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

Community School District 8 Final Report

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Submitted to
District 8

Submitted by
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Introduction

This final report is the result of an audit of the written, taught, and tested curriculum of Community School District 8 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) curricula for all students, including 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 a response to the recommendations from the audit in their District Comprehensive Education Plan.

District Background

Overview

Community School District 8[1] is located in the borough of the Bronx, one of the five boroughs of New York City. It includes the communities of Throgs Neck, Country Club, Westchester Square, Unionport, Soundview, Castle Hill, and Hunts Point as well as portions of Crotona Park, Morrisania, Clason Point, and West Farms. It is bisected by the Bruckner, Cross Bronx, and Sheridan Expressways. Twenty-seven percent of the population speaks a language other than English in the home. Hispanics make up 35 percent of the population; African Americans are 47 percent, Asians are 8 percent, and whites are 5 percent. There are also fast-growing Honduran, West African, and East Asian communities. District 8 is in Region 2.[2]

Data from 2005 indicate that District 8 served a total of 33,929 students, with 850 prekindergarten students; 30,098 K–12 students; and 2,981 ungraded students[3] in 21 elementary, 12 middle or intermediate, and 12 high schools. Of the students enrolled, 7 percent were white; 29 percent were African American; 60 percent were Hispanic; and 4 percent were Asian, Pacific Islander, Alaskan Native, or Native American. The school enrollment figures compared to the general population of the Bronx shows that the district is serving a significantly higher percentage of Hispanic and white students and a lower percentage of African-American and Asian students. Data from 2002–03, 2003–04, and 2004-05 school years indicate that the majority of students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (83 percent, 82 percent, and 82 percent, respectively). District data also indicate that the percentage of limited-English-proficient students was 9 percent, 11 percent, and 10 percent for these years, respectively. The percentage of special education students enrolled during these years was consistent at 15 percent.

Student Academic Performance

As of 2005–06, District 8 has been designated as a district In Need of Improvement—Year 3. The state accountability status in all levels of ELA has been designated as Requiring Academic Progress—Year 4. In 2004–05, SWDs and ELLs were the student accountability groups that did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in elementary-level ELA. SWDs, blacks, Hispanics, ELLs, and students from low-income families were the groups that did not make AYP in middle-level ELA. For the same year, there were no student accountability groups (for which there are data) that made AYP in secondary-level ELA.

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[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* at http://schools.nyc.gov/daa/SchoolReports/.

[2] Information regarding communities and the populations of the district were obtained from the Region 2 District office by e-mail on April 18, 2007.

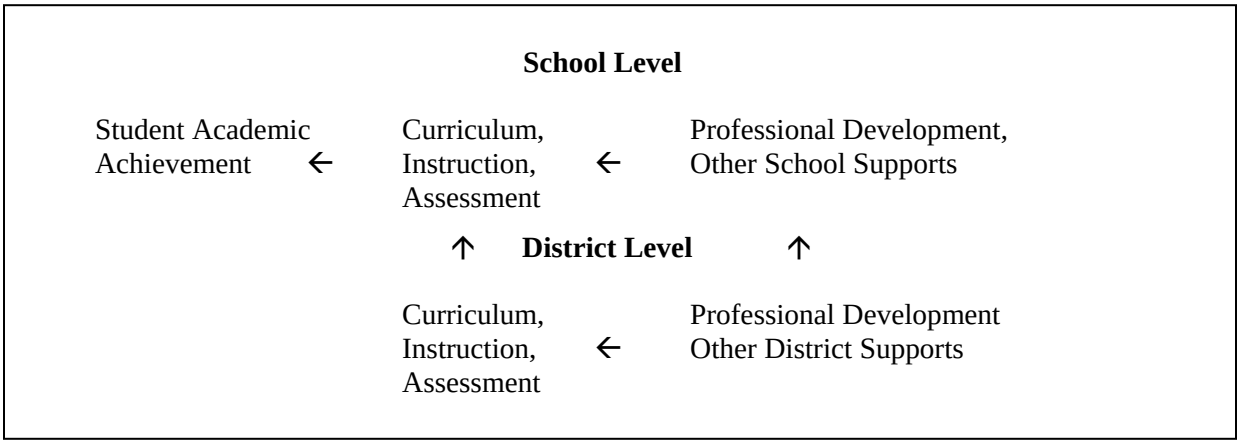
[3] District data were obtained from *2004–2005 Annual District Report: District 8*, produced by New York City Public Schools, and available at http://schools.nyc.gov/daa/SchoolReports/.

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 connected to and influenced by their district-level counterparts.

The theory of action reviewed in the co-interpretation[SM] 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 16 essential questions to guide the work. In addition, a number of these guiding questions were further refined to more specifically address concerns related to ELLs and SWDs.

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?

   For SWDs:

   - Does the district ensure that all SWDs have access to and are instructed in the written general education or alternate ELA and mathematics curricula?
   - Is the individualized education program (IEP) used as the guiding curriculum document for an SWD and used to drive the student's instruction?
   - Does the district ensure that each student with disabilities has a current IEP that is fully implemented?

   For ELLs:

   - Does the district ensure that ELLs have access to and are instructed in the written general education ELA and mathematics (where applicable) curricula?
3. Does the district provide materials that support the implementation of the written curriculum, and are the materials used?

   For SWDs:

   - Does the district provide SWDs with access to current and appropriate instructional resources in ELA and mathematics?

   For ELLs:

   - Does the district provide ELLs with access to current and appropriate instructional resources in ELA and mathematics? Are the resources used appropriately?
4. Are the teachers teaching to the state standards?
5. Is the taught curriculum aligned with the state assessments?

   For ELLs:

   - Are the taught English as a Second Language (ESL), bilingual, and Dual Language program curricula aligned with the state ELA and mathematics assessments and, where appropriate, the New York State English as a Second Language Test (NYSESLAT)?

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

   For SWDs:

   - Are the district's alternate ELA and mathematics curricula aligned to state standards and assessments?

   For ELLs:

   - Are the ESL, bilingual or Dual Language program curricula aligned with the state standards?

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

   For SWDs:

   - Does the district implement effective and rigorous ELA and mathematics instructional programs based on scientific evidence and the specific needs of all learners?

   For ELLs:

   - Are teachers teaching content and concepts to ELLs with the same rigor they teach general education students?

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)?

   For ELLs:

   - Are there supplemental educational services specifically for ELLs within and/or outside of the school day?
   - Are ELLs who have been enrolled in the United States (excluding Puerto Rico) for one year or more receiving testing accommodations for the ELA test such as extended time, separate locations, third reading of listening selections, and use of bilingual dictionaries/glossaries?
   - If appropriate, is the ELL student being offered the mathematics test translated into Spanish, Chinese (traditional), Haitian Creole, Korean, or Russian?

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

   For SWDs:

   - Do teachers of SWDs use varied, research-based instructional strategies in ELA and mathematics to address the individual needs of SWDs?
   - Does the district promote high expectations for SWDs?
   - Does the district ensure a safe and orderly school environment in order to optimize learning?
   - Does the district maximize student learning time?

For ELLs:

- Do teachers of ELLs use varied, researched-based instructional strategies in ELA and mathematics (where appropriate) to address the individual needs of ELLs?
- Does the district promote high academic expectations of ELLs?

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

    For ELLs:

    - Is there an established, formative process or tool for identifying varying levels of proficiency among ELL students?

11. Do teachers use assessment data to inform instruction (monitoring, diagnosis, reteaching)? Are data accessible?

    For SWDs:

    - Does the district ensure that a system to track the performance of SWDs in ELA and mathematics throughout the year is in place and used?
    - Does the district provide a comprehensive accountability and data management system for SWDs?
    - *For ELLs:*
    - Do teachers of ELLs use assessment data to inform instruction (e.g., monitoring, diagnosis, reteaching)?
    - Does the district provide a comprehensive accountability and data management system for ELLs?

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

    For ELLs:

    - Is there a process in place to monitor the effectiveness of ESL, bilingual, or Dual Language programs?

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

    For SWDs:

    - Does the district provide teachers of SWDs with opportunities to receive high-quality, relevant, ongoing professional development regarding instructional techniques?
    - Does the district provide teachers of SWDs with opportunities to receive high-quality, relevant, ongoing professional development regarding effective use of student data?

For ELLs:

- Does the district provide teachers of ELLs with opportunities to receive high-quality, relevant, ongoing professional development regarding instructional techniques?
- Does the district provide teachers of ELLs with opportunities to receive high-quality, relevant, ongoing professional development regarding effective use of student data?

14. Are teachers translating professional development into effective classroom practice?

For ELLs:

- Are teachers of ELLs translating professional development into effective classroom practice?

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

For English language learners:

- Are there sufficient supports in place for new ESL, bilingual, and Dual Language teachers?

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

For SWDs:

- Are teachers of SWDs are qualified to teach SWDs ?
- Has the district developed, implemented, and evaluated a comprehensive improvement plan that addresses the needs of SWDs ?

For ELLs:

- Has the district developed, implemented, and evaluated a comprehensive improvement plan that addresses the needs of ELLs?

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 completes 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* (SEC), 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 were not available to Learning Point Associates at the time of co-interpretation. As such, Learning Point Associates compiled NCLB accountability data for the most recent three years available (i.e., 2002–03, 2003–04, and 2004–05) 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 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. A disciplinary topic (e.g., critical reading, vocabulary) by cognitive level (e.g., Recall, Demonstrate and Explain) 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 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 area (ELA), during a three-hour block of time. The observations were conducted on three different days for each school during the 2006–07 school year. While in schools, observers visited 8–12 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 levels (e.g., region, district, school) and respondent groups (e.g., teachers, administrators). As a result, the protocols covered the same topics. When appropriate, the same questions were asked of teachers, principals, content coaches, and district personnel.

The teacher interviews were structured tightly, primarily to elicit short responses that could be compared readily within 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. The documents submitted by the district were examined against the guiding questions established for this audit.

The document review process involved three steps. First, each district was given the guiding questions and the supporting standards directing the curriculum audit as well as a rubric outlining the criteria by which the documents would be reviewed. Learning Point Associates also provided examples of the types of documents and plans that a district might use in responding to each of these questions. Second, district personnel identified key documents addressing each question, using the document review matrix provided by Learning Point Associates. Only the documents submitted by each district were examined in this process. Third, once the documents were

received by Learning Point Associates, teams of four staff members evaluated the district documents using the rating scale.

The evaluation process began with each staff member individually reviewing all the documents. Once the individual review was complete, Learning Point Associates staff met in pairs to compare and discuss ratings. As a final step, all four staff members met to discuss the pair ratings and to agree on the final rating for each guiding question addressed by the document review. This two-step evaluation process promoted a fair assessment of the documents, not allowing one individual or pair to drive the team's decision. This process allowed multiple perspectives to be considered in the scoring.

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 or policies, implementation of those plans or 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. 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 and/or mathematics 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 required for the topics addressed within each subject. Cognitive demand categories provide a structure to measure the depth of understanding for each topic.

The ELA curriculum alignment, reviewing coverage of topics and depth of knowledge in ELA, was performed using the literacy competencies and performance descriptors as defined by the state's ELA standards. This component of the New York ELA standards was chosen because the literacy competencies and performance descriptors are expectations that New York has of students at each grade level. These written expectations identify content topic as well as the depth of knowledge or level of cognitive demand required of the student. By conducting a two-step alignment that includes expected student outcomes, a focused discussion of the range of topics and depth of knowledge in the written ELA curriculum is possible. Gap analysis also is a byproduct of this process. Each district's identified ELA written curriculum was reviewed by multiple Learning Point Associates literacy specialists to identify the degree to which the district curriculum was aligned to the state's identified literacy competencies in Grades 2, 4, 6, and 8 and student performance descriptors in Grade 10.

Special Education Component

The purpose of the special education component of the audit 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 component included district and 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 teachers with responsibility for oversight of special education services in that school; classroom observations utilizing a research-based special education classroom observation protocol designed by Learning Point Associates; a review of the school climate utilizing the Total School Environment Protocol; focus groups with parents of SWDs; a review of approximately 50 redacted IEPs per district; 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. At the conclusion of the data collection, analyses were conducted and a report of findings was developed for each audited district.

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 ensure the inclusion of at least one intermediate and one high school.

It is important to note that the special education curriculum audit did not in any way attempt to evaluate special education compliance. Rather, this audit assessed the alignment between the written, taught, and tested curriculum and the degree to which SWDs are being instructed related to the general education curriculum. The underlying assumption for the curriculum audit was that SWDs should be tested on what they are taught, that what they are taught should be aligned with state standards that apply to all students, and that they need to have access to what is being taught if they are going to be tested on it.

English Language Learner Component

The purpose of the ELL component of the audit 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-specific component of the audit included district and 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 that 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 sampling 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 and one high school.

Review parameters for the ELL component of the district audit were limited to instructional contexts, teachers, and students engaged in the three primary program models for ELLs defined by the New York City Department of Education's Office of ELLs: Transitional Bilingual Education, ESL, and Dual Language. The audit did not address identification and placement procedures, program entrance and exit requirements, or placement procedures.

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 No Child Left Behind (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 (e.g., 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 (e.g., 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 within 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 held April 26–27, 2007, 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 priority area.
- Present and defend key findings.

- Respond to clarifying questions.
- Refine and reach consensus on key findings.

Identification of Key Findings

As the co-interpretation work groups presented their findings to the whole group during the co-interpretation meeting for District 8, some natural combining and winnowing of results occurred. From various data sources, the participants used relational and triangulation methods 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. This process also resulted in creating positive key findings (i.e., areas where the district demonstrated positive impact based on the available data). 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:

1. Identify a set of hypotheses supported by evidence for each key finding.
2. Reach consensus on a set of hypotheses for each key finding.

Phase 4: Action Planning

The last step in the audit process will be action planning. This process will result in an action plan focused on the key findings identified in the co-interpretation report. The actions will be integrated into the DCEP and eventually at the school level in the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP).

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

Key Findings

As illustrated in the Phase 3 process description, each key finding statement was generated through the co-interpretation process. In a facilitated sequence of steps, participants (consisting of regional and district administrators and staff as well as school personnel) identified findings that were supported by data presented in multiple reports. Initial findings were identified in small group sessions, then presented to all co-interpretation participants. Participants individually prioritized findings, based on their opinions that the findings, if acted upon, would improve district outcomes related to instruction and learning in ELA. In a group process, participants also identified hypotheses about the causes and conditions contributing to the key findings.

The prioritized findings, or key findings, are presented as follows. For each key finding, the presentation includes supporting data and hypotheses. These also are summarized in a data map in the appendix.

Key Finding 1

There is an inconsistency regarding the adequacy of materials in the district, particularly for ELLs, struggling students, and secondary students.

This finding was supported by several reports: the Document Review Report, SEC Report, Special Education Report, and Interview Report. As this finding indicates, data reveal an inconsistent response as to whether instructional materials in the district are adequate, specifically for ELLs, students performing below grade level, and secondary students. Although the Document Review Report reveals that the district provides support to schools to ensure that the selected materials are aligned to state standards, only 56 percent of teachers surveyed reported having adequate materials available for instruction, according to the SEC Report. This finding also is corroborated by the Special Education Report, which reveals that secondary teachers reported little availability and use of supplementary materials, as well as the special education observations, which were inconclusive as to the adequacy of instructional materials. Data from the Interview Report also suggest that there is a lack of appropriate materials for ELLs and struggling students.

In addition to there not being enough materials for students, the Interview Report reveals that many respondents did not feel that the materials addressed the needs of students reading below grade level. Although several respondents in the Special Education Report felt that the materials met the needs of their students, several included a caveat to this by adding that the materials fit their students' needs because the teachers themselves develop or modify the materials accordingly. It also was reported that instructional resources are being used to support the learning of SWDs in only about half of the classrooms. Respondents in the ELL Report also reported that although supplemental materials and personnel are provided to schools to assist ELL instruction, the use of technology tools and computer software was less accessible in most classrooms as compared to general education classrooms.

The hypotheses generated by co-interpretation participants regarding this finding focus on schools' need for support from the district in understanding the needs of special populations to make guided decisions about purchasing appropriate materials. Hypotheses also suggest that schools need support in aligning their budgets to CEP plans, standards, assessments, and data on subgroups. Finally, many co-interpretation participants reported that many of the materials in classrooms are inappropriate because they are of low quality, outdated, and not research-based, including technology, and should be removed or replaced.

Key Finding 2

The written ELA curriculum and instruction are not fully aligned to state standards. The K–8 written curriculum has gaps in areas, such as spelling, handwriting, and fluency. The district did not submit ELA curricula for Grades 9–12.

The primary sources for this key finding are the Curriculum Alignment Report and the SEC Report, although the Interview Report and Document Review Report also provide support for the finding. As indicated, the ELA curriculum in District 8 is not aligned to the New York state standards. The Interview Report reveals that teachers perceive they are following the written curriculum closely and that it is aligned to standards; however, data from the SEC Report reveal that although teachers feel well prepared to provide instruction that is aligned with ELA or reading standards, the content areas and levels of cognitive demand they emphasize in the classroom do not necessarily align with standards. For example, teachers in Grades K–3 place some emphasis on the areas of comprehension, listening and viewing, and speaking and listening skills with their students; however, the standards require much more emphasis to be placed on these areas. Similarly, high school teachers report devoting limited instructional time to critical reading, writing processes, writing applications, and speaking and presenting compared to what is required by the standards.

According to the Curriculum Alignment Report, several literacy competencies in reading and writing that are identified by state standards are missing from the district's written curriculum. For example, in the Grade 2 curriculum, there is no evidence of dictionary skills or handwriting competency being addressed. Similarly, in the Grade 4 curriculum, there is no evidence of spelling and handwriting or thesaurus study being addressed. In fact, data from the Curriculum Alignment Report indicate that dictionary and thesaurus use is not explicitly addressed in the curriculum at all. Several literacy competencies identified by state standards for listening and speaking also are missing from District 8's written curriculum. According to the Curriculum Alignment Report, fluency is not addressed on the Grade 8 literacy curriculum map, and there is no evidence of attending to a listening activity for any period of time in the curriculum for any grade.

The SEC and Curriculum Alignment Reports further highlight several areas in which both the range of topics and the levels of cognitive demand that should be emphasized are not aligned with ELA standards. It should be noted that the key finding developed by the co-interpretation participants only addressed the range of topics; however, the auditors also are including data regarding the alignment of the levels of cognitive demand—depth of understanding—in the curriculum as an important finding. As discussed in the Curriculum Alignment Report, an

effective written curriculum requires students to respond to a variety of cognitive demand levels (ranging from Recall to Generate and Create) to meet the state's standards. According to the SEC Report, teachers in Grades K–3 and high school reported spending little time developing their students' creative and investigative cognitive skills compared to what is expected by the New York standards. Based on the Curriculum Alignment and Document Review Reports, the cognitive expectations for students are not clear in District 8's curriculum because the K–8 curriculum map that has been developed and distributed to the schools does not focus on students' depth of understanding, only on content topics.

The hypotheses generated regarding this key finding suggest that the New York state standards are not consistently referred to in schools across the district and that explicit attention needs to be directed to the standards when implementing the written curriculum. Although the district does provide support to schools to ensure that the instructional materials are aligned to state standards, co-interpretation participants pointed out that writing and developing the curriculum is a process that requires ongoing reflection and refinement, which does not necessarily occur. Another hypothesis regarding this key finding suggests that learning about the standards should be embedded in new teachers' professional development and teaching experience.

Key Finding 3

A majority of teachers report that they are not prepared to teach and need support in serving SWDs or ELLs.

There were several data sources that support this key finding, including the Interview Report, SEC Report, ELL Report, and Special Education Report. The Interview Report reveals that the ability to meet the needs of different learners, such as ELLs and SWDs, are among the most problematic areas identified by respondents. Building personnel cite factors, such as not enough ESL and special education teachers, insufficient services for students, and teachers' need for specialized instructional strategies. Although teachers report liking the ELA curriculum, they do not necessarily know how to differentiate instruction for their struggling students. As such, many respondents perceived that SWDs are not being served adequately in elementary and secondary schools (three out of four secondary schools and one out of six elementary schools in the sample were given low ratings on how effectively the needs of SWDs are being met by the district). In a related vein, the ELL Report found that general education teachers are not as consistent in addressing ELLs' needs, particularly with language learning goals.

Although data from the Special Education Report indicate that District 8 is implementing rigorous instructional programs based on scientific evidence and specific to the needs of all learners, the SEC Report showed that only about half of teachers reported feeling well prepared to teach students with limited English proficiency, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, or diverse learning abilities.

The hypotheses generated by participants regarding this key finding focus primarily on professional development and the need to provide varied and professional opportunities and models to all teachers. The "Lunch and Learn" model is not perceived to be enough. Suggestions made by co-interpretation participants for other professional learning opportunities that could be

incorporated include visits to other schools, conference attendance, the creation of study groups, and peer coaching; however, it also was noted that teachers should be looking on their own for opportunities to learn, without necessarily having to be told what to do. Participants suggested that those teachers who do not feel prepared to teach students with special needs should be taking more of an initiative to learn about these issues, subscribe to professional journals, and generally make more of an effort to "expand their professional horizons."

Key Finding 4

Professional development with regard to New York ELA standards and the Region 2 literacy curriculum maps is not differentiated to account for the divergent needs evidenced by new and seasoned teachers. In addition, while District 8 has provided comprehensive data-driven professional development opportunities for all teachers, teachers remain in need of sustained ongoing professional development with formal monitoring protocols (process and product) to assess the use of best practices with targeted populations, such as ELLs and SWDs.

This key finding is supported by the data from the Special Education Report, Interview Report, SEC Report, Document Review Report, and ELL Report. According to the Document Review Report, although the district has a professional development model, there is no evidence that professional development offerings are consistent across the district, nor is there evidence that the district analyzes the goals and focus for professional development or that there is a district process or expectations for monitoring professional development opportunities. The Special Education Report also confirms this disconnect between District 8's professional development plan and the effective communication of this plan across the district. There also does not appear to be an integrated professional development plan, only a special education-specific plan for professional development.

Not only do the data show a need for formal monitoring protocols for professional development opportunities, but another component of this key finding is the need for teachers to receive ongoing professional development. Despite the inconsistency in professional development offerings and monitoring plans across the district, the Interview and SEC Reports reveal that professional development, as well as the presence of a literacy coach in the schools, generally is perceived to have a positive impact on instruction. Most of the professional learning opportunities take place during the school year; however, due to the elimination of the 100-minute professional development sessions, professional development now has even less of a presence in schools; and efforts to get teachers to attend are not always successful. According to the SEC Report, only 56 percent of K–12 teachers surveyed reported attending a summer professional development session about ELA; 53 percent of K–12 teachers reported receiving less than 36 hours of inservice training in ELA, reading, or literature in the previous 12 months. Less than half of teachers reported being enrolled in ELA college courses geared toward teaching and learning, and half of the teachers surveyed reported never—or at most once or twice a year—participating in a study group, network, or collaborative.

One focus on the district, in terms of professional development, was differentiated instruction. The Special Education Report reveals that most teachers have had some professional

development in the use of student data, and that there is a great deal of professional development provided to schools in the areas of differentiated instruction, balanced literacy, guided reading, and Point of Entry Model, which are uniform in the district. The ELL Report similarly describes teacher reports of receiving professional development on how to use assessment to inform instruction and using differentiated instruction for ELLs. The SEC Report also reveals that the majority of K–12 teachers (75 percent of those surveyed) perceived a moderate to major emphasis on classroom assessment in professional development activities. The Interview Report states that the region provides workshops on differentiated instruction to teams within the schools who then are supposed to turnkey it; however, several district respondents and principals suggest that teachers may not be as proficient as necessary in differentiating instruction as they should be for dealing with struggling students. This may lead to problems with curriculum maps if teachers do not know how to determine student needs. It is interesting to note the variation in responses between school and district administrators and the teachers themselves regarding whether differentiated instruction is being used effectively in the classroom.

Several data sources support the finding that further emphasis needs to be placed on professional development for teachers instructing students with special needs. The SEC Report reveals that more than half of the teachers surveyed felt that there was little to no emphasis on meeting the needs of special populations in their professional development offerings. The Special Education Report points out that although the majority of teachers have received professional development in areas, such as classroom management, behavior modification techniques, and instructional techniques, these opportunities have neither been ongoing nor embedded in classroom practice. Special education parent focus groups also reveal a concern about inexperienced teachers teaching SWDs.

The ELL Report also highlights areas of need. Professional development about ELL-specific issues is not consistent, and teachers report not being provided with enough support to meet the needs of ELLs. Although nearly all ELL teachers reported receiving professional development, it was not necessarily geared toward ELL issues and tended to be the same professional development sessions attended by general education teachers (not ELL-specific). In fact, respondents reported that it was very rare for their professional development to be embedded in English, second-language acquisition, or pedagogy specific for ELLs.

Finally, this key finding addresses the need for professional development in District 8 to be differentiated based on the needs of new versus veteran teachers in understanding the ELA curriculum and state standards. According to the Interview and Special Education Reports, teacher turnover is a fairly common problem in the schools. Given that this leads to a high number of new teachers in the schools each year, respondents felt that the district could better support new teachers by offering new teacher workshops and providing a regional mentor year round. The Document Review Report showed no evidence of professional development opportunities for new teachers on New York state standards. In addition, according to the ELL Report, professional development for new teachers early in their teaching careers is not provided. Districtwide this practice varies from principal to principal.

The loss of the 100 minutes of professional development time was one of the main hypotheses generated as a reason for this particular key finding. Due to contractual limitations, professional development opportunities effectively were limited and often had to be voluntary, which impeded teacher attendance. Co-interpretation participants also pointed to the need for data to be used to make more definitive instructional decisions. Just as instruction should be differentiated, there was a perceived need to differentiate professional development based on the readiness and needs of staff members to meet the needs of students. This is aligned with another hypothesis that was generated by participants who perceived a lack of research-based inquiry into the needs of teachers and students as learners. A deeper understanding of learners (especially learners with special needs) would help teachers determine appropriate instructional strategies. Finally, another factor that was hypothesized as a reason for this key finding was that although the administration provides oversight of the implementation of professional development elements, it does not necessarily provide followthrough and monitor the effectiveness of the professional development.

Positive Key Findings

There were two key findings developed during the co-interpretation process, which participants unanimously agreed reflected positive aspects of District 8's curriculum and implementation. These findings are discussed briefly in the following.

The district has a comprehensive K–8 Literacy Curriculum Map (that was developed through a definitive, collaborative process. The curriculum maps are available to teachers and are used.

This positive key finding was supported by data from the Interview Report, Curriculum Alignment Report, Document Review Report, SEC Report, and the Special Education Report. As indicated by the key finding, data from the Curriculum Alignment and Document Review Reports show that District 8 has a written ELA curriculum map for Grades K–8, and it is available to schools across the district. Not only is the curriculum map reported to be available to teachers, but the SEC Report reveals that the majority of teachers who were surveyed reported that they receive support from the administration for teaching ELA, and they are very well prepared to provide ELA instruction that meets the standards. District 8 teachers perceive that the written curriculum is aligned with state and district standards and report that they follow the written curriculum closely. The Special Education Report notes that the regional office monitors the implementation of the curriculum in classrooms serving SWDs and not just general education classrooms.

Supplementary academic services are being used and implemented in elementary and secondary schools.

Data from the Special Education and ELL Reports supported this positive key finding. These two reports indicate that Academic Intervention Services are available for ELLs and SWDs in the schools and that teachers report providing supplemental support for these students in their classrooms. The ELL Report observations reveal that ELL teachers utilized adaptive instructional strategies, such as checking for understanding and reteaching, activating prior

student knowledge, and providing opportunities for independent practice. District staff and teachers confirm that supplemental personnel and supplementary materials are provided to schools to assist with ELL instruction, and according to the Special Education Report, the district monitors to ensure that students are getting appropriate services.

Additional Key Findings

Other findings were developed by the co-interpretation participants but were not necessarily given top priority. A number of these findings are related to those already discussed.

- There is inconsistency in the evidence aligning the process of monitoring to the actual implementation of a monitoring plan (ELL Report, Document Review Report, Special Education Report).
- There is a district leadership team that develops the district improvement plan, but the plan is not developed in collaboration with, and does not include feedback from teachers and building administrators (Special Education Report).
- Although the needs of ELLs are aligned with the core curriculum and ELLs have the same access to the general education curriculum, teachers need support for K–8 ELL students to pass assessments and for ELL secondary students to pass the Regents (ELL Report).
- There are no curriculum maps for Grades 9–12 (Document Review Report).
- There is a preponderance of teacher-directed whole-class instruction (ELL Report, Observation Report, SEC Report).
- Data use and availability is inconsistent in the district. At the secondary level, data are not widely available (Special Education Report, Document Review Report, ELL Report, Interview Report).
- For Grades 3–12, teachers report that instructional time generally is devoted equally across ELA topic areas whereas assessments place more emphasis on comprehension and critical reading (SEC Report).

Recommendations for Action Planning

The key findings that arose out of co-interpretation with District 8 led Learning Point Associates to make three recommendations. In this section, the three recommendations along with research and best practices in the appropriate areas are presented.

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. Furthermore, 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 it reflects the depth and breadth of the state standards and is clearly articulated and explicit enough for teachers to implement consistently.

Link to the Findings

Learning Point Associates conducted an alignment of the ELA curriculum with materials supplied by Region 2 and District 8. This process inspected the alignment of the ELA curriculum to the literacy competencies 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 in which gaps exist in coverage:

- Reading
  - Grade 4: Decoding, Motivation to Read
  - Grade 6: Word Recognition, Background Knowledge and Vocabulary Development, and Motivation to Read
  - Grade 8: Word Recognition, Background Knowledge and Vocabulary Development, Fluency, and Motivation to Read
- Writing
  - Grade 2: Spelling, Handwriting, and Motivation to Write
  - Grade 4: Spelling, Handwriting, and Motivation to Write
  - Grade 6: Spelling, Handwriting, and Motivation to Write
  - Grade 8: Spelling, Text Production, and Motivation to Write

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, and 8) addresses several of the state's literacy competencies, the following presents 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 which specific competencies or performance indicators are not addressed.):

- Reading
  - Grade 2: Missing four literacy competencies (out of 31)
  - Grade 4: Missing 18 literacy competencies (out of 29)
  - Grade 6: Missing 19 literacy competencies (out of 28)
  - Grade 8: Missing 16 literacy competencies (out of 20)
- Writing
  - Grade 2: Missing nine literacy competencies (out of 16)
  - Grade 4: Missing 11 literacy competencies (out of 18)
  - Grade 6: Missing 12 literacy competencies (out of 21)
  - Grade 8: Missing six literacy competencies (out of 11)
- Listening and Speaking
  - Grade 2: Listening: Missing one literacy competency (out of four)
Speaking: Missing one literacy competencies (out of eight)
  - Grade 4: Listening: Missing three literacy competencies (out of four)
Speaking: Missing four literacy competencies (out of 10)
  - Grade 6: Listening: Missing three literacy competencies (out of five)
Speaking: Missing three literacy competencies (out of 10)
  - Grade 8: Listening: Missing three literacy competencies (out of five)
Speaking: Missing three literacy competencies (out of eight)

The SEC Report also provides 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 8 ELA curriculum does have missing components and competencies in addition to those not addressed in the state standards.

Note that these findings are restricted to the curriculum for Grades K–8 because District 8 did not submit for review any ELA curriculum documents for Grades 9–12.

Link to the 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 curriculum align, student performance still will lag if the level of cognitive demand required by the standards differs from the cognitive demands reflected in classroom instruction and 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. Curricula must be aligned clearly 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 effectively can help teachers develop units and lessons that will interest students and enable them to perform well on high-stakes tests (Glatthorn, 1999).

Implementation Considerations

Grades K–8. District 8 has engaged in an extensive process to develop curriculum maps that define district expectations for what is to be taught. In the co-interpretation meeting, district employees continuously referred to the curriculum maps as *living documents* that would need to be reviewed and revised on a consistent basis. The recommendation outlined as follows is designed to provide guidance as the district embarks on reviewing and revising these maps to more fully meet the breadth and depth of the New York state standards at all grade levels.

District 8 should review the district's current ELA curriculum maps 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 ELA Core Curriculum. Learning Point Associates recommends 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 then can 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. Learning Point Associates feels that this approach would work well for Grades K–8.

In revising the curriculum, the district should consider the following seven curricular components (English, 2000):

- Prioritized ELA content to be taught
- Sequence or order in which the content is to be taught
- Time frame for covering the content
- Expectations for what students are to know, understand, and be able to do
- Detailed linkages of the content to instructional materials, such as the page numbers, names, or sections of trade books, textbooks, and other materials
- Ideas for classroom procedures or approaches for successful teaching, such as sample lessons
- Connections to assessments to be used

Many of these elements exist in the district's current curriculum maps. Incorporating the missing components from those outlined here and compiling this information in one central curricular document ensures that the work of teachers is focused and connected. This allows 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.

Grades 9–12. The high school curriculum poses a greater problem because currently there are no state-identified literacy competencies available for Grade 10. In addition, no Grades 9–12 ELA curriculum documents were submitted by the district for review. Because these grades are lacking competencies, it is very difficult for teachers to understand what they are expected to teach. New York 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 district's 9–12 ELA curriculum for alignment to New York state performance descriptors. Learning Point Associates recommends that the committee examine the content alignment as well as the alignment between the cognitive expectations.

Monitoring. Finally, although the district currently has in place some policies and plans for monitoring and accountability, the review of key documents indicates that the district and schools also would benefit from establishing and implementing more formal processes for tracking the implementation of the ELA curriculum. During the co-interpretation meeting, participants indicated that many of the district's monitoring processes were intuitive or implicit and not explicitly outlined or defined, which can lead to a lack of common expectations across the district or even within an individual school.

Learning Point Associates recommends that District 8 form a committee of district- and school-level leadership that includes teacher representation to develop written policies and procedures for monitoring curriculum implementation. Such policies and procedures should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Purpose for curriculum monitoring
- Types of monitoring that will occur
- Types of data that will be collected
- Tools to be used
- Who is responsible for monitoring
- How often monitoring will occur
- How data will be analyzed
- How collected data will be used

Expectations and procedures for monitoring at both the district and school levels should be outlined to ensure that monitoring systems operate to focus and support teachers and leaders in improving curriculum and instructional practice.

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Recommendation 2

Implement a model of reading instruction that provides students with opportunities to build fluency, background knowledge, and reading skills utilizing a variety of texts at different levels. This instruction should feature directed instruction in reading comprehension, extended time for literacy instruction, and an emphasis for adolescent readers especially on developing a strong level of engagement with the material.

Link to the Findings

The district has provided support to schools to ensure that materials selected align to the state standards; however, schools may need assistance from the district in the review and recommendation of materials for special populations. It is possible that schools do not understand the needs of these special populations, which impair theirs ability to purchase appropriate materials. In addition, new administrators and teachers may need direction and guidance in researching and purchasing appropriate materials for all students.

It appears that most elementary schools have enough materials for reading at different levels with the exception of supplementary materials for ELLs. A little less than half of the teachers, particularly at the secondary level, report they do not have adequate supplementary materials. Some teachers interviewed indicated that the materials they have do not address the needs of students reading below grade level or SWDs. Some classroom materials and software may not be of the highest quality, current, or research based.

Link to the Research

A common feature of effective reading programs is student access to a wide variety of appealing trade books and other reading materials. (Cullinan, 2000). Highly effective literacy educators create print-rich classroom environments filled with high-quality, diverse reading materials including ELLs (Brisk & Harrington, 2000; Morrow & Gambrell, 2000). Research has shown that access to an abundance of books within the classroom results in increased motivation and increased reading achievement. (Guthrie, Schafer, Von Secker, & Alban, 2000). Students in classrooms with a well-designed classroom libraries (1) interact more with books, (2) spend more time reading, (3) demonstrate more positive attitudes toward reading, and (4) exhibit higher levels of reading achievement (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2002).

As District 8 begins to think about the materials they have and the ones they need, they also need to realize that just having these materials will not solve reading problems. The research in reading identifies students who are struggling in different ways.

Students have been labeled as struggling readers or *at-risk* for many reasons (Allington & Cunningham, 2001). The NAEP data for Grade 4 has shown improvement in reading scores since 1992. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the reading results for Grades 5, 9, and 12. About 70 percent of the students are performing below grade level in Grade 8 while 60 percent of 12th graders are performing below grade level (Olson, 2006). Other researchers in the field of reading concur with these findings, indicating that 70 percent of the adolescents are struggling readers.

This issue is a growing concern at the middle and high school levels. Several findings from District 8 indicate that this is a concern for this age level. Students at this level struggle with reading for many reasons. Many people think these students are having difficulty reading words accurately; however, most older struggling readers can read words accurately but do not comprehend what they read because of their reading rate, lack of strategy knowledge, or strategy application (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Carr, Saifer, & Novick, 2002; Kamil, 2003). The second group of struggling readers are students identified as struggling in reading and identified as SWDs or ELLs. All of these groups need additional instruction and time to read with materials at their level (Allington, 2005).

The third group of struggling readers are those not engaged in learning. Engagement is defined as being motivated intrinsically, building knowledge, using cognitive strategies, and interacting socially to learn from text (Guthrie, Wigfield, Barbosa, Perencevich, Taboada, & Davis et al., 2004). This lack of engagement is often the reason that skilled readers and writers do not progress in literacy at the middle and high school levels.

As District 8 looks at a review of the research on middle and high school students, it will want to focus on the common elements of successful instruction: (1) direct instruction in comprehension, (2) extended time for literacy, and (3) developing engagement or self-efficacy.

Direct Instruction. At the core of reading instruction lies comprehension. To build comprehension, a reader needs to use an interactive strategic process during reading (National Reading Panel, 2000). Research indicates that readers can be taught to be strategic in their approach to reading (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). Effective instructional methods use teacher explanation, modeling, guided practices, and discussion throughout the process. Students are asked to reflect on the use and effectiveness of the strategy while constructing meaning (Duffy Roehler, Sivan, Rackliffe, Book, & Meloth et al., 1987). Guided reading is one model where students are grouped flexibly by ability or need. They are grouped and regrouped on a based on observations and assessments (Flood, Lapp, Flood, & Nagel, 1992). Schools need to be aware of text availability, including a variety of genres on a variety of reading levels. This is essential to meeting students' varied needs.

Extended Time. Research has shown that good readers read for longer periods of time than poor readers (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). One of the ways for struggling readers to improve their reading level is by reading for extended periods of time. Reading for an extended period of time allows the readers the opportunity to try out comprehension, self-monitoring and word identification strategies that they are learning (Swift, 1993). Middle school students need extensive time set aside for them to read and respond to text that they choose to read (Ivey, 1999). A classroom library with all types of genres as well as magazines, comic books, picture books, and other interesting reading material at different reading levels is important in maintaining students' motivation and interest in reading (Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez, & Teale, 1993).

Student Engagement. The research of Guthrie et al. (2004) with adolescents has shown that once students become engaged in learning, skills can be taught to them. When students are engaged in learning, they see a use for their skills and successfully use them. This allows students to become involved and motivated in their learning. Students who are successful in learning develop self-efficacy or confidence that they are capable (Alvermann, 2003).

Implementation Considerations

The district should consider developing a model of reading at the secondary level and for struggling readers that includes the following:

- Direct instruction in comprehension during content classes
  - Identify strategies using a research base.
  - Develop an instructional framework for teachers using explanation, modeling, and discussion.
- Extended time for reading (during the school day)
  - Have materials available that include a wide range of topics.
  - Match students with text based on their reading ability or interest level.
  - Provide an extended time to read during the day.

- Wherever possible, a choice of student reading materials.
  - Have the choice of an assignment or type of text.
  - Develop an understanding of assignments.

The District also may wish to inventory classroom libraries using a structured checklist to determine whether every classroom has inviting and comfortable libraries well stocked with high-quality, high-interest books that are leveled and accessible to all students, including ELLs. The results of the inventory can be used to identify materials that could be purchased by the school to strengthen its reading program.

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Recommendation 3

Develop and implement a comprehensive professional development plan aligned to priority goals that provides data-driven, differentiated, job-embedded professional development and results in improved classroom practices and student achievement. Create a continuous feedback loop to allow ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and refinement of the plan.

Link to the Findings

Several of the data reports (ELL Report, Interview Report, SEC Report, and Special Education Report) discussed professional development, although in many instances the reports revealed conflicting statements. While the ELL Report, Interview Report, SEC Report, and Special Educations Report indicated professional development opportunities available for all teachers, the ELL Report and Special Education Report pointed out that the professional development opportunities do not address the needs of special populations. In addition, the Interview Report indicated that a great deal of professional development is provided at the school level while the ELL Report and Special Education Report indicate limited schoolwide professional development. Teacher interviews (Interview Report) and the Document Review Report revealed that professional development is not consistent across the district. The Document Review Report further revealed that the process for monitoring professional development is unclear. A priority hypothesis revealed a need for administration oversight and a need to differentiate professional development.

Interviews revealed inconsistencies related to new teacher support. Some interviews revealed that new teacher support is adequate while others reveal a need to improve region and district support for new teachers. This is especially true for new teachers as it relates to professional development on state content standards and the literacy curriculum map. In addition, interviews revealed high teacher turnover and identified that several teacher literacy leaders have fewer than two years of experience. These findings point to a need for differentiating professional development so new teachers and novice school-based teacher leaders receive instructional support to ensure their success.

Furthermore, interviews indicated that the elimination of the 100 professional development minutes has impacted teacher attendance at professional development sessions. The loss of professional development time during the school day was identified as a priority hypothesis. The Document Review Report further supports the premise that professional development is provided during the school year, but is less frequent and not necessarily well attended.

Link to the Research

NCLB requires professional development to be of high quality, sustained, intensive, and focused to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction.

The quality of good teaching should be evident in staff development programs. Ironically, this is seldom the case. The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (1996) reports the following:

> There is a mismatch between the kind of teaching and learning teachers are now expected to pursue with their students and the teaching they experience in their own professional education. Teachers are urged to engage their students in actively building their understanding of new ideas; to provide opportunities for practice and feedback as well as for inquiry, problem solving, collaboration, and critical reflection; to connect knowledge to students' developmental stages and personal experiences; and to carefully assess student learning over time. These desirable characteristics of teaching are usually absent in the learning afforded to teachers. There are few parallels between how teachers are expected to teach and how they are encouraged to learn. (p. 84)

Professional Learning Communities. The creation of professional learning communities requires a radical rethinking of the purpose and activities of staff development and a new understanding of its contribution to individual and organizational renewal (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) (2001) has worked in cooperation with 11 other national educational organizations to identify standards for professional development that provide benchmarks by which schools can assess their programs. The standards are organized into three categories: content, process, and context.

Content addresses the "what" of staff development—the actual skills or knowledge that educators need to possess or acquire. The content of effective staff development programs should be based on research, focus on both generic and discipline-specific teaching skills, and expand the repertoire of teachers to meet the needs of students who learn in diverse ways.

Process addresses the "how" of staff development—the means by which educators will acquire knowledge and skills. The process of effective staff development should accomplish the following:

- Attend to the tenets of good teaching.
- Provide the ongoing coaching that is critical to the mastery of new skills.
- Result in reflection and dialogue on the part of participants.
- Be sustained over a considerable period of time.
- Be evaluated at several different levels, including evidence of improved student performance.

Context refers to the organization, system, or culture that supports staff development initiatives. The context of effective staff development should be focused on individual schools and have strong support from the central office. It also should be embedded so deeply in daily work that it is difficult to determine where the work ends and the staff development begins. Finally, the context in which professional development is provided should foster renewal.

Standards-Based Instruction and Instructional Support. A practice that has been proven effective in other districts is promoting professional development opportunities to support using standards and assessment to improve instruction (Berman, 2000). Shared standards have the potential to draw teachers, parents, schools, and communities together across the state to share their best ideas and practices and help each other adapt them for the conditions affecting

their students. From lesson plans to test items and from scheduling methods to professional development plans, the standards can provide an organizer for shared efforts to improve education. The standards can be the vehicle for sharing and supporting many ways to help students learn (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.).

Mentoring for New Teachers. Between 20 percent and 30 percent of new teachers leave the field within the first three years (DePaul, 2000). Although there have been few large-scale studies of new-teacher induction programs and standards-based instruction, existing data confirm that schools that provide high levels of support for beginners do retain more teachers (Goodwin, 1999). Higher retention rates are not the only benefit of mentoring programs. The benefits for schools and students have been seen in higher student achievement and test scores (Education Commission of the States, 2000; Ganser, Marchione, & Fleischmann, 1999; Goodwin, 1999). The mere presence of a mentor is not enough; the mentor's knowledge of how to support a new teacher and skill at providing guidance are also crucial (Holloway, 2001).

Evaluating and Monitoring Professional Development. Most schools do not have a formalized, consistent process for evaluation of professional development designs, programs, activities, or events (Guskey, 2000; Sparks, 1998). Sparks and Hirsh (1997) emphasize the importance of the shift in evaluating professional development from teachers' perceptions regarding their needs to a focus on student learning. The need for concrete evidence that professional development is making a difference is important for maintaining credibility with teachers, leaders, and the community. A formal evaluation process demonstrates that the school is interested not only in teacher growth but also the growth for students. Professional development needs an ongoing evaluation process to ensure that the goals are being achieved, needs are being met, and resources are being used wisely (Zepeda, 1999). Without systematic evaluation of efforts based on hard data, it is almost impossible to determine whether the changes are sustainable and, more importantly, whether the professional development activities improve teachers' abilities to increase student achievement (Lindstrom & Speck, 2004).

Effective evaluation programs should have both long- and short-term objectives (Rutherford, 1989). Short-term objectives usually target changes in teacher behaviors, in the school, or in the curriculum while long-term objectives focus on improvements in student achievement or behavior. Professional development can be justified only if its ultimate goal is to improve education for students. Monitoring results has proven to be a major factor for achieving success in schools and requires that the theory and research presented, modeled, and practiced in workshop or inservice settings be supported with on-the-job coaching to promote transfer to the workplace and to facilitate change in teacher behavior that will affect student achievement (Lindstrom & Speck, 2004).

Supporting General Education and ELL Teachers. *Classroom Instruction That Works With English Language Learners*, published by ASCD (Hill & Flynn, 2006), looks at Marzano's original nine instructional strategies that work for all students and refines them for the ELL population. These practical strategies can be incorporated into professional development for all teachers. Still, other research suggests that classroom teachers need to understand, at a higher cognitive level, the challenges faced by their students and ways to meet those challenges. For example, classroom teachers need to know about first- and second-language acquisition, reading

and writing in a second language, alternative assessments, and sociocultural issues in education (Coady, Hamann, Harrington, Pacheco, Pho, & Yedlin, 2003).

In addition, studies examined by August and Calderón (2006) affirm the attributes of professional development deemed important for all teachers by the American Educational Research Association in the report created by the National Literacy Panel for Language-Minority Children and Youth (August & Shanahan, 2006). The attributes include the following:

- 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.

A practical first step in this area would be to provide embedded professional development to general education teachers that integrate knowledge of language acquisition, literacy, and teaching strategies shown to be successful with ELLs.

Supporting General Education and Special Education Teachers. To be most effective with their special education students, teachers need to know about the types of learning disabilities and how they affect students' receptive and expressive abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Thus, professional development that builds this knowledge and supports teachers through implementation in their own classrooms should be considered (García & Beltrán, 2003).

Research shows 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, n.d.). 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 immediately can use and implement in the classroom. In addition to hands-on skills training, classroom observations or videotapes of successfully inclusive classes, and situation-specific problem-solving sessions throughout the school year can be key to providing a frame of reference for these teachers (Whitworth, 1999). 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

Consider planning, designing, and implementing professional development utilizing NSDC components: context-establishing the environment for professional development; content-connecting data, professional development, and student achievement; and context-establishing the environment for professional development. The following models are suggested for enhancing schoolwide, job-embedded professional development:

- Action Research—A process through which educators examine their own practice, systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research.
- Assessment as Professional Development—Designing and evaluating assessments leads to powerful professional development.
- Case Discussions—Ways to use examples of classroom work as a springboard for discussion about subject matter knowledge and pedagogical reasoning, assumptions, teaching strategies, and student thinking.
- Critical Friends Groups—A professional learning community in which a small group of educators meet regularly to deepen their knowledge of their craft.
- Data Analysis—Is a powerful tool for professional development.
- Lesson Study—A cycle of instructional improvement focused on planning, observation, and revision of actual lessons.
- Tuning Protocols—Collaborative professional development activity that helps educators fine-tune their practice by examining student work or other artifacts of teaching and learning.
- Study Groups—Process that demonstrates a student-driven approach to professional development.

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Appendix

Data Map

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

The following tables list each of the key findings identified by co-interpretation participants, followed by the hypothesized root causes, including the voting results. The coding for data sources is as follows:

Curriculum Alignment—CA
Observations—SOM
District and School Interviews—DSI
Special Education—SE
Document Review—DR
Surveys of Enacted Curriculum—SEC
English Language Learner—ELL

Critical Key Finding	Supporting Findings	Source
1. There is an inconsistency regarding the adequacy of materials in the district, particularly for English language learners (ELLs), struggling students, and secondary students. **Final votes:** 4 *Note.* Several key findings were combined across themes, yielding this critical key finding.	1. The district has provided support to schools to ensure that materials selected align to the state standards. Alignment is monitored by the regional team.	DR p. 3
	2. A little more than half (31 of 55 or 56 percent) of teachers agree or strongly agree that they have adequate materials available for instruction.	SEC p. 174
	3. The majority of teachers (46 or 55 or 84 percent) reported that they are well prepared or very well prepared to select and/or adapt instructional materials to implement the curriculum.	SEC p. 58
	4. Classroom observations are inconclusive regarding the adequacy of instructional materials. Based on 11 classrooms, the team agreed or strongly agreed that "instructional resources are being used to support students with disabilities [SWDs]."	SE p. 8
	5. Secondary teachers report that supplementary materials are not available and not widely used.	SE p. 18
	6. A summary of interview responses indicated that teachers do not think materials address the needs of students reading below grade level.	DSI p. 18

Hypotheses	Votes
1. Schools need support from the district to review and recommend materials for special populations.	11
2. Schools need support in aligning budget to Comprehensive Education Plans, standards, assessment, and data on subgroups.	15
3. Schools need support in understanding the needs of these special populations so they can make appropriate purchase of materials.	15
4. Some materials in the classrooms are not of high quality, are outdated, are not research-based, including technology, and should be removed.	15
5. There should be movement of materials within a school building (from closets across classrooms).	8
6. New administrators, schools, and teachers need direction in searching out and purchasing appropriate materials for all students.	15

Critical Key Finding	Supporting Findings	Source
2. The written curriculum and instruction are not fully aligned to state standards. The K–8 written curriculum has gaps in areas, such as spelling, handwriting, and fluency. **Final votes:** 7 *Note.* Several key findings were combined across themes, yielding this critical key finding.	1. Teacher perceptions are that they are following the written curriculum and that it is aligned to standards.	DSI pp. 4, 5
	2. In Grades K–3, teachers reported some emphasis in the area of comprehension, listening and viewing, and speaking and listening. However, the standards placed more emphasis on these areas.	SEC pp. 9–12
	3. The majority of teachers who were surveyed (52 or 55 or 95 percent) perceive themselves as very well prepared to provide instruction that meets English Langauge Arts (ELA) and or reading standards.	SEC p. 54
	4. High school teachers (Grades 9–12) report that limited instructional time is spent on the ELA topic areas of critical reading, writing processes, writing applications, and speaking and presenting as compared to the standards.	SEC pp. 29, 30
	5. High school teachers (Grades 9–12) report that instruction is limited in the cognitive expectations of students related to create and investigate.	SEC p. 29
	6. No evidence of dictionary skills at Grade 2.	CA p. 10
	7. Spelling and handwriting not addressed at Grade 4.	CA p. 6
	8. No evidence of handwriting competency at Grade 2.	CA p. 18
	9. No thesaurus study at Grade 4.	CA p. 13
	10. Dictionary and thesaurus is not explicit on the K–8 literacy curriculum map.	CA. p. 15

Critical Key Finding	Supporting Findings	Source
Note. Several key findings were combined across themes, yielding this critical key finding.	11. Fluency is not evident at Grade 8 on the K–8 literacy curriculum map	CA p. 16
	12. Cognitive demand was not evaluated because the content topics in reading need to be written focusing on student expectations.	CA p. 2
	13. The district has provided support to schools to ensure that materials selected align to state standards.	DR p. 3
Hypotheses		**Votes**
1. New York state standards are not referred to on a consistent basis.		11
2. Writing the curriculum is a process that requires on going reflection and refinement.		5
3. Teachers new to the system must be embedded in learning about the standards.		14
4. Explicit attention needs to be directed to state standards.		15

Critical Key Finding	Supporting Findings	Source
3. A majority of teachers report that they are not prepared to teach and need support in serving SWDs or ELLs, and therefore, the needs of many SWDs and ELLs are not being met. **Final votes:** 8 *Note.* Several key findings were combined across themes, yielding this critical key finding.	1. The ability to meet the needs of different learners, such as ELLs and SWDs are among the most problematic areas identified in the qualitative study (interviews).	DSI p. 9
	2. Less than half of K–12 teachers surveyed reported that they are well prepared or very well prepared to teach students who have limited English proficiency.	SEC p. 60
	3. Less than half (21 of 55 or 38 percent) of teachers surveyed said they were well prepared to teach students who had a learning disability that impacted ELA learning.	SEC p. 60
	4. Less than half of K–12 teachers who were surveyed (19 or 55 or 35 percent) reported that they are well or very well prepared to teachers students with physical disabilities.	SEC p. 58
	5. Approximately half of K–12 teachers who were surveyed (28 of 55 or 51 percent) perceive themselves as very well prepared or well prepared to teach students with diverse learning abilities.	SEC p. 62
	6. Concerns expressed in interviews: Not enough English as a Second Language and special education instructors; the service provided to special populations is not comprehensive enough and students do not receive sufficient services; teachers need instructional strategies.	DSI p. 10
	7. In general education ELA classrooms, teachers are not as consistent in addressing ELL needs, particularly with language learning goals.	SE p. 25

Hypotheses	Votes
1. There is a need to provide varied and professional opportunities (models) not just "Lunch and Learns" (e.g., visits to other schools, attendance at conferences, creation of study groups, and peer coaching should be incorporated into professional opportunities.	15
2. There needs to be clear expectations on what these student populations (ELLs and SWDs) need to know and be able to do.	14
3. Do we have enough highly qualified and effective teachers in these areas with experience in teaching?	13
4. Are the teachers (in this majority) looking for opportunities for learning? Have they subscribed to a professional journal? Do they make any effort to expand their professional horizons on their own (without being told what to do)?	14

Critical Key Finding	Supporting Findings	Source
4. While District 8 has provided comprehensive data-driven professional development opportunities for all teachers, there is a need to strengthen professional development by offering sustained, ongoing, job-embedded professional development with formal monitoring protocols (process and product) to assess the use of best practices with targeted populations, such as ELLs and SWDs. There is a need to enhance professional development by differentiating it to meet the needs of new and seasoned teachers in their understanding of New York standards and the Literacy Curriculum Map (LCM).	1. Most teachers reported having had some professional development in the use of student data	SE p. 18
	2. Regional and special education administrators report there is a great deal of professional development provided to schools, especially in the areas of differentiated instruction, balanced literacy, guided reading, and Partnership Outreach Education Model, which are uniform in the district.	SE p. 18
	3. Data from interviews suggests that teachers may not be as proficient as necessary in differentiating instruction for struggling students.	DSI p. 25
	4. Half of K–12 teachers surveyed (28 of 55 or 51 percent) reported participating in study groups, networks, or collaboratives never to once or twice a year.	SEC p. 66
	5. In middle school, seven Grades 7–8 teachers reported that they were enrolled in college courses that supported ELA learning.	SEC p. 65
	6. A little more than half of K–12 teachers surveyed (31 of 55 or 56 percent) reported participating in summer learning about ELA while 44 percent of respondents reported no ELA summer learning experience.	SEC p. 65
	7. More than half of K–12 teachers surveyed (31 of 55 or 56 percent) felt that the professional development emphasis on meeting the needs of special populations was a minor to none.	SEC p. 77
Final votes: 8	8. Less than half of the K–12 teachers surveyed (24 of 55 or 44 percent) felt that there was a moderate to major professional development emphasis on meeting the needs of special populations in professional development activities.	SEC p. 77

Critical Key Finding	Supporting Findings	Source
Note. All professional development findings were combined into one key finding, which culminated in this critical key finding.	9. A minimal number of K–12 teachers (10 of 55 or 18 percent) reported, participating in 36–60 hours of ELA, reading, or literature workshops (inservices) in 12 months.	SEC p. 64
	10. Of 55 K–12 teachers, 29 (53 percent) reported receiving 1–35 hours of ELA, reading, or literature workshops (inservices) in 12 months	SEC p. 64
	11. Less than half of K–12 teachers (26 of 55 of 47 percent) reported enrolling in ELA college courses that supported the teaching and learning.	SEC p. 65
	12. The majority of K–12 teachers (43 of 55 or 78 percent) reported professional development as positive; 14 percent reported the professional development experience had little to no influence.	SEC p. 52
	13. The majority of K–12 teachers (44 of 55 or 80 percent) felt that there was a moderate to major emphasis on state content standards in professional development activities.	SEC p. 75
	14. The region is providing workshops on differentiated instruction to teams in the schools who are supposed to turnkey it.	DSI p. 25
	15. There is no evidence that professional development offerings are consistent across the district.	DR p. 12
	16. Of 55 K–12 teachers 41 (75 percent) felt that there was a moderate to major emphasis on classroom assessment in professional development activities.	SEC p. 78
	17. Principals interviewed shared that high teacher turnover was a fairly common concern. One principal shared that two thirds of literacy teachers have fewer than two years of experience.	DSI p. 17
	18. Teacher qualification was beyond the scope of this review. However, some teachers and administrators noted that the teacher turnover is an issue	SE p. 18
	19. Principal states that teachers have problems with curriculum maps because they do not know how to determine student needs.	DSI p. 5
	20. The district has a professional development model.	DR p. 11
	21. Professional development is perceived to have a positive impact on instruction.	DSI p. 13
	22. Professional development is not provided early on, districtwide; provided by principals (begin teachers)	ELL p. 9
	23. Teachers report not being aware of overall planning to address needs of ELLs. Communication is an issue.	ELL p. 13

Critical Key Finding	Supporting Findings	Source
Note. All professional development findings were combined into one key finding, which culminated in this critical key finding.	24. Most all teachers report use for ELLs differentiated instruction.	ELL p. 13
	25. Teachers do not report providing detailed support for ELLs and SWDs	ELL p. 13
	26. Teachers report providing supplemental support for ELLs	ELL p. 13
	27. Teachers report providing supplemental support for ELLs	ELL p. 13
	28. Program specific professional development—Integrated professional development plan is not evident in this document.	SE pp. 17, 18
	29. Disconnect between district professional development plan and effective communication and implementation of such a plan.	SE p. 17
	30. There is no evidence that the district analyzes the goals and focus for professional development.	DR p. 11
	31. There is no evidence for having criteria for outside consultants	DR p. 12
	32. Several respondents though region and district support would be improved if a new teacher workshop were offered annually and if the region mentor was available all year round.	DSI p. 14
	33. Parents interviewed indicated a concern with inexperienced teachers teaching special education students.	SE p. 18
	34. No teacher or building administrator that was interviewed had played a role in the development of the district's improvement plan.	SE p. 18
	35. Overall the impact of professional development was positive in more than half of the schools. Teachers, principals, and coaches said professional development had a strong influence on instruction.	DSI p. 13
	36. Coach impact interview—Respondents reported that coaches have a marked influence on instruction.	DSI p. 11
	37. Coaches are perceived to have an impact on instruction, but secondary schools are less likely to have a full time qualified coach than elementary schools.	DSI pp. 11, 12
	38. Teachers report seeing professional development on how to use assessment to inform instruction and use it to do the same.	ELL pp. 15, 20
	39. District process and expectations for monitoring professional development are unclear.	DR p. 11

Critical Key Finding	Supporting Findings	Source
Note. All professional development findings were combined into one key finding, which culminated in this critical key finding.	40. Teachers report attempting to introduce professional development benefits into teaching.	ELL p. 14, 20
	41. Rare for professional development through embedded professional development for ELA, second language acquisition, and pedagogy for ELLs.	ELL p. 14
	42. All but one teacher reported receiving PD, but necessarily geared to ELL issues.	ELL p. 14
	43. Professional development about ELLs not consistent.	ELL p. 19
	44. ELL teachers are offered same professional development opportunities as general education.	ELL p. 8
	45. The majority of teachers received professional development in areas of classroom management or behavior modification techniques, but professional development has not been ongoing or embedded.	SE p. 17
	46. The majority of teachers interviewed (17 of 25) said they had received professional development regarding instructional techniques, but would not describe the professional development as ongoing or embedded.	SE p. 17
	47. Interviewed coaches reported similar duties across the district.	DSI p. 11
	48. Professional learning summary findings report new teacher support to be adequate with support from school or region.	DSI p. 14
	49. Due to the elimination of the 100 professional development sessions, professional development has less of a presence or efforts to get teachers to attend are not always successful.	DSI p. 13
	50. There is no evidence of current professional development on state standards for newer staff members.	DR p. 12
	51. Most professional development is provided during the school year but is less frequent now than in the past and are not necessarily well attended.	DR pp. 13, 14

Hypotheses	Votes
1. There is a need to differentiate professional development based on the readiness and needs of staff members to meet the needs of students.	13
2. Administration oversight of the implementation of professional development elements where appropriate. Administration does not provide followthrough.	12

Hypotheses	Votes
3. Loss of 100 minutes of professional development time.	15
4. Lack of researched-based inquiry into the needs of teachers and students as learners. There needs to be a deeper understanding of the learners. Schools need to be attuned to the research behind West Ed—Cognitive Academic Proficiency. (Who are the 3 percent or 19 students? What are their names? Who are they?)	11
5. There is a need to use the data to make definitive instructional decisions.	15

Positive Key Finding	Supporting Findings	Source
5. The district has a comprehensive K–8 LCM that was developed through a definitive, collaborative process. The curriculum maps are available to teachers and are used. **Votes:** Unanimous agreement	1. Teacher perceptions are that they are following the written curriculum and that it is aligned to standards.	DSI pp. 4, 5
	2. The district has a written ELA curriculum which has been developed for K–8 and distributed to all schools.	CA p. 2, DR pp. 2, 3
	3. The majority of teachers who were surveyed (52 of 55 or 95 percent) perceive themselves as very well prepared to provide instruction that meets ELA and or reading standards.	SEC p. 54
	4. The majority of K–12 teachers reported that state and district curriculum standards positively influenced what they teach.	SEC p. 47
	5. Most teachers (39 of 55 or 70 percent) agree or strongly agree that they receive support from the administration for teaching ELA.	SEC p. 63
	6. The regional office monitors the implementation of the curriculum in classrooms serving SWDs.	SE p. 5

Positive Key Finding	Supporting Findings	Source
6. Supplementary academic services are being used and implemented in elementary and secondary schools. **Votes:** Unanimous agreement	1. The district checks to see whether students are getting appropriate services and generates reports that are forwarded to the principal.	SE p. 7
	2. Primary classes ELL strategies utilized: checking for understanding, reteaching, activities, and independent practice.	ELL pp. 26, 31
	3. Teachers report providing supplemental support for ELLs and SWDs.	ELL p. 18
	4. There are Academic Instructional Services available for ELLs and SWDs.	ELL p. 19
	5. District staff and teachers confirm that supplemental personnel and supplementary materials are provided to schools to assist ELL instruction.	ELL p. 7, 12, 18