

**New York State Education Department  
Audit of the Written, Taught, and  
Tested Curriculum**

**Schenectady City School District  
Final Report**

**May 2007**

**Submitted to  
Schenectady City School District**

**Submitted by  
Learning Point Associates**



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## **Introduction**

This final report is the result of an audit of the written, taught, and tested curriculum of the Schenectady City School District by Learning Point Associates. In 2006, 10 school districts and the New York State Education Department (NYSED) commissioned this audit to fulfill an accountability requirement of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act for local education agencies (LEAs) identified as districts in need of corrective action. These LEAs agreed, with the consent of NYSED, to collaborate on the implementation of this audit, which was intended to identify areas of concern and make recommendations to assist districts in their improvement efforts.

The focus of the audit was on English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum for all students, including Students with Disabilities. The audit examined the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment as well as other key areas—such as professional development, and school and district supports—through multiple lenses of data collection and analysis. These findings acted as a starting point to facilitate conversations in the district in order to identify areas for improvement, probable causes, and ways to generate plans for improvement.

This report contains an outline of the process, data, and methods used as well as the key findings from the data collection. Finally, the Recommendations for Action Planning section provides suggestions as well as more specific advice to consider in the action-planning process. Districts are required to incorporate recommendations from the audit in their District Comprehensive Education Plan.

# District Background

## Overview

### Geographic Background

Schenectady City School District is one of six school districts in Schenectady County, located in eastern New York state. It is an urban school district located in the Albany metropolitan area, about 7 miles northwest of Albany. The estimated population of the city in 2003 was 61,016.<sup>1</sup>

### Student Population and Demographics

Data from 2005 indicate that Schenectady City School District served a total of 9,337 students, with 135 prekindergarten students, 9,077 K–12 students, and 125 ungraded students.<sup>2</sup> Of students enrolled in the district, 51 percent were white, 32 percent were black, 11 percent were Hispanic, and 6 percent were Asian, Pacific Islander, Alaskan Native, or Native American.

According to the district, there are 11 elementary schools, three middle schools, one high school, and an adult education center.<sup>3</sup> Data for school years 2002–03 and 2003–04 indicate a slight decline (7 tenths of a percent) in the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. For school years 2003–04 and 2004–05, the number of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch increased nearly 8 percent (from 48 percent to 56 percent, respectively). District data for school years 2002–03, 2003–04, and 2004–05 also indicate a slow but steady percentage of limited-English-proficient students (3 percent, 3 percent, and 4 percent, respectively). As of December 2006, the percentage of Students with Disabilities (SWDs) enrolled is 15 percent.<sup>4</sup>

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the district's average spending per student (instruction and direct services only) in 2003–04 was \$8,277; this amount was \$8,107 per student in 2002–03.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> General information regarding the school district and city was obtained from the following websites:

<http://www.epodunk.com/cgi-bin/genInfo.php?locIndex=22502#Educ>, and <http://www.epodunk.com/cgi-bin/genInfo.php?locIndex=1615>, retrieved April 9, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> School district data in this section came from the *New York State District Report Card Comprehensive Information Report BEDS Code: 53-06-00-01-000 Schenectady City School District 2004–05* at [http://emsc32.nysed.gov/repcrd2005/links/d\\_530600.shtml](http://emsc32.nysed.gov/repcrd2005/links/d_530600.shtml), retrieved April 9, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> The number of schools in the district was obtained from <http://www.schenectady.k12.ny.us/AboutSCSD/Aboutus.htm>, retrieved April 9, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Information regarding special education student enrollment was obtained from the Office of Special Education and Pupil Services via telephone on April 16, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> School finance data was obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics at <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/bat/index.asp>, retrieved April 10, 2007.

## **Student Academic Performance**

### **English Language Arts**

As of 2005–06 school year, Schenectady City School District was designated as a district “in need of improvement–Year 3” for ELA.<sup>6</sup> In 2004–05, the student accountability groups that did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in elementary-level ELA were SWDs and Hispanic students. For the same year, the following groups did not make AYP in middle-level ELA: SWDs, blacks, Hispanics, and low-income students. SWDs and Hispanic students were the groups that did not make AYP in secondary-level ELA that year.

### **Mathematics**

As of 2005–06, Schenectady City School District was designated as a district “in need of improvement–Year 1” for mathematics. In 2004–05, SWDs were the only group that did not make AYP in middle-level mathematics. SWDs and Hispanics did not make AYP in secondary-level mathematics.

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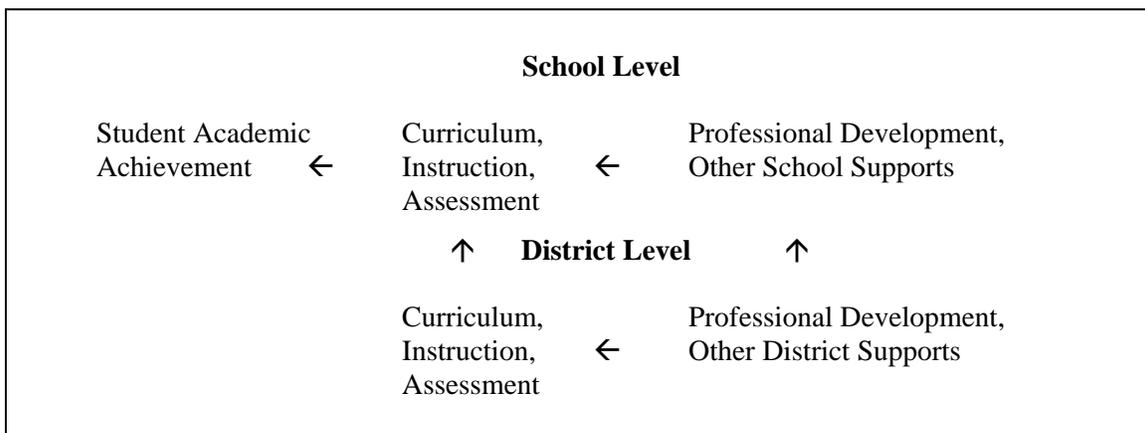
<sup>6</sup> Information regarding accountability status and student accountability groups that made AYP was obtained from the *Accountability Status Report for Schenectady City School District* at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/repcrd2005/school-accountability/530600010000.pdf>, retrieved April 18, 2007.

## Theory of Action

The theory of action starts from student academic achievement of the audited districts and their schools in relation to the New York State Learning Standards. Specifically, student academic achievement outcomes are related directly to curriculum, instruction, and assessment activities within the classroom of each study school. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment at the school level are supported and influenced by professional development and other supports at the school level and by curriculum, instruction, and assessment at the district level. Finally, school-level professional development and other supports are supported and influenced by their district-level counterparts.

The theory of action reviewed in the co-interpretation meeting identified that change (i.e., actions needed to improve student achievement) occurs at both the school and district levels. Therefore, the audit gathered information at both levels. A graphic representation of the theory of action dynamic is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Theory of Action**



## Guiding Questions for the Audit

To address both the needs of individual districts and the requirements of the audit, Learning Point Associates identified the following 16 essential questions for the focus of the audit:

1. Where is the district struggling most in terms of content areas and demographic groups over time?
2. Are teachers teaching the written curriculum in their classrooms?
3. Does the district provide materials that support the implementation of the written curriculum, and are the materials used?
4. Are the teachers teaching to the state standards?
5. Is the taught curriculum aligned with the state assessments?
6. Is the written curriculum aligned with the state standards?
7. Do all students have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum?
8. What does the district/school do for students who are not scoring at proficient levels according to NCLB? Are these students receiving additional supports (within and outside the school day)?
9. Does classroom instruction maximize the use of best practices and research-based practices?
10. Do teachers identify and provide appropriate additional instruction for students who are not proficient?
11. Do teachers use assessment data to inform instruction (monitoring, diagnosis, reteaching)? Are data accessible?
12. Is there a process in place within the district to monitor the effectiveness of instructional programs?
13. Is the professional development (regional, district, school) of high quality and focused on the content/pedagogical areas of need?
14. Are teachers translating professional development into effective classroom practice?
15. Are there sufficient supports in place for new teachers?
16. Do district and school plans prioritize the needs identified by NCLB?

## **Audit Process Overview**

The audit process follows four phases, as outlined in the Learning Point Associates proposal application: planning, data collection and analysis, co-interpretation<sup>SM</sup> of findings, and action planning. This report comes at or near the end of the co-interpretation phase. A description of each phase follows.

### **Phase 1: Planning**

The purpose of planning was to develop a shared understanding of the theory of action and guiding questions for the audit. This phase also included reviewing the project plan, timeline, and expectations, and planning and delivering communications about the audit to the district's key stakeholders.

### **Phase 2: Data Collection and Analysis**

To conduct this audit, Learning Point Associates examined district issues from multiple angles, gathering a wide range of data and using the guiding questions to focus on factors that affect curriculum, instruction, assessment, management, and compliance. Like the lens of a microscope clicking into place, all of these data sources work together to bring focus and clarity to the main factors contributing to the districts' corrective-action status. Broadly categorized, information sources include student achievement data, the *Surveys of Enacted Curriculum* (SEC), observations of instruction, interviews, reviews of key district documents, and curriculum alignment.

#### **Student Achievement Data**

To provide a broad overview of district performance, student achievement data from the New York State Testing Program assessments were analyzed for Grades 4, 8, and 12 for the past three years. This analysis shows aggregate trends in performance with NCLB subgroups.

#### **Surveys of Enacted Curriculum (SEC)**

To examine whether instruction was aligned to the New York state standards and assessments, teachers in the district completed the SEC. Based on two decades of research funded by the National Science Foundation, the SEC are designed to facilitate the comparison of enacted (taught) curriculum to standards (intended) and assessed curriculum (state tests), using teachers' self-assessments. The data for each content area for each teacher consist of more than 500 responses. The disciplinary topic by cognitive-level matrix is presented in graphic form, which creates a common language for comparison and a common metric to maintain comparison objectivity.

#### **Observations of Instruction**

To examine instruction in the classrooms, the School Observation Measure (SOM) was utilized to capture classroom observation data for the district audit. The SOM was developed by the Center for Research in Educational Policy at the University of Memphis. The SOM groups 24

classroom strategies into six categories: instructional orientation, classroom organization, instructional strategies, student activities, technology use, and assessment.

The observations were collected from a representative sample of schools in the district in order to get a “snapshot” of the instructional practices being used. These observations were not individually prescheduled but instead involved observing multiple classes, primarily in the identified subject areas (ELA, mathematics, or both), during a three-hour block of time for each subject. The observations were conducted on three different days for each school during the 2006–07 school year. While in schools, observers visited eight to 12 classrooms within this block of time, spending 15 minutes observing each classroom. This approach resulted in conducting approximately 300 classroom observations across the district.

## **Interviews**

To garner additional data concerning the alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum, Learning Point Associates engaged school and district personnel in semistructured interviews. These interviews were based on predeveloped protocols that were designed to be approximately 60 minutes in length. The protocols were developed to specifically address the guiding questions and to be comparable across the different types of interviews. As a result, the protocols covered the same topics and, when appropriate, the same questions were asked on teacher, principal, content coach, and district personnel protocols.

The teacher interviews were tightly structured, primarily to elicit short responses that could be readily compared within schools and between schools. Principal and coach interviews had more questions designed to elicit longer, more elaborate responses. District personnel interviews were even more open-ended. When agreed to by the interviewee, interviews were taped and transcribed. Interview records, both notes and transcriptions, were imported into NVivo software, which supports the coding and analysis of interview data.

## **District Document Review**

A district’s formal documents (e.g., district improvement plan, professional development plan) demonstrate its official goals and priorities. To identify the priorities and strategies to which the district has committed, a structured analysis of key district documents was completed.

A document review scoring rubric was developed and used to synthesize document information against a subset of the audit’s guiding questions. The rubric was designed to measure whether each submitted group of documents contained sufficient evidence of district plans and/or policies, implementation of those plans/policies, and evaluation of the implementation in support of each identified question. The degree to which each respective document addressed the relevant question was evaluated by four Learning Point Associates analysts to ensure multiple perspectives during the process. The district was given a 0–3 rating on each question, based on the depth of coverage within the documents provided. After ratings were completed, a consensus meeting was held and a report was generated by all reviewers.

## Curriculum Alignment

A district’s written curriculum demonstrates its program of ELA studies for students. The curriculum alignment process was used to examine both the vertical and horizontal alignment of the written curriculum to the New York state standards. *Vertical alignment* examines the match of curriculum and standards between grade levels. *Horizontal alignment* is defined as the breath and depth of the curriculum. In addition, it is important to examine the depth of understanding for the topics addressed in ELA. Cognitive demand categories provide a structure to measure the depth of understanding for each topic.

The curriculum alignment process was developed using the literacy competencies from the New York state standards. All written curriculum materials submitted at Grades 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 were scored by looking for a match to the content topic and cognitive demand level.

Table 1 lists the key data sources and how they were used to review the district during the co-interpretation process.

**Table 1. Alignment of Data Sources with Guiding Questions**

Guiding Questions	Student Achievement Data	Surveys of Enacted Curriculum	Observations	Interviews	Document Review	Curriculum Alignment	Special Education Review
1. Where is the district struggling most in terms of content areas and demographic groups over time?	X						
2. Are teachers teaching the written curriculum in their classrooms?		X		X	X		X
3. Does the district provide materials that support the implementation of the written curriculum, and are they used?				X	X	X	X
4. Are the teachers teaching to the state standards?		X				X	
5. Is the taught curriculum aligned with the state assessments?		X					
6. Is the written curriculum aligned with the state standards?					X	X	X
7. Do all students have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum?			X	X		X	X
8. What does the district or school do for students who are not scoring at proficient levels according to NCLB (within and outside the school day)?				X	X	X	X

Guiding Questions	Student Achievement Data	Surveys of Enacted Curriculum	Observations	Interviews	Document Review	Curriculum Alignment	Special Education Review
9. Does classroom instruction maximize the use of best practices and research-based practices?		X	X	X	X		X
10. Do teachers identify and provide appropriate additional instruction for students who are not proficient?			X	X			X
11. Do teachers use assessment data to inform instruction (monitoring, diagnosis, reteaching)? Are data accessible?				X	X		X
12. Is there a process in place within the district to monitor the effectiveness of instructional programs?				X	X		
13. Is the professional development (regional, district, school) of high quality and focused on the content or pedagogical areas of need?		X		X	X		X
14. Are teachers translating professional development into effective classroom practice?		X		X			
15. Are there sufficient supports in place for new teachers?				X			
16. Do district and school plans prioritize the needs identified by NCLB?				X	X		X

### Phase 3: Co-Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of co-interpretation is to interpret the data collected, which were grouped into four priority areas: standards and curriculum, instruction and assessment, planning and accountability, and professional development.

The initial co-interpretation had several steps, starting with the interpretation of the data, followed by the identification of key findings, and concluding with the identification of hypotheses specific to each key finding. These steps occurred in a two-day meeting with key school and district staff. Because this process was critical in identifying the priority areas for district improvement, the detailed approach is outlined here.

## **Interpretation of the Data**

The co-interpretation process began with the study of the individual data reports (i.e., student achievement, document review, curriculum alignment, interview data, SEC data, classroom observation, and special populations) to do the following:

- Select findings.
- Categorize or cluster and agree upon the critical findings.
- Group findings across reports according to guiding question/focus area.
- Present and defend key findings.
- Respond to clarifying questions.
- Refine and reach consensus on key findings.

## **Identification of Key Findings**

As the investigative groups presented their findings to the whole group at the co-interpretation meeting in Schenectady City School District, some natural combining and winnowing of results occurred. From various data sources, the participants used the method of triangulation to provide support for combining and subsuming some of the findings. The following set of three criteria enabled the participants to examine the prioritized list of findings:

- Does the list respond to the essential questions?
- Does the list respond to the subgroup and content areas identified as not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP)?
- Does the list capture the most important findings?

From this process, which required considerable thought and discussion, key findings emerged. These findings are discussed in the Key Findings section of this report.

## **Identification of Hypotheses**

Identification of hypotheses occurred next. In this stage, participants performed the following steps:

- Identify a set of hypotheses supported by evidence for each high-priority finding.
- Reach consensus on a set of hypotheses for each high priority finding.

## **Phase 4: Action Planning**

The last step in the audit process was action planning. This process resulted in an action plan focused on the areas identified in the audit. These actions will be integrated into the District Comprehensive Education Plan and eventually at the school level in the Comprehensive Education Plan.

The process entails initial goal and strategy setting by a core district team, followed by planning meetings with groups or departments in the district to determine action steps and associated financial implications and timelines for implementation. Learning Point Associates also will assist districts in aligning school and district plans.

## Key Findings

As illustrated in the process description for Phase 3 (Co-Interpretation of Findings), each key finding statement was generated through the co-interpretation process. In a facilitated process, groups of district administrators and staff identified key findings across multiple data sets. The supporting findings and hypotheses, which also can be mapped back to the original data sets, are included in the data map in Appendix A.

After a review of multiple data documents, participants in the co-interpretation meetings in Schenectady City School District generated a list of key findings. These were prioritized and are included below, along with district-generated hypotheses.

### Key Findings Related to Curriculum

#### **1. Although educators believe the district curriculum is aligned with state standards, data show there are gaps in literacy areas, including a lack of focus on higher level cognitive demands across all grade levels.**

Interview data revealed that 87 percent of teachers, 70 percent of principals, and 75 percent of special educators have confidence that the district’s ELA written curriculum is aligned with the New York state standards. However, an examination of the ELA written curriculum documents submitted by the district reveals significant gaps in alignment in the areas of reading, writing, and listening and speaking when compared to the literacy competencies within the state standards. More specifically, participants found that although at least some of the literacy competencies under listening and speaking are addressed in the written curriculum at Grades 2, 4, and 6, they are not addressed at all in Grades 8 and 10. One participant found that “the district’s curriculum does not address all areas of reading required by the state.” Another participant addressed this same issue: “Documents submitted for curriculum review indicate a significant gap between the reading written curriculum and the state literacy competencies at Grades 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10, causing problems across and between grade levels.” This same concern was echoed by yet another participant: “Gaps in the curriculum literacy competencies negatively affect student progress at [their] current grade level as well as [in] future grade levels.”

Also found during the curriculum alignment process—and of particular concern for co-interpretation participants—seemed to be the low level of cognitive expectations that the written curriculum holds for student performance. An analysis of the level of cognitive demand required through the written curriculum revealed that students are rarely asked to perform beyond the demonstrate/explain level. “A range of cognitive demand should be required at every level; SCSD [Schenectady City School District] cognitive expectations are at the demonstrate/explain level.” Another participant stated, “In the area of writing, [the] ELA written curriculum needs greater variation in cognitive demands consistently and across all grade levels.”

## Hypotheses

Participants at the co-interpretation generated many possible hypotheses for this finding. It was suggested that although the current K-8 ELA written curriculum does contain gaps when compared to state literacy competencies, there is a complete lack of an ELA written curriculum at the high school level. Most participants also agreed that there is no common definition of *curriculum*. “We have books, programs, etc. [but] no ELA written curriculum,” said one participant. To address the lack of variation of cognitive expectations, it was generally thought that educators just do not know the different levels of cognitive demand or how to target a specific level. It was further stated that professional development has not been centered on higher levels of cognitive demand. Some participants mentioned lack of accountability, no monitoring of lesson plans, and teachers not using performance indicators in their planning. Some felt strongly that the Scott Foresman program is too prescriptive—offering rigid time frames, no flexibility, and inadequate alignment to standards.

### **2. Respondents believe that special populations do not have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum; for example, 40 percent of respondents do not believe that all students (all learners) can learn challenging content.**

In interviews, respondents reported that programs for special populations are inadequate. As indicated in the SEC results, many teachers have had no professional development on meeting the needs of students in special populations during the last year. Most alarming is that at least 40 percent of all teachers (Special Education and regular education teachers) do not believe that all students can learn challenging content.

Another area of concern is instruction. SEC data revealed that there is an overall lack of instruction in the three writing categories at the higher levels of cognitive demand (i.e., analyze/investigate, evaluate, and generate/create), and instruction does not emphasize critical reading. Respondents indicate that while actions are being taken to minimize instructional interruptions at all levels, more needs to be done. High school respondents indicated that there is a need for a better curriculum and greater opportunities for collaboration.

## Hypotheses

Hypotheses regarding this key finding fell into four categories: student factors, contextual factors, teacher beliefs, and logistical concerns. Student factors included low reading/writing skill levels and behavior or attendance issues. Contextual factors included cultural and language barriers, poverty, and lack of home support. Teacher beliefs included low expectations, no consistent expectations between schools and grade levels, apathy, and using a general excuse that “these groups can’t learn.” Logistical concerns were that it takes too much time to develop high-level lessons for low-level students (especially since teachers typically teach the same level or courses), teachers’ lack of understanding of differentiated instruction, a loss of focus on grade-level expectations, and the suggestion that materials and teachers don’t give students “access.”

## **Key Finding Related to Instruction**

**3. Evidence from the SEC, SOM, and document review indicate that regular education and Special Education teachers in Grades K–12 do not maximize the use of best practices and/or research-based practices in their classrooms. Noticeably absent are best practices such as cooperative learning, systematic individualized instruction, differentiated instruction, experiential hands-on learning, integration of subject matter, and project-based learning.**

The SOM showed that across all grades, strategies such as cooperative learning, team teaching, performance assessments, student self-assessment, experiential hands-on learning, individual tutoring, the use of ability groups to differentiate instruction, project-based learning, work centers, and integration of technology to enhance learning were not observed or rarely observed the majority of the time. Direct instruction is the most prevalent instructional orientation in Grades K–12; it was observed occasionally or frequently in 100 percent of classroom visits in Grades 9–12 and 78 percent of classroom visits in Grades K–8. In addition, although class time was observed to be highly focused 61 percent of the time in Grades K–8, high levels of student attention, interest, and engagement was rarely or occasionally observed 72 percent of the time.

Specific to Special Education, SOM observations indicated the following for Grades K–8: performance assessment strategies and student self-assessment strategies were rarely observed or not observed at all 100 percent of the time, project-based learning was not observed at all, teachers acting as a coach/facilitator was frequently or extensively observed only 25 percent of the time, and direct instruction was used 50 percent of the time.

No written documents were provided that show evidence of implementation and monitoring of best practices in Grades K–12. No written documents were provided that show evidence of policy/plans for using best practices in Grades 6–12.

SEC results indicated that Grades K–12 teachers in both regular education and Special Education do not address tactile learners as there is minimal use of hands-on materials. Special Education teachers in Grades K–5 report spending more time modeling than do regular education teachers in Grades K–5. In addition, the SEC found that the use of pairs and small groups decreases from elementary to middle to high school.

Despite the lack of variance in the instructional techniques observed, teachers indicated on the SEC that they were well prepared to use cooperative learning groups and well prepared to teach classes for students with diverse abilities and learning styles.

## **Hypotheses**

The first strand of hypotheses focused on lack of knowledge about best practices and lack of professional development to build knowledge. These hypotheses included the following: lack of exposure to best practices, lack of training in teaching reading strategies, lack of follow-through for professional development on best practices, not enough building time to share practices,

inconsistency or lack of knowledge about what constitutes a best practice, lack of long-term district commitment, and teachers not taking advantage of visitation days.

The second strand of hypotheses focused on logistical issues, including the following: there is a lack of time to implement best practices, the Scott Foresman basal reader dictates the time allotment, teachers feel the need to “get through” the content/curriculum, and difficulty linking best practices to an inconsistent curriculum. Other logical concerns focused on lack of planning or poor planning and lack of teacher collaboration. Teachers may also be using direct instruction for classroom management purposes due to class size or because classroom management is an issue when trying out different strategies. Last, a few participants indicated that the unavailability of research on best practices and research-based practices is the reason for a lack of best practices observed in the schools.

The third strand of hypothesis pertained to negative attitudes that are barriers such as the following: fear of change, teachers find excuses not to do it, teachers are stuck in a rut, teachers doing the same old thing, teachers believe what they are doing is working, and teachers are afraid to admit they do not know it all

**4. Multiple data points, across grade levels in both Special Education and regular education, indicate that students are rarely engaged in the following literacy practices in their classrooms: sustained reading and writing, student discussion, listening, self-assessments, and independent inquiry/research.**

Two groupings of findings contributed to this key finding: (1) students spend a significant amount of time doing individual activities, and (2) students are not engaged in substantial literacy practices.

As reported on the SEC, students spend a significant amount of time (>50 percent) working individually in both Special Education and regular education; also, a large percent of elementary and middle school teachers use worksheets in regular education. The findings from the SEC were corroborated by the findings from the SOM. Student activities observed in Special Education classes in Grades 9–12 were predominately independent seatwork, with 100 percent of the classes using independent seatwork occasionally or frequently. In Grades K–8 classrooms, student independent seatwork was observed to be the most frequently used student activity, with 94 percent of classrooms using this frequently or extensively.

Students are rarely engaged in substantial literacy practices. In K–8 ELA classes, the strategies of student discussion, sustained writing/composition, or sustained reading were not observed or rarely observed a vast majority of the time. In Grades 9–12 no student discussion was observed; sustained writing and reading was observed only occasionally in two thirds of the classroom visits; and the SEC reported that high school instruction underemphasized composition, critical reading, writing, and listening and speaking according to the standards. In Special Education for Grades 9–12, the following strategies were rarely observed on the SOM: sustained reading and sustained writing/composition; student self-assessment was not observed at all.

At the co-interpretation, three types of hypotheses were favored to explain this problem: management issues, lack of understanding, and attitudes. Management included time management, classroom management, the challenges of addressing a wide variety of student skill

levels, and the need for additional planning time and materials. A number of participants stated that teachers and administrators do not see these activities as instructional techniques, and teachers and administrators are unsure of the “how to” of literacy techniques (lack of skill set) in the classroom. Hypothesized attitudinal barriers include the following: teachers fear giving up control, and lack of willingness on the part of teachers and administrators to move away from traditional approaches to more student-centered approaches.

Less popular hypotheses suggested that the lack of substantial literacy practices is due to limited time beyond the 90-minute ELA block given in current curriculum, too much time devoted to assessments, and flexible scheduling for kids who need additional supports. It also was suggested that lack of substantial literacy practices could be due to staff turnover at both the teacher and administrative levels.

## **Key Finding Related to Professional Development**

**5. There is currently a professional development process and plan in place that lacks consistency (in use), focus, and follow-up. Data indicate that professional development is needed in specific areas to address student and teacher needs, such as differentiated instruction, using data to inform instruction, and ELA content strategies.**

The key district document review and interviews showed that although there is evidence of plans, implementation, and monitoring of professional development, respondents reported a low level of utility due to a lack of consistency focus, and follow-through. One employee commented, “It [professional development] is not effective, but we are trying to change it and make it more focused.” The impact of professional development was positive at the elementary level but less so in the upper grades. In contrast, documents provided showed evidence that professional development translates into effective classroom strategies through professional development offering, strategies, tools for monitoring, and teacher reflections; the documents, however, do not provide evidence of the qualifications of professional development providers. The SEC revealed that although most teachers feel they have had a lot of professional development about teaching to the standards and that they are prepared to teach to the standards, the actual teaching to the standards is not being done.

Specific professional development is needed to address the needs of teachers and students. As reported by the SEC and in interviews, many regular education teachers in Grades K–12 do not feel prepared to teach students who have disabilities that impact ELA learning. They indicate that they feel unprepared due to a lack of professional development, with 35 percent of regular education teachers reporting their professional development has not addressed meeting the learning needs of special populations. Several principals said that more training is needed for Special Education teachers, especially in the area of reading instruction. Many teachers indicate they have not had enough professional development regarding individual differences in student learning. At the high school level, teachers indicate they have not had enough professional development in understanding assessment data. This lack of specific professional development showed up in observations. In Grades K–8 ELA classrooms, independent student seatwork was observed to be the most frequent student activity, with 94 percent of ELA classrooms using this activity occasionally, frequently, or extensively.

District personnel hypothesized that the issues related to professional development were due to the following: teachers choosing their own 30 hours of professional development (per contract), rather than professional development being driven by teacher or building need; lack of collaboration among teachers and administrators; and the lack of job-embedded opportunities for teachers to observe other “model teachers” using techniques such as differentiated instruction; and lack of job-embedded opportunities to work with a consultant and receive feedback. Other hypotheses focused on the professional development itself, as follows: the professional development opportunities need to be more focused on academic issues, not just “fluff”; and professional development may be too narrowly focused on action-research-based courses. Participants indicated that much of professional development is a “one-shot deal” with lack of follow-through over time (multiple years) due to staff changes and not enough time to allow change to happen. Participants also indicated that not all teachers have the skills, background, or desire to provide reading instruction (reading in content areas); there is teacher resistance (lack of willingness to change); and some teachers do not want to go to professional development offered during the summer.

## **Hypotheses**

Hypotheses that were not given as much emphasis were as follows: professional development opportunities focus more on dealing with community issues, lack of faith that professional development will bring positive results, and teachers need to recognize that reading and writing go together.

## **Additional Key Findings**

Additional findings were identified as key by the district co-interpretation participants but were not prioritized for action planning. Because these findings were not chosen for action planning, hypotheses were not generated. These findings include the following:

**6. Data indicate that a variety of NCLB subgroups (including but not limited to SWDs, black students, Hispanic students, and economically disadvantaged students) have difficulty meeting or exceeding AYP proficiency levels for ELA, particularly at Grades 7–12.**

**7. The district has policy and plans illustrating evidence of written ELA K–12 curriculum; there is evidence of implementing the K-8 curriculum, which includes the Scott Foresman basal reader, at the elementary level.**

**8. Curricular materials are provided, but they are not adequate to meet the needs of all learners and are not relevant to students’ background knowledge.**

**9. Although teachers believe they know state standards, data indicate that the scope and breadth to which the standards are addressed—in both general education and Special Education—are inadequate according to the New York state standards and assessments.**

**10. Teachers in Grades K–12 feel that community factor such as poverty, mobility, and lack of parent involvement are a concern.**

**11. Although teachers indicate that the curriculum is flexible enough to meet the educational needs of students, differentiated instruction was observed only 31 percent of the time in K–12 regular education classrooms.**

**12. Although K–12 regular education and Special Education teachers are using assessment data to inform instruction, the data indicate that assessments are not being used in a consistent or uniform manner.**

**13. Multiple sources of data indicate that there are inconsistencies in the monitoring and implementation of the policies and procedures of ELA instructional programs across the district; evidence indicates that the curriculum is implemented and monitored at the elementary level more than at the secondary level.**

**14. Data indicate that there are inconsistencies in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the individualized education program (IEP) process for SWDs across the district.**

**15. The current approaches to orienting and supporting new teachers is “working”; data indicate there is not enough support and guidance on curriculum for new teachers.**

## **Positive Findings**

Four positive findings also emerged from the co-interpretation process in the Schenectady City School District. These findings were prioritized by district participants as follows:

**16. Data indicate evidence of substantial prioritizing of ELA needs as identified by NCLB as shown in K–12 documents; there also is evidence of district support for students not meeting academic proficiency according to NCLB.**

**17. The document review showed evidence of substantial prioritization of needs identified by NCLB in documents submitted.**

**18. Interview respondents indicated that one of the strengths of the Schenectady City School District is the faculty and staff.**

**19. When interviewed in regard to strengths of the school, two thirds of district respondents mentioned faculty and staff as a strength (54 percent for elementary, 94 percent for middle school, and 56 percent for high school) and said that morale is high.**

## **Recommendations for Action Planning**

In this section, the key findings—along with research and best practice in the appropriate areas—are used to make recommendations for the district’s efforts during the next three years.

The key findings that arose out of co-interpretation with Schenectady City School District led Learning Point Associates to make four recommendations. Three recommendations involve curriculum and instruction, another one focuses on effective professional development.

It is important to note that a one-to-one connection between key findings and recommendations does not exist. Rather, Learning Point Associates has identified the areas that are believed to be the most critical for the district. Further, the order of listing does not reflect a ranking or prioritization of the recommendations. For each recommendation, additional information is provided on specific actions the district may consider during the action planning process. The diversity and complexity of each recommendation places limits on the extent to which Learning Point Associates can discern its relative impact on the district’s improvement process. For this reason, recommendations are firm but the associated actions or strategies to implement the recommendations should be considered points of reference for consideration.

### **Recommendation 1**

**Review the current ELA curriculum and develop a K–12 curriculum that meets the depth and breadth of the state standards; also, implement a district-level monitoring system to ensure consistent curriculum implementation across the district.**

#### **Link to Findings**

One of the key findings for Schenectady City School District indicates that there are gaps in the literacy areas of the curriculum, including a lack of focus on higher level of cognitive demands across all grade levels. The SEC and curriculum alignment findings supported this finding. Teachers recognize that the current curriculum asks students to work at a demonstrate/explain level but does not require them to work at a range of cognitive demand levels.

Participants at the co-interpretation generated many possible hypotheses for this finding. It was suggested that although the current ELA written curriculum does contain gaps when compared to state literacy competencies, there is a lack of an ELA written curriculum at the high school level.

#### **Link to Research**

As the Schenectady City School District begins to make decisions on how to improve its ELA curriculum, the district needs to recognize the impact an aligned curriculum has on achievement. Research shows that curriculum is one of the major factors that impacts student learning. Marzano’s (2003) research found that having a viable and guaranteed curriculum is one of the strongest indicators of improving student performance. A viable and guaranteed curriculum is one that can be achieved based on the amount of instructional time available.

The written curriculum is a central component of teachers' work. A standards-aligned curriculum and assessments aid in the planning of instruction that helps identify struggling readers and writers. Having a usable and clearly articulated curriculum allows grade-level teachers to make decisions for particular students. When a district uses an aligned curriculum, teachers can modify the content, process, and product for individual students and still hold all students to the same standard.

A fully articulated curriculum with specific benchmarks, performance indicators, assessments and strategies provide teachers with a common set of expectations. When the curriculum, materials, programs, instruction, and assessment are aligned, student progress can be monitored throughout the year (Porter, 2002). Using assessments during instruction can aid in planning instruction, thus monitoring students' progress and determining when and what curricular changes need to be made. This alignment of the curriculum, instruction, and assessments to the state standards allows all students access to the written curriculum (Webb, 1997) and provides depth and breadth. Although a written curriculum must provide both depth and breadth, it is also crucial that priorities are determined so that critical standards are covered in all classrooms across the district (Marzano, 2003).

When developing their ELA curriculum, Schenectady City School District needs to remember that research supports the need for teaching ELA skills with more depth and breath. Students typically do well with basic literacy skills, such as decoding and comprehension, but struggle with higher level concepts such making inferences, drawing conclusions, and communicating complex ideas (Carr, Saifer, & Novick, 2002). According to the data in Schenectady City School District, all areas of reading are taught at every grade level but need to be developed in more depth to match the expectations of the standards. Research has shown that increasing instruction in any area of reading (such as decoding, phonics, vocabulary, or fluency) will also increase comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000). Research further indicates that similar skills are required for writing. Instruction in writing can and will improve reading comprehension (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991).

The learning process becomes transparent if there is an explicitly written curriculum that provides clear information of ongoing goals and expectations for student learning. Researchers support professional development aligned to curriculum implementation (Burger, 2002; Fullan, 2003; Guskey, 2000) Tying student learning or achievement to professional development makes it imperative that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the goal (Guskey, 2000). While teachers are learning, they need support from building- and district-level leaders. Continuous and consistent curriculum implementation requires knowledgeable, skilled, committed, and supportive building- and district-level leaders (Fullan, 2003). This leadership consists of leaders working together to motivate others and monitor curriculum implementation.

### **Steps to Consider**

- Develop or use the current scope and sequence to make an ELA written curriculum that provides specific and clear guidance to teachers, addresses the range of topics in the state standards, and requires students to work at a range of cognitive demands. This task could be accomplished through a variety of formats, such as curriculum mapping, benchmarking, and/or a written scope and sequence.

- Identify content considered essential for all students to learn.
- Ensure that all essential content can be addressed in the amount of time available for in-school instruction.
- Include suggestions for modified and differentiated instruction.
- Communicate the essential content to teachers and students.
  - Set up a plan to share expectations and information about the curriculum.
  - Support teachers as they build a common understanding of the curriculum.
- Develop a district wide system of support and ongoing monitoring of ELA curriculum implementation.
  - Ensure teachers address the essential content.
  - Ensure administrators identify key components.
  - Revise or create instruments for observations and walk-throughs.

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## **Recommendation 2**

**Schenectady City School District needs to implement and monitor the K-12 ELA core curriculum with instructional supports that will scaffold learning for students with special needs and allow them to meet the expectations of state standards.**

### **Link to Findings**

Another key finding from the co-interpretation indicated that teachers believe that special populations do not have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum. Multiple data sources indicated that teachers do not feel prepared to teach students with special needs and do not believe that students can learn challenging content. Another area of concern is that instruction is not rigorous enough to meet high expectations.

Hypotheses regarding this key finding fell into four categories: student factors, contextual factors, teacher beliefs, and logistical concerns. Student factors included low reading or writing skill levels and behavior or attendance issues. Contextual factors included cultural and language barriers, poverty, and lack of home support. Teacher beliefs included low expectations, inconsistent expectations between schools and grade levels, apathy, and teacher attitudes that “these groups can’t learn.” Logistical concerns were that it takes too much time to develop high-level lessons for low-level students (especially since teachers always typically teach the same level or courses), teachers’ lack of understanding of differentiated instruction, a loss of focus on grade level expectations, and the suggestion that materials and teachers do not give students “access.”

### **Link to Research**

Effective school reform sets high academic standards that provide students with challenging curriculum. Schools can achieve goals when they have structures in place and when teachers learn new ways to teach and tie assessment to instruction. Although the Schenectady City School District is working to align curriculum and improve instruction in the general K–12 education system, particular attention needs to be placed on the curriculum and instruction for students in Special Education. This recommendation links to two other key findings for Schenectady City School District. Both the curriculum and instruction findings were cited at co-interpretation as possible reasons for differences in achievement between groups of students. Building on teachers’ knowledge of curriculum and instruction will help dispel the myth that Special Education students need to be held to different standards. Helping regular education and Special

Education teachers realize that all students are being held to this standard is a high priority for Schenectady City School District (Bechard, 2000).

Research has shown that teachers play a large role in the success of students at all grade levels (Marzano & Pickering, 2001). While district- and school-level decisions about the curriculum are important to the cohesion of the district, teacher decisions about the design of curriculum, class management, and instructional strategies have a stronger impact on student success than district-level decisions

Research also has shown that teachers can make a bigger impact on student achievement at the classroom level when the following three areas are addressed: instructional strategies, curriculum design, and classroom management (Marzano, 2003; McTighe & Thomas, 2003). In the Schenectady City School District, classroom management was not an issue noted in any of the reports or findings; but the other two areas, curriculum design and instructional strategies, are addressed in other findings.

At the classroom level, teachers will need to make decisions on the sequence of the curriculum and pacing of the lessons (Marzano, 2003). In many schools, teachers think this approach means following a textbook. Although districts may choose a textbook to support the curriculum, these textbooks do not replace the standards or benchmarks that are the essential content. Although it is important for all educators to know and understand both the standards and benchmarks, that understanding is clearly not enough. Teachers need to be able to use these standards and benchmarks in their daily instruction. Only then will learning change. In a standards-led curriculum, the starting point is always the benchmark or standard. Teachers begin by asking, “What do I want students to know, understand, and be able to do as a result of this unit of study?” The next question a teacher asks is, “If this is what my students must learn, how will I know that they’ve learned it?” This approach means establishing the assessment and evaluation criteria prior to instruction. The teacher also should be transparent with his or her students. From the beginning of the school year, the teacher should inform the students as to what they will need to do and how they will be assessed.

Another key finding from the co-interpretation process showed that teachers in the Schenectady City School District are not using a variety of instructional strategies. Effective teachers meet students where they are now, not where someone thinks they are (Darling Hammond, 1997). Once benchmarks are established, however, teachers have a wide range of choices in methods, strategies, and materials when designing lessons. Research shows that students learn in a variety of ways and need multiple exposures to the same content (Tomlinson, 1999). Differentiation is one way that teachers can meet the diverse needs of the student population, and this approach can be accomplished by varying content, process, or product (Tomlinson, 1999). Varied instructional strategies increase the opportunities for student success.

### **Steps to Consider**

Develop a K–12 ELA curriculum for all students.

- Set high standards for all students.
  - Identify the essential ELA content at each grade level.

- Ensure that all essential content can be addressed in the time available for instruction.
- Communicate this information to all staff.
- Develop multiple ways to assess the essential content.
- Identify a core of research-based ELA instructional strategies.
  - Develop teacher knowledge of these strategies.
  - Support teachers as they use these strategies and adapt them in their classroom.
- Implement a standard form of curriculum design.
  - Choose curriculum or lesson models for instruction.
  - Provide professional development in multiple ways to present the same content.
  - Provide professional development in differentiated instruction (content, process, or product).
- Develop a districtwide system of support and ongoing monitoring of ELA curriculum implementation.
  - Ensure that teachers address essential content.
  - Create instruments for assessment.

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## **Recommendation 3**

**Implement a variety of research-based instructional strategies to engage students in learning, address the needs of students, and improve student achievement in literacy.**

### **Link to Findings**

Based on evidence from the SEC, SOM, and document review, regular education and Special Education teachers in Grades K–12 do not maximize the use of best practices and/or research-based practices in their classrooms. Noticeably absent are best practices such as cooperative learning, systematic individualized instruction, differentiated instruction, experiential hands-on learning, integration of subject matter, and project-based learning. Classroom observations indicated direct instruction as the most prevalent instructional orientation.

### **Link to Research**

As the Schenectady City School District seeks to improve student achievement through student engagement, it will want to review the research on reading and strategy instruction. Research indicates that readers can be taught to be strategic in their approach to reading (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1996). Effective instructional methods use teacher explanation, modeling, guided practices, and discussion throughout the process. Students are asked to reflect on the use and effectiveness of the strategy while constructing meaning (Duffy et al, 1987).

Constructing meaning is the core of any reading instruction. Reading comprehension is the construction of meaning from a series of exchanges between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 2005). In order to build comprehension, a reader needs to use interactive strategic processes during reading (National Reading Panel, 2000).

The National Reading Panel (2000) looked at two areas of research: text comprehension instruction and vocabulary instruction. The panel identified eight kinds of comprehension strategies that improve comprehension: comprehension, monitoring, cooperative learning, graphic organizers, story structure, question answering, question generating, summarization, and multiple-strategy instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000). Teachers should understand that readers use multiple strategies to build comprehension; teaching more than one strategy allows readers to use the strategies flexibly during the reading process. Learning Point Associates suggests that the Schenectady City School District should examine current instructional strategies and practices in its curriculum. After the district has completed this process, a selection of research-based strategies that scaffold learning and engage students should be selected and implemented in K–12 classrooms.

Middle and high school students need to use these comprehension strategies in their content areas and ELA classes. Teaching reading comprehension in all content areas is most effective if it is embedded into the content itself, thus providing a context for understanding that it is dependent on the concept. Too often, students are asked to learn content information without having learned strategies for organizing and synthesizing information (Langer, 2001). Practicing these strategies will help readers develop the strategies and allow them to apply the strategies

independently. One possible source of information is a new report from the Center on Instruction (Torgeson et al., 2007), which has suggestions for improving literacy-related instruction in the content areas.

Because students vary in readiness, interests, and learning styles, appropriately differentiated instruction allows teachers to vary instructional approaches by varying the content, the process, or the product (Tomlinson & Strickland, 2005). Choosing to vary the process as a method of differentiation allows schools to choose a variety of instructional strategies while holding all students to the same content standards.

Implementation of systemic, aligned, research-based instructional strategies requires a professional development plan with the evaluation of effectiveness. While teachers are learning and trying different strategies, they need support from building- and district-level leaders. Research also supports the need to have accountability for professional development results. Tying student learning or achievement to professional development allows all stakeholders to have a clear understanding of the goal (Guskey, 2000).

### **Steps to Consider**

- Identify a core of instructional strategies for instruction.
  - Review the research on reading, ELA, and content-area instructional strategies.
  - Choose a core of instructional strategies as a district. The district may choose to use the same core of strategies for all schools or to divide these strategies in another manner. It is important to remember that organizing by school will create issues for students who transfer within the year. Some possibilities include the following:
    - Individual grade levels
    - Grade clusters (e.g., K–2, 3–5)
    - Elementary, middle school, high school
- Provide professional development activities that allow staff to acquire the needed literacy knowledge of skills and strategies, with activities that are interactive and collaborative and that provide multiple opportunities for practice.
- Monitor the impact of these sessions on teachers and students by addressing goals and collecting evidence of progress.

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## **Recommendation 4**

**Develop and implement a professional development system that provides ongoing support that aligns with Schenectady City School District priorities for improving literacy instruction by building teacher knowledge, skills, or pedagogical knowledge in literacy. Implementation of instructional strategies should be monitored and evaluated for its impact on teaching and learning in classrooms and schools over time.**

## **Link to Findings**

The key district document review and interviews showed that although there is evidence of multiple plans, implementation, and monitoring of professional development, respondents reported a low level of utility due to a lack of consistency, focus, and follow-through. Other data identified specific areas of need that were not being met by professional development: meeting the learning needs of special populations, individual differences in student learning, and understanding assessment data. This lack of specific professional development showed up in observations. In K–8 ELA classrooms, student independent seatwork was observed to be the most frequent student activity, with 94 percent of ELA classrooms using independent seatwork activity frequently or extensively.

District personnel hypothesized that the issues related to professional development were due to the following: teachers choosing their own 30 hours of professional development (per contract) rather than professional development being driven by teacher or building need; lack of collaboration among teachers and administrators; lack of job-embedded opportunities for teachers to observe others using differentiated instruction; and lack of opportunities for working with a coach or consultant who provides feedback. Other hypotheses focused on the professional development itself, indicating the professional development opportunities need to be more focused.

## **Link to Research**

The problem faced by many schools and districts is not resistance to innovation but acceptance of too many different innovations (Fullan, 1991). Many districts are caught in this pattern of fragmenting their professional development efforts. Schenectady City School District teachers expressed the same concerns of having many topics addressed in professional development, but not for any length of time. Research has shown that schools and districts that focus their professional development on just one or two goals are more effective in creating change (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

Professional development is one effective method for changing instructional practice and impacting student achievement, when it is directly tied to district goals (Guskey, 2000). Providing opportunities for teacher input of the process and content is important for teacher buy-in and choice of formats. Without this buy-in, the professional development will not have sustainability for either a one year or multi-year cycle (Steiner, 2004).

Researchers have indicated that effective professional development should be thought of as a cycle beginning with goals and linking to student achievement (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). In addition to assessing student achievement, teachers need to develop a plan to measure how they have met the goals (Fuhrman, Clune, & Elmore, 1988). During the school year, teachers will be at different stages of implementing the same goal and will need support in continuing to build their understanding. These professional development opportunities need to assist teachers in continuing to build their knowledge. Within this model, administrators or mentors play a critical role by providing feedback to teachers.

This cycle of professional development begins with teachers using data to set specific, measurable goals for student learning. It is important that teacher and department goals be closely tied together. Because these goals drive the selection of professional development opportunities, it is important that the methods used for professional development are conducive to improving instruction. Job-embedded professional development is regarded by experts as a strong approach that offers multiple pathways to improve learning. Professional learning communities (Dufour & Eaker, 1998), schoolwide study groups (Taylor, 2004), literacy coaching, using specialists (Walpole & McKenna, 2004), lesson study (Lewis & Tschudi, 1998), mentoring and induction (Boyer, 1999, as cited in Holloway, 2001), and a myriad of other systemic initiatives have a strong research base and require similar elements for successful implementation. The elements needed for successful implementation of professional development resemble those needs for developing a data-driven organization and should include supporting common articulated goals, building professional knowledge, as well as providing support to teachers during the change process. School districts find it beneficial to offer teacher choices because different models work for different people.

Principals are key in initiating and supporting change in a school. Instructional leaders need to set the standard of progress toward higher student achievement and improved instructional practices. Throughout the planning and implementation process, schools and districts that develop effective professional development programs realize that continuous improvement is critical to long-term success. For this reason, at every stage of the process, they make a deliberate effort to build the capacity of the staff (Hassel, 1999).

Whatever the task—whether it is data collection and analysis, planning, finding time for peer observations and reflection, evaluation, or using outside providers—strong school leaders (including important stakeholders) must make sure that they understand why and how each step is taken. Whatever the task, those leaders must communicate a clear vision. In schools that are focused on student learning, there is always a need to improve teacher knowledge and practices.

### **Steps to Consider**

Schenectady City School District needs to reexamine its professional development system, creating a cohesive, well-aligned plan for professional development that addresses the district's highest priorities, especially literacy.

- Determine specific content literacy and pedagogy needs of Schenectady City School District professional development sessions based upon:
  - Examining multiple forms of current data about literacy.
  - Identifying what staff members need to know and be able to do in order to achieve the literacy goals in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
  - Determining the indicators and evidence of success toward achieving goals in these areas. During the co-interpretation process, specific topics were identified from multiple data sources: reading strategies, content-area reading, adolescent literacy, and differentiation of instruction.

- Define professional development activities that allow staff to acquire the needed literacy knowledge, skills, and strategies, thus ensuring that activities are sufficiently interactive, collaborative, and provide multiple opportunities for practice.
- Design professional development so that it provides both initial and follow-up training, ideally with an ongoing, job-embedded component such as instructional coaching and/or the use of grade-level or department meetings to examine student work or engage in lesson study.
- Monitor the impact of professional development on teachers, students, and the organization by addressing indicators of success and systematically collecting evidence of progress.
- Examine the evidence collected and adjust the professional development plan as needed, thus beginning anew the cycle of improvement using data to inform ongoing instructional decision making over time.

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## **Additional Reading**

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## **Appendix A. Data Maps**

### **Schenectady City School District Co-Interpretation Key Findings and Hypotheses**

During the co-interpretation process, participants analyzed five individual reports (data sets). Participants identified findings from across the data sets under each of the areas examined through the audit. Participants worked together to identify which findings were most significant. The participants articulated hypotheses on what the root cause of each key finding was. The following tables document the results of this co-interpretation process.

Table A-1 lists each of the key findings identified by co-interpretation participants, followed by the hypothesized root causes.

## TABLE A-1. DATA MAP

### CO-INTERPRETATION FINDINGS, PROBLEM STATEMENTS AND HYPOTHESES

During the co-interpretation process, participants analyze nine data sets. Participants identify findings from across data sets under each of the sixteen (16) questions. Participants work together to identify which findings are key. Participants articulate hypotheses on what the root cause of each key finding. The following tables document the results of the co-interpretation process.

Appendix ? - Curriculum Alignment – CA  
Appendix ? - District Interviews – DI  
Appendix ? - Document Review – DR  
Appendix ? - Observations – OBS

Appendix ? - School Interviews – SI  
Appendix ? - Special Education – SE  
Appendix ? - Student Achievement – SA  
Appendix ? - Surveys of Enacted Curriculum – SEC

#### Section I

The first section of the data map contains all of the key findings by guiding questions. Each key finding is imbedded in a chart containing three elements. The first element is the statement of the key finding, and how it was prioritized. Key findings were voted on using a three tier system, the first tier was for finding which were positive, the second for findings which were cautious, and the third were finding that were an immediate concern. The number of caution and concern votes were totaled and weighted (concern receiving a higher weight) and were prioritized, one being the highest priority, each key finding then received a rating based on that priority. Key findings with “not rated” were positive findings that did not receive a rating. The second section of the map contains the supporting findings. The third section contains the hypotheses for the cause of the key finding and a rating on how likely a cause it is. The two columns inform the 1, number of votes received and 2, can the district control this?, will it affect change?, and does data exist or can it be collected to support this? For each question that could be answered yes the hypotheses received a “+” and for each that was answered no the hypotheses received a “-“. Only key findings that were prioritized and moved to the hypotheses phase, “final”, received hypotheses.

#### Section II

The first section of the data map only contains the individual findings that were tied directly to a key finding during co-interpretation. For report writing reasons we did not want to lose the information contained in the other findings that could inform the recommendations in the report. The second section of the data map contains findings that were not tied to key findings and is organized by guiding question.





3. Does the district provide materials that support the implementation of the written curriculum and are they used?

Curricular materials are provided however, they are not adequate to meet the needs of all learners and are not relevant to students' background knowledge.	Findings	20% of regular education teachers at the HS level do not use text books or instructional materials to plan their instruction.	SEC p 53	
		A large percentage of teachers at the elementary level, and k-12 SPED teachers, use the textbook to plan their instruction.	SEC p 53	
		Many teachers feel they do not have adequate materials for instruction K-12.	SEC p 68	
		Document review provides evidence of required book lists (9-12 grades) and sign out sheet ensuring their use.	DR p 4	
		Evidence show plan and implementation of providing materials for ELA curriculum for new teachers K-5.	DR p 4	
		Most respondents indicate that materials available in the classroom do not serve the needs of students at all levels.	Intv. p 8	
		A number of secondary teachers have expressed concern over the relevance of the prescribed readings: to the lives of their students, accessibility of readings, and the impact it has upon student achievement	Intv. p 4	
		Teachers felt students in this area do not relate to the stories being taught; a lot of teaching time is spent trying to relate the selections to students' lives.	Intv. p 8	
	Hypotheses	Teachers may not know how (or may not choose to) adapt/modify existing materials	12	++++
		Teachers feel that an ELA class should focus primarily on fiction	12	++++
		Lack of access to informational texts and genres	12	++++
		Lack of professional development on how to connect students to text and build background knowledge	12	+++
		Lack of a writing and vocabulary curriculum at Elementary level	10	++++
		Leveled readers don't exist at all grade levels	8	++++
		Lack of written curriculum at the HS level	8	++++
Sub-skills are not clearly articulated; [text] books are driving rather than standards.		6		
Lack of knowledge of how to "match" books to kids		5		
Lack of appropriate materials available to purchase		4		
Teachers are not communicating to administration what materials are needed		4		
Wide range of cultures and reading abilities		4		
Administration does not communicate effectively what materials ARE available.		4		
Lack of PD addressing cultures and norms in reference to learning		4		
Materials dictate the curriculum; for example, all 8 <sup>th</sup> graders must read "The Giver"		4		
Teachers are not using resources and materials provided		4		
Lack of knowing and sharing of resources (teachers are not familiar with children's books)		4		
Belief that at the "end of instruction" all kids need to respond to the same material in the same way	4			

Votes	Final?
4	

4. Are the teachers teaching to the state standards?

		Findings						
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Votes</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Final?</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 20px;"></td> <td style="height: 20px;"></td> </tr> </table>		Votes	Final?			Hypotheses		
		Votes	Final?					



		The curriculum documents reviewed indicate that the districts' curriculum does not address all areas of reading required by the state.	CA pg 2
		Documents submitted for curriculum review indicate a significant gap between the reading written curriculum and the state literacy competencies at grades 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10, causing problems across and between grade levels.	CA pg 3
		Based on the documents reviewed, the listening and speaking areas of ELA are addressed in 2, 4, and 6 <sup>th</sup> grades in the written curriculum.	CA pg 6
		Principals had positive opinions about the ELA curriculum.	Interview pg 4
		Respondents indicate confidence in the curriculum being aligned with NYS standards (T=87%; P=70%; S=75%).	Interviews pg 3
		3 <sup>rd</sup> grade SPED instruction is not focused enough on the demonstrate level.	SEC p 19
		Across grade levels in speaking and presenting, we do not emphasize the "create" cognitive demand.	SEC p 9-17
		Teachers don't use performance indicators in their planning	15 +++++
	Hypotheses	ELA written curriculum is missing at HS level. Curriculum is not aligned with state standards	15 +++++
		Grade level entry/exit standards (expectations) are not in place	15 +++++
		Questions are focused on recall rather than higher level learning.	15 +++++
		No ELA written curriculum; we have books, programs, etc. No common definition of "curriculum."	15 +++++
		Educators do not know the different levels of cognitive demand or how to teach specifically at different levels	15 +++++
		Lack of accountability	15 +++++
		No monitoring/review of lesson plans	15 +++++
		PD has not been centered on higher levels of cognitive demands	14 +++++
		Scott Foresman dictates lessons/curriculum; no flexibility; limited time; we need more alignment with state standards	14 +++++
		Lack of appropriate planning on the part of teachers	14 +++++
		Instruction is focusing on all areas of standards to catch students up rather than focusing on their specific needs.	13 +++++
		We don't have a vocabulary-tier II program or a written language program at the K-6 level.	12 +++++
		Time constraints – it takes longer	8 + - 0+
		Gaps in K-12 state curriculum	8
		Things going on in the classroom that are preventing learning (i.e., behavior issues, interruptions, pull-outs)	8 ++0+

7. Do all students have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum?

<p>Respondents believe that special populations do not have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum; for example, 40% of respondents do not believe that all students can learn challenging content (all learners).</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="113 505 573 576"> <tr> <th>Votes</th> <th>Final?</th> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> </table>	Votes	Final?	8	Yes	Findings	Most respondents felt that programs for (ELL) special populations are inadequate.	Intv. p 5
	Votes	Final?					
	8	Yes					
	Approximately 1/3 of elementary teachers, a majority of middle school teachers, and only one high school teacher indicated that the district requires Sp Ed teachers to teach the district's general education curriculum.	Intv. p 2					
	High school respondents indicate a need for better curriculum and greater opportunities for collaboration.	Intv. p 16					
	At the high school level, to a lesser extent at the middle school level, teacher reported that more needs to be done to reduce interruptions.	SPED Intv. p 3					
	Respondents indicate that while actions are being taken to minimize instructional interruptions at all levels, more needs to be done (at all levels).	SPED Intv. p 3					
	At least 40% of all teachers (SPED and Reg Ed) do not believe that all students can learn challenging content.	SEC p 66					
	Many teachers have had no PD in regards to meeting the needs of students in special population in the last year.	SEC p 73					
	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade SPED instruction is not focused enough on the demonstrate level.	SEC p 19					
	There is a discrepancy between how much time teachers say they spend on extended response writing and what is reflected in the content map.	SEC p 43					
	We need to put a greater emphasis on critical reading	SEC p 11					
	There is an overall lack if instruction in the 3 writing categories at the higher levels of cognitive demand (i.e., investigate/evaluate and generate/create)	SEC p 10					
	At many grade levels, instruction does not emphasize critical reading.	SEC p 9-18					
	Hypotheses	Reading/writing abilities	15	++++			
		Behavior/attendance	14	++++			
		Teacher expectations (SPED and reg ed) are low – no consistent expectations between schools and grade levels.	14	- ++			
		Language barriers (Spanish/Guyanese)	13	++++			
		Takes too much time to develop high level class for low level students.	12	+++-			
		Cultural barriers	11				
Use as an excuse for poor student achievement (“these groups can't learn”).		11					
Poor differentiated instruction skills		11					
Lack of home support		10					
A lost focus on grade level expectations		10					
Apathy (teacher, student, community)/resistance		9					
Lack of creative learning environments that support independent learning groups; more leveling, ability grouping, and instruction on higher level thinking processes.		9					
Poverty	9						

		People do not always stay teaching at the same level or courses (MS & HS)	8					
		Materials and teachers often don't give students "access," therefore they can't handle challenging topics.	8					
		No time	7					
K-12, interruptions interfere with students' access to curriculum.	Findings	At the high school level, to a lesser extent at the middle school level, teacher reported that more needs to be done to reduce interruptions.	SPED Intv. p 3					
		Respondents indicate that while actions are being taken to minimize instructional interruptions at all levels, more needs to be done (at all levels).	SPED Intv. p 3					
<table border="1"> <tr> <th>Votes</th> <th>Final?</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		Votes	Final?					
Votes	Final?							

**8. What does the district/school do for students who are not scoring at proficient levels according to NCLB? (within and outside the school day)**

Data indicates there is evidence of substantial prioritizing of ELA needs as identified by NCLB as shown in K-12 documents; there is also evidence of district support for students not meeting academic proficiency according to NCLB.	Findings	There is evidence of district support for students not meeting academic proficiency according to NCLB.	DR p 8					
		There is evidence of substantial prioritization of needs identified by NCLB, shown in documents submitted.	DR p 17					
<table border="1"> <tr> <th>Votes</th> <th>Final?</th> </tr> <tr> <td>23 green</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		Votes	Final?	23 green				
Votes	Final?							
23 green								
K-12 teachers feel that community factor such as poverty, mobility, and lack of parent involvement are a concern.	Findings	K-12 teachers feel that community factor such as poverty, mobility, and lack of parent involvement are a concern.	Intv. p 4					
		Respondents pointed to the need for more community support and outreach and more resources.	Intv. p 6					

		In elementary and middle schools, about ½ of the respondents identified community factors such as poverty as a challenge.	Intv. p 14					
		Elementary respondents pointed to community factors such as student/family mobility, poverty and home life.	Intv. p 15					
		In grades K-12, parent and community involvement in learning was rarely or not observed at all.	SOM p 3, 7					
	Hypotheses							
<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Votes</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Final?</td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </table>	Votes	Final?			Findings			
	Votes	Final?						
	Hypotheses							

**9. Does classroom instruction maximize the use of best practices and research based practices?**

<p>Based on evidence from the SEC, SOM, and document review, regular education and special education teachers K-12, do not maximize the use of best practices and/or research based practices in their during classrooms; noticeably absent are best practices such as cooperative learning, systematic individualized instruction, differentiated instruction, experiential hands-on learning, integration of subject matter, project-based learning, etc.</p>	<p><b>Findings</b></p>	In grades 9-12, cooperative learning was not observed 67% of the time.	SOM p5
		In grades 9-12, team teaching was not observed or rarely observed 100% of the classroom visits.	SOM p5
		At best, teachers used performance assessment strategies occasionally in 1/3 of the classroom visits.	SOM p7
		In grades 9-12 hands-on learning was observed either occasionally (33%) or not at all (67%).	SOM p7
		Cooperative and collaborative learning was not observed 66.7% of the time in grade 9-12.	SOM p7
		In grades 9-12, individual tutoring was never observed.	SOM p7
		In 9-12, use of ability groups to differentiate instruction was not observed in 66.7% of the time.	SOM p7
		In K-8 classrooms, class time was observed to be highly focused 61% of the time.	SOM p2, 3
		In grades K-8, high levels of student attention, interest, and engagement was rarely or occasionally observed 72% of the time.	SOM p2, 3
		In K-8 classrooms, work centers were not observed or rarely observed 66.7% of the time.	SOM p3
		In K-8 ELA classrooms, performance assessments were not observed or rarely observed 78% of the time.	SOM p3
		In K-8 classrooms, research based instructional strategies were rarely observed or not observed at least 89% to 100% of the time.	SOM p3
		In K-8 classrooms, ability grouping was rarely or not observed 44.4% of the time.	SOM p3
		In K-8 ELA classrooms integration of technology to enhance learning was not observed or rarely observed 100% of the time.	SOM p3
		In K-8 classrooms, systematic individual instruction was not observed or rarely observed 83% of the time.	SOM p3
		In grades K-8 project based learning was not observed or rarely observed 100% of the time.	SOM p1
		In grades K-8 experiential hands-on learning was not observed or rarely observed 94% of the time.	SOM p1
		Direct instruction is the most prevalent instructional orientation K-12 being observed occasionally or frequently in 100% of 9-12 classroom visits and 78% in K-8.	SOM 3,7
		No written documents were provided that show evidence of policy/plans for using best practices in grades 6-12.	DR p9
		No written documents were provided that show evidence of implementation and monitoring of best practices K-12.	DR p9
		There is minimal use of hand-on materials in both SPED and regular ed K-12.	SEC p36
		Teachers K-12 in both regular ed and SPED do not address tactile learners.	SEC pg36
		SPED teachers K-5 spend more time modeling than reg ed teachers K-5.	SEC p34
		Use of pairs and small groups decreases from elementary to middle to high school.	SEC p37
		Most teachers feel well prepared to use cooperative learning groups.	SEC p59
		Most teachers feel well prepared to teach classes for students with diverse abilities and learning styles.	SEC p62
		In K-8 ELA sped classrooms, performance assessment strategies and student self-assessment strategies were rarely observed or not observed at all 100% of the time.	SOM p6
		In ELA SPED, direct instruction is used K-8 50% of the time.	SOM p6
Project based learning was not observed at all in K-8 ELA SPED instruction.	SOM p6		

<b>Votes</b>	<b>Final?</b>
32	Yes

		In K-8 SPED ELA classrooms, teachers acting as a coach/facilitator were frequently or extensively observed only 25% of the time.		
	Hypotheses	Lack of exposure to best practices	15	++++
		Lack of follow through for PD on best practices	15	++++
		Classroom management is an issue when trying our different strategies	15	--- -
		Scott Foresman basal dictates time allotment / not enough time	15	++++
		Not enough building time to share practices	15	++++
		Lack of training in teaching reading strategies	15	++++
		Lack of time to implement	14	++++
		Inconsistency/lack of knowledge about what constitutes a best practice; lack of long term district commitment	13	++++
		Teachers feel the need to "get through" the content/curriculum	13	++++
		Teachers are afraid to admit they don't know it all.	13	
		Teachers don't take advantage of visitation days	13	
		People are stuck in a rut, doing the same old thing	13	
		Lack of teacher collaboration	12	
		Lack of planning or poor planning	12	
		Fear of change	12	
		Class size	11	
		Teachers believe what they are doing is working	9	
		Difficulty linking best practices to an inconsistent curriculum	5	
		Teachers find excuses not to do it	5	
		The practice of best practices/research based practices don't exist prior to implementing for success	5	

**9. Does classroom instruction maximize the use of best practices and research based practices?**

Multiple data points, across grade levels in both special education and regular education, indicate that students are rarely engaged in literacy practices in their classrooms; literacy practices such as sustained reading and writing, student discussion, listening, self-assessments, and independent inquiry/research.	Findings	HS instruction underemphasized composition, critical reading, writing, listening/speaking according to the standards.	SEC p 36	
		Students spend a significant amount of time (>50%) working individually in both SPED and regular ed.	SEC p 39	
		A Large % of elementary and middle school teachers use worksheets in regular education.	SEC p 42	
		In SPED 9-12, sustained reading was either rarely observed or not observed 100% of the time.	SOM p 10	
		In SPED 9-12 classrooms, sustained writing/composition was either not observed or rarely observed 66.6% of the time.	SOM p 9	
		In K-8 student discussion was observed rarely or not at all in 100% of classes.	SOM p 3	
		In grades 9-12 no student discussion was observed.	SOM p 7	
		In grades 9-12 SPED, student self-assessment was not observed at all.	SOM p 10	
		Sustained writing/composition was not observed or rarely observed 89% of the time in K-8 ELA classrooms.	SOM p 3	
		In grade 9-12 sustained writing and reading was observed only occasionally in 2/3 of the classroom visits.	SOM p 7	
		Sustained reading was either not observed or rarely observed 77.8% of the time in K-8 classrooms.	SOM p 3	
		Student activities in 9-12 SPED classes were predominately independent seatwork with 100% of the classes using it occasionally or frequently.	SOM p 10	
		In k-8 ELA classrooms, student independent seatwork was observed to be the most frequently used student activity with 94% of ELA classrooms using this occasionally, frequently, or extensively.	SOM p 3	
	Hypotheses	Teachers and administrators do not see these activities as instructional techniques.	15	+++0
		Teachers and administrators are unsure of the “how to” of literacy techniques (lack of skill set) in the classroom	15	+++0
		Time management issue for teachers	15	+++-
		Lack of willingness on the part of teachers and administrators to move away from traditional approaches to more student centered approaches.	14	+++0
		Teachers fear giving up control	12	--+0
		These require a lot of planning both inside and outside the school day.	8	---+
Writing to learn research (at middle level) suggests that longer (over 30 min) assignments decrease student engagement. (What constitutes sustained writing?)		7		
Limited time beyond 90 minute ELA block given in current curriculum.		7		
Flexible scheduling for kids who need additional supports		7		
More prep, planning, and materials needed for implementation		6		
Student behavior often limits approaches to instruction		5		
Too much time to develop and assess – priority is on state assessments		5		
Changes in staffing, administration, and teachers		5		
Wide variety of student skill level	5			

Votes	Final?
16	Yes

10. Do teachers identify and provide appropriate additional instruction for students who are not proficient?

<p>Student-centered instruction incorporating best practices of cooperative learning, systematic individualized instruction and hands-on learning occurs rarely or not at all in all grades for both SPED and regular education. (SOM p. 3, 6, 7)</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <th style="width: 50%;">Votes</th> <th style="width: 50%;">Final?</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Incorporated</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Votes	Final?	Incorporated		Findings	<i>Refer to key finding 1 under GQ 9.</i>			
	Votes	Final?							
	Incorporated								
	<p>Teachers indicate that they feel the curriculum is flexible enough to meet the educational needs of students, but differentiated instruction was observed only 31% of the time in K-12 regular education classrooms.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <th style="width: 50%;">Votes</th> <th style="width: 50%;">Final?</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Votes	Final?	2		Findings	In K-8 classrooms, work centers were not observed or rarely observed 66.7% of the time.	SOM p 3	
		Votes	Final?						
		2							
The key problem cited by respondents was that within any one classroom, student reading levels vary. The range becomes wider as students get older.		Intv. p 7							
In grades K-12, SPED computer use for instructional delivery was not observed at all.		SOM p 5, 10							
In K-8 classrooms, systematic individual instruction was not observed or rarely observed 83% of the time.		SOM p 3							
In grades 9-12, hands-on learning was observed either occasionally (33%) or not at all (67%).		SOM p 7							
In grades K-8, observed hands-on learning was not observed or rarely observed 94% of the time.		SOM p 1							
In grades K-8, individual tutoring was rarely observed during 62.5% of the visits.		SPED SOM p 6							
In grades 9-12, individual tutoring was never observed.		SOM p 8							
Respondents indicated additional resources are needed with more support staff, smaller class sizes and more time to work with students.	Intv. p 6								
Teachers expressed concern about the curriculum meeting the needs of the English Language Learner (ELL) students.	Intv. p4								
Hypotheses									

**11. Do teachers use assessment data to inform instruction? (monitoring, diagnosis, re-teaching)**

<p>Although K-12 regular education and special education teachers are using assessment data to inform instruction, the data indicates that assessments are not being utilized in a consistent or uniform manner.</p>	Findings	There is a process in place to disseminate data on a regular basis; data is foundation for building plans.	DR p 11
		Assessment data is used to monitor and inform instruction	DR p 11
		SPED elementary students are tested more than reg ed students.	SEC p 39
		In SPED 9-12 ELA classes, performance assessment strategies was more prevalent than in reg ed classes, being rarely observed or occasionally observed 67% of the time.	SOM SPED 10
		In K-8 SPED classes, performance assessment strategies and student self-assessment were rarely or not observed 100% of the time.	SOM p
		At best, teachers in grade 9-12 used assessment strategies occasionally in one-third of classroom visits.	SOM p 7
		In K-8 classrooms, performance assessment strategies were not observed or rarely observed 78% of the time.	SOM p 3
		Almost all elementary teachers said they use assessment data to form ability-based groups and most use data to guide pace of curriculum.	Intv. p 9
		Respondents report there did not appear to be a consistent method for using test results across the district.	Intv. p 9
		Hypotheses	

Votes	Final?

**12. Is there a process in place within the district to monitor the effectiveness of instructional programs?**

<p>Multiple sources of data indicate that there are inconsistencies in the monitoring and implementation of the policies and procedures of ELA instructional programs across the district; there is more evidence that the curriculum is implemented and monitored at the elementary level than the secondary level.</p> <p>Data indicates that there are inconsistencies in the development, implementation and monitoring of the IEP process for students with disabilities across the district.</p>	Findings	No written documents were provided that show evidence of implementation and monitoring of best practices K-12.	DR p 9
		Substantial evidence exists that illustrates evidence of implementation and monitoring of additional support for students not scoring at proficient levels.	DR p 7
		No written documents were provided that show evidence of policy/plans for using best practices in grades 6-12.	DR p 9
		The district monitors the effectiveness of instructional programs through the review of yearly building plans	DR p 13
		In the documents, there is some evidence of monitoring of the curriculum.	DR p 2
		Respondents indicate that in all levels in the district there exists inconsistency in implementing and monitoring IEPs and other accommodations.	SPED Intv p 6
		Nearly all respondents said that IEP implementation is monitored in their school.	SPED Intv p 6
		A majority of elementary and middle school teachers report being very familiar with IEP content. High school teachers report only somewhat familiar.	SPED Intv. p 5
		Respondents indicated that teachers do not know how frequently the district uses assessment data to determine the needs and monitor the performance of students with disabilities.	SPED Intv p 7
		H y	

Votes	Final?


13. Is the professional development (regional, district, school) high quality and focused on the content/pedagogical areas of need?

<p>Data indicates that professional development is needed in specific areas to address student and teacher needs such as differentiated instruction, using data to inform instruction, and ELA content strategies.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="113 456 573 529"> <tr> <th>Votes</th> <th>Final?</th> </tr> <tr> <td>12</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Votes	Final?	12		Findings	In K-8 ELA classrooms, independent student seat work was observed to be the most frequent student activity, with 94% of ELA classrooms using this activity occasionally, frequently, or extensively.	SOM p 3
	Votes	Final?					
	12						
	Many reg ed teachers K-12 do not feel prepared to teach students who have disabilities that impact language arts learning.	SEC p 65					
	35% of reg ed teachers feel their professional development has not addressed meeting the learning needs of special populations.	SEC p 73					
	56% of reg ed HS teachers feel they have not had enough PD in understanding assessment data.	SEC p 74					
	A large percentage of red ed teachers 6-12 have had no PD, in the past year, regarding how children learn particular topics in ELA.	SEC p 72					
	Many teachers feel they have not had enough professional development regarding individual differences in student learning.	SEC p 72					
	Many teachers have had no PD regarding meeting the needs of students in special populations in the past year.	SEC p 73					
	Several principals said that more training is needed for special education teachers, especially around the area of reading instruction.	Intv. p 6					
Hypotheses	Teachers choose their own 30 hours of PD; PD is not driven by teacher/building needs (per contract)	15	++++				
	Professional development opportunities need to be more focused on academic issues, not just "fluff"	15	++++				
	Lack of collaboration among teachers and administrators	15	++++				
	Teachers do not have the opportunity to observe other "model" teachers use techniques such as differentiated instruction and therefore do not choose differentiated instruction for their PD.	15	++++				
	Narrow focus on PD addressing action research based courses (each PD opportunity throughout the year is focused on these issues.	15	++++				
	Teachers lack job-embedded (modeling) PD; teachers need to see theory in action.	15	++++				
	Not all teachers have skills, background, or desire to provide reading instruction (reading in content areas)	15	++++				
	Teacher resistance (lack of willingness to change)	15	0++0				
	Offered during summer – some don't want to go; only 10 hours; not embedded (i.e., observation, feedback w/ consultant.	14					
	Much of PD is a "one-shot deal" with no follow-up or advanced class afterward	13					
	Lack of follow-through over time (multiple years) as staff changes and not enough time to allow change to happen.	13					
	PD opportunities focus more on dealing with community issues.	5					
	Lack of faith that PD will bring positive results	5					
Teachers need to recognize that reading and writing go together.	5						

13. Is the professional development (regional, district, school) high quality and focused on the content/pedagogical areas of need?

There is currently a professional development process and plan in place that lacks consistency, focus, and follow-up.		Findings	Respondents reported that the low level of professional development utility was the lack of consistency, focus, and follow-through.	Intv. p 11				
			One employee commented, "It (PD) is not effective but we are trying to change it and make it more focused."	Intv. p 12				
			The impact of professional development was positive at the elementary level but less so at the upper grades.	Intv. p 12				
			The district ensures professional development plan is guided by student needs and/or student data.	DR p 14				
			Documents provided evidence of plans, implementation, and monitoring of professional development.	DR p 14				
			Documents provided ensure staff participation in PD and required teacher reflections for monitoring of growth.	DR p 14				
			Documents provided do not provide evidence of the qualifications of PD providers.	DR p 14				
			Documents provided showed evidence that PD translates into effective classroom strategies through PD offering, strategies, tools for monitoring, and teacher reflections.	DR p 14-15				
			Most teachers feel they are prepared to teach to the standards (but it is not being done).	SEC p 60				
			Many teachers feel they have had a lot of PD about teaching to the standards.	SEC p 71				
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Votes</th> <th>Final?</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>4 red; 2 green</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Votes	Final?	4 red; 2 green		Hypotheses		
		Votes	Final?					
		4 red; 2 green						

14. Are teachers translating PD into effective classroom practice?

		Findings						
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Votes</th> <th>Final?</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Votes	Final?			Hypotheses		
		Votes	Final?					



16. Do district and school plans prioritize the needs identified by NCLB?

Data indicates there is evidence of substantial prioritization of ELA needs as identified by NCLB as shown in K-12 documents.          <table border="1" data-bbox="115 495 577 560"> <tr> <th>Votes</th> <th>Final?</th> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </table>	Votes	Final?			Findings	Evidence of substantial prioritization of needs identified by NCLB is shown in documents submitted.	DR p 17	
	Votes	Final?						
	Hypotheses							

## Section II – Other Findings

1. Where is the district struggling most in terms of content areas and demographic groups over time?

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC
A large % of teachers feel well prepared to teach students from a variety of cultural backgrounds.									SEC p. 63
A large % of teachers feel well prepared to teach students with diverse abilities and learning styles.									SEC p. 62

2. Are teachers teaching the written curriculum in their classrooms?

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC

3. Does the district provide materials that support the implementation of the written curriculum and are they used?

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC

4. Are the teachers teaching to the state standards?

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC

5. Is the taught curriculum aligned with the state assessments?

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC

6. Is the written curriculum aligned with the state standards?

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC

7. Do all students have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum?

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC

8. What does the district/school do for students who are not scoring at proficient levels according to NCLB? (within and outside the school day)

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC

9. Does classroom instruction maximize the use of best practices and research based practices?

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC

**10. Do teachers identify and provide appropriate additional instruction for students who are not proficient?**

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC
Respondents reported that middle school social promotion was challenging						P 15			
Several respondents said that the students' IEPs, more than the general curricular guidelines, directed their instruction of special education students.						SPED p 3			

**11. Do teachers use assessment data to inform instruction? (monitoring, diagnosis, re-teaching)**

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC

**12. Is there a process in place within the district to monitor the effectiveness of instructional programs?**

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC
Respondents said there is a need for an elementary, middle, and high school level person as the curriculum is too different. (interviews p. 7)						7			
Principals and district level employees indicated that they make a number of programmatic decisions based on assessment data.						9			
Most respondents felt that programs for ELL and special populations are inadequate.						12			

**13. Is the professional development (regional, district, school) high quality and focused on the content/pedagogical areas of need?**

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC

**14. Are teachers translating PD into effective classroom practice?**

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC

**15. Are there sufficient supports in place for new teachers?**

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC

**16. Do district and school plans prioritize the needs identified by NCLB?**

	CA	DI	DR	ELL	OBS	SI	SE	SA	SEC

Policies are not uniformly enforced. At least 27% of respondents said that students with disabilities were allowed to remain in school or got lessened sentences despite serious behavior issues.						SPED Intv. p 10			
Respondents indicated across the district other disciplinary strategies are being accessed in addition to the school code of conduct						SPED Intv. p 9			
43 % of Elementary school respondents said they need more support staff.						Intv. p 6			

## **Appendix B. Action Planning**

### **Action Planning Process Overview**

Learning Point Associates provided a recommended process and templates to the districts to meet the action planning requirements of the proposal. Submission of the completed action plan is the responsibility of the district.

### **Implementation of the Process**

The recommended process includes the following steps: goal and strategy setting, action and task planning, integration and alignment of actions, and integration and alignment with the comprehensive district education plan.

### **Integration and Alignment of Audit Action Plan with Other District Plans and/or School Plans**

The final component of the action planning process involves the integration and alignment of the audit action plan with other district and school plans. Schenectady City School District is aware of the requirement to integrate the audit actions into the overall district comprehensive plan.

**Goal 1:** By 2009-2010, the district will implement a consistent K-12 ELA core curriculum across all grade levels.

**Strategy 1:** Review and modify the district's current K-12 ELA Core Curriculum, so that it aligns with the New York State Standards and addresses literacy gaps for all academic levels, and includes higher level cognitive demands at all grade levels.

**Strategy 2:** Develop and implement a plan to share expectations and information about K-12 ELA core curriculum

**Strategy 3:** Develop and implement a plan of ongoing support for all staff as they build a district understanding of the K-12 ELA Core Curriculum.

**Strategy 4:** Develop a district-wide system of monitoring and assessing the K-12 ELA core curriculum implementation.

**Goal 2:** By 2009-2010, Schenectady City School District will increase the percentage of students with disabilities achieving proficiency on the state ELA assessments by 5% annually.

**Strategy 1** SWD's access a rigorous and challenging ELA curriculum with instructional strategies and methods that meet the students' needs.

**Strategy 2:** Through collaboration, regular education and special education teachers will utilize rigorous and challenging ELA instruction for SWD's in accordance with each student's IEP/504 plan.

**Strategy 3:** Develop a district wide system for the ongoing monitoring of the implementation and instruction of the ELA curriculum across all settings.

**Goal 3:** The district will identify, implement, monitor and evaluate the use of a core set of research-based instructional strategies for literacy by the end of 2009-2010.

**Strategy 1:** Identify and adopt a core set of research-based literacy focused instructional strategies that are proven to engage students in active learning which result in improved student achievement.

**Strategy 2:** Require all Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and administrators to implement the adopted core set of instructional strategies for literacy into daily teaching practices.

**Strategy 3:** Develop and use a plan to monitor and evaluate effective usage of the adopted core set of research-based instructional strategies by Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers.

**Goal 4:** By 2010 all staff will have actively participated in ongoing literacy focused professional development and will have put into regular practice research-based instructional strategies that are monitored and evaluated for effectiveness.

**Strategy 1:** Implement an on-going PD program focused on building teacher knowledge (content-subject) and expanding instructional strategies in literacy

**Strategy 2:** Monitor the regular usage of varied literacy-focused instructional strategies by all teachers based on professional development.

**Strategy 3:** Monitor the impact of literacy-focused professional development by systematically collecting and examining evidence of progress to adjust the PD plan.