Transforming Sanchez School
Shared Leadership, Equity, and Evidence
By Raymond R. Isola and Jim Cummins
ISBN: 978-1-934000-41-0

In his 13 years as principal at San Francisco’s Sanchez Elementary School, Raymond R. Isola opened up an important dialogue between educators and parents who believed in preparing their students to cultivate their talents and nurture their imaginations. Throughout Isola’s tenure, co-author and educational researcher Jim Cummins observed Isola’s community of educational equity and how Isola became a trailblazer in introducing Italy’s inspiring Reggio Emilia approach to a California public school. A powerful, educational story of how schools can transform from blank canvases to works of art, as told by an Italian American who sought to close gaps experienced by low-income, socially marginalized students.

― Lorenzo Ortona, Consul General of Italy in San Francisco

This book is the result of 20 years of collaboration between a school principal and an educational researcher. Isola and Cummins document how practitioners at Sanchez Elementary School successfully transformed the learning experiences of students from a low-income and linguistically diverse community in the Mission District of San Francisco. Over the course of 13 years, from 1999 to 2012, test scores improved dramatically despite school reconstitution and misguided education policies.

Key focus areas of the transformation process

- **Development of dynamic learning communities** that relate empirical research of what works for diverse students, schools, and communities to the concrete challenges faced at Sanchez School
- **Shared leadership and results-oriented cycle of inquiry** to build capacity for effective learning across generations within the school community
- **Multi-dimensional roles of the school principal**, including instructional leader, resource manager, social architect of learning, and community organizer and activist
- **Evidence collection**, including student achievement data, performance-based assessments, teacher leadership development, paraprofessional career ladder, and parent education and activism