

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

**Community School District 4
Final Report**

July 2007

**Submitted to
District 4**

**Submitted by
Learning Point Associates**



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Contents

	Page
Introduction.....	1
District Background.....	2
Overview.....	2
Student Academic Performance.....	2
Theory of Action.....	4
Guiding Questions for the Audit.....	5
Audit Process Overview	6
Phase 1: Planning.....	6
Phase 2: Data Collection and Analysis	6
Phase 3: Co-Interpretation of Findings	10
Phase 4: Action Planning.....	12
Key Findings.....	13
Key Finding 1	13
Key Finding 2	14
Key Finding 3	14
Key Finding 4	15
Key Finding 5	17
Key Finding 6	17
Recommendations for Action Planning.....	19
Recommendation 1: ELA Curriculum.....	19
Recommendation 2: Professional Development.....	24
Recommendation 3: English Language Learners	34
Recommendation 4: Monitoring.....	43
Appendix. Data Map.....	50

Introduction

This final report is the result of an audit of the written, taught, and tested curriculum of Community School District 4 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 the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum for Students with Disabilities (SWDs) and English Language Learners (ELLs). 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

Community School District 4¹ is located on the north eastern part of the borough of the Manhattan, one of the five boroughs of New York City. Manhattan is the borough that many tourists most closely associate with New York City. District 4 encompasses the community commonly referred to as East Harlem. The general area of District 4 spans from East 99th Street through East 123rd Street and borders the East River. District 4 is located in Region 9.

Student Population

Data from 2005 indicate that District 4 served a total of 16,129 students, with 312 prekindergarten students, 14,678 K–12 students, and 1139 ungraded students.² Of those students enrolled, 2 percent were white, 33.5 percent were black, 61.5 percent were Hispanic, and 3 percent were Asian, Pacific Islanders, Alaskan Natives, or Native Americans.

Demographics

The 2004–05 Annual District Report for District 4 is based on 33 schools: one early childhood elementary school (no grade level above Grade 2), 16 elementary schools, three elementary through middle schools, 6 middle schools, 2 elementary through high school, and 5 high schools. Data from 2002–03, 2003–04, and 2004–05 school years indicate that the majority of students were eligible for free lunch (90 percent, 90 percent, and 84 percent, respectively). District data also indicate that the percentage of limited-English-proficient students was 10 percent, 10 percent, and 12 percent, respectively. The percentage of special education students enrolled during these years was consistent at 14 percent, 14 percent, and 14 percent, respectively.

In 2002–03, the district’s average spending per student (direct services only) was \$10,655, while in 2003–04, this amount per student rose to \$11,170.

Student Academic Performance

As of 2005–06, District 4 has been designated as a district “In Need of Improvement—Year 3.” The state accountability status of District 4 in all levels of ELA has been designated as “Requiring Academic Progress—Year 4.” In 2004–05, the student accountability groups SWDs

¹ This is “[o]ne of the subdivisions of the New York Public school system. There are 32 community school districts, which are defined by their geographic boundaries. Each community school district resides within one of the ten different regions, which have taken over many of the functions that these districts used to perform.” This information was retrieved on April 19, 2007, from the glossary contained in *Parent Guides to the Annual School Reports* (schools.nyc.gov/daa/SchoolReports/). Information regarding the district’s location was obtained from personnel at the district office by telephone on April 23, 2007.

² District data were obtained from *New York City Public Schools 2004–2005 Annual District Report, District 4*, retrieved April 23, 2007, from <http://schools.nyc.gov/daa/SchoolReports/>.

and ELLs did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in elementary-level ELA or secondary-level ELA. The group designated “white” was the only accountability group that made AYP in middle-level ELA that year while the following groups did not make AYP: SWDs, blacks, Hispanics, ELLs, and low-income students.

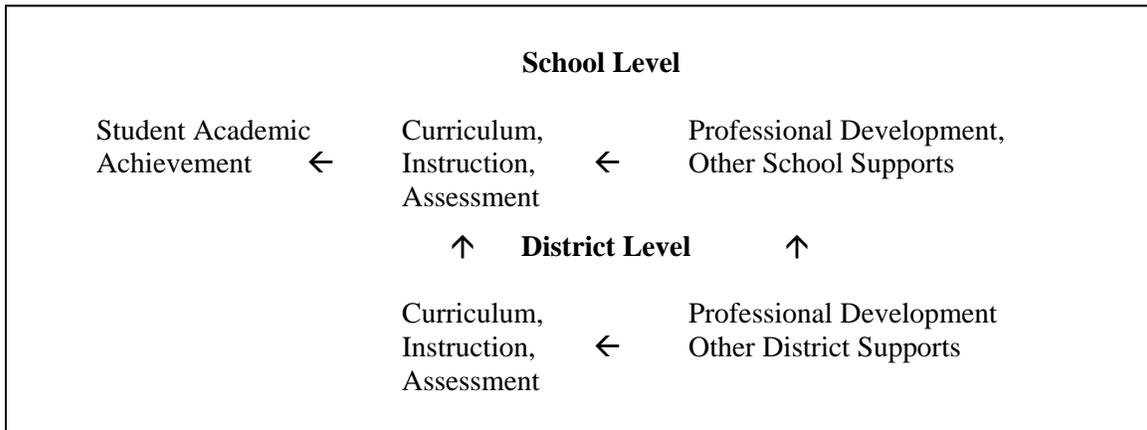
The state accountability status of District 4 in all levels of mathematics has been designated “In Good Standing.” In 2004–05, all accountability groups made AYP in elementary-level mathematics. SWDs and ELLs are the two groups that did not make AYP in middle-level or secondary-level mathematics that year.

Theory of Action

The theory of action starts from student academic achievement in relation to the New York State Learning Standards of the audited districts and their schools. Specifically, student academic achievement outcomes are related directly to curriculum, instruction, and assessment activities within the classroom. 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-interpretationSM meeting indicates that change (i.e., actions needed to improve student achievement) occurs at both the school and the 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 (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 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, and other school supports. 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*, observations of instruction, interviews, review of key district documents, and curriculum alignment. Parent and community focus groups also were included in the Special Education and ELL audits.

Student Achievement Data

Current student achievement data was not available to Learning Point Associates at the time of co-interpretation. As such, we compiled NCLB accountability data for the most recent three years available to provide the district with an overview of student achievement trends.

Surveys of Enacted Curriculum

To examine whether instruction was aligned to the New York state standards and assessments, teachers in the district completed the *Surveys of Enacted Curriculum* (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 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 used 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. It 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; 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 breadth and depth of the curriculum. In addition, it is important to examine the depth of understanding for the topics addressed regarding ELA. Cognitive demand categories provide a structure to measure the depth of understanding for each topic.

The ELA 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.

Special Education Review

The purpose of the special education review was to provide information to districts regarding the curriculum, instruction, assessment and improvement planning practices related to their special education program. Data collection activities that informed the special education review included: district/regional staff interviews; teacher interviews—including self-contained, Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT), Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS), and general education teachers who serve SWDs; school administrator interviews—including principals, assistant principals, and/or individualized education program (IEP) teachers; classroom observations utilizing the Total School Environment Protocol; focus groups with parents of SWDs; a review of approximately 50 redacted IEPs; and a review of formal district documents to provide insight into the policies, plans and procedures the district has developed to ensure services to SWDs, as identified under the 16 guiding questions developed for the audit.

The sample of schools for this portion of the audit was drawn by Learning Point Associates using a stratified random sampling procedure. This sample was drawn to include district schools with low, moderate and high levels of student achievement, and to assure the inclusion of at least one intermediate and one high school.

English Language Learner Review

The purpose of the ELL review was to provide a districtwide synthesis of data from multiple perspectives on the district's curriculum, instruction, assessment and student supports as they impact ELLs. Data collection activities that informed the ELL review included: district/regional staff interviews; teacher interviews—including ELL teachers (English as a Second Language, Transitional Bilingual Education, and/or dual language) and monolingual general education teachers who serve ELLs; classroom observations; focus groups with parents of ELLs and members of community-based organizations serving ELLs; and a review of formal district documents to provide insight into the policies, plans and procedures the district has developed to ensure services to ELLs, as identified under the 16 guiding questions developed for the audit.

The sample of schools for this portion of the audit was drawn by Learning Point Associates using a stratified random selection procedure. This sample was drawn to include district schools with low, moderate, and high proportions of ELL enrollments as well as low, moderate, and high levels of student achievement, and to ensure the inclusion of at least one intermediate school and one high school.

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	ELL 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	X
3. Does the district provide materials that support the implementation of the written curriculum, and are they used?				X	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	X
7. Do all students have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum?			X	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	X
9. Does classroom instruction maximize the use of best practices and research-based practices?		X	X	X	X		X	X
10. Do teachers identify and provide appropriate additional instruction for students who are not proficient?			X	X			X	X

Guiding Questions	Student Achievement Data	Surveys of Enacted Curriculum	Observations	Interviews	Document Review	Curriculum Alignment	Special Education Review	ELL Review
11. Do teachers use assessment data to inform instruction (monitoring, diagnosis, reteaching)? Are data accessible?				X	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	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	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 co-interpretation process has 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 or 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 during the co-interpretation meeting for District 4, 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 group then used a rating process to prioritize the findings. Participants were instructed to rate the findings based on the following criteria:

- Is the key finding identified one of the most critical problems faced by the district and addressed by the audit?
- If resolved, would student achievement improve sufficiently to move the district out of corrective action?
- If resolved, will there be a measurable, positive impact systemwide?

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 is action planning. This year, given the reorganization of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE), Learning Point Associates will work with NYCDOE on a central-level action planning process during the months of July and August 2007. District-level action planning will not take place until November or December, and will integrate action planning steps generated by district schools during the months of September and October. School-level actions will be integrated into each school's Comprehensive Education Plan, and the district-level action plan will be integrated into the District Comprehensive Education Plan addendum.

The action planning 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.

Key Findings

As illustrated in the description process 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 the Appendix.

After a review of multiple data documents, participants in the co-interpretation meetings in District 4 generated a list of key findings. These were prioritized and are included below, along with district-generated hypotheses.

Key Finding 1

The district is challenged in meeting the needs of SWDs and ELL students.

Several sources of data show that the district has challenges related to meeting the needs of all students, especially SWDs and ELLs. For example, according to teacher interview data, it is unclear whether the services to SWDs and ELLs are meeting their needs.

The special education study also reflects a need to more closely examine the requirements of SWDs. The report finds that there are substantial gaps between the SWDs and their general education peers especially at Levels 3 and 4. There is a shortage of related service providers to service the needs of SWDs. The report also noted that some SWDs need a higher level of individualization in their current placements.

The ELL study also shows that the needs of special populations are not being met. Teachers said they had limited resources in Spanish, and general education classes were sometimes considered to be developmentally inappropriate for ELL learners. In addition, secondary classrooms were judged not to be rich learning environments for ELL students and not as well-resourced and orderly as elementary classrooms.

Several hypotheses were generated to determine the root causes of this key finding. First and foremost, there is a lack of an instructional plan to support developing literacy competencies of special populations. Schools also seem to lack adequate monitoring and reflecting on the instructional programs utilized for special populations. There also seems to be inappropriate student placement, so schools may need to more carefully examine instructional strategies to meet the needs of students before passing them on. Professional development was also listed as a reason for this key finding. In particular, there is a need for more focused professional development on the implementation of differentiated instruction and a need for ongoing, on-site support for professional development.

Key Finding 2

The effectiveness of instructional programs is not being monitored (with the exception of some federal programs).

Under the achievement and accountability umbrella, this key finding was supported by the document review as well as other data sources. The document review found that there was no evidence of district monitoring of instructional program effectiveness, with the exception of the federal Reading First program. In fact, it was found that there was only a plan for monitoring the compliance with federal mandates. The implementation status of this monitoring was unclear. There is evidence that the district and school plans prioritize the needs identified in NCLB but it is uncertain how they are monitored.

Nonfederal programs were also found to be inadequately monitored. For example, although there is an extensive plan for Academic Intervention Services (AIS), there is no evidence that student progress in the AIS programs is being monitored. In addition, the ELL study found a general lack of awareness of how specific instructional programs for ELLs are monitored. Interestingly, the interview report noted that nearly all the respondents said that the Local Instructional Superintendents (LISs) and Regional Instructional Superintendents (RISs) are stretched too thin, which may account, in part, for the lack of monitoring.

At co-interpretation, a number of hypotheses for this key finding were generated, including that building leaders need support in monitoring their instructional programs. Other hypotheses focused on leadership, such as leaders do not focus on better teacher support and accountability for implementation of instructional programs. In addition, it was thought that leadership does not follow through on the professional development that may lead to instructional effectiveness and that the focus is on high-stakes testing rather than instruction. A final hypothesis is that the constant changing of programs and structures makes proper monitoring almost impossible.

Key Finding 3

There was limited evidence found in the district documents of a written ELA curriculum that is aligned with the state literacy competencies and performance indicators. Evidence shows that taught curriculum lacks appropriate depth and focus when compared to the literacy competencies within the New York State Learning Standards and state assessments. In addition, there was no evidence found of monitoring the implementation of a written curriculum.

Under the standards and curriculum umbrella, this key finding is well triangulated and draws from almost every data source used for the audit. The interview report shows that although teachers follow the curriculum very closely and the courses of study used are generally perceived as being aligned to New York State Learning Standards, they seem to be unaware of when, how often, and by whom alignment occurs.

The curriculum alignment report adds substantial evidence to this key finding by showing that evidence for curricular alignment with state standards is slim. This report found that literacy

competencies in the area of background knowledge and vocabulary development are addressed in Grade 2 but not addressed in Grades 4–10. In addition, motivation to write is not addressed in the written curriculum in Grades 4–10. In fact, it was found that as the grade level increases, there are a greater number of literacy competencies that are not addressed in all areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Furthermore, the report notes that the Comprehensive Approach to Balanced Literacy (CAB), New York State Literacy Competencies, and New York State Performance Indicators have not been aligned in the district for the purpose of teacher instructional planning.

Whereas Grade 2 has done the most in terms of aligning the literacy competencies to the CAB, Grades 6 and 10 have the most gaps in terms of addressing the literacy competencies, according to the curriculum alignment report. It was also found that expected cognitive demands are not scaffolded vertically, which contributes to creating gaps in addressing the literacy competencies. Thus, it is clear from the curriculum alignment report that adequate support for Grades 4–10 to address and align all literacy competencies has not been implemented.

The *Surveys of Enacted Curriculum* (SEC) also add support for this key finding. The SEC showed that more than one-third of teachers in Grades 3–5 feel they are only *somewhat prepared or not well prepared* to provide instruction that meets ELA/reading standards. In Grades K–6, the areas of writing, comprehension, and vocabulary are where the taught curriculum lacks appropriate depth and focus when compared to the New York State standards. In other grades, areas such as phonemic awareness, critical reading, and comprehension, as taught in the classroom, also show an inadequate depth and focus in comparison to what is required by the NY State ELA standards.

Other data sources question whether there is a written curriculum and if instruction for subpopulations is adequately guided. For example, there is no ESL curriculum provided by the region; many teachers are left to determine what they teach, which implies that there is a lack of a cohesive, consistent, and modified curriculum for teachers of ELLs. SWDs are similarly affected. The special education study found that accommodations and modifications are not included in IEPs to the degree they should be, according to the New York City IEP standards.

Root causes for this key finding were hypothesized to include that there is a lack of consideration of standards when planning instruction and curricula. In addition, there may be a lack of collaboration between various disciplines (e.g., ELL and ELA). Other hypotheses pointed to a lack of a common definition of what “curriculum” means and suggest that schools assume approaches such as Ramp Up and Teachers College Reading/Writing Workshops are curricula.

Key Finding 4

Teachers across all grade levels are not using varied literacy instructional strategies and approaches such as but not limited to project-based learning, higher order questioning, integration of subject matter, use of technology, and sustained writing with all students (including SWD, and ELLs). There is a lack of extensive student engagement, particularly at the secondary level.

This key finding is under the instruction and assessment theme and it yields some interesting information about what teachers feel they are capable of doing (from the SEC data) and what they are actually doing in the classroom (from the observation data). For example, although almost all K–12 teachers feel they are well or very well prepared to integrate ELA with other subjects, they were not at all or rarely observed integrating subjects in ELA classrooms. In addition, whereas the majority of K–12 teachers feel they are well prepared or very well prepared to use and manage cooperative learning groups in ELA, they were not observed using cooperative learning in their classrooms.

In general education classes, according to the observation report, teachers were rarely, if ever, observed using strategies such as project-based learning, sustained writing, hands-on learning, systematic individual instruction, independent inquiry, and involving parents. This is puzzling because according to survey data, teachers reported that they used a variety of instructional programs and strategies in their classrooms. Despite this finding, the most frequently observed instructional strategy used was direct instruction, which may explain—in part—why there was a reduction in student engagement observed in Grades 9–12.

According to the ELL and special education study reports, there were some variations of instructional practices observed for subpopulations. This was especially evident for special education teachers working in a self-contained classroom versus those working in more mainstreamed settings (CTT classes or SETSS)—i.e., self-contained classroom teachers’ differentiated instruction for their students with IEPs. In addition, special education teachers reported that they used a variety of instructional programs and strategies in their classrooms such as cooperative learning, small groups, and “pair shares” as ways to differentiate instruction for particular students.

Somewhat more than the general education classrooms, the ELL program classrooms demonstrated the use of varied instructional strategies, one of which was cooperative learning. Interestingly, both the ELL program and general education classes at the secondary level showed a mixture of instructional configurations during lessons, but there were differences noted between the two programs. General education classes had more individually based activities than ELL program classes, which used more small-group or pair work by comparison. The group work configuration of the ELL program classrooms promoted more opportunity for ELLs to engage in extended oral discourse during the lesson.

Surmised causes for the lack of variety in instructional strategies were diverse. One hypothesis for this key finding was that there are inexperienced leaders at the building level. This situation may indicate that school leaders have low instructional expectations or that coaches, lead teachers, and assistant principals have not been facilitating teacher learning, modeling strategies, and helping teachers to use varied strategies in the classroom, which would aid the translation of professional development into effective classroom practices. Poor professional development was also proposed as a reason for this key finding, specifically in regard to a lack of support for assistant principals. In addition, a lack of opportunities that concentrate on how to use varied literacy instructional strategies and approaches in a purposeful and strategic manner was also noted as a root cause of this key finding.

Key Finding 5

There is no formal plan for transitioning students out of ELL status and closing the gap between ELL and English-proficient students. ELL classrooms focus on vocabulary instruction, reviewing concepts, and practicing skills while monolingual classrooms focus more on cognitive development.

This key finding also falls under the instruction and assessment umbrella. While the teacher survey (SEC) reports that approximately 50 percent of teachers state that they know how to teach students with limited English proficiency “very well” to “well,” there are clearly issues with the education of ELLs in District 4. For example, the ELL study reported that there is a lack of a timeline and benchmarks for transitioning students out of ELL status. The report also found an interesting dichotomy between ELL and general education classrooms. That is, where ELL classrooms tended to focus on vocabulary instruction, reviewing concepts, and practicing skills, monolingual classrooms tended to focus more on cognitive development. This dichotomy indicates that ELLs are being short-changed when it comes to a rigorous and challenging curriculum.

According to the ELL study, there were a number of other elements that were observed in ELL classrooms. These included that all ELL classrooms had opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding through work products, discussion, or group work engagement rather than independent work. In addition, there was a greater use of activating prior knowledge in ELL classrooms than monolingual classrooms; while monolingual classrooms revealed inconsistent attention to clear language goals and objectives with content goals, ELL classrooms included language goals. ELL program classrooms tended to exhibit fewer displays of student work; however, process and strategy charts were present in most ELL classrooms observed.

Root causes identified for this key finding include teachers have low expectations for ELL students and that general education teachers lack a solid knowledge of language acquisition and its relationship to instruction. In addition, some participants felt that school leaders need to know the specific needs of students in order to provide proper services and supports.

Key Finding 6

Data indicate while District 4 has provided comprehensive ELA K–12 professional development for all teachers, there is a lack of evidence for ongoing support in the following areas: data-driven instruction, literacy strategies for teachers of ELL, ESL strategies for general education teachers, native language instructional strategies, and behavioral management strategies.

The sixth and last key finding falls under the theme of professional development. This key finding reiterates some elements of the above key findings and makes a case for a direct focus on professional development within the district. Although the use of coaches was viewed as positively impacting professional development, there are other areas that can be targeted to improve instruction. For example, the SEC found that the majority of teacher respondents feel they are only somewhat prepared to teach students with physical disabilities. The interview

report suggests at least two ways that this could be remedied: (1) professional development needs to be provided for all teachers on how to work with ELL and special education students, and (2) there needs to be more time allocated to collaborate among ELL, special education, and general education teachers.

Although there are multiple opportunities for professional development at the school and district levels, there is no evidence that there has been a needs assessment of what professional development is actually needed to support high-quality instruction and improve student achievement. The SEC shows that all respondents K–12 reported feeling at least somewhat prepared to teach reading, writing, language arts, and literature at their assigned level. Other areas that reportedly need attention include behavior management, data-driven instruction, literacy strategies for ELL teachers, ESL strategies for general education teachers, and native language instruction.

Hypothesized reasons for this key finding included a lack of the following: (1) a cohesive professional development plan to address all needs across curricular areas, (2) a needs assessment conducted prior to planning and implementing a professional development plan, and (3) training for staff to provide professional development to others.

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 District 4 led Learning Point Associates to make four recommendations.

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

Revise the written K–12 ELA curriculum so that it reflects the depth and breadth of the state standards and is clearly articulated and explicit enough for teachers to implement consistently. Once revised, establish clear guidelines and expectations for implementing the district’s ELA curriculum.

Link to Findings

Learning Point Associates conducted an alignment of the ELA curriculum with materials supplied by District 4. This process inspected the alignment of the K–12 ELA curriculum to the K–8 Literacy Competencies and 9–12 Performance Descriptors identified in the New York ELA Core Curriculum document, as well as the levels of cognitive demand sought. Curriculum alignment grade-level reports detail the following as areas where gaps exist in coverage:

Reading

- Grade 2: Print Awareness
- Grade 6: Word Recognition, Vocabulary and Background Knowledge
- Grade 8: Word Recognition, Vocabulary and Background Knowledge
- Grade 10: Vocabulary and Background Knowledge, Fluency

Writing

- Grade 2: Handwriting
- Grade 4: Handwriting
- Grade 6: Handwriting and Motivation to Write
- Grade 8: Text Production and Motivation to Write
- Grade 10: Text Production

Furthermore, each ELA state standard has its respective literacy competencies that a student is expected to meet at a particular grade level. While the district’s written curriculum (for Grades 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10) addresses several of the state’s literacy competencies, below is the number of literacy competencies not addressed in the materials submitted by the district (*See grade level summaries from the curriculum alignment report to see specifically which competencies or performance indicators are not addressed.*)

Reading

- Grade 2: 4 literacy competencies (out of 31)
- Grade 4: 10 literacy competencies (out of 28)
- Grade 6: 18 literacy competencies (out of 27)
- Grade 8: 11 literacy competencies (out of 21)
- Grade 10: 8 performance indicators (out of 10)

Writing

- Grade 2: 3 literacy competency (out of 16)
- Grade 4: 10 literacy competencies (out of 18)
- Grade 6: 14 literacy competencies (out of 20)
- Grade 8: 6 literacy competencies (out of 11)
- Grade 10: 7 performance indicators (out of 11)

Listening and Speaking

- Grade 2: Listening: 1 literacy competency (out of 4)
Speaking: 5 literacy competencies (out of 18)
- Grade 4: Listening: 3 literacy competency (out of 4)
Speaking: 5 literacy competency (out of 10)
- Grade 6: Listening: 3 literacy competencies (out of 5)
Speaking: 5 literacy competencies (out of 10)
- Grade 8: Listening: 3 literacy competencies (out of 5)
Speaking: 2 literacy competencies (out of 9)
- Grade 10: Listening: 4 performance indicators (out of 5)
Speaking: 4 performance indicators (out of 9)

The *Surveys of Enacted Curriculum* reports also provide perceptual data for consideration in curriculum construction. These two reports (provided at co-interpretation) can serve as an invaluable resource for the district in determining where coverage is needed. It is important to note that the state standards do not have consistent coverage of reading areas across all grade levels; however, the District 4 curriculum does have missing components and competencies in addition to those not addressed in the state standards.

Link to Research

Research shows that the curriculum is one of the major factors contributing to student achievement. Marzano’s (2003) review of research in this area found that having a guaranteed and viable curriculum is one of the strongest indicators of improving student performance. Marzano contends that the curriculum is guaranteed and viable when it: (1) provides students

with the opportunity to study and learn the specified content by providing teachers with clear guidelines on what is to be taught, and (2) establishes realistic expectations for what content can be covered within the amount of time available for instruction. Aligning a curriculum to a state's content standards is an important initial step in establishing a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Academic standards are intended to create more intellectually demanding content and pedagogy, thereby improving the quality of education for all students. By establishing a standards aligned curriculum that is guaranteed and viable, districts are one step closer to producing greater equality in students' academic achievement (Sandholtz, Ogawa & Scribner, 2004).

When aligning the curriculum, more than curricular topics should correspond to the state standards. If both the content of the standards and the content of the curriculum align, student performance will still lag if the level of cognitive demand required by the standards differs from the cognitive demands reflected in classroom instruction and/or assessment (Corallo & McDonald, 2002). Therefore, it is vital to align the ELA curriculum to the state standards both in terms of content topics addressed in the curriculum (the breadth) and the level of cognitive demand required to meet expectations (the depth).

A fully articulated and aligned curriculum with specific objectives, performance indicators, assessments and strategies provides teachers with a common set of expectations. Furthermore, when curriculum materials, programs, and assessments are aligned, student progress can be monitored throughout the year (Porter, 2002). Curriculum alignment therefore, must extend beyond the written curriculum to be most effective. The research literature has identified a link between assessments and the curriculum. Curriculum must be clearly aligned to state standards, but also to state assessments, local assessments, instructional strategies, and professional development (Burger, 2002, Holcomb, 1999). Standards alignment uses local content standards to foster the use of multiple assessment sources, describes how classroom instruction and assessment relate to each other, and aligns assessment with learner outcomes (Burger, 2002). If used wisely, curriculum alignment that coordinates the written, taught, and tested curricula can effectively help teachers develop units and lessons that will interest students and enable them to perform well on high-stakes tests (Glatthorn, 1999).

Implementation Considerations

In order to revise the ELA curriculum so that it meets the breadth and depth of the New York state standards mapped at all grade levels and is articulated and explicit enough for teachers to implement consistently, we recommend the following:

District 4 should review the district's current ELA curricula to examine the alignment gaps between the written curriculum and the state standards, specifically the state literacy competencies and performance descriptors as identified in the New York State English Language Arts Core Curriculum. We recommend focusing on alignment to the state literacy competencies as they specify expectations for student learning at each grade level whereas the state standards are written in general terms. The review at the level of literacy competencies, performance descriptors, and instructional assessments will allow greater clarity in identifying the cognitive demands of instruction.

One possible way that district could approach this is to convene a team of teachers, coaches, and other district personnel across Grades K–8 to conduct an in-depth gap analysis and develop curricular materials to address the missing components and competencies for K–8 in Reading, Writing and Listening and Speaking as outlined in the New York State ELA Learning Standards. The revised curriculum can then be piloted in selected schools or classrooms. After gathering information from the pilot through the strong coaching team, the district team could rework the materials and fully put them in place for Year 2. We feel that this approach would work well for Grades K–8.

In interviews and in the co-interpretation, District 4 noted that there is a plethora of ELA programs operating in the district and there is no agreement about what constitutes the district’s curriculum. It is important to note that programs should be considered as supportive materials for the actual curriculum; programs are vehicles that help students reach mastery of the intended (written) curriculum. Programs also need to be aligned to a written curriculum that includes specific benchmarks.

The curriculum should include a concise compilation of components that clearly specify the following: (1) the prioritized ELA content to be taught, (2) the sequence or order in which the content is to be taught, (3) the timeframe for covering the content, (4) expectations for what students are to know, understand and be able to do, (5) detailed linkages of the content to instructional materials such as the page numbers, names, or sections of trade books, textbooks, and other materials, (6) ideas for classroom procedures or approaches for successful teaching such as sample lessons, and (7) connections to assessments to be used (English, 2000). Compiling this information in one central curricular document ensures that the work of teachers is focused and connected, allowing for horizontal (within grade levels) and vertical (from one grade level to the next) articulation of the curriculum and greater equity in students’ opportunities to learn.

We recommend that District 4 look into creating a quarterly (or more frequent) standards benchmarking. This would help teachers to ensure that students are progressing and that the curriculum is working. The various programs can then be aligned to benchmarks to ensure that all programs are complementary and comprehensive so that all students have access to the full written curriculum (Webb, 1997).

The Grades 9–12 curriculum poses a greater problem because currently there are no state identified literacy competencies available for Grade 10. Because this grade is lacking competencies, it is very difficult for teachers to understand what they are expected to teach. New York state does, however, specify ELA Core Curriculum Performance Descriptors at Grade 10. Aligning the curriculum to the state performance descriptors might be more feasible because the descriptors may be written in a manner that is more aligned to teachers’ classroom-based assessments and other outcome measures. The district can address this issue by forming a committee of Grades 9–12 teachers to examine the Grades 9–12 state learning standards and establishing literacy competencies for each of the focal areas (reading writing, speaking and listening) to inform revisions to the curriculum. Another option would be to use the performance descriptors as a way to assess curriculum alignment. Once completed, the benchmarking process outlined above can be instituted.

Finally, although the district currently has some policies, plans, and monitoring and accountability measures in place, the review of key documents indicates that the district and schools would also benefit from establishing and implementing more formal monitoring policies and processes. (Recommendation 3 addresses the issue of monitoring in greater detail.)

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Recommendation 2

Craft and implement a comprehensive professional development plan that addresses the needs identified within the district and its schools. It should be targeted to prioritized teacher needs and embedded in the daily/weekly routine. This plan should be monitored and evaluated at both district and school levels.

Two areas in particular stood out in the audit findings and should be considered key areas for the plan:

- **Professional development for teachers on providing focused and engaging literacy instruction**
- **Support for general education teachers to meet the needs of special education and ELL students, including increased collaboration with special population teachers**

Link to Findings

As expected, an expressed need for some type of professional development can be found in nearly every data set. This is not uncommon, as professional development, if well executed, can be a strong driver of instructional improvement. Learning Point Associates suggests a focus on ongoing and embedded professional development as a core recommendation to move the district out of corrective action. In the co-interpretation process, participants hypothesized that one of the main reasons for insufficient professional development opportunities in key areas was the lack of a cohesive plan. According to the interview report, some of these findings include teachers expressing a need for more data-driven instruction training, support for working with SWDs, and support for instructing ELLs.

Looking deeper into the data, the observation report indicates two areas that require priority attention: First, student engagement was observed 68 percent of the time at the elementary level, and 0 percent at the high school level. The same source indicates that the following was rarely if at all observed in K–12 classrooms: sustained writing, performance assessment or student self-assessment, hands-on learning, systematic individual instruction, and independent inquiry. In addition, according to the SEC report, high school teachers spend some to no time on guided reading or writing practice. These data suggest a need for an in depth approach to professional development, including modeling and coaching, focused on student engagement—specifically in literacy. There were several findings related to instructional strategies and approaches. Although teachers reported feeling confident in the use of cooperative learning and other student-centered strategies, these were rarely observed in the classroom, especially at the secondary level. A key finding was that teachers are not using varied instructional strategies and approaches in literacy.

Second, according to the interview report, there is a need for professional development for general education teachers to improve instruction for SWDs and ELL populations. Both populations are failing to meet AYP. With most of these students in general education classrooms at least some of the school day, it is critical that general education teachers are equipped to modify instruction to address their needs and to assess progress. For example, the SEC report indicates that more than 50 percent of the teachers at the high school level and 25 percent to 40

percent at the elementary level do not feel prepared to teach SWDs. In addition, the interview report indicates that teachers (general education, special education, and bilingual/ESL) indicate they need more time to collaborate. According to the elementary interviews presented in the ELL report, teachers need information about language acquisition and ESL methodologies. With a growing movement toward response to intervention (RTI), teachers are expected to use sound evidence-based practices and implement frequent diagnostic assessments for students (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003). Additional specific support for those teaching ELLs is addressed in a separate recommendation.

Link to Research

Impact on School Improvement. Educators and researchers know a great deal about the elements of effective professional development (NSDC, 2001). Numerous case studies of successful schools have documented the role that high-quality professional development can play in school improvement (Hassel, 1999; National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching, 1999; WestEd, 2000). Learning Point Associates encourages District 4 to review these and other resources when designing the professional development, to assist in defining high-quality professional development and to set criteria to ensure that all professional development in District 4 is high quality.

In addition, large-scale surveys of teachers about their professional development experiences show that well-designed professional development leads to desirable changes in teaching practices (Garet, Berman, Porter, Desimone, & Herman, 1999; Parsad, Lewis, & Farris, 2001; Wenglinsky, 2000). A number of studies demonstrate that well-designed professional development activities can have a direct, measurable impact on student achievement (Cohen & Ball, 1999; Kennedy, 1998; Wenglinsky, 2000).

Importance of a Comprehensive Plan. Evidence-based professional development is most successful when it is connected to a comprehensive change process. One national survey of teachers found that when teachers report a connection between professional development and other district and school improvement activities, they are much more likely to say professional development has improved their teaching practice (Parsad et al., 2001). This is why it is so critical to have a comprehensive professional development plan tied to the District Comprehensive Education Plan and the Comprehensive Education Plan. Given the fluctuation of the New York City regional structure, a district and school plan (including focused and well-designed professional development) is one of the best ways to ensure that teacher learning needs will be thoroughly and thoughtfully addressed. Districts and schools that follow this approach target their professional development toward the highest priority needs and pursue activities with the greatest chance of improving student performance (Geiser & Berman, 2000).

Building a Successful Plan. For several years, the U.S. Department of Education sponsored the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development to encourage and reward schools and districts that successfully implemented high-impact professional development. In interviews with staff members at these schools and districts, researchers discovered that despite their many differences, there were several common steps taken by each of these award winners. Some of these steps included the following:

- **Seek input from participating educators.** Especially in New York City, where the school is now a key decision-making body, it is critical to have school-level administrator and teacher participation in designing and executing the plan. While schools may be purchasing a variety of services, depending on the support organizations they partner with, it is critical that the prioritized needs from the district professional development plan are addressed, and thus the key staff should be engaged in creating it. The district plan should have core focus areas but allow flexibility for individual school needs to be addressed. When teachers help plan their own professional development, they are likely to feel a greater sense of involvement in their own learning. This engagement increases motivation, empowers teachers to take risks, ensures that what is learned is relevant to a particular context, and makes the school culture more collaborative (Corcoran, 1995; Hodges, 1996; National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching, 1999).
- **Focus planning on what students need to learn.** Research increasingly supports targeted professional development. According to one overview of the literature, professional development that provides teachers with general information about a new instructional practice, or about new developments in a particular content field, usually does not result in improved teaching (National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching, 1999). Instead, effective professional development concentrates on the specific content that students will be asked to master, the challenges they are likely to encounter, and research-based instructional strategies to meet those challenges (Cohen & Hill, 1998; Garet, et al., 1999; Kennedy, 1998)—in District 4’s case, literacy. The more targeted the professional development, the better its chance for success. In other words, design professional development that goes deep.
- **Plan for job-embedded learning opportunities.** Collective bargaining agreements in New York City may limit the amount of time teachers can be required to attend professional development activities. However, when professional development is built into the routine practices of schooling, it becomes a more powerful tool for teacher growth. Instead of relegating professional development to specific “inservice days,” schools with excellent programs make professional development a part of teachers’ everyday work lives (Hassel, 1999; Sparks, 1999). By using everyday activities such as lesson planning, staff meetings, and curriculum development as opportunities for professional growth, schools can develop a culture of collaboration and shared inquiry (Fullan & Miles, 1992; WestEd, 2000; Wood & McQuarrie, 1999). When these activities are focused on meeting agreed-upon goals for student learning, they are especially powerful. Because embedded professional development is relevant to the daily issues teachers face in their work, it allows teachers to see immediate change in the application to classroom practice.
- **Plan for longer term activities, not stand-alone workshops.** National surveys confirm that successful professional development takes place over a long period of time. In one study, the simple duration of an activity predicts its success; when teachers report that their activities extended over a longer period of time, they cite more improvement in teaching practice (Garet et al., 1999). Other studies suggest that it takes months and even years to fully implement new practices (Hodges, 1996). If teachers have the opportunity to try out new practices and then to discuss with their colleagues any insights or concerns

that develop, they are more likely to persevere in implementing those new practices (National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching, 1999). One way that schools ensure follow-up is by tying professional development goals to teachers' ongoing self-assessments (McCloskey & Egelson, 1997).

- **Include plans to support, monitor, evaluate, and adjust.** Districts and schools that develop clear goals for professional development are better able to evaluate whether certain professional development activities are having the desired impact on teacher practice and, ultimately, student achievement. Even if current adult learning activities are found to be less than effective, a well structured evaluation can bolster and refine professional development efforts. Researchers suggest that districts and schools design evaluation protocols that do the following: help educators reflect on their practice; use multiple sources of information, including teacher portfolios, observations of teachers, peer evaluations, and student performance data; and collect evidence of impact at multiple levels—educator reaction, learning, and use of new knowledge and skills, organizational support and change, and student learning (Guskey & Sparks, 1991; Hodges, 1996; National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching, 1999). Learning Point Associates suggests that the district team spend time developing monitoring processes and evaluation protocols during action planning. Building an effective monitoring and evaluation plan is critical to the success of the overall professional development plan. Knowing when professional development is working, and when to adjust due to spotty implementation or outcome, will ensure that time and funds are wisely invested.

It also is important that the methods used for professional development are conducive to improving instruction and developing and retaining high-quality teachers. Job-embedded professional development is regarded by experts as a strong approach that offers multiple pathways. Professional learning communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1998), schoolwide study groups (Taylor, 2004), literacy coaching, using specialists (Walpole & McKenna, 2004), lesson study (Lewis & Tsuchida, 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.

Providing Professional Development on Focused, Engaging Instruction. Teachers need to be able to create an engaging learning environment and implement research-based instructional strategies. Focused, engaging instruction requires knowledge of the content, comfort in differentiating instruction using research-based instructional strategies, and an focus on student engagement. Findings from the audit suggest that using varied instruction strategies, being able to differentiate them, and having knowledge of the critical components of student engagement are essential in District 4.

Regarding varied instructional strategies in literacy, the National Reading Panel (2000) has identified five areas of reading in which students need instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. There are effective strategies available in each of these areas. The instruction needs to be tied to grade-appropriate cognitive demands that ask students to factor in prior learning and experience, to apply these five areas to speaking and writing, and to stretch their efforts by utilizing critical thinking to support comprehension.

Differentiated instruction is a process approach to teaching and learning for students of differing abilities in the same class (Hall, 2002). There are three elements that can be differentiated: the content, the process, and the products (Tomlinson, 2001). *Content* includes the actual concepts being taught and the alignment of the objectives and learning goals; it content includes the same concept for all students at varying levels of complexity. *Process* involves how students learn and includes flexible grouping, classroom management, and instructional delivery approaches. Several other strategies, such as in *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed Ability Classrooms* (Tomlinson, 2001), can be used for successful differentiation. Finally, *products* includes student assessments and task assignments. A well-designed task allows for multiple means of expression and various levels of complexity (Hall, 2002).

Learning Point Associates provides this explanation to illustrate the complexity of differentiation. Not only do teachers need to learn about what differentiation is, but they also need to learn about and practice a variety of instructional strategies. Teachers have all types of learners in their classrooms; they need to accommodate not only different learning abilities but also different learning styles. Students bring a spectrum of “intelligences” to the classroom and teachers need to know how to recognize and leverage those “ways of knowing.”

Research shows that high student engagement has a positive impact on student achievement, across racial and ethnic groups (Finn, 1993). In 2005, Learning Point Associates published *Quick Key 10 Action Guide*, titled “Using Student Engagement to Improve Adolescent Literacy.” It indicated that educators have to build engagement levels if they intend for students to meet higher standards.

As anyone who has spent time with middle and high school students can attest, attempting to build the skills of disengaged adolescents is a futile enterprise. Whether expressed as defiant noncompliance or passive “checking out,” the student who refuses to learn will succeed in that effort.

The key elements of student engagement, according to this *Quick Key*, are: student confidence, teacher caring, relevant and interesting texts, and choices of literacy activities. This booklet contains information pertaining to improving student engagement in middle schools and high schools through changes in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development at the school, district, and state levels, and offers a host of references and practical examples.

In a well-researched article on engaged reading, Guthrie (2000) discusses motivation and instructional contexts for engagement and offers a schematic diagram titled “The Engagement Model of Reading Development” (p. 4). He discusses learning and knowledge goals, real-world interaction and instruction, autonomy support, interesting texts for instruction, strategy instruction, social discourse among students (collaboration), praise and rewards, evaluation, deeper teacher involvement, and coherence of instructional processes as necessary for creating a fertile context for improving student engagement. He specifically suggests the following activities for engaged reading:

- Identify a knowledge goal and announce it.
- Provide a brief real-world experience related to the goal.

- Make trade books and multiple other books available.
- Give students some choice about the subtopics and texts for learning.
- Teach cognitive strategies that empower students to succeed in reading these texts.
- Ensure social collaboration for learning.
- Align evaluation of student work with the instructional context.

An additional challenge to teachers in regard to student engagement is the student peer culture. If disengagement is a strong peer group norm, teachers have to develop strategies to overcome that.

Support for General Education Teachers Who Have Special Education Students. With the increasing movement towards inclusion, RtI, and other nonrestrictive environments, pressure on general education teachers to meet the needs of SWDs is greater than ever.

In order to be most effective with their SWDs, teachers need to know about the types of learning disabilities and how these disabilities affect students' receptive and expressive abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Thus, intensive professional development that builds this knowledge and supports teachers through implementation in their own classrooms should be considered (Garcia & Beltran, 2003).

Research indicates that the most successful professional development efforts are those that provide regular opportunities for participants to share perspectives and seek solutions to common problems in an atmosphere of collegiality and professional respect (Little, 1982). Collaboration in professional development is especially useful for increasing the capacity to meet the needs of special populations, given that a history of sorting and separating both diverse students and classroom teachers has resulted in very little common ground (Ferguson, 2005). Classroom teachers are specialists in curriculum; special education teachers are specialists in the unique learning and behavior needs of students. Each specialist learns skills from the others, with all students being the ultimate beneficiaries (Beckman, 2001).

In addition, general education teachers learning to support the needs of SWDs in their classrooms report that the most useful professional development provides them with specific skills they can immediately use and implement in the classroom. In addition to hands-on skills training, classroom observations and/or videos of successfully inclusive classes, and situation-specific problem-solving sessions over the course of the school year can be key to providing a frame of reference for these teachers (Whitworth, 1999). In order for teachers to provide high-quality differentiation to their students they must understand both the theory and related practice as well as develop those skills (Hedrick, 2005). Staff developers that are effective in teaching differentiation will help instructors use differentiation in their classroom effectively. Hence, this recommended action links closely with the need to provide professional development in the area of differentiation.

Finally, research supports the importance of strong collaboration among teachers for the mainstreaming of students to be successful (Ripley, 1997). Collaboration occurs at all three

levels—the district, the school, and the classroom (as delineated in the hypotheses)—with time to meet, plan, and evaluate being the most critical variable of success (Ripley, 1997).

Implementation Considerations

This recommendation contains many facets. Given the diminished role of the district in New York City for the upcoming school year, our recommended approach involves convening schools to develop a comprehensive professional development plan that is aligned with school and district priorities. Determining what authority rests with the city, the district, and the schools will be critical – including developing, funding, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating. It will also be essential that schools take ownership of the core elements of the plan and determine how they will fully execute those elements. Typically, the process of bringing together district objectives and school specific needs is an iterative process. In this case, it may be more school directed, with district audit recommendations and the DCEP used as guidance.

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Recommendation 3

Create policies, plans and a monitoring system for educating ELLs in both English language development and the age-appropriate core curriculum, and improve the knowledge and practice of all teachers instructing ELLs in the following ways:

- **Create and disseminate a curriculum plan for ELLs to achieve English proficiency, with benchmarks and a timeline for each of the major subgroups of ELLs -- newcomers, Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFEs), and intermediate/advanced ELLs.**
- **Disaggregate test data for different groups of ELLs (by category and by program, including general education) in order to monitor their progress.**
- **Prepare all teachers (including monolingual general education teachers) to work effectively with ELLs by providing professional development on including English language and core curriculum goals in their lessons, and differentiating instruction to meet the needs of ELLs.**

Link to Findings: Creating a Plan for Achieving English Proficiency and a Curriculum for ELLs

Data in the ELL report for District 4 reveal that the current plan for the timely acquisition of English for ELLs includes the following:

- A procedure for testing and placement in an available, parents' choice program for ELLs.
- Instructional time for English, as required for ELLs according to their English proficiency level.
- Transition from ELL programs into general education upon achieving a "proficient" score on the NYSESLAT.

However, there are no prescribed timelines or benchmarks for the timely acquisition of English.

Regarding curriculum for ELLs, District 4 is in a state of flux as this is the first year that the New York State ELA exams must be taken by all students who have been enrolled in the New York City school system for one year or more. Prior to this year, ELL program teachers instructed students in English as they determined best, within the required time allocation framework for differing levels of ELLs. As of this year, schools in District 4 are requiring ESL instruction to follow the core ELA curriculum, modified as needed. Data reveal, however, that ESL teachers, while encouraged to implement the core ELA curriculum, are largely left on their own to determine how they will modify the curriculum for their students on a daily basis. This situation is particularly true for ESL teachers of SIFEs, newcomers and beginners and is more widely observed at the middle and high school level. This results in significantly diverse content and English language instruction both within and between schools in District 4.

Research supports the district's emphasis on core curriculum content for ELLs. Cummins' (1994) pedagogical principle for students in linguistically diverse classrooms explains the

importance of providing ELLs with curriculum content that is similar to that of native English speaking students:

If students are to catch up academically with their native-English-speaking peers, their cognitive growth and mastery of academic content must continue while English is being learned. Thus, the teaching of ESL should be integrated with the teaching of other academic content that is appropriate to students' cognitive level. (p. 42)

However, this is not the case for many ELLs. The gap in District 4 curriculum and instruction between ELLs and general education occurs most obviously with students whose English language and/or literacy levels in their native language are low. The challenge to teach students with low English and/or native-language literacy levels curriculum content in English comparable to general education classes is greatest beyond the third-grade level when students are required to read to read independently in content areas to gather information. This challenge becomes even more acute when ELLs' low literacy skills are due to a significant interruption in formal education. In order for District 4 to raise the achievement levels of its ELL population, the district should implement a well-articulated curriculum for ESL instruction that parallels the literacy content in the core curriculum but also concentrates on English language development. This curriculum will need to differentiate the level of English proficiency of the learner as well as the age-appropriate core curriculum to address the needs of diverse ELL students.

Link to Research: Creating a Plan for Achieving English Proficiency and a Curriculum for ELLs

The recent commissioned report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth, *Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners* (August & Shanahan, 2006), reviewed 293 published research studies to examine five research domains or themes. The research examined in three of those domains—instructional approaches, professional development, and student assessment—are relevant to the critical key finding regarding ELLs for District 4. The first domain, instructional approaches, relates to the recommendation for creating a coherent ESL curriculum and a plan for the timely acquisition of English.

The authors of the National Literacy Panel report acknowledge that the research to date has “failed to provide a complete answer to what constitutes high-quality literacy instruction for language minority students” (August & Shanahan, 2006 p. 16). Nevertheless, the report indicates some instructional approaches that yield greater academic gains for ELLs. For ELLs learning to read for the first time, the research indicates that explicit instruction on key components of literacy that are recommended for native English-speaking children learning to read are beneficial for beginning ELL readers as well. These components include the following:

- Phonemic awareness
- Decoding
- Oral reading fluency
- Vocabulary
- Reading comprehension

- Writing

According to August and Shanahan, “Some of the instructional research shows that enhanced teachings of these various elements provided an advantage to second-language learners” (p. 16). The research is not as clear, however, on how to approach this instruction with ELLs -- whether in English or the native language, first or simultaneously. It does suggest, though, that decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension require a strong background in English proficiency. Native English speaking students improve more than ELLs with the same instructional attention to the aforementioned key components of reading. The more solid the foundation in English, the more students benefit from key literacy component instruction. Studies reviewed in the comprehensive National Literacy Panel report conclude that all ELLs gain from early, ongoing, extensive oral English language instruction, with particular attention to vocabulary and comprehension of complex academic language. The research of August and Shanahan also indicates that students instructed in their native language (primarily Spanish in the studies reviewed) and in English “perform, on average, better than language-minority students instructed only in their second language (English in this case)” (p. 17).

Implementation Considerations: Creating a Plan for Achieving English Proficiency and a Curriculum for ELLs

Based on these research findings, District 4 could improve the academic performance of ELLs by:

- Engaging low-proficiency ELLs, including SIFEs, in oral English learning with a focus on building a rich academic vocabulary and creating sufficient background knowledge to understand content-area instruction.
- Building native language competency, as feasible, so that knowledge in the key components of literacy instruction can be transferred to English; or providing sheltered English classes that take ELLs through the academic content of the core curriculum.
- Creating a developmentally appropriate curriculum for beginning ELLs that concentrates on the acquisition of English language skills, the key components of literacy for new readers, as well as the ELA core curriculum.

The populations in critical need of a developmentally appropriate English language learning curriculum are upper elementary and secondary newcomers. Students who have literacy skills in their native language can be supported in transferring those skills to a new language if they have English language proficiency sufficient to access the meaning of the core curriculum. A concentrated effort on newcomers—building academic English language competency, both oral and written—will prepare them to access the content and skills of the ELA curriculum in the upper grades within the K–12 timeline. SIFEs, on the other hand, need extensive oral English preparation and basic literacy skill instruction at whatever age they enter school. If they are to meet standards within the K–12 timeline, they will need additional instructional opportunities beyond the regular school day, such as afterschool programs and Saturday academies specifically designed to build their academic skills and English language proficiency. Increased time on task is a targeted area of Contracts for Excellence funds. The district can access funds to create additional, beyond-the-school-day English language and primary literacy instructional

opportunities that will prepare SIFEs and older newcomers to access the core curriculum in a more timely manner.

It is evident from the data compiled for District 4 that uncoordinated ESL and content-area instruction, when combined with an intention to move ELLs into general education classes as quickly as possible, does not improve the academic achievement of many ELLs. To summarize what has been detailed previously, to reduce the achievement gap between ELLs and native English speaking students, ELLs need to:

- Be engaged in the appropriate curricular content for their grade level.
- Receive additional English language instruction, beyond what is available to them during the school day.
- Be provided during the school day with a curriculum that is:
 - Comprehensive
 - Developmentally appropriate for age and level of ELLs
 - Based on the core curriculum
 - Focused on key components of literacy that have been demonstrated to improve students' reading proficiency
 - Explicit in providing instructional modifications of the Balanced Literacy approach and workshop model to meet the oral language and content needs of ELLs.

Link to Findings: Monitoring ELL Achievement With Data

Full implementation of data-driven instruction requires careful monitoring of ELLs' English language development and academic achievement, coupled with feedback to teachers that enables them to target further instruction appropriately. A finding from the District 4 ELL report indicated that teachers are not knowledgeable about using testing reports to inform their instruction. They have not been trained to interpret testing data and are not particularly well prepared to translate the data into differentiated instruction according to students' needs. Training teachers to understand test score reports and disaggregating the data from standardized tests for students in different programs offered to ELLs would give teachers program specific information about the effectiveness of their instructional approaches. Furthermore, including general education teachers in the feedback of ELL achievement data, particularly regarding ELLs who have transitioned into general education, is necessary to inform general education teachers of the specific needs to target in further instruction of their ELLs. This should be relatively easy to implement given that ELLs are taking the same tests as the general education students, in English, in the core curriculum state-tested disciplines, and given that improved data tracking systems for individual students will be on-line soon.

Link to Research: Monitoring ELL Achievement With Data

In addition to tracking these data points for ELLs, however, the research suggests that testing content knowledge in the native language as well gives a clearer picture of students' knowledge and skills. It would be a mistake to rely solely on standardized test scores to inform teachers,

administrators, and the district of ELLs' academic achievement or English proficiency. Research on the reliability and validity of standardized achievement tests in English administered to ELLs is very limited and inconclusive. The practice of testing in English, mandated by NCLB, raises questions of whether standardized achievement tests are accurate instruments, in and of themselves, for assessing student knowledge and skills. Garcia, McKoon, and August (2006) indicate that according to the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* developed by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education in 1999, "serious test bias occurs when measures normed on native English speakers are used with English-language learners." They state:

When a test is administered in the same language to all examinees in a linguistically diverse population, the test user should investigate the validity of the score interpretations for test takers believed to have limited proficiency in the language of the test [because] the achievement, abilities, and traits of examinees who do not speak the language of the test as their primary language may be seriously mismeasured by the test. (p. 586)

Since more research is needed to determine the construct validity regarding information about achievement, knowledge, and skills in content areas of standardized tests in English taken by ELLs, in the short term, a more accurate picture of student achievement should include:

- Students' academic and reading performance in their native language
- Their oral English development
- Teachers' judgments based on observation and curriculum-based tests.

It is widely reported in language acquisition research that it may take upward of five years for students to reach a level of academic proficiency in English comparable to their native-English-speaking peers (Ashworth, Cummins, & Handscombe, 1989; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; and Thomas & Collier, 1997). This means that schools must make a long-term commitment to ELLs as they transition out of ELL programs and into general education classrooms, and monitor content learning in the native language, as necessary, to demonstrate ELLs' progress in mastering both English and age-appropriate core curriculum content.

Link to Findings: Professional Development

The quality of teaching, known as the "teacher effect" has been determined to be the largest single factor influencing student achievement. In low SES schools, the teacher effect can account for up to 21 percent of the total variance in student achievement as measured by standardized tests of reading and math, much greater than the effect found in high SES schools (Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004). This highlights the importance of having excellent, well-trained teachers in District 4 schools. According to the *Surveys of Enacted Curriculum* results, at present only 50 percent of the teachers in District 4 report that they know how to teach students with limited English proficiency very well to well. Professional development for all teachers, both in ELL programs and general education, is crucial for the improved performance of ELLs in District 4. Moreover, school level interviews indicated that there is little communication between TBE (Transitional Bilingual Education) teachers and general education teachers. Consequently, both sets of teachers are largely uninformed about what each other's programs are doing

regarding curriculum and instructional practices. ESL teachers in push-in or pull-out programs may have greater knowledge of the general education classroom, but they are not informed of the core curriculum and pacing calendars that guide general education curriculum in their school. They are also removed from TBE program curriculum and practices.

In order to improve the quality of instruction that all ELLs receive, whatever the program they are enrolled in, all teachers need to be knowledgeable about the development and acquisition of a second language and the particular challenges ELLs face in learning both English and content. They also need to be fully cognizant of the diversity of ELLs based on their native language proficiency, English language proficiency, prior literacy and schooling experiences, as well as a host of social and emotional factors that may affect these learners. Teachers need to:

- Differentiate their instruction for their diverse learners based on data obtained from multiple assessments
- Teach all students to rigorous content standards and provide ELLs with specific language instruction to support content access
- Focus on teaching vocabulary and academic language needed to understand texts taught in the core curriculum.

Link to Research: Professional Development

The attributes of professional development that are deemed important for all teachers according to the American Educational Research Association, are affirmed as important in the studies examined by August and Calderón (2006) for the report created by the National Literacy Panel for Language-Minority Children and Youth. They include:

- Long-term commitment to developing a particular knowledge base and skill set.
- Ongoing meetings between teachers and professional development providers.
- Opportunities for classroom practice with mentoring and coaching.
- Focusing on learning specific strategies for improving instruction for ELLs, the theory that informs those strategies, and how to apply them in the classroom.

Contracts for Excellence funds should be accessed to support embedded, frequent, sustained professional development that utilizes ELL instructional coaches to work with:

- ELL program teachers—to modify appropriately the workshop model for ELLs
- General education ELA teachers—to ensure the accessibility of the core curriculum for their designated ELLs and those who are transitioning into general education.

Implication Considerations: Professional Development

A practical first step in this area would be to provide embedded professional development to general education teachers that integrates knowledge of language acquisition, literacy, and teaching strategies to ELLs. This approach is preferable to the current system of providing opportunities, on a voluntary basis, for teachers to attend occasional workshops on instructional

strategies that help render the curriculum comprehensible for ELLs. Research shows that when training is piecemeal, teachers are called upon to put the pieces together and most often results in poor or no implementation of the desired changes in instructional practice.

One possible training resource is SIOP (the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), which is a research-based professional development program designed to support the teaching of the core curriculum content to ELLs (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2003). Having district or school-based personnel (such as literacy coaches who already have a strong background in language arts and the workshop model) trained as trainers of SIOP would be an investment in sustaining high-quality and accessible content-area instruction for ELLs. The SIOP model training and resources are described at the *SIOP Research* website (www.siopinstitute.net/research.shtml). Another online resource providing teachers and coaches with current research, materials and information on teaching diverse learners is available at the *Teaching Diverse Learners* website (www.alliance.brown.edu/tdl).

Finally, the article “Working with English Language Learners: Strategies for Elementary and Middle School Teachers” (Zehler, 1994) is an excellent resource containing jargon-free instructional strategies for teachers who are not specifically trained to work with ELLs. It is available online (www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/pigs/pig19.htm). Teachers looking for more in-depth discussion regarding the topics presented (i.e., cultural differences, theories and methods of second language acquisition) will find it limited in that regard. However, it remains a good introductory overview of some of the issues related to educating ELLs.

Summary

It is recommended that District 4 improve the academic performance of ELLs by pursuing the following strategies:

- Engaging all ELLs in oral English learning with a focus on building a rich academic vocabulary and creating sufficient background knowledge to understand content-area instruction.
- Creating a developmentally appropriate curriculum for upper elementary, middle, and high school beginning ELLs and SIFEs that concentrates on oral English, the key components of literacy for new readers and the ELA core curriculum.
- Building native language competency, as feasible, so that knowledge in the key components of literacy instruction can be transferred to English; and/or providing sheltered English classes that take ELLs through the academic content of the core curriculum.
- Making use of instructional opportunities outside of the regular school day (afterschool and Saturday Academies) to provide a range of supports for SIFEs and newcomers from basic English instruction to higher level literacy and content-area access.
- Forming instructional groups by age and language proficiency to allow for the most appropriate targeted, explicit instruction to diverse learners.

- Providing administrators and teachers with disaggregated program and individual ELL student test results.
- Providing ongoing professional development to all teachers that trains them to do the following:
 - Track student achievement with test data from multiple sources.
 - Collect, interpret and use daily/weekly formative assessment data.
 - Utilize a range of assessment and test data to plan differentiated, appropriate instruction.
 - Teach all students to rigorous content standards and provide ELLs with specific language instruction.
 - Teach vocabulary and academic language needed to understand texts and concepts taught in the core curriculum.

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Recommendation 4

Develop and implement a systematic and systemic plan for monitoring school and district practices and programs for effectiveness. This plan should include links to data, processes and tools in the following areas:

- **Curriculum implementation and instruction, as follows:**
 - **Identification of evidence to respond to the questions: “How do we know the curriculum and instruction are being implemented as intended?” “Are they having the desired effect on student performance?”**
 - **Development of tools to monitor curriculum implementation and instruction related to formative assessment data on student progress.**
- **Program effectiveness, as follows:**
 - **Identification of evidence to respond to the questions: “How do we know that a particular program is effective and having the intended impact?” What does success look like?**
 - **Determination of program data measures based on their intended impact on student performance or other critical success factors.**

Link to Findings

Throughout the co-interpretation process, “monitoring” arose as a need. Evidence from the document review report indicated that while the district has policies and plans in place for monitoring the implementation of the Reading First program (in accordance with federal mandates), as well as a number of priorities outlined under NCLB, there was little or no evidence of that monitoring having been implemented. For example, although there is an extensive plan for AIS services, there is no evidence that student progress in the AIS programs is being monitored. In addition, the ELL study found a general lack of awareness of how specific instructional programs for ELLs are monitored. Further, formal plans for monitoring other instructional programs do not exist. District administrators (in interviews) identified the lack of a monitoring system to help assess curriculum, implementation, and program effectiveness.

Hypotheses generated at co-intepretation focused on inexperienced or weak building leadership as a possible explanation for a lack of monitoring at the building level. New or weak school principals may need additional support in order to understand the importance of program monitoring, and/or the tools to carry it out. District personnel noted that there is not a continuous cycle of examining practice at the school level—in essence, a lack of monitoring. Finally, the high rate of change in programs and structures in New York City districts has made it difficult for administrators to implement regular monitoring practices.

The No Child Left Behind Act raised the expectation that all students can learn to one that says they can become proficient in reading and mathematics. Comparison of state, district, school, and student progress against this expectation is done by using annual assessments. This approach provides a once-a-year check on student achievement, but districts and schools need more frequent information regarding student progress. Especially where there is a high percentage of

new teachers, there is a more critical role for the monitoring of student progress, implementation of instructional programs, and utilization of best practices. New teachers require frequent and consistent feedback to help identify priorities and areas that need improvement. Experienced teachers also need feedback regarding how they are doing in comparison to the rest of the school community. Regular monitoring and the maintenance of current data systems can clearly provide this feedback.

Consistent monitoring and real-time data systems allow districts and schools to prioritize and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs and initiatives. Human and capital resources and time are too scarce and valuable to be allocated to ineffective programs and initiatives. Annual state assessments are too infrequent and typically too broad to serve as evaluation tools for local programs and initiatives. In order to prioritize programs and initiatives for effective and appropriate allocation of human and capital resources and time allotment, schools and districts need to identify tools, processes, and measures to monitor effectiveness.

Monitoring is critical for this district so decision makers will know which interventions and practices work and which do not. In addition to informing the improvement of student proficiency, having this information will help the district redeploy its funds, energy and efforts to those initiatives that are proven to be effective and successful.

Link to Research

School districts have often played an indirect role in classroom-based instruction through the allocation of resources, hiring of staff, managing of operational and fiscal procedures, and setting of policies. Their role now includes ensuring high-quality instruction geared toward increased levels of student achievement. In their analysis of high poverty districts successfully making this transition, Togneri and Anderson (2003) detail seven strategies for increasing achievement. Among these is the building of systemwide approaches to improve instruction and guide instructional improvements; imbedded in these systems are structures for monitoring student learning and district progress. Elmore and Burney (as cited in Resnick & Glennan, 2002, p. 2) agree that focusing on instruction and learning—along with monitoring of student achievement at the individual student, classroom, school and district level—has a positive impact on student learning in urban districts.

Monitoring is a function of school leadership. In their meta-analysis of the effects of leadership practices on student achievement, researchers at McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning) identified “the extent to which the principal monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student achievement” to be one of the 21 leadership responsibilities significantly associated with student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003, p. 12). Cotton (1988) agrees, “The careful monitoring of student progress is shown in the literature to be one of the major factors differentiating effective schools and teachers from ineffective ones” (p. 1). Schmoker (1999) echoes this: “Regular monitoring, followed by adjustment, is the only way to expect success” (p. 5).

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) identifies six core tasks of instructional leaders: (1) focusing on student and adult learning, (2) holding high performance

expectations, (3) helping teachers understand the value of standards, (4) fostering professional collegiality and culture, (5) using data to guide decisions, and (6) tapping into community resources to improve school functioning. While instructional leadership typically is principal-centered—or principal motivated—tasks associated with instructional leadership should be dispersed among school-site staff (Elmore, 2000). Strong instructional leadership depends upon interrelated activities such as involving teachers in mentoring or professional development presentations (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2000). In other words, instructional monitoring involves the principal working closely with on-site instructional staff.

Research recommends a balance between formative and summative assessments. While summative assessments are typically utilized at the district level, the use of formative assessments at the school level can impact both teachers' instructional decisions and student motivation and academic achievement. "High-stakes data give us only one piece of evidence about student learning. Well-designed classroom data collection and analysis, the everyday information a teacher collects, forms the backbone of student growth" (Gregory & Kuzmich, 2004, p. 10). Paying regular attention to both short term and annual measures of student proficiency allows teachers, schools, and districts to identify how close they are to reaching their goals (e.g., achieving AYP) and may suggest immediate practice adjustments.

New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein has recently announced (Bosman, 2007) an increase in the amount of periodic tests students will have to take each year as a means of spotting "students who are falling behind."

Pupils in grades three through eight will be tested five times a year in both reading and math instead of three times as they are now. High school students, for the first time, will be tested four times a year in each subject. In the next few years, the tests will expand to include science and social studies.

Formative achievement assessments utilizing different forms of monitoring have always been available to teachers and administrators. These include observations, presentation and portfolio assessments, brief quizzes, classroom questions from teachers and from students to gauge understanding and comprehension, writing exercises, parent reports, and homework analyses.

Disaggregating of the results of formative and summative assessments allows for the monitoring of student progress along demographic lines. For instance, results garnered from formative assessments can be used as a monitoring tool in special education (IEPs, for example). If students are not showing individual improvement, adjustments to instruction or accommodations can be made. If a significant group of students is not showing progress, teachers and administrators can examine the appropriateness, adequacy and implementation of the content of IEPs.

Pruess (2003) advocates for schools and districts to determine their own "key indicators of student success," which are student-centered, measurable results that become the focal point of district and school monitoring and decision making. Determination of how the key indicators are to be measured is essential in improvement efforts. Monitoring of those measures requires data collection systems—including reporting formats, timelines, and feedback structures—that will allow the district to make appropriate adjustments and inform action planning.

There should be regular and agreed-upon measures of student proficiency that can be analyzed to determine individual student needs, specific classroom instructional decisions, and schoolwide and districtwide monitoring and decision making. The creation of group data allows teachers to monitor their own practice relative to their school and district. Group data additionally allow the schools and districts to identify areas that need improvement and the impact or effectiveness of specific interventions (Schmoker, 1999).

Particular programs and initiatives are put into place to improve student engagement and/or academic performance. Key indicators of success need to be determined for them as well. Assuming fidelity to the program model, monitors would seek to assess whether the program is achieving its intended outcomes. If the program is not resulting in those outcomes or achieving them only to a degree, there are two alternatives: Alter the program so that it has more successful results and becomes more effective, or abandon it. Monitors would ask the questions: How does this program/initiative help move us toward improvements on our key indicators of success? What concrete measures help us see progress? If the answers are not clear, the measures are not concrete, and there is no way to rectify any gaps, the continuation of the program or initiative needs to be reconsidered. For instance, if an afterschool tutoring program includes measures that show intermittent improvements in mathematics computation for the students involved, but the periodic district and schoolwide assessments do not show progress for this group of students, adjustments need to be made to the instruction in the afterschool program. Monitoring of student achievement data from specific programs as compared to districtwide achievement measures allows teachers and leaders to inform a change to the content and/or methodology of the program and reevaluate its effectiveness.

Key indicators of student success should also be used in monitoring of instructional practices in the classroom. District 4 has already established a set of “walk-through protocols” (including learning walks, school walk-throughs, and reading and writing workshop walk-throughs). The protocols for these walks, however, have a broad range from “book baskets are labeled” to “includes learning activities with resources/materials that support rigorous instructional objectives and accommodates diverse learning needs.” Refocusing these practices on specific instructional strategies, clear indications of student progress directly related to the key indicators of success, and outcomes from data analysis would move these tools and processes from a simple compliance mode to systematically and assertively monitoring improvement.

Many models exist to promote district emphasis on instructional leadership—including structured classroom walk-throughs, principal support groups, and principal peer observations. What is most important, though, is that the district models to site leaders, and site leaders model to teachers, the critical importance of effective instruction (Blase & Blase, 2000, Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005). Analysis of group results would help the district identify and foster excellent practices as well as identify areas requiring intervention. Procedures that allow for school principals and teacher leaders to review data, compare understanding, and plan for intervention and feedback will build and broaden leadership capacity as it relates to instruction. This combined focus on student learning and improvement in instruction are characteristics of improved school districts (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004).

The theme of identifying key indicators of success and building tools and systems to monitor those indicators is a unifying approach to school and district improvement. Districts that have put in place systemic and systemwide approaches that include a clear vision focused on student learning and improving instruction, supported by multi-measure accountability and data systems and coherent profession development designed to develop districtwide strategies to improve instruction, have improved student achievement (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Implementation Considerations

Implicit in Recommendation 4 are various steps. For instance, the identification of key indicators of student success serves to drive the design of monitoring processes, tools and data systems. Using data to assess needs, measure improvement and make decisions will likely require additional training, investment in collection tools and processes, and will create opportunities for teacher and school staff to collaborate.

This recommendation also may require well-focused redefinition of the priorities and practices of school and district personnel. The deepening of tasks from compliance routines to practices that inform reflection and progress must include disciplined and committed follow-through and the development of a comprehensive system for data collection, analysis, and synthesis. Creating “multi-measure accountability systems that specify desired student and school outcomes” (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 51) strengthens every aspect of the school and district success.

District 4 needs to determine its own answers to the following:

- What do we want to know about our students, our programs/initiatives and our effectiveness?
- What should be monitored and in what priority order? (For example, student performance and proficiency outcomes, program effectiveness, translation of professional development learning into classroom practice)
- How should these be measured and monitored?
- What will the monitoring look like?
- How frequently is it effective and/or feasible to monitor these areas?
- Who will do the monitoring?
- What training will they need to conduct effective and efficient monitoring?
- What will monitoring tell us?
- What can/will we do with that information?

Analysis of current data and reporting systems within the district and the extent to which they can be utilized or retooled in shaping a comprehensive plan for monitoring and improving student achievement and instruction is a critical initial step. This may require determining new assessments, organizing data collection systems and structures across the district, and outlining processes for analysis and feedback. Identification of key indicators of student success and multiple measures for these indicators should also be included. The weaving of these key

indicators into instructional programs and initiatives as well as walk-through protocols and procedures will require systemic and systematic strategic coordination. Key decision makers in the district and its schools would want to collaborate in the adaptation of current monitoring procedures that are effective and the design, development and implementation of a well-integrated, efficient, and accurate monitoring system than will provide continuous assessment of the relationship of district and school-based practices to student academic outcomes.

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Appendix. Data Map

District 4 Co-Interpretation Key Findings and Hypotheses

During the co-interpretation process for District 4, participants analyzed seven individual reports (data sets). The abbreviation of each report is included in capital letters.

- CA—Curriculum Alignment Report
- DR—Document Review Report
- ELL—ELL Report (ELL EI indicates elementary interviews)
- INT—Interview Report
- SEC—*Surveys of Enacted Curriculum* Report
- SOM—School Observation Measure Report
- SE—Special Education Report

Participants identified findings from across the data sets under each of the areas examined through the audit. They then worked together to identify which findings were most significant. They also articulated hypotheses on the root cause of each key finding. The following data map documents the results of this co-interpretation process.

This data map organizes the key findings, supporting findings, and hypotheses under the following four themes:

- Theme 1: Achievement and Accountability
- Theme 2: Standards and Curriculum
- Theme 3: Instruction and Assessment
- Theme 4: Professional Development

Each key finding is embedded in a chart containing three sections. The left section of each chart is the statement of the key finding and the number of votes it received. Key findings were voted on as either positive (green) or concerns to be acted upon (red). The number of votes and the final status of the key finding are indicated within the left section.

The top right section of each chart contains the supporting findings. The right column of this section indicates the report source and page number.

The bottom right section of each chart contains the hypotheses for the cause of the key finding and information relating to the following questions:

- Does the district have the control to respond to this hypothesis?
- If the hypothesis were addressed, would it effect sufficient measurable change?
- If the hypothesis were addressed, would it respond to one of more of the guiding questions?
- Are there data collected or that could be collected to support the hypothesis?

For each question answered, the “+” symbol indicates “yes,” the “-” symbol indicates “no,” and “0” indicates “don’t know” or “no change.”

Theme 1: Achievement and Accountability

KEY FINDING			Source & Page				
<p>1. The district is challenged in meeting the needs of SWDs and ELL students.</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Votes</th> <th>Final?</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">0</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Yes</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Votes	Final?	0	Yes	Findings	According to interview data, it is unclear whether the services to ELLs and SWDs are meeting their needs.	INT 9
	Votes	Final?					
	0	Yes					
	Absence of data for children with disabilities – 2 03 3 elementary , high school	SE 4					
	There are substantial gaps between the SWDs and their general education peers especially at levels 3 and 4.	SE 4					
	Middle schools failed to make ELA, AYP for all students.	SE 4					
	Eligibility rates are higher than similar schools and city schools.	SE 4					
	More resources are needed for ELLs and SWDs.	INT 9					
	Teachers are unclear whether services to ELLs and SWD are meeting their needs.	INT 9					
	There is a shortage of related service providers.	SE 16					
	Some SWDs need higher level of individualization in their current placements.	SE 13					
	TBE teachers and general education teachers said they had limited resources in Spanish.	ELL 12					
	Overall, secondary classrooms were not rich learning environments for the students in them, and certainly not as well-resourced and orderly as elementary classrooms.	ELL 36					
	In addition, general education classes were sometimes considered to be developmentally inappropriate for ELL learners by reviewers.	ELL 31					
	Instructional resources were being used support the learning of SWDs in 78 percent of the classrooms observed.	SE 20					
Hypotheses	Lack of instructional plan to support developing literacy competencies.	++++					
	There is a need for more focused PD on implementation of differentiated instruction and a need to monitor that implementation.	++++					
	Schools need to carefully examine instructional strategies to meet the needs of students before passing them on.	++++					
	Schools lack monitoring and reflecting of instructional programs.	++++					
	Inappropriate student placement.	++++					
	On-site, ongoing, supportive PD is not present.	++++					
	Lack of articulated transition plan for both ELLs and SWD						
	Lack of effective native language program for ELL students who require one.						

	High referral rate and over identification for “more restrictive” services	
	Tiers 1–3 interventions are not always appropriately used	
	Leadership support is lacking – does not support PD, resources, etc.	
	Inappropriate student placement.	
	Low level expectations.	
	Provision of SPED services impacted by a shortage of related service providers and certified special education teachers	

KEY FINDING			Source & Page				
<p>2. The effectiveness of instructional programs is not being monitored (with the exception of some federal programs).</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="191 922 623 992"> <thead> <tr> <th>Votes</th> <th>Final?</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Votes	Final?	5	Yes	Findings	There is substantial evidence of a plan for monitoring the compliance with federal mandates only.	DR 7
	Votes	Final?					
	5	Yes					
	Monitoring evidence was presented only in relation to Reading First schools.	DR 9					
	There is evidence that the district and school plans prioritize the needs identified in NCLB but it is unclear as to how it is monitored.	DR 18					
	Although there is an extensive plan for AIS services, there is no evidence that student progress in the AIS programs is being monitored.	DR 7					
	There is no evidence of district monitoring of the effectiveness of instructional programs other than Reading First.	DR 13					
	Nearly all the respondents in the interviews said that the LISES and RISES are stretched too thin.	INT 26					
	There is a general lack of awareness of how specific instructional programs for ELLs are monitored.	ELL 16					
	Leadership does not focus on greater teacher support and accountability for implementation of instructional programs.	++++					
	The focus is on high-stakes testing rather than instruction.	++++					
	Hypotheses	Leadership does not follow through on PD leading to instructional effectiveness.	++++				
		Constant changing of programs and structures makes monitoring difficult (almost impossible).	----				
		Building leaders need support in monitoring their instructional programs.	++++				
		Attention is paid only to compliance, not implementation.	++++				
		Ineffective monitoring tools and practices.					
Insufficient staff for effective monitoring of program implementation							
Not enough time given to implement instruction for monitoring or reflection							
Lack of cohesive instructional programming districtwide; no program to monitor							

Theme 2: Standards and Curriculum

KEY FINDING			Source & Page				
<p>3. There is limited evidence found in the district documents of a written ELA curriculum that is aligned with the state literacy competencies and performance indicators. Evidence shows that taught curriculum lacks appropriate depth and focus when compared to the literacy competencies within the New York State Learning Standards and state assessments. In addition, there was no evidence found of monitoring the implementation of a written curriculum.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="191 816 648 886"> <thead> <tr> <th>Votes</th> <th>Final?</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>20</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Votes	Final?	20	Yes	Findings	Teachers seem unaware of when, how often, and by whom alignment occurs.	INT 4
	Votes	Final?					
	20	Yes					
	Courses of study are perceived by teachers as being aligned to New York State Learning Standards	INT 6					
	Literacy competencies in the area of background knowledge and vocabulary development are addressed in Grade 2 but not addressed in Grades 4–10.	CA					
	Motivation to write is not addressed in the written curriculum in Grades 4–10.	CA					
	As you go up in grade levels, there are more and more literacy competencies that are not addressed in all areas of reading, writing, listening and speaking.	CA					
	CAB, New York State ELA Core Curriculum and New York State Performance indicators have not been aligned in the district for the purpose of teacher instructional planning	CA					
	Grade 2 has done the most in terms of aligning the literacy competencies to the CAB	CA					
	Expected cognitive demands are not scaffolded vertically thus creating gaps	CA					
	Grades 6 and 10 have the most gaps in terms of addressing the literacy competencies	CA					
	Priority support to Grades 4–10 for addressing and aligning all literacy competencies has not been implemented	CA					
	There is not always a direct link between the present levels of performance (as seen on pgs. 3 and 4 of student IEPs) and the annual goals (found on pg 6).	SE 8					
	Monolingual and ELL teachers follow the same curriculum	ELL 11					
	No ESL curriculum is provided by the Region – many teachers determine what they teach	ELL 18					
	There is a lack of cohesion, consistent, and modified curriculum for teachers of ELLs	ELL 11-12					
	Teachers follow the curriculum very closely	INT					
Courses of study are perceived as being aligned to New York State Learning Standards	INT 4						
Schools perceive the curriculum is effective for most students but not for ELLs, SWD, or struggling students	INT 4						
There was no evidence submitted outlining expectations for the use of (frequency, analysis) the administer walk-through tool	DR 2						

	Some curriculum is available – there is no evidence that observation tools are used as evidence of expectations for teaching the curriculum	DR 2
	There is limited evidence of a written ELA curriculum	DR
	General ed and ELL follow the “same” curriculum using the workshop model	ELL 11
	Accommodations and modifications are not included in the IEPs to the degree they should be according to the New York City IEP standards	SE 8
	More than 1/3 of teachers in Grades 3–5 feel they are only somewhat prepared or not well prepared to provide instruction that meets ELA/reading standards.	SEC 50
	More writing is seen in Grades 3–5 than in Grades 6–18	SEC 30
	Critical reading and comprehension is lacking in the curriculum for Grades 3 and 5.	SEC 15
	The taught curriculum grade one in the areas of phonemic awareness and phonics lack appropriate depth and focus when compared to the standards.	SEC 9
	District instruction is lacking in the taught curriculum especially in comprehension and critical reading in Grade 6	SEC
	At Grade 3, the taught curriculum does not focus in depth on language study, comprehension and critical reading when compared to the standards	SEC
	In Grades K–6 in the areas of writing processes, writing components, and writing applications, the taught curriculum lacks appropriate depth and focus when compared to the standards.	SEC 9-13
	In Grades K–6 in the area of vocabulary, the taught curriculum lacks appropriate depth and focus when compared to the standards	SEC 9-13
	Across all grade levels, the taught curriculum in the area of speaking and presenting lacks appropriate depth and focus when compared to standards	SEC 9-13
	The Grade 1 taught curriculum lacks appropriate focus in the area of fluency when compared to the standards	SEC 9
	Speech and oral presentation is happening less than 11 percent of the time at the HS level.	SEC 27
	The Grade 3 state standards require more depth and focus in the areas of author’s craft, writing processes, writing components, and writing applications than the taught curriculum	SEC 11
	At the K-6 level, the taught curriculum in the area of comprehension lacks appropriate depth and focus when compared to the standards	SEC 9
	Literacy competencies for addressing building background knowledge and vocabulary	CA

		development are not addressed in Grades 4–10		
		Grades 6–10 exhibit the most gaps in addressing the NY ELA lit competencies.	CA	
	Hypotheses		Schools misunderstand that approaches such as Ramp Up and Reading/Writing Workshops are curricula.	++++
			Lack of a common definition of what curriculum means.	++++
			Lack of collaboration between various disciplines (e.g., ELL and ELA)	+++0
			Lack of consideration of standards when planning instruction and curricula	+++0
			Not enough teacher focus on learning to look at student work to gain understanding of literacy competencies; teachers are not competent in evaluating student work (e.g., writing)	
			The absence of a monitoring protocol – rubric w/ checklist and processes	
			Insufficient PD surrounding ELA NY Learning Standards	
			There is a lack of understanding of the big ideas/concepts in literacy that align w/ New York State Standards and literacy competencies	
			Time is not provided for principals and staff to engage in curriculum mapping that is aligned to state learning standards, city performance indicators, and state assessments.	
			“Evidence” needs to be identified for teachers and schools re: reviewing what a “good” lesson plan looks like.	
			Looking at student work; observing and sharing best practices	
	No PD for teachers in building depth of content knowledge and literacy competencies.			
	Lack of clear understanding “data-driven” instruction; interpret and analyze data to inform instruction.			
	There is a lack of support to assist teachers in curricula decisions.			

Theme 3: Instruction and Assessment

KEY FINDING		Source & Page				
<p>4. Teachers across all grade levels are not using varied literacy instructional strategies and approaches such as, but not limited to, project-based learning, higher order questioning, integration of subject matter, use of technology, and sustained writing with all students (including SWD, and ELLs). There is a lack of extensive student engagement, particularly at the secondary level.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="191 711 621 781"> <thead> <tr> <th>Votes</th> <th>Final?</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>17</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Votes	Final?	17	Yes	Findings	Almost all teachers in Grades K–12 feel they are well/very well prepared to integrate ELA with other subjects. SEC 50
	Votes	Final?				
	17	Yes				
	The majority of teachers K–12 feel they are well prepared or very well prepared to use and manage cooperative learning groups in ELA. SEC 49					
	K–12 teachers were not observed using cooperative learning. SOM 6 & 10					
	K–12 teachers were not at all or rarely observed integrating subjects SOM 6 & 10					
	Somewhat more than the general education classrooms, the ELL program classrooms demonstrated the use of instructional strategies, one of which is cooperative learning. ELL 26					
	Both ESL and general education ELA classes were rated in the mid range of the scale for specific instructional strategies. The classes that had students work in groups — three ELL program classes and one general education class—allowed the teacher to individualize instruction and scaffold comprehension and learning. The other classes relied on whole-group instruction and individual work that the teachers monitored superficially — mostly to ensure that students were on task. ELL 30					
	In Grades K–8, ½ of the students spend a moderate amount of time working with a text or worksheet. SEC 30					
	Almost ½ of the students in Grades K–5 work independently on assignments much of the time. SEC 23					
	¾ of students in Grades 3–5 work in centers less than 50 percent of the time. SEC28					
	Teachers reported that they used a variety of instructional programs and strategies in their classrooms such as cooperative learning, small groups and “pair shares” as ways to differentiate instruction for particular students. SE 12-13					
	K–12 teachers were not at all or rarely observed using project based learning or involving parents. SOM 6 & 10					
	K–12 teachers were not observed in team teaching and were frequently observed using direct instruction.					
Sustained writing was not observed very often in K–12 classrooms. SOM 6 & 10						
Performance assessment and student self-assessment were not or rarely seen in K–12 classrooms. SOM 6 & 10						
Student activities such as hands-on learning, systematic individual instruction and SOM 6						

	independent inquiry was rarely, if every, observed in K–12 classrooms.	& 10
	High school teachers spend some to no time on guided reading or writing practice.	SEC 24
	In Grades K–8, ½ of the students spend a moderate amount of time working with a text or worksheet.	SEC 30
	Almost ½ of the students in Grades K–5 work independently on assignments much of the time.	SEC 23
	¾ of students in Grades 3–5 work in centers less than 5 percent of the time.	SEC 28
	Higher level questioning was not observed in K–8 and less in 9–12.	SOM 6 & 10
	There is a reduction in student engagement in higher grades. (Observed extensively in K–8 - 68 percent, in 9–12 - 0 percent)	SOM 6 & 10
	Many secondary teachers said they employed cooperative grouping and pair work so that ELLs could be helped by more proficient students as well as given additional oral practice.	ELL 22
	Both ELL program and general education secondary classes showed through observations a mix of instructional configurations during the lessons, but there were differences noted between the two programs. General education classes had a lot more individually based activities than ELL program classes, which demonstrated more small-group or pair work in comparison. The group work configuration of the ELL program classrooms promoted more opportunity for ELLs to engage in extended oral discourse during the lesson.	ELL 31
	Both general education and ELL program classes used whole class instruction for some of the observed lesson	ELL 31
	There was some variation in responses between special education teachers working in a self-contained classroom versus those working in more mainstreamed settings (CTT classes or SETSS) with the special class teachers noting that they differentiate of instruction for their students with IEPs.	SE 7
	Teachers reported that they used a variety of instructional programs and strategies in their classrooms such as cooperative learning, small groups and “pair shares” as ways to differentiate instruction for particular students.	SE 12-13
	Based on classroom observations in general and special education settings the pace of instruction seems to vary across the special education continuum.	SE 9

	Hypotheses	Lack of translation of PD into effective classroom practices; lack of teacher planning.	++++
		Coaches/lead teachers/AP's need to facilitate the learning, model strategies, and help with planning.	++++
		Little support for secondary leaders (AP's) – they do not get enough PD	++++
		Lack of collaborative learning opportunities that concentrate on the varied literacy instructional strategies and approaches and how to use them purposefully and strategically	++++
		Lack of articulation between elementary, middle school, and high school.	0+++
		Inexperienced leaders at the building level.	0+++
		There is not enough PD on best practices for secondary educators	+++0
		Lack of a good PD design that can maximize the talent and resources within the school building	++++
		Lack of purposeful learning activities for linguistically challenged students.	++++
		Low instructional expectations from school leaders (building level).	++++
		Lack of backward planning.	

KEY FINDING			Source & Page
5. There is no formal plan for transitioning students out of ELL status and closing the gap between ELL and English-proficient students. ELL classrooms focus on vocabulary instruction, reviewing concepts, and practicing skills while monolingual classrooms focus more on cognitive development.	Findings	ELL teachers in general seemed to be more aware of specific practices for teaching ELL than general education teachers.	ELL 14
		Proportionately more ELL program classes engaged in vocabulary instruction, reviewing concepts and practicing skills than in conceptual development.	ELL 24
		There is somewhat more time spent on whole class instruction in ELL program classrooms than general education classrooms.	ELL 24
		All ELL classrooms had opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding through work products, discussion or group work engagement.	ELL 24
		ELL program classrooms were somewhat less engaged in independent work.	ELL 24
		General education classes were more conceptually oriented while ELL programs showed a greater emphasis on skills and practices (vocabulary and facts)	ELL 28
		ELL classrooms give students less time for independent practice than general education classrooms.	ELL 27

<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Votes</th> <th>Final?</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Votes	Final?	8	Yes		More use of activating prior knowledge in ELL classrooms than general education classrooms	ELL 27
	Votes	Final?					
	8	Yes					
	General education classrooms revealed inconsistent attention to clear language goals and objectives with content goals whereas ELL classrooms included language goals.	ELL 26					
	General education lessons engaged students in collaborative group work but didn't demonstrate many teaching strategies.	ELL 26					
	ELL program exhibited fewer displays of student work but process charts and strategy charts and were present in most ELL classrooms.	ELL 28					
	General education classroom scored higher in collegiality between teachers and student than ELL classrooms.	ELL 28					
	In almost all cases, specific, instructional accommodations and modifications were not included in the IEP.	SE 8					
	About 50 percent of the teachers report that they know how to teach students with limited English proficiency very well to well.	SEC 54					
	Need time line and benchmarks for transitioning kids out of ELL status.	ELL 13					
	Hypotheses	Instruction is skills based vs. cognitively challenging	++++				
		Teachers have low expectations for ELL students	++++				
		Teachers lack knowledge of language acquisition and its relationship to pedagogy/instruction	++++				
		No pre-service teacher training that includes substantial units on pedagogy for this demographic group	0++				
		School leaders need to know the needs of students in order to provide proper services and supports	++++				
		Lack of PD on scaffolding strategies and differentiated instruction					
		New teachers and monolingual teachers need support in instructional strategies and approaches for ELLs					
		The assumption is based on the deficit model – because a youngster doesn't speak English, the expectation is low.					
		Lack of teacher understanding of the criteria for the transition process					
Students with different levels of proficiency are placed in the same classroom and it is difficult for teachers to address the different levels effectively							

Theme 4: Professional Development

KEY FINDING		Source & Page				
<p>6. Data indicate while District 4 has provided comprehensive ELA K–12 professional development for all teachers, there is a lack of evidence for on-going support in the following areas: data-driven instruction, literacy strategies for teachers of ELL, ESL strategies for general education teachers, native language instructional strategies, and behavioral management strategies.</p>	Findings	½ of teachers @ the high school level and ¼ @ the K-2 level do not feel well prepared to teach students with diverse disabilities and learning styles				
		At least 40 percent of K–12 teachers do not feel well prepared to teach SWDs that impact LA learning.				
		Only a little more than ½ of K-2 teachers observe demonstrations of teaching techniques some of the time.				
		¾ of teachers in Grades 3–5 observe demonstrations of teaching techniques sometimes to often.				
		More than ½ of all K–12 teachers use teacher resource centers/or the internet anywhere from 2 times a week to almost daily.				
		The majority of teachers across grades feel they are only somewhat /or not well prepared to teach students with physical disabilities.				
		Coaches were viewed as positively impacting professional development.				
		Professional development for all teachers to work with ELL and special education				
		More time to collaborate among ELL, special education and general education.				
		More than ½ of teachers in K–12 have never or hardly ever participated in study groups.				
		No evidence that assessment of what professional development is needed to support high-quality instruction and improve student achievement.				
		There are multiple opportunities for professional development at school and district level. More on behavior Management for special education students				
		ELL program teachers and general education teachers receive the same professional development.				
		Currently there is a district emphasis on QTEL training and the incorporation of scaffolding strategies.				
		Professional development is delivered regionally, districtwide and within school through various configuration.				
Teachers need more training in the what, why, and how of using data to drive instruction.						
<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Votes</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Final?</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">12</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Yes</td> </tr> </table>	Votes	Final?	12	Yes		ELL 8
Votes	Final?					
12	Yes					
		ELL 8				
		ELL 8				
		ELL EI 15- 16				

		General education teachers received few ELL related professional development than ELL teachers.	ELL EI 14
		Teachers need more help with native language instruction. There is no district native language programs in place.	
		General education teachers need to know about language acquisition and ESL methodologies. ESL teachers need to know more about literacy strategies.	ELL EI 13-14
		At least 40 percent of teachers K–12 do not feel well prepared to teach students with learning disabilities that impact language arts learning.	SEC 54
		All respondents K–12 reported feeling at least somewhat prepared to teach reading, writing, LA, and literature at their assigned level.	SEC 14
		Professional development is being translated into effective classroom practice (general education kids look like SWDs and vice versa)	SE 20
	Hypotheses	Lack of cohesive PD plan to address all needs	++++
		Lack of cohesive plan across curricula areas	++++
		No needs assessment conducted prior to planning and implementing PD plan	++++
		Not sufficient training for staff to provide PD to others	++++
		PD time taken away; lack of PD time	++00
		Lack of focus on instructional priorities	
		No differentiation of staff	
		PD for principals do not focus on supporting effective teaching practices	
		Need for more lab sites and teacher visitations to better promote best practices	
		No sustained, scaffolded PD to build capacity	
		Lack of on-going assessment of PD plan	
		Principals and assistant principals have limited background knowledge around the listed strategies	
		Not enough support staff to provide PD	
		No decision made at school level – no school level prioritization	
No differentiation around needs of schools			
Principals are not modeling the roles of leader and learner			
District and schools do not make a conscious effort to extend PD offerings regarding special populations to all teachers			
Not all PD opportunities are available to all schools/teachers			