

Evidence of the Impact of the Ball Foundation Partnerships on Springfield and Chula Vista School Districts

Executive Summary

The following paper presents quantitative and qualitative evidence of the impact of the Ball Foundation partnerships on the Springfield, IL and Chula Vista, CA school districts. The Ball Foundation partnerships had a positive effect on student achievement in literacy and organizational change in both districts.

Student Achievement

In both districts, results from state assessments from 2004 to 2008 show an increase in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding literacy standards. Furthermore, key subgroups in each district (low-income students in Springfield and English-language learners in Chula Vista) showed gains in meeting or exceeding literacy standards. In this time period, elementary schools in both districts that were directly involved in the Ball partnership outperformed those that did not.

Organizational Change

Qualitative data taken from external evaluation reports, written testimonials from superintendents, and interviews with key district staff members show evidence of positive organizational impact on both districts. Four common themes emerged: improved teaching and learning, use of inquiry and evidence-based practices, highly collaborative and non-hierarchical ways of working, and the creation of common purpose system-wide.

<u>Student Achievement Impact (pp. 2-8)</u>	<u>Organizational Change Impact (pp. 9-11)</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Both Springfield and Chula Vista showed growth in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding literacy standards.• Key subgroups—low-income students in Springfield and English-language learners in Chula Vista—showed gains in literacy achievement.• Elementary schools that directly participated in the Ball Foundation partnership outperformed elementary schools that did not.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching and learning improved.• Use of inquiry and evidence-based practices increased.• Work became more collaborative and less hierarchical.• Common purpose was created system-wide.

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Sections:

- Selected Demographic Data, 2008
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Selected Demographic Data, 2008

The data below are provided as context for the student achievement data from Springfield, IL and Chula Vista, CA presented in this report. The demographic sub-group that is highlighted for Springfield is low-income students. The demographic sub-group that is highlighted for Chula Vista is English-language learners.

	Enrollment (change from 2004)	Low-income Percentage (change from 2004)	English-learner Percentage (change from 2004)
Springfield (K-12 Unit District)	14,157 (-0.6%)	59.4 (+2.7)	
Similar Districts in Illinois (Average)	11,792 (+2.7%)	52.0 (+0.2)	
Chula Vista (Elementary District)	27,264 (+7.8%)		36.5 (+1.4)
San Diego County	495,689 (-0.7%)		24.7 (+1.3)

Student Achievement Data: List of Exhibits

- Exhibit 1: Percentage of Springfield Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards 2004-2008, Illinois Standards Achievement Test (Reading)
- Exhibit 2: Comparison of Springfield with Similar Districts in Illinois---Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards, 2008, Illinois Standards Achievement Test (Reading)
- Exhibit 3: Percentage of Chula Vista Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards 2004-2008, California Standards Test (English-Language Arts)
- Exhibit 4: Comparison of Chula Vista with San Diego County---Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards, 2008, California Standards Test (English-Language Arts)
- Exhibit 5: Growth in Percentage of Springfield Elementary Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards from 2004-2008, Illinois Standards Achievement Test (Reading), Ball and Non-Ball Schools
- Exhibit 6: Growth in Percentage of Chula Vista Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards from 2004-2008, California Standards Test (English-Language Arts), Ball and Non-Ball Schools

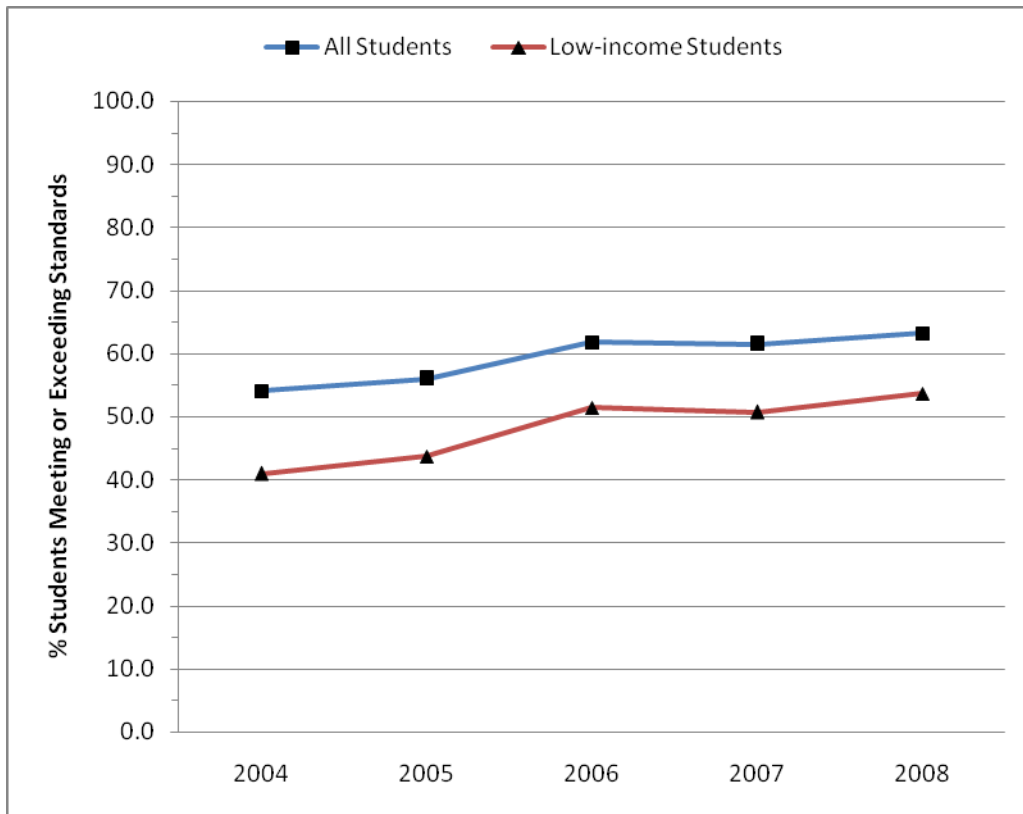
Student Achievement Data

The data presented below are a broad indicator of district-wide student achievement in literacy covering the years 2004-2008. For each district, we report the percentage of students that meet or exceed standards (in English-language arts or reading), as measured by the relevant state assessment. In addition, we report the performance of one key subgroup of students that was targeted by the district during the Ball partnership. For Springfield, this subgroup was low-income students, and for Chula Vista, this subgroup was English learners.

Springfield: District Data

Exhibit 1: Percentage of Springfield Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards 2004-2008, Illinois Standards Achievement Test (Reading)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	4-yr. Growth
All Students (%)	54.1	56.0	61.8	61.5	63.2	9.1%
Low-income Students (%)	40.9	43.7	51.4	50.7	53.7	12.8%



Springfield: District Comparison

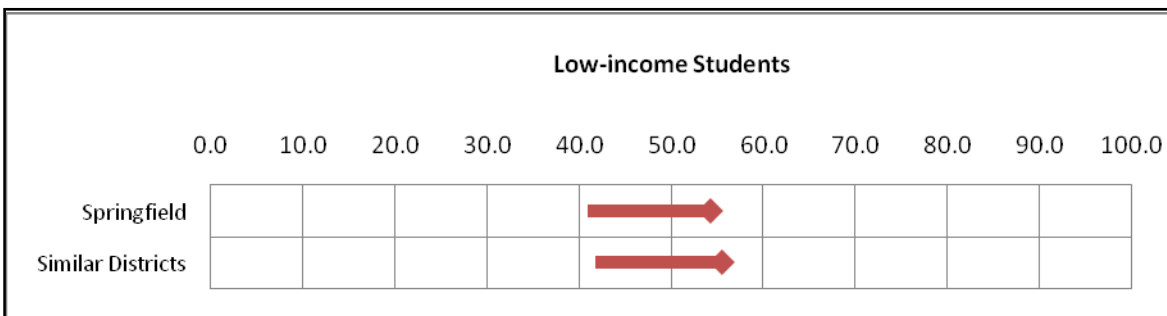
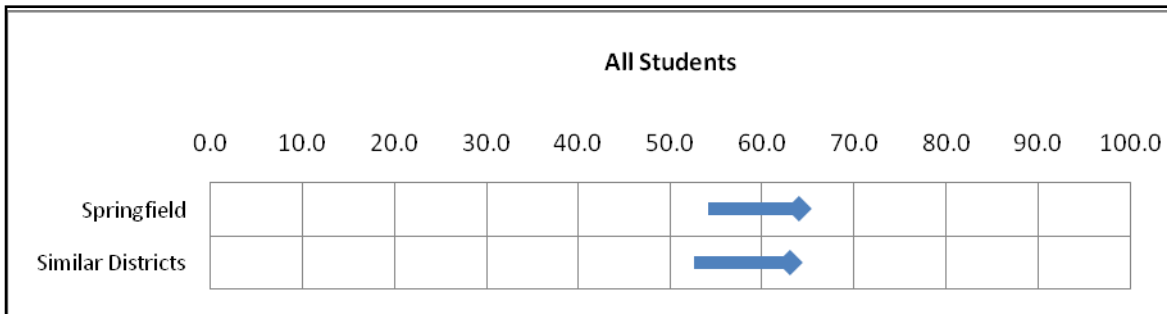
The table below compares Springfield with similar districts in the state of Illinois. Similar districts were defined using the following criteria:

- Type of district: K-12 unit district
- Enrollment: Between half and double the size of Springfield
- Percentage of low income students: 40-70%

There were a total of five similar districts, whose average enrollment was 11,792 and percentage of low-income students was 52.0.

Exhibit 2: Comparison of Springfield with Similar Districts in Illinois---Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards, 2008, Illinois Standards Achievement Test (Reading)

	All Students	Growth (over 2004)	Low-income Students	Growth (over 2004)
Springfield	64.0	9.9	54.2	13.3
Similar Districts	63.0	10.4	55.5	13.7

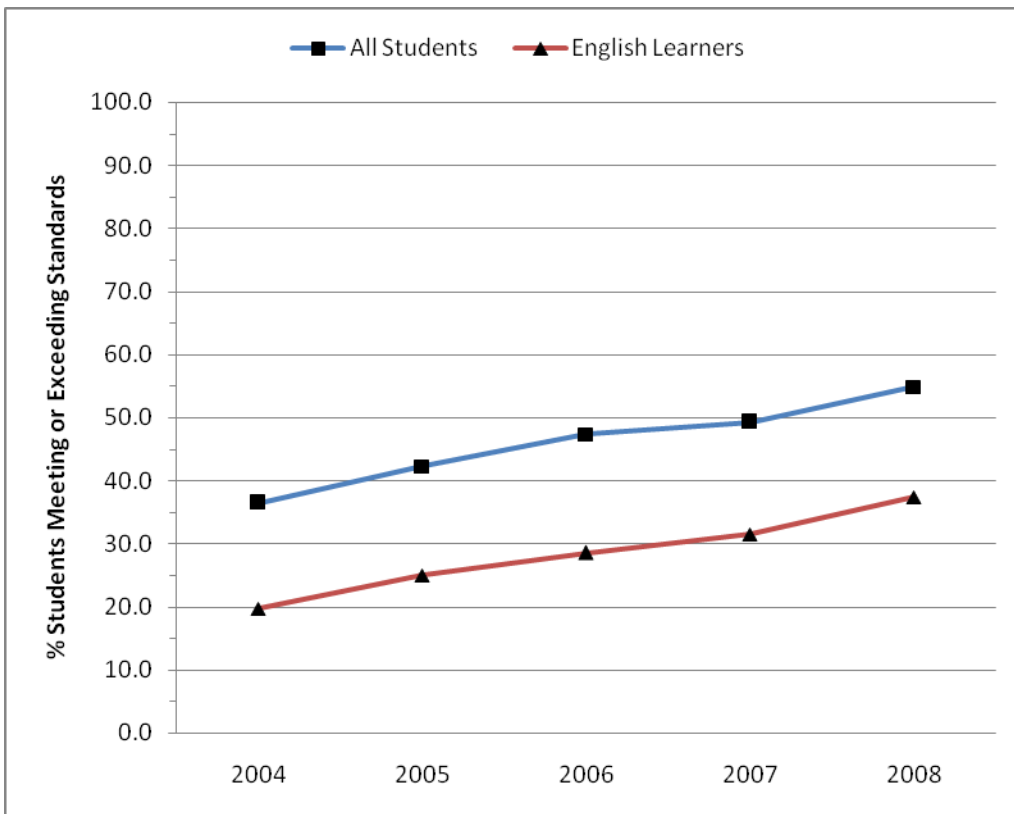


Note: the length of each line above represents the growth over 2004.

Chula Vista: District Data

Exhibit 3: Percentage of Chula Vista Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards 2004-2008, California Standards Test (English-Language Arts)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	4-yr. Growth
All Students (%)	36.5	42.3	47.4	49.3	54.9	18.4%
English Learners (%)	19.7	25.0	28.5	31.5	37.4	17.7%

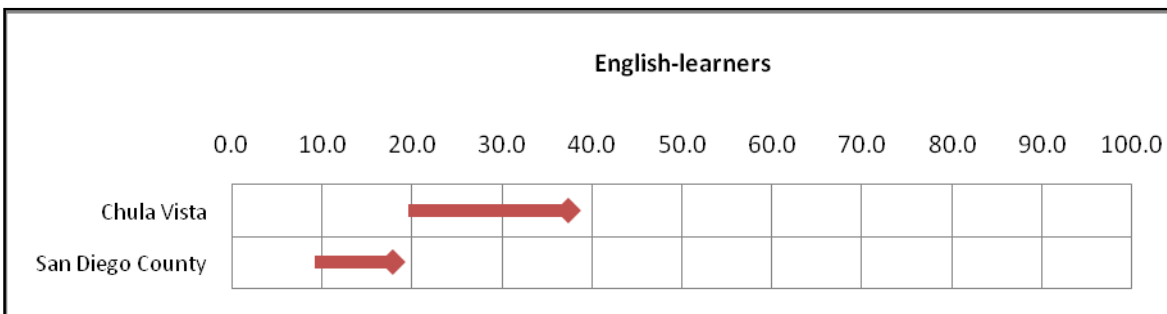
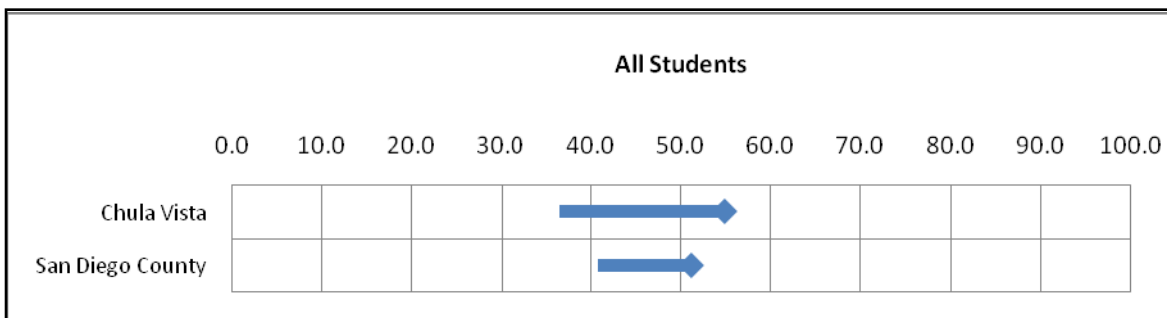


Chula Vista: District Comparison

The table below compares Chula Vista with San Diego County.

Exhibit 4: Comparison of Chula Vista with San Diego County---Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards, 2008, California Standards Test (English-Language Arts)

	All Students	Growth (over 2004)	English Learners	Growth (over 2004)
Chula Vista	54.9	18.4	37.4	17.7
San Diego County	51.2	10.3	17.9	8.7



Note: the length of each line above represents the growth over 2004.

Next, we present some school-level data for elementary schools in each district. We highlight elementary schools because of the large number of elementary schools involved in the Ball partnerships in both districts. Furthermore, a comparison among elementary schools is more informative than a comparison across different levels of schools because the assessments are the same.

Springfield: Elementary School Data

Exhibit 5: Growth in Percentage of Springfield Elementary Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards from 2004-2008, Illinois Standards Achievement Test (Reading), Ball and Non-Ball Schools

This table compares the average four-year growth in nine elementary schools most directly involved in the Ball partnership work with fourteen elementary schools not as directly involved.

	Ball Schools, Average	Non-Ball Schools, Average	Statistically significant difference?
All Students	17.0	8.4	Yes*
Low-income Students	20.0	15.3	No

* Statistically significant at a 92.5% level

Chula Vista: Elementary School Data

Exhibit 6: Growth in Percentage of Chula Vista Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards from 2004-2008, California Standards Test (English-Language Arts), Ball and Non-Ball Schools

This table compares the average four-year growth in twenty-two elementary schools most directly involved in the Ball partnership work with eighteen elementary schools not as directly involved.

	Ball Schools, Average	Non-Ball Schools, Average	Statistically significant difference?
All Students	17.7	15.9	No
English Learners	15.5	13.6	No

The district took intentional steps (outside the scope of the Ball partnership) to put twelve of the non-Ball schools into similar learning experiences. Thus, the fact that there is no statistically significant difference between Ball and non-Ball schools reflects the success that the district had in transferring learning to non-Ball schools.

Observations

The following observations are based on trends or patterns revealed by the data presented.

- Both Springfield and Chula Vista showed measurable growth in the percentage of students (both overall and in the highlighted subgroup) meeting or exceeding literacy standards, as measured by state achievement tests.
- Student achievement gains in Springfield were comparable to those of similar districts in Illinois.

- In Springfield, gains in student achievement by low-income students outpaced gains of all students, contributing to a narrowing of the achievement gap.
- Elementary schools in Springfield that participated directly in the Ball Foundation partnership showed statistically significant higher growth than those schools that did not participate directly.
- Student achievement gains in Chula Vista exceeded those of San Diego County and California as a whole.
- In Chula Vista, gains in student achievement by English learners were comparable to gains by all students. Individual school-level data, however, reveal that on average, schools with the highest percentages of English learners grew more than schools with the lowest percentages of English learners.
- Elementary schools in Chula Vista that participated directly in the Ball Foundation partnership showed higher growth than those schools that did not participate directly, but this difference was not statistically significant. In working with Chula Vista, the foundation observed that after a few years, the district was able to transfer learning across all schools, thus blurring the line between those that participated directly and those that did not.

The next section examines the qualitative data from evaluation studies, testimonials, and interviews. Combining student achievement data with these qualitative data on organizational impact provides a richer picture of the overall impact of the Ball Foundation partnership on Springfield and Chula Vista.

Summary of Qualitative Data about Organizational Impact

The following is a summary of the organizational impact that the work of Ball Foundation Partnership has had on the Springfield, IL and Chula Vista, CA school districts. The summary draws on a variety of evidence from several sources including:

- Evaluation reports from external evaluators
- Written testimonials by current superintendent of Chula Vista and former superintendent of Springfield
- Interviews with key district staff: the Executive Director of Instruction and Assessment (EDIA) in Chula Vista and the Family and Community Engagement Coordinator (FCEC) in Springfield. More interviews with district staff will be conducted over the winter and spring 2009.

Based on the analysis of the above evidence, several aspects of organizational impact emerged. While both Springfield and Chula Vista had several specific indicators of impact, there were common themes that emerged across both districts. The common themes as well as the specific examples that illustrate that theme in each district are outlined below:

- 1) **Improved teaching and learning:** While all of the other indicators of impact influenced the classroom, there is also evidence of direct impact on classroom teaching and learning. Teachers in both districts demonstrate an increased level of competency (individual and collective) in understanding, planning and implementing quality instruction.

Chula Vista	Springfield
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community of learners get together consistently to learn about and implement instructional strategies in their classroom. • District shows a stronger focus on quality instruction in literacy. There is also evidence of quality writing instruction and explicit teaching on how to read and be good readers. The EDIA observes an “amazing difference in seven years” • There is greater emphasis on teaching to California standards, with an increased level of rigor. Teachers and principals more knowledgeable about standards. The EDIA observes that “the Partnership gave us a venue to have conversations about instructional rigor” • Instruction moved from being a closed-door to an open-door activity. The superintendent notes that “the result was greater efforts to plan and implement instruction horizontally and vertically” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers come together in “collaboration days” to look at report card together and name children who are struggling. They then focus on the interventions that they are currently doing and the ones that they need to do to support struggling students better. • Teachers are implementing best practices learned in district-wide “framework” days in their classroom. • The FCEC observes that teachers are “engaging families in teaching and learning activities – not just sharing, but co-learning with families.” Activities like “brains in a box” allow teachers, families and students to engage in instructional practices together.

- 2) **Use of inquiry and evidence-based practices:** Both districts place high value on using an inquiry-based approach that involved asking powerful questions and seeking evidence through the use of data. Several of the practices that were introduced in the Ball partnership have become well-established and a part of district culture.

Chula Vista	Springfield
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers come together in a structured way to talk about their practice, look at student work and examine ways of improving teaching. This happens both at the school level and at a cross-level/district level in an “action research” approach. Walkthroughs (structured classroom observations) have become a part of district culture. The EDIA states that , “there is much more of an openness to walkthroughs as a way of teachers supporting and learning from each other” Student data is rigorously examined and analyzed, both at school level and district level. The superintendent observes that “data sharing on a school-wide basis has become acceptable practice” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of design teams and design process (taught and modeled by Ball) has become routine. Design team members ask critical questions in planning the meeting and following up on the results. The district uses a continuous improvement process around a specific and relevant literacy “instructional focus” Walkthroughs are conducted routinely, not just in schools, but also in neighborhoods (as a way for teachers to get to know their students’ community better) and in other exemplar districts. District staff demonstrated an increased capacity for reflection. The former superintendent notes that “collaborating with Ball brought us the ability to reflect on our practice. The foundation serves as a mirror for the systems to see itself.”

- 3) **Highly Collaborative and non-hierarchical ways of working:** Both districts demonstrate evidence that traditional, often stifling hierarchies of school systems are giving way to a newer flexible and collaborative ways of working to support literacy for all students. Traditional siloed roles of administrators, teachers and executive leaders have evolved to be much more interconnected and dynamic.

Chula Vista	Springfield
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals and teachers engage in conversations together as peers looking at student data and creating school improvement plans Structures now exist for site-based decision making. The EDIA observes that “Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) have become a model of distributed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several cross-functional teams were formed to support the district’s improvement work, especially around family engagement (e.g: District Framework team, Family and Community Engagement team, etc.) Culture has become more systemic and inclusive. The FCEC notes that the

<p>leadership”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional Support Services division was reorganized to be more responsive to the needs of schools. Five Executive Directors and eight Resource Teachers function more cohesively in supporting schools and facilitating improvement 	<p>question “who else needs to be in the room (for this conversation)?” is posed frequently as a way to connect different people in the system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohorts of schools function as a learning community, sharing information and best practices • Collaboration has become the norm and an integral part of district culture. This is at all levels including grade-level, ILT, cross-school etc. • Instructional Services staff serve as “anchors” and “links” for schools – they attend ILT meetings and “framework “days and connect schools to resources at district level.
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- 4) **Creation of common purpose system-wide:** A key impact of the partnership in both districts has been the creation of common purpose accompanied by system-wide frameworks about change and improvement. The partnership has provided the district with tools and language to unify the system around a common purpose.

Chula Vista	Springfield
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In setting clear expectations and providing support from the central office, the school district has struck a more appropriate balance between centralization and decentralization (it was completely decentralized when the partnership began). The superintendent notes that the partnership “built connection... web influence that connected schools and people in a decentralized system” • 43 out of 44 schools in the district are now involved in the instructional improvement work established by the Ball partnership (compared to 5 original schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A district-level strategic “framework”, consisting of eight essential elements was created with the support of the partnership. The former superintendent notes that this “allowed the entire district to speak the same language and work towards common goals.” • 32 out of 32 schools are now involved in the instructional and family engagement work established by the Ball partnership (compared to 6 original schools)