

*Evidence, Example, Elaboration:
Developing Student Writers
Tibby Elementary School, Compton, California*



Ontrece Ellerbe, Principal: When I first arrived at the school, many of our students were not reading fluently. Many of our students were not reading on grade level. Many of our students, even our higher performing students were struggling with getting through the writing process successfully. So we visited a neighboring school, Laurel Elementary. They are a California Distinguished School. One of their signature practices was their writing program. We loved what they were doing because it provided students with a series of templates to make it through the writing process.

Jesusa Rodriguez, Grade 3 Teacher: I learned a lot. I learned a lot from that and it changed my perspective towards teaching language arts, especially writing. I think, cause to be honest, at first, I am scared to teach writing. I know writing is difficult. But our professional development really, really transformed me to a new teacher in writing. **[in class]** Mine is grasslands. So, are you going to copy mine? What are you going to use? Topic sentence plus four Es What is One E? One E is evidence! Examples! Elaboration! You're going to put that in your paragraph.

Latrece Polk, Grade 6 Teacher: It was new to have a team come in and observe teachers, to observe me as a teacher and our staff as teachers, it was new. Yes. And that was the significant dynamic that was brought to Tibby. We had a powerful and knowledgeable instructional leader. **[in class]** this is where I throw it over to you and you guy are going to start discussing, how would you group these, and what would you label them?

Ontrece Ellerbe: We saw changes immediately, but we really saw the fruits of our labors after about two years. We were very excited to have made the leaps that we made specifically in language arts. 74% of our students test advanced proficient which is a remarkable achievement in a school like ours where students were not expected to succeed at those levels.

Ronald Terrell, Grade 2 Teacher: Our principal Ms. Ellerbee provided us with an entire notebook full of strategies. At least 30 or 40 pages. We had to carry a composition book to all of our meetings,

we wrote down all of these strategies, and we employed those strategies. We'd come back and say, "it worked; it didn't work." Now there's a plan, I know what to do, I know when it is not looking right, how to correct it. If I can't correct it, I will turn to my colleagues for help to correct it.

Ontrece Ellerbe: I would say the biggest cultural shift is one of high expectations for all scholars. Our students are now striving to be on the honor roll. If you get 90% or better you get on the honor roll. You get to buy a tee-shirt that says you are an honor roll student, you get certain privileges and field trips for our honor roll students. So there is a culture now of wanting to achieve and succeed.

Nancy Harris, ELA Specialist: Yes, there is a feeling of importance, and a feeling of being special because you are a scholar at Tibby Elementary. We refer to our students as scholars because that is what they are.

Davion, Grade 6 Student: I know Tibby, they're gonna push us even harder as we grow up, because they expect a whole lot from us. I want to be a doctor...I like sports too but now I know I have a talent. I'm smart, I'm very smart. And Tibby is helping me become smarter.

Ontrece Ellerbe: In order to close the achievement gap significantly and rapidly, it's essential that there's consistency of practice. At Tibby, all of our teachers participate in all professional development. Now in the beginning, not every teacher implemented the practices at the same level. Some teachers will implement it a little bit more brilliantly. But even the teachers that are weaker, that are more developing, that are less enthusiastic, if they're doing something every single day, they get better. So we've grown together doing the same things in every classroom, because if you want all students to learn, if you say all students can learn, they all have to be exposed to the same instructional practices.