



From Chaos to Coherence:

How Shandin Hills MS improved safety, systems, and student outcomes

CLIENT OVERVIEW

Client Name: Shandin Hills Middle School
Location: San Bernardino, CA
Timeline: SY 2024- 2026
Service(s): PLC Coaching

Shandin Hills Middle School is part of the San Bernardino City Unified School District in Southern California, serving more than 750 students in grades 6–8. When Creative Leadership Solutions (CLS) began working with the school, a new principal had been appointed mid-year during the 2023-24 school year, stepping into a low-performing and chaotic campus. Initial priorities focused on improving safety and behavior, reducing parent complaints, strengthening school culture, and increasing instructional quality, student engagement, and accountability.

CHALLENGE

When the principal assumed leadership, the school faced challenges impacting both instruction and campus climate. An ineffective bell schedule, including a 14-minute “0” period, led to lost instructional time and inconsistent student engagement. Low expectations for behavior and academics, combined with a lack of coherent systems for instruction and PLC follow-through, created inconsistency across classrooms. Ongoing parent complaints reflected limited confidence in the school and a campus climate requiring immediate attention to safety, supervision, and consistency.

- Lost instructional time reduced student learning
- Inconsistent expectations drove uneven outcomes
- Misaligned systems weakened coherence and accountability
- Safety concerns eroded trust across the school community

PRACTICE

When CLS began working with the school and principal, the focus was on strengthening instructional systems and building leadership capacity. Through targeted coaching, leaders developed a more effective approach to PLCs, resulting in clearer expectations for teaching and learning. Teachers began consistently submitting weekly lesson plans and posting daily learning intentions and success criteria, creating a foundation for aligned instruction.

Over time, PLCs emphasized formative assessment to monitor progress and Kagan strategies to increase engagement. More recently, teams have focused on increasing rigor using the Hess Cognitive Rigor Matrix to deepen understanding of standards. Ongoing coaching from administrators and department leaders supported consistent implementation and continuous improvement.

	<p>INSTRUCTIONAL CONSISTENCY Established consistent expectations through weekly lesson plans, daily learning intentions, and success criteria</p>
	<p>PLC FOCUS ON LEARNING Strengthened PLCs to prioritize formative assessment and monitor student progress</p>
	<p>RIGOR & ENGAGEMENT Increased student engagement and cognitive demand through Kagan strategies and the Hess Cognitive Rigor Matrix</p>

At Shandin Hills, we leveled up our commitment to eliminate inconsistency—because our students deserve consistency, clarity, and results in every classroom.
Dr. Persida Torres, Principal

TAILORED PROCESS

01

Built leadership capacity through targeted coaching to strengthen instructional systems

02

Established clear expectations for behavior, supervision, and campus routines to improve safety and school climate

03

Coached PLCs teams to implement formative assessment to monitor student progress

04

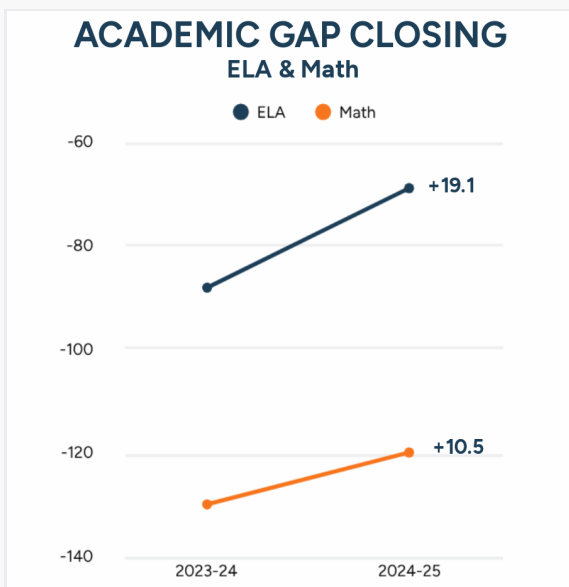
Supported teachers in using the Hess Cognitive Rigor Matrix to increase rigor in daily instruction

RESULTS

SUSPENSION RATE

Down from 16.8% in 2023
(-12.3 points)

4.5%



ABOUT US

Creative Leadership Solutions is a leading provider of research and evidence-based professional development and coaching for K-12 education. We partner with districts and schools to achieve their goals, impact student learning, and improve performance. Our team of experts is dedicated to delivering personalized and differentiated learning opportunities.

- Research-driven approach grounded in evidence and practice
- Experienced coaches with deep K-12 and systems-change expertise
- Customized supports based on context, goals, and stakeholder needs
- Sustained partnership focused on implementation and results

ROADBLOCKS

Several roadblocks emerged as the work progressed. Contractual constraints necessitated ongoing collaboration with union leadership to navigate contract language and align systems with site-based goals.

In addition, inconsistent implementation of expectations and policies across staff created a need for greater clarity and accountability, which was addressed by establishing and reinforcing consistent practices schoolwide. There was also a need to establish more transparent and shared decision-making processes, leading leaders to intentionally involve staff in co-constructing key systems and priorities.

IMPACT OVER TIME

By reducing the campus “temperature” and building systems grounded in accountability, transparency, and relationships, Shandin Hills has made measurable gains in both climate and academics. The sharp decline in suspensions and steady academic growth signal a school moving from instability toward sustained success and a stronger, unified culture.

Source: CDE Dashboard & School Level Data

