

**The James Irvine Foundation 2010 Leadership Award
Letter of Nomination for Randy Barth**

Summary

Randy Barth is the founder and CEO of THINK Together, a non-profit organization providing high quality academically-oriented out-of-school programs to low-income, educationally at-risk students throughout Southern California. THINK Together currently serves over 50,000 students at more than 200 sites and has some of the strongest evaluation results of any after-school provider in the nation.

From Winter 2007 to Fall 2008, Barth led a landmark expansion of the organization's core after-school program, establishing 177 new sites throughout Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. During this process, THINK Together developed a platform that it is now leveraging to deliver to not only comprehensive after-school programs, but small group tutoring, summer learning and early literacy programs as well.

Barth has built a high-performing organization that has attracted the best and the brightest from business and education to create a scalable system of supports around high poverty schools.

Narrative

Significance

The Education Trust-West has stated that "By the time [minority students] reach grade 12, if they do so at all, minority students are about four years behind other young people. Indeed, 17 year-old African American and Latino students have skills in English, mathematics and science similar to those of 13-year-old white students." This glaring disparity is reflected in the high school graduation rates for the class of 2007. The Education Trust-West reported that only 50% of Latino and 53% of African American students in California graduated from high school compared to 83% of white and Asian students. In addition, only 13% of Latino and 15% of African American 9th grade students in 2003 graduated four years later having completed the A-G courses needed to attend college. Latino and African American students represent over 90% of the students that THINK Together serves. THINK Together has the long term goal of closing this achievement gap between white students and Latino and African-American students.

The U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, has outlined a number of goals to help improve our nation's education and close the achievement gap. One of the keys to this strategy is extended learning time for students. He states, "We need innovative, new instructional models. One of the first areas where we can foster innovation is the amount of time our students spend learning. Other top-performing countries do not take two months off in the summer. They do not dismiss students at two in the afternoon. Instead, they spend 30 or 40 more days per year in school and offer safe, constructive

activities that keep kids learning. We must expand quality after-school programs and rethink the school day to incorporate more time—whether that's by extending hours or offering more summer school.”

California has one of the shortest school years in the nation at 180 days and also has one of the shortest school days in the nation at 6.5 hours where learning takes place during only 4.75 hours of that day. California's students spend less than 15% of their waking hours during the year learning in the classroom. One key to improving student achievement is through building an ecosystem of support around the school day through after-school programs, summer school, Saturday programs, and small group tutoring.

Inclusiveness

Randy Barth has been instrumental in bringing disparate parts of the community together to support the academic achievement of our community's most vulnerable children. The seeds of THINK Together were planted in the Shalimar neighborhood of Costa Mesa in 1994. After a gang shooting, mothers from this low-income, Latino neighborhood organized to take the neighborhood back from the gang. Barth and several leaders from local churches met with the mothers to see how they could help. Barth organized two churches and a community group in the area to provide funding for a neighborhood center where their children could go after school to get tutoring, help with English, and academic support. As a result of the program's combination of academic support and adult mentors, over 200 of THINK Together Shalimar students have gone on to college. In addition, over 50 have now graduated, all of them the first in their families to earn a college degree. For the last four years, 100% of the Shalimar seniors have graduated and enrolled in college.

Due to the success of this model, Randy Barth started THINK Together in 1997 to take the after-school learning center concept into a broader community environment including public school sites throughout Southern California. To make significant inroads into helping students achieve academic success, Barth envisioned the whole community coming together – corporations, foundations, individuals, schools, colleges, government, along with communities of faith – to achieve this vision. With the advent of state funding of after-school programs in 2006, through the passing of Proposition 49 in 2002, Barth was able to partner with 17 school districts throughout Southern California in expanding the reach of THINK Together to 177 new sites, serving over 35,000 students annually.

Through Randy Barth's collaboration with community leaders such as Donald Bren of the Irvine Company and Jane Russo, Superintendent of Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD), THINK Together was able to expand from 12 to 45 school sites in SAUSD in fall 2008, serving over 15,000 students annually. THINK Together now operates after-school programs at nearly all of the elementary and middle school sites along with two high schools in SAUSD. THINK Together also partnered with SAUSD to create a new paradigm for summer learning. More than 12,000 K-8 students participated in a six-week program that offered literacy, broad standards-based enrichment and structured physical fitness. The program was delivered by a blend of SAUSD teachers and THINK Together staff. The

program was a huge success as measured by student turnout as well as through survey data from students, parents and teachers. Early evaluation results are promising as well.

Also in fall 2008, THINK Together began providing free small group tutoring under the Supplemental Educational Services (SES) provision of No Child Left Behind, and piloted these programs at school campuses throughout Southern California. THINK Together was chosen by the U.S. Department of Education to be one of five National Demonstration Sites to study and develop a national model for the alignment of SES with 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school programs. THINK Together is partnering with a widely-known and respected expert in the field of after-school research, Dr. Deborah Lowe Vandell, Chair of the Department of Education at the University of California, Irvine to evaluate the programs. THINK Together has already received promising evaluation results from the first year of program; reports show significant student improvements in the areas of math and reading efficacy, and positive peer relations.

Barth has also developed a partnership with the Orange County Children and Families Commission to provide Early Literacy programming this fall to high need students and families in central Santa Ana.

Innovation

Through this collaboration with the various community partners, THINK Together is providing additional programs and services that enable it to go deeper in the communities it serves. In the Eco-System model, THINK Together provides after-school programs, Saturday programs, summer programs, Early Literacy programs, and small group tutoring (SES) at public school sites; these sites will also be used as a base for community health services.

This strategy is funded by a blend of public and private sources and is at the forefront of where President Obama is headed with his education strategy. Linking the various aspects of this model together is a robust parent engagement strategy. Each school will have a parent outreach coordinator who is charged with working with the THINK Together Site Coordinator to ensure that parents make use of the array of programs made available to them on and off campus.

School Support Eco-System



THINK Together will be partnering with the California Endowment in its *Building Healthy Communities* ten-year initiative which is designed to improve health and education outcomes for Santa Ana children. Funding from this initiative will allow THINK Together to expand its parent engagement strategy while also improving health outcomes our students and their families. Barth is currently working with community partners in Los Angeles, the San Gabriel Valley, and San Bernardino to replicate this Eco-System model.

THINK Together is also at the forefront of education innovation and reform through the alignment of its programs with the school day. These alignment strategies are in stark contrast to nearly all other after-school providers in California. Most providers come from a youth development approach which focuses on developing the physical, emotional, and social aspects of children and youth, which has been shown to indirectly affect student achievement at a low level. THINK Together focuses on these aspects, but it is also very intentional in developing the academic skills of children and youth through aligning its programs with the school day, which has shown promising results. THINK Together is developing a “both and” rather than “either/or” approach to academics and youth development in after-school.

THINK Together has developed a model partnership with the Little Lake City School District (LLCSD) where this alignment model is now in its second year of implementation. Each school principal in LLCSD systematically integrates our staff into their well-developed school-day alignment practices. THINK Together Site Coordinators attend weekly grade-level meetings that include structured discussion about curriculum and assessment outcomes. Teachers use benchmark assessment data to identify needs of all students, including after-school participants. Related follow-up curriculum is then targeted for after-school. Teachers sometimes model the delivery of the lesson for the program staff. As a result, our Site Coordinators are better able to understand student needs, develop a “school-based” language, and gain knowledge about curriculum and effective instructional strategies. In addition, teachers have gained a new perspective on the power of after-school to be a real support to their instructional-day efforts.

Effectiveness

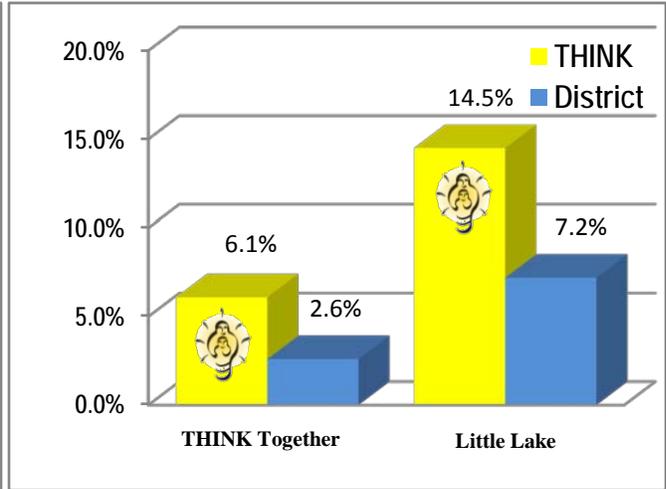
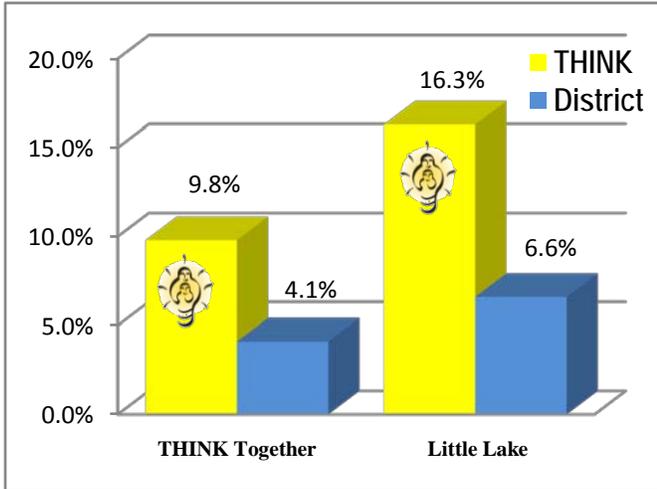
An analysis of California Standards Tests (CST) scores shows the promise of this innovative alignment practice. THINK Together released evaluation results of CST scores for over 6,500 students in the program at 18 school districts in Southern California. These results have shown that students who participate in THINK Together’s program for 60 days or more have a higher growth rate towards Proficiency in their English Language Arts (ELA) and Math scores from spring 2007 to spring 2008, compared to all students throughout these districts. Regularly-attending program participants in LLCSD had gains two to nearly three times those of all students in LLCSD in both ELA and Math and overall – gains significantly higher than any of the other low-achieving districts in which THINK serves. We believe these gains were a direct result of the collaborative effort in LLCSD to make THINK a true partner in advancing student achievement.

Growth Rate Towards Proficiency

2007 (Baseline) vs 2008 (Follow-Up) CSTs
 THINK Together Regular Attendees¹
 vs District-Wide Results²

¹ Regular Attendees= Students who attended THINK Together after-school program for 60 days or more in 2007-2008. ELA (N=6,558); MATH (N=6,555).

² District-wide CST results for all 3rd-8th graders across all districts served by THINK Together in 2007-2008 (N=18).



THINK Together also partnered with Celerity Educational Group to provide after-school programming for three charter schools in low-income, diverse neighborhoods in South Central Los Angeles. While most of THINK Together’s programs serve only 10% to 20% of the student body, the Celerity Charter schools provided funding for THINK Together to serve an average of 64% of their students. The results were dramatic. At Celerity Nascent, where THINK Together served 62% of their students, the Academic Performance Index (API) increased from 641 to 753, a 112 point gain. At Celerity Dyad, where THINK Together served 67.5% of their students, API increased from 667 to 785, a 118 point gain. These were the two highest increases in all of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) for traditional schools. At Celerity Troika Charter, which is classified as a small school, THINK Together served 74.2% of their students; API increased from 595 to 874, an incredible jump of 279 points – the highest increase in all of LAUSD and Los Angeles County!

Field Leadership

While nearly all after-school providers are content with the status quo youth development approach, Randy Barth is leading the effort to reform after-school programs in California. With federal, state and local officials demanding education reform, the field of after-school providers has been working in a silo, oblivious to the opportunity to support the school day and improve the achievement for at-risk students. Barth is continually sharing best practices of alignment with the school day and the Eco-System approach to reform after-school and give our communities all the resources available to close the achievement gap. Barth was recognized for this leadership earlier this year by Secretary Duncan as he was named one of seven national After-School Champions.

Timing of Recognition

With federal, state, and local policy makers advocating education reform and through the historic Race to the Top initiative and its sister Investing In Innovation effort, this current education climate has been dubbed by Arne Duncan as the “perfect storm for reform.” THINK Together will demonstrate at local, state and national levels the innovative practices of the Eco-System model and alignment with the school day. THINK Together will use its evaluation data to replicate and scale its models as well as to inform policy decisions.