

**Marcus P. Johnson**

Superintendent  
Sanger Unified School District  
Sanger California



Marc Johnson is currently in his 35<sup>th</sup> year in public education, all of which have been spent in the Central Valley of California. Marc began his career at American Union Elementary, a single school k-8 district in western Fresno County. Marc taught for 16 years, 13 at the Jr. High level, and spent the last 7 years there serving as Superintendent/Principal. In 1999, Marc left American Union to assume the position of Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources for the Sanger Unified School District. A year and a half later Marc and the other two Assistant Superintendents were asked by the Board to lead the District for a “short time” as a collaborative team following the departure of the District’s Superintendent. That short time of serving as Associate Superintendents lasted two and a half years, which served as a time of rebuilding for the district. Marc was named Superintendent of the district in the fall of 2003 and continues in that role today.

Sanger Unified is a mostly rural district of just under 11,000 students. The highly diverse student population includes 82% minority enrollment, 76% free and reduced lunch recipients, and 24% English Language Learners. Low parent education levels and high unemployment levels in the region provide additional challenges in the work of the district. In the fall of 2004 the District was notified that they were one of the first 98 districts in California to fall into Program Improvement status due primarily to failing to meet the learning needs of their English Language Learners. Seizing this as an opportunity, Marc and his leadership team began a journey of District wide improvement that has generated incredible gains. By restructuring the district’s schools into Professional Learning Communities focusing on student learning, the achievement gains were immediate and dramatic. In a two year time period the District became one of the first districts in the state of California to exit Program Improvement.

Today the district’s success continues, the robust structures of support that have been developed to support the learning needs of all students, coupled with high quality initial instruction delivered by teachers who work in collaborative teams have resulted in some of the highest overall achievement gains in the State over the last five years. In that period 13 schools have been designated as State Distinguished Schools. In the last two years, 12 schools have been designated as Title I Academic Achieving Schools and two schools have been named National Blue Ribbon Schools. Additionally this past spring, all 13 of the districts elementary schools were honored by the Bonner Center for Character Development at California State University Fresno for their outstanding character development programs.

Marc is a graduate of Reedley Community College, California State University Fresno and Fresno Pacific University where he received his Masters degree and completed his credential programs. This past spring Marc was honored by both Reedley College and Fresno State as their Distinguished Alumnus.