 2004-05 through 2007-08

**Exhibit 2. Student Characteristics, 2007-08**

	School	District	Statewide HS Average
African American	5%	3%	9%
American Indian	0%	0%	2%
Asian	8%	11%	8%
Filipino	6%	3%	3%
Hispanic	49%	57%	42%
Pacific Islander	3%	2%	1%
White	19%	16%	36%
Other race/ethnicity	9%	8%	3%
Eligible for free or reduced-price lunch	47%	51%	45%
English learners (ELs)	19%	28%	16%
Special education	11%	9%	8%

Sources: California Basic Educational Data Systems (CBEDS); Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program; and Free/Reduced Meals Program & CalWORKS Data Files, 2007-08.

## Overview (continued)

The staff at Western trace the school's current academic success to a turnaround beginning in 2001, when the school was identified as a low-performing school under California's Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP) (see Exhibit 4 for more information on Western's achievement over time). This program, designed to raise student achievement in the state's lowest performing schools through targeted assistance and additional funding, compelled the staff to consider the school's current level of achievement and develop plans to increase student performance. Dr. Paul Sevillano, who began as principal at Western in 2006-07, and a number of staff identify the II/USP designation as a crucial turning point for the school, uniting the staff in a common vision and jumpstarting what has been a 10-year process of developing strategies to increase student achievement and fostering greater communication and collaboration among staff to achieve that goal.

Based on interviews with the principal, teachers, and students during a visit to Western, this profile details the following four strategies identified as being key to the school's success:

- Positive school culture
- Teacher collaboration
- Standards-based curriculum aligned with instruction and common assessments
- Interventions and support for struggling students

## Why Western Was Selected

To identify high-performing schools across the state, we examined student and school performance data from 2004-05 through 2007-08. An overview of our methodology is posted on the SchoolsMovingUp website: [http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/pdf/CA\\_CC\\_High\\_Perf\\_Schools\\_Criteria2009.pdf](http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/pdf/CA_CC_High_Perf_Schools_Criteria2009.pdf). Additionally, we selected schools to highlight based on the following criteria:

- **Substantially higher performance than predicted**  
As indicated by a Similar Schools rank of 10 in 2007-08 (see Exhibit 1), Western students are performing better than their peers in similar schools.
- **Meeting or exceeding subgroup performance standards**  
Western students in all numerically significant subgroups<sup>1</sup> are meeting or exceeding Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals in both English language arts and mathematics (see Exhibits 6 and 7).
- **Sustained performance over time**  
Western met all AYP requirements and was not identified for program improvement in 2004-05 through 2007-08. Western also met all Academic Performance Index (API) targets in 2004-05 through 2007-08 (see Exhibit 4).
- **High-need student population**  
The percentage of students at Western eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (47 percent) is higher than the state average for high schools (see Exhibit 2).
- **No selectivity in admissions**  
Since Western is a traditional comprehensive high school, it does not have any selective admissions policies. The school serves neighborhood students within its attendance zone.

### Exhibit 3. School and District Facts, 2007-08

	School	District
Location	Anaheim, Orange County, CA	
Grade span	9-12	7-12
Number of schools	N/A	17
Enrollment	2,173	31,814

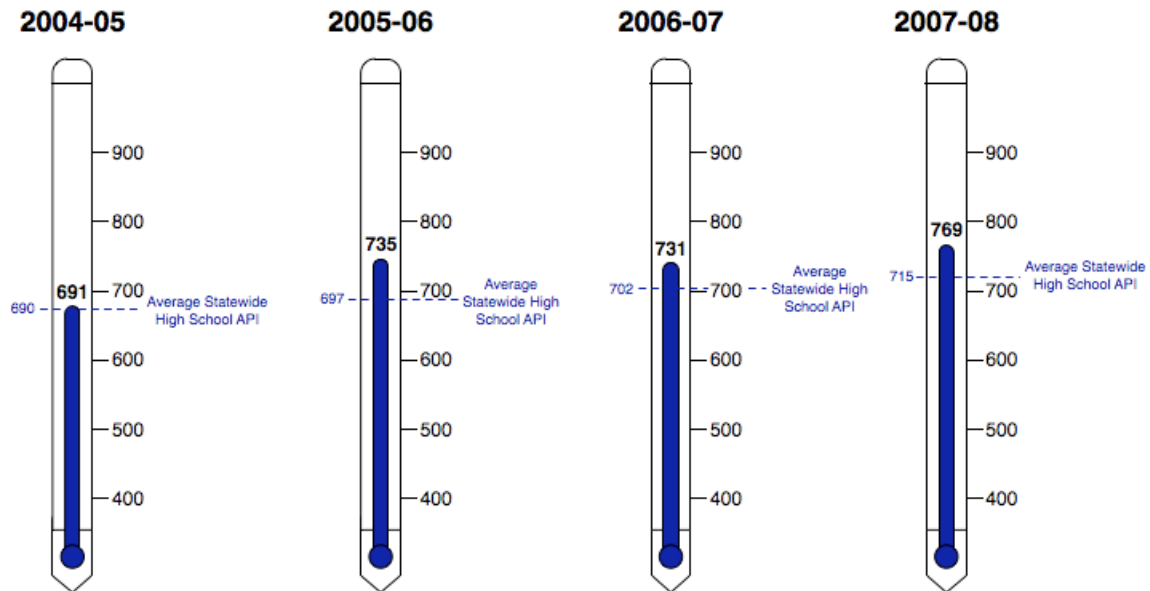
Source: California Basic Educational Data Systems (CBEDS), 2007-08

### Recent School Awards

- California Distinguished School Award, 2005 and 2009
- California Golden Bell Award, 2008

<sup>1</sup> A subgroup is defined as numerically significant for percent proficient if it has 100 or more students with valid scores or 50 or more students with valid scores who make up at least 15 percent of the total valid scores.

Exhibit 4. Schoolwide API Scores for Western High School Compared to the Average Statewide High School API, 2004-05 Through 2007-08



Source: Academic Performance Index, 2004-05 through 2007-08

## Factor 1: Positive School Culture

### Encourage a positive school atmosphere among students

Most staff members at Western describe its student body’s diversity as one of the school’s greatest strengths (see Exhibit 2). This positive attitude toward diversity is said to permeate the campus and foster an attitude of respect and acceptance among students. Each year, Western celebrates its diversity through presentations, dances, and food during International Week, hosted by student groups representing numerous cultures. The Pioneer Outreach Network for Diversity (POND), a student group sponsored by the Orange County Human Relations Council, promotes acceptance and positive relationships through presentations in freshman classes and sponsorship of schoolwide projects. In addition, students participate in Peer Assistance and Leadership (PAL) work with a school counselor to learn to serve as mediators among their peers and to help them resolve conflicts.

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“We are so diverse; we do not have a majority of any race or SES. I think that’s a big advantage. It makes for a much friendlier campus and [the students] are very supportive of each other and so it makes it a better school climate. We have less bullying and scared kids than other campuses.”

Lizabeth Rosette,  
English teacher

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### Safe campus environment

Staff and students describe Western as a safe campus with few fights among students or other discipline issues. According to teachers, the staff members share consistent behavioral expectations across classes for all students, thereby helping to minimize discipline issues. “Students know what to expect and they know that they are going to be held to that standard in all classes,” said 10th grade World History teacher Raquel Solorzano. Teachers describe the school as a place where students want to be and where they feel safe.

### Opportunities for students to connect with staff and other students

Although there are a large number of students at Western, there are many opportunities for students to connect with staff and other students. Students describe numerous student groups, activities such as the dance team, and sports as crucial for keeping them motivated and helping them to build relationships at school with other students and staff. These activities also promote school spirit and pride, creating an engaging environment for all members of the Western community. One teacher stated that he makes it a priority to attend sports games and other events in which his students are participating, and sees these events as an important opportunity to support and further connect with his students. Western also has six career pathways—culinary arts, media arts, Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, design and manufacturing, teaching, and protective services—that provide a smaller learning environment in which students can connect with staff and peers while learning useful workplace skills.

**Exhibit 5. Staff Characteristics, 2007-08**

	School	Statewide High School Average
<b>Teacher Characteristics:</b>		
Number of students per full time teacher	27 : 1	22 : 1
Average years in education	13 years	12 years
Percentage with greater than BA degree	96%	81%
Percentage with full credential	99%	90%
<b>Full Time Staff per 2,000 Students:</b>		
Administrators	3 : 2,000	8 : 2,000
Pupil services	6 : 2,000	7 : 2,000
Paraprofessionals	11 : 2,000	13 : 2,000
Clerical	9 : 2,000	15 : 2,000

Source: California Basic Educational Data Systems (CBEDS), 2007-08

## Factor 2: Teacher Collaboration

### School plan and common vision

The staff at Western develop a Single Plan for Student Achievement each year, a process which provides the opportunity to reflect on the previous year and strategically plan for the coming year. The principal describes the school plan as a “living document” that is initially created during staff meetings before the school year begins using student data; the plan is then reviewed in the spring as staff members identify areas where students are struggling. “We constantly monitor how we’re doing in meeting that plan and addressing changes to help students succeed,” said Principal Sevillano. The plan serves as a foundation on which all of the school’s instructional strategies are built, uniting the staff around a common vision for student achievement.

**Time for teacher collaboration**

Although teachers at Western do not have a class period set aside for collaborating with other teachers, the principal uses the school’s federal Title II (a federal program related to teacher quality) money for pull-outs, allowing teachers in the same department or small learning community to meet for a full day. During these times, teachers share best practices and are given the opportunity to model their teaching strategies and lessons for other teachers and obtain feedback. Staff also emphasize the importance of using data from benchmark assessments to guide instructional planning and determine when re-teaching is necessary. Western uses Data Director software, which organizes and analyzes data, indicating student strengths and weaknesses across content strands.

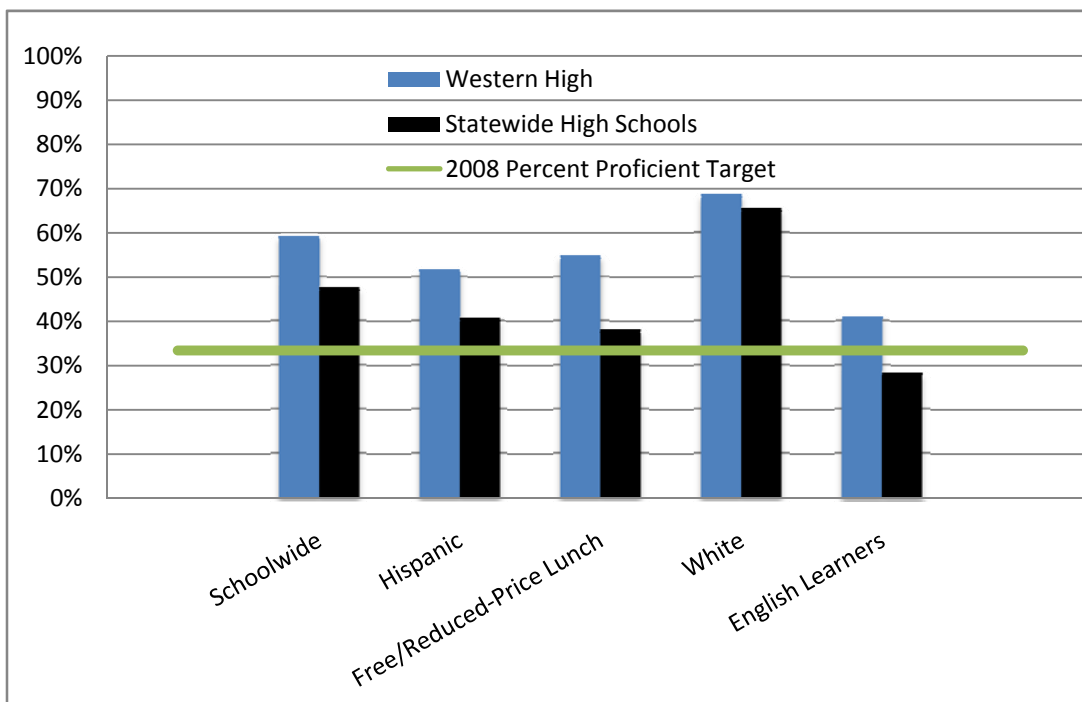
**Vertical and horizontal collaboration and alignment**

Teachers emphasize the importance of communicating regularly with other staff in their departments for the purpose of aligning their curriculum. Within departments, teachers report working with others teaching the same grade level to ensure that students have “an equal experience across classes.” In addition, teachers align their curricula vertically by meeting with instructors at the next grade level to determine the skills that students leaving their classes need to know to be successful in the next course.

“Within departments we have certain things that every class is doing. It really lends to high expectations. Teachers are using the same strategies and have the same benchmarks.”

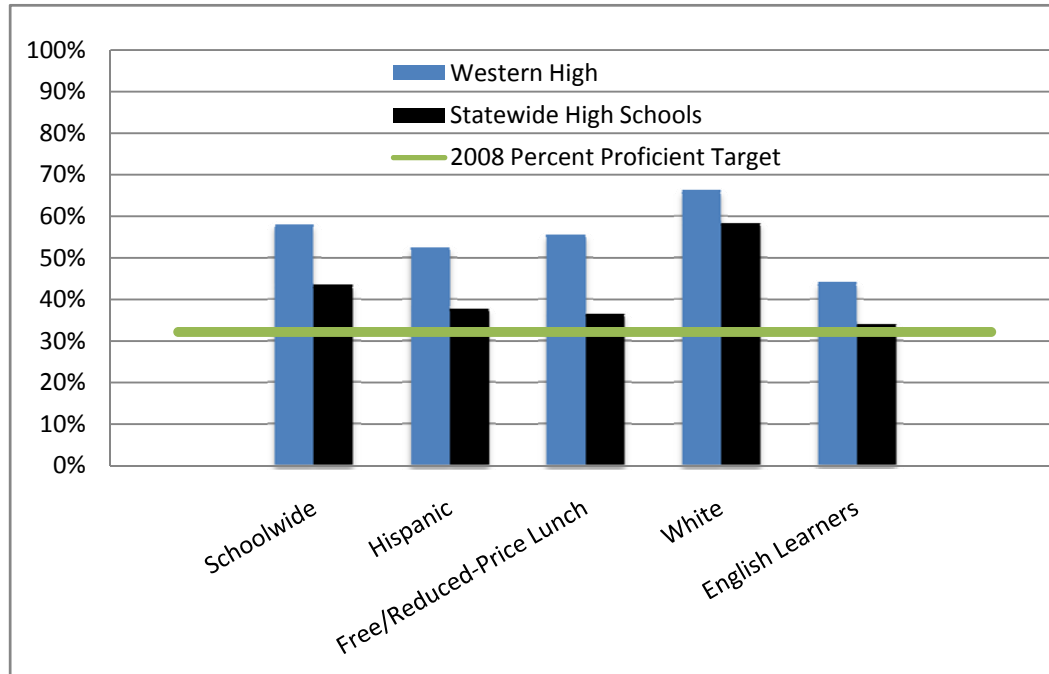
Wendy Criner,  
ELD teacher

**Exhibit 6. Schoolwide and Subgroup\* English Language Arts AYP Proficiency Targets and Scores for Western High School Compared to Average Statewide High School Scores, 2007-08**



\*Subgroups are ordered proportional to size.  
Source: California Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), 2007-08

**Exhibit 7. Schoolwide and Subgroup\* Mathematics AYP Proficiency Targets and Scores for Western High School Compared to Average Statewide High School Scores, 2007-08**



\*Subgroups are ordered proportional to size.  
Source: California Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), 2007-08

### Factor 3: Standards-Based Curriculum Aligned with Instruction and Common Assessments

#### Teachers held accountable for teaching content standards

At the beginning of each school year all teachers at Western are required to submit to the administration a week-by-week pacing guide mapping their curriculum to content standards. Teachers use data from the previous year to identify standards that may require more of their attention or an adjustment in teaching strategies. While teachers have the flexibility to adjust their pacing guide and strategies to meet student needs, they are still expected to address all required standards. Thus, the administrative team periodically monitors classrooms to ensure that appropriate standards are being taught.

#### Common benchmark exams

During staff development time at the beginning of the school year, teachers in core content areas develop common benchmark exams to assess student progress. These exams are designed to resemble the California Standards Test and assess students' knowledge of content related to standards. Benchmark exams are administered quarterly, and teachers meet to discuss the results and revise instructional strategies or pacing guides accordingly. Teachers also review the benchmarks annually to ensure that they are well aligned to state standards.

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“We print out every teacher’s data. When they see that they are performing lower than other teachers, that motivates them. I don’t dictate to them, but peer pressure really is the key.”

Paul Sevillano,  
Principal

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## Factor 4: Interventions and Support for Struggling Students

### After-school tutoring

The math, English, and science departments offer targeted tutoring for two hours after school for struggling students. Students can choose to attend the tutoring sessions voluntarily, or students may be referred by a teacher. Teachers noted that one of the benefits of this program is that the after-school sessions are taught by teachers in those content areas, allowing students to get additional content-specific instruction and assistance. Furthermore, many other teachers stay after school to help students who are struggling in their classes. Several students emphasized that this extra time with teachers has been instrumental in helping them improve their grades and gain a better understanding of specific content.

### Support for special populations

Recently, Western has been moving toward a full-inclusion model for special education students. The principal stressed the importance of exposing special education students to the core curriculum and standards. To this end, many special education students have been mainstreamed into regular classes that employ a team-teaching model including a general education teacher and a Resource Specialist Program (RSP) instructor. Further, special education students participate in a study skills course that is taught by an RSP teacher who provides students with homework assistance and re-teaching, if necessary.

The English Language Development (ELD) department also provides a great deal of support for ELs who are enrolled in two-period ELD classes, which are divided into three levels and taught by Cross-Cultural, Language, and Academic Development (CLAD) certified teachers. There are also sheltered English classes available in all core content areas for ELs. In addition, to better address EL students' needs, many teachers have been trained in specialized instructional techniques such as thinking maps, Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP).

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“We have a lot of one-on-one help that really helped me improve, like after school tutoring.”  
11th grade student

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### Small learning communities

The Pioneer Tech Learning Community at Western targets incoming ninth graders with a C average or below. With about 400 students in grades 9 and 10, this community focuses on providing students with individualized instruction and support. The students in this community have a common corps of teachers who collaborate regularly on instruction and addressing student needs. Teachers also emphasize project-based learning and integrate common themes across content areas.

### More Information:

- For more information about this school please go to the school's website: [western.auhsd.k12.ca.us](http://western.auhsd.k12.ca.us) or contact Dr. Paul Sevillano, Principal, Western High School, Anaheim, California: [sevillano\\_p@auhsd.us](mailto:sevillano_p@auhsd.us) or (714) 220-4040.
- For more information about other high-performing, high-need schools, please see other school profiles on the SchoolsMovingUp website: <http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/smu/print/htdocs/smu/ideas/schools.htm>.
- For more information about this study, please contact Mette Huberman, Senior Research Analyst, American Institutes for Research, Palo Alto, California: [mhuberman@air.org](mailto:mhuberman@air.org) or (650) 843-8174.