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

Community School District 12 Final Report

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Submitted to
District 12

Submitted by
Learning Point Associates

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Introduction

This final report is the result of an audit of the written, taught, and tested curriculum of Community School District 12 by Learning Point Associates. In 2006, 10 school districts and the New York State Education Department (NYSED) commissioned this audit to fulfill an accountability requirement of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act for local education agencies (LEAs) identified as districts in need of corrective action. These LEAs agreed, with the consent of NYSED, to collaborate on the implementation of this audit, which was intended to identify areas of concern and make recommendations to assist districts in their improvement efforts.

The focus of the audit was on English Language Arts (ELA) 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 responses to the recommendations from the audit in their District Comprehensive Education Plan (DCEP).

District Background

Overview

Community School District 12[1] is located in the central part of the borough of the Bronx in New York. The Bronx is one of the five boroughs of New York City. District 12 encompasses the communities of Crotona Park, Morrisania, West Farms, Hunts Point, and East Tremont Ave.; and it is in Region 2. Hispanics account for 48 percent of the population, 36 percent are African American, 6 percent are Asian, and 4 percent are white. There are also fast-growing Honduran, West African, and East Asian communities in the district. Thirty-eight percent of the population speaks a language other than English in the home.

Data from 2005 indicate that District 12 served a total of 21,947 students, with 682 prekindergarten students; 19,432 K–12 students; and 1,833 *ungraded* students.[2] Of those students enrolled, 1 percent was white; 31 percent were black; 66 percent were Hispanic; and 2 percent were Asian, Pacific Islanders, Alaskan Natives, or Native Americans. Recent immigrants, having immigrated to the United States within the last three years, constituted 6.5 percent of students. The 2004–05 Annual District Report for District 12 is based on 42 schools: 21 elementary schools, four elementary through middle schools, one elementary through high school, nine middle schools, and six high schools. Data from the 2002–03, 2003–04, and 2004–05 school years indicate that the majority of students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (91 percent, 92 percent, and 86 percent, respectively). District data also indicate that the percentage of ELL students was consistent at 17 percent across these three years. The percentage of special education students enrolled during these years fluctuated slightly between 14 percent and 15 percent of the total population. In 2002–03, the district's average spending per student (direct services only) was $12,268 while in 2003–04, this amount per student rose to $12,905.

Student Academic Performance

As of 2005–06, Community School District 12 has been designated as a district *in need of improvement—Year 3*. The state accountability status in elementary-, middle-, and secondary-level ELA has been designated as *requiring academic progress—Year 4*. In 2004–05, the following student accountability groups did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in elementary-level ELA: SWDs, Hispanic, and ELLs. There were no accountability groups that made AYP in middle- or secondary-level ELA in 2004–05.

The state accountability status for District 12 in elementary-, middle-, and secondary-level mathematics has been designated *in good standing*. In 2004–05, SWDs did make AYP in elementary- and middle-level mathematics. The following groups did not make AYP in secondary-level mathematics that year: SWDs, black or African-American students, ELLs, and economically disadvantaged students.

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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 **schools.nyc.gov/daa/SchoolReports/**.

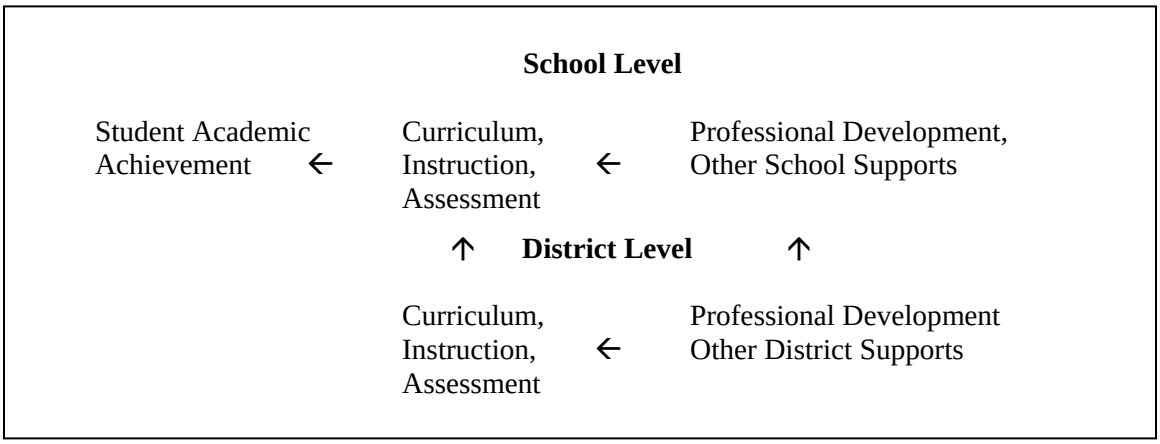
[2] District data were obtained from the *2004–2005 Annual District Report, District 12*, produced by New York City Public Schools and are available online at **schools.nyc.gov/daa/SchoolReports/**.

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 supported 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 the following 16 essential questions for the focus of the audit:

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

Audit Process Overview

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

Phase 1: Planning

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

Phase 2: Data Collection and Analysis

To conduct this audit, Learning Point Associates examined district issues from multiple angles, gathering a wide range of data and using the guiding questions to focus on factors that affect curriculum, instruction, assessment, and other school supports. All of these data sources work together to bring focus and clarity to the main factors contributing to the districts' corrective-action status. Broadly categorized, information sources include student achievement data, the *Surveys of Enacted Curriculum* (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 was not available to Learning Point Associates at the time of co-interpretation. As such, we compiled NCLB accountability data for the most recent three years available to provide the district with an overview of student achievement trends.

Surveys of Enacted Curriculum

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

Observations of Instruction

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

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

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

Interviews

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

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

District Document Review

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

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

Curriculum Alignment

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

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

Special Education Review

The purpose of the special education review was to provide information to districts regarding the curriculum, instruction, assessment, and improvement planning practices related to the district's special education program. Data collection activities that informed the special education review 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/or individualized education program [IEP] teachers); classroom observations utilizing the Total School Environment Protocol; focus groups with parents of SWDs; a review of approximately 50 redacted IEPs; and a review of formal district documents to provide insight into the policies, plans and procedures the district has developed to ensure services to SWDs, as identified under the 16 guiding questions developed for the audit.

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

English Language Learner Review

The purpose of the ELL review was to provide a districtwide synthesis of data from multiple perspectives on the district's curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student supports as they impact ELLs. Data collection activities that informed the ELL review included district 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 the district has developed to ensure services to ELLs, as identified under the 16 guiding questions developed for the audit.

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

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

Table 1. Alignment of Data Sources With Guiding Questions

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

Guiding Questions	Student Achievement Data	Surveys of Enacted Curriculum	Observations	Interviews	Document Review	Curriculum Alignment	Special Education Review	ELL Review
11. Do teachers use assessment data to inform instruction (monitoring, diagnosis, reteaching)? Are data accessible?				X	X		X	X
12. Is there a process in place within the district to monitor the effectiveness of instructional programs?				X	X			
13. Is the professional development (regional, district, school) of high quality and focused on the content or pedagogical areas of need?		X		X	X		X	X
14. Are teachers translating professional development into effective classroom practice?		X		X				
15. Are there sufficient supports in place for new teachers?				X				
16. Do district and school plans prioritize the needs identified by NCLB?				X	X		X	X

Phase 3: Co-Interpretation of Findings

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

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

Interpretation of the Data

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

- Select findings.
- Categorize or cluster and agree upon the critical findings.

- Group findings across reports according to guiding question or focus area.
- Present and defend key findings.
- Respond to clarifying questions.
- Refine and reach consensus on key findings.

Identification of Key Findings

As the investigative groups presented their findings to the whole group during the co-interpretation meeting for District 12, some natural combining and winnowing of results occurred. From various data sources, the participants used the method of triangulation to provide support for combining and subsuming some of the findings. The group then used a rating process to prioritize the findings. Participants were instructed to rate the findings based on the following criteria:

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

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

Identification of Hypotheses

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

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

Phase 4: Action Planning

The last step in the audit process is action planning. The action planning process entails initial goal and strategy setting by a core district team, followed by planning meetings with groups or departments in the district to determine action steps and associated financial implications and timelines for implementation.

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

Key Findings

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

After a review of multiple data documents, participants in the co-interpretation meeting in District 12 generated a group of four key findings related to ELA curriculum, ELLs and SWDs, professional development, and monitoring of program implementation, respectively. In addition, the auditors have added two key findings from an internal review of the data: one identifying concerns related to District 12's secondary schools, and one regarding the rate of teacher turnover in the district. These key findings are explained in the following.

Key Finding 1

Although interviewed teachers perceived the curriculum to be aligned to the New York state standards, a number of sources indicated that there are gaps in alignment. A notable number of the literacy competencies identified in the New York State ELA Literacy Standards for Grades K–8 are not identified specifically in the current ELA curriculum maps. Significant gaps occurred at Grades 6 and 8, especially in the areas of word recognition, background, and comprehension. The district did not submit ELA curricula for Grades 9–12.

The primary sources for this finding are the Curriculum Alignment Report and the School Interview Report. Two other reports, the Document Review and the SEC Report, also support this finding. As the finding indicates, there are a number of areas where curriculum alignment requires strengthening. In general, the curriculum alignment study revealed that while the district curriculum is focused largely on content standards, it does not adequately address specific areas identified in the New York State ELA standards. The curriculum alignment study in general indicated that as grade levels increase, the number of identified literacy competencies addressed decreases in the written curriculum. For example, the alignment study revealed that the second-grade curriculum is aligned most closely to the New York state literacy competencies, and that a higher number of gaps occur at Grades 6 and above. (There were no curriculum documents submitted for Grades 9–12, thus a curriculum alignment for the upper grades could not be completed.) When compared to the state standards, the taught curriculum—according to the SEC respondents—lacks depth and focus in certain key areas, for example, speaking and presenting, and, at the middle school level, critical reading.

Interview respondents, particularly at the elementary level, expressed a willingness to learn and follow a district curriculum map, and, at all levels, respondents in the sampled elementary schools indicated that they closely follow a curriculum. However, in secondary schools particularly, teachers said they had high discretion in following the curriculum, and, more than elementary teacher respondents, indicated that they had to find materials on their own. In addition, district respondents acknowledged long-standing concerns regarding how the literacy

curricula are taught in the secondary schools, saying that until fairly recently, there was no alignment between grade levels, and little alignment between standards, assessment and instruction—school problems that probably have not been resolved yet. Just a few years ago, respondents said literacy curricula "were all over the map—with no alignment between grade levels and not enough alignment between standards, assessments, and what was happening in the classroom." District respondents further indicated middle schools needed more work in aligning their curricula.

Key Finding 2

The region or district has defined plans, policies, and resources to address the needs of ELLs and SWDs. However, poor communication and/or ineffective implementation related to the district plans was evident in a number of the district schools that participated in the audit.

The two subpopulation studies, the ELL Report and the Special Education Report, were key sources of information for this finding. Contributing information was also available from the School Interview Report and the District Interview Report. The reports together addressed region and district policies and activities related to education of ELLs and SWDs and whether schools are fully aware of, and implementing, these policies.

District 12 strategies and resources related to ELLs and SWDs have a mixed impact in the schools. Interviews of both Region 2 and District 12 school respondents indicate that district efforts to improve instruction of subgroups, particularly through professional development for teachers, have been extensive, but effective implementation of district plans and policies is uneven. However, school-level interviews indicate that staff at only a few of the sample schools thought that the needs of special populations were met at a high level.

With respect to ELLs, key components of the district plans and policies for instruction of ELLs were not communicated successfully to teachers (particularly general education teachers). A fairly high proportion of interviewed teachers indicated that they do not know about district plans and policies. Teachers of ELLs indicated they do not have descriptions of the ELL services that are articulated in the DCEP. None of the general education teachers interviewed for the ELL study said they were aware of the school's Language Allocation Policy, nor were they aware of district plans for ELL services. Furthermore, although the district has data related to ELL student achievement (e.g., New York State English as a Second Language Test scores), interviewed teachers said they do not have these data.

With respect to SWDs, there appears to be variation across schools as to how well the district plans and policies are implemented. General education teachers who were interviewed for the special education study reported that utilization of accommodations or modifications is impacted by low administrative support within the school, teachers not knowing effective instructional strategies, and not having enough services and materials for SWDs—teachers in particular cited a lack of services that addressed the emotional and social needs of SWDs and appropriate reading materials for struggling readers. Elementary teachers did not know whether special assistance is available for SWDs.

Teachers not having adequate information about policies and resources appears to contribute to poor communication between schools and parents. Interviewed parents indicated they get more information directly from the district and the NYCDOE than from the schools or their children's teachers. Parents who participated in the ELL study indicated that they were not informed by schools about services that would benefit their child, such as psychological services, and did not have adequate information to inform decisions related to their child's education. Low communication is a particular concern when parents opt for school choice and have to consider the advantages and disadvantages of transferring a child to a school with different resources and policies.

Key Finding 3

Teachers of various experience levels and with responsibilities for all student subgroups, including new teachers assigned to challenging classes, indicate a need for differentiated professional development specific to their needs. In the case of new teachers, these needs include student behavior management. In the case of general education teachers, needs include approaches for differentiating instruction to meet the needs of ELLs, SWDs, and lower achieving students.

Several sources provided information that supports this finding, including the School Interview Report, District Interview Report, the ELL Report, the Special Education Report, and the SEC Report. Together, these reports suggest that teachers have specific instructional areas where they need more support and that professional development should be differentiated so these needs are met. Teacher and classroom characteristics—such as teaching experience and education, skill gaps, and classroom demographics—are varied, and as a result teachers are likely to require different types of professional development.

As noted earlier, the district has a high percentage of new teachers, and interview respondents indicated that new teachers need professional development on how to use instructional materials effectively, how to manage classrooms, and other fundamental areas. Veteran teachers may not benefit from these sessions. At the same time, reports indicate that teachers generally report various levels of skills and capacities. For example, at different grade levels, between one third and three fourths of SEC respondents indicated that they are unprepared to effectively instruct SWDs and ELLs. In middle schools, half of the teachers of middle school students said they do not feel fully prepared to teach students with diverse abilities and learning styles. Among high school teachers, half also indicated they are not fully prepared to teach writing.

The Interview Report suggests that professional development based on teacher needs is relevant and more likely to have an impact. For example, in one school where professional development had a high impact on instruction, professional development sessions were created following observations of classrooms by a team of administrators, teachers, and coaches. Similarly, new teachers (on whom coaches direct much of their efforts) were identified as being particularly receptive to professional development.

Key Finding 4

District processes to assess program implementation and effectiveness are not fully developed.

The reports together pointed to lack of evidence that monitoring was systematic and used extensively. This statement is supported by the Document Review Report, the ELL Report, the District Interview Report, and the School Interview Report. The reports suggest that the district has developed plans to monitor (or track and assess) student academic progress; implementation of instructional programs, including Academic Intervention Services; and the alignment of student data and instructional practices. However, there was little evidence that the plans were implemented fully or that information collected through a review of program implementation was influencing administrative decisions. Co-interpretation participants corroborated this finding anecdotally, remarking that while the district does a good job of planning for these activities, follow-up is not as strong and not as well documented.

On the other hand, there is some evidence that for certain program areas, the district is monitoring results. This was evident in the District Interview Report, when respondents cited subgroup data, and noted that they are looking at data related to referrals to special education. It is also evident in their discussions of Balanced Literacy where the district objective is to match SWDs with the right reading and skill level.

Key Finding 5

Attracting and retaining high-quality school-based personnel is a critical issue for the district. District 12 schools experience an unusually high degree of teacher turnover, particularly at the secondary level. Several sources suggest that high rates of teacher turnover, which include the annual arrival of teachers new to the profession, greatly impacts how professional development is directed and school capacity to meet the needs of students. District personnel interviewed also perceive a shortage of experienced and effective principals and are concerned about the impact of ineffective building leadership on school capacity to improve instruction and learning.

The School and District Interview Reports conveyed that high turnover results in low school capacity throughout the district. The district's schools are perceived as challenging, and as a result, District 12 finds it difficult to attract and retain high-quality personnel. Many of the district teachers are new to the profession and a high percentage of teachers are new to the schools. Half of the randomly selected District 12 ELA teachers who were interviewed had only one or two years of tenure in the school; one secondary principal said that 65 percent of the teachers in his school were new hires.

A great deal of time and resources are expended by the district and individual schools to support new teachers. However, because of high turnover, new teacher support does not necessarily improve instructional capacity in the long run. Throughout the Interview Report, comments conveyed that the capacity to meet learning objectives is compromised because of high teacher turnover. Respondents associated poor classroom management with teacher inexperience.

Differentiation of instruction and working with small groups was noted to be especially challenging for new teachers. A number of interview comments from both teachers and administrators suggested that new teachers do not know how to use instructional materials effectively, particularly for lower level students.

Several hypotheses contributing to low teacher retention were presented in interviews. These include the assignment of new teachers to the most challenging classrooms, poor building administration, rough neighborhoods where teachers do not feel safe ("even when the schools are nice," a respondent said), overcrowding, and alternative certification programs, the teachers from which typically only stay for a couple of years before moving on.

A number of district interview respondents said it was also difficult to find experienced, capable principals to fill vacancies; they noted that building principals have a powerful influence on instruction. Respondents suggested that poor building administration contributes to less focused professional development for teachers, less effective and consistent use of new instructional materials, lower implementation of instructional programs, lower teacher morale, and fewer opportunities for teachers to meet and discuss instruction and learning. According to interview respondents from the district, recruitment and retention of qualified principals has emerged as a concern due to recent resignations; general challenges in finding and successfully recruiting capable principals; and an increase in the number of high schools resulting from the small school initiative.

Key Finding 6

District 12 secondary schools exhibit problems related to curriculum materials, curriculum alignment, resources, meeting the needs of all students, student behavior, and recruiting and retaining principals and teachers. In addition, the influence of content coaches and professional development was perceived to be lower in secondary schools than elementary schools.

Several sources contribute to this finding, including the School Interview and District Interview Reports; the SEC Report; and the Curriculum Alignment Report. Together, these reports suggest that secondary schools face a high number of challenges. At the same time, resources that might influence instructional change—strong leadership, professional development and content coaches—have less of a presence or influence in secondary schools than in elementary schools.

As noted earlier, curriculum alignment is less articulated in the secondary schools than the elementary schools, and according to SEC respondents in secondary schools, the district curriculum has relatively low influence on instruction. (In fact, the district did not submit an ELA curriculum for Grades 9–12 for the auditors to review.) In the majority of secondary schools in the sample, teachers indicated that they did not have adequate instructional materials for addressing the many different reading levels in their classroom. The finding was corroborated by SEC respondents. More than elementary schools, secondary school respondents indicated they were not doing well in meeting the needs of SWDs and ELLs. In addition, the use of assessment data by teachers drops in Grade 7 and again in Grades 9–12. Monitoring of instruction was lower in secondary than elementary schools. Secondary schools, particularly

high schools, faced significant challenges with respect to student behavior, perhaps in part because of new teachers' inexperience in managing classrooms. Absenteeism was cited as a problem in high schools by SEC respondents.

At the same time, professional development has a lower impact in secondary schools than elementary schools, according to interview respondents. On the SEC, teachers indicated that as grade levels progress, there are fewer hours of professional development. SEC respondents indicated that they rarely or only sometimes consider professional development to be focused, and that professional development does not emphasize state standards. The content coaches, whose role is influential in elementary schools, have a fairly low impact in the secondary schools due to coaches not being full-time, the need for coaches to focus on new teacher support, and coaches having limited opportunities to work with all ELA teachers.

Positive Findings

A number of positive findings were identified by the co-interpretation participants but were not given top priority. A number of the findings are related to those already discussed.

- For the instruction of ELLs, the district has made consistent efforts to communicate about the curriculum through professional development programs, handbooks, and district and school personnel. (ELL Report)
- In teaching Balanced Literacy, evidence indicates that teachers use guided reading and small-group instruction and that elementary teachers adapt instruction for ELL and general education students. (ELL Report)
- School-based curriculum teams that review the curriculum and develop the school-specific curriculum maps have a positive impact on teacher awareness of the curriculum, the standards, and the importance of following the curriculum. (School Interview Report).

Recommendations for Action Planning

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

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.

The key findings that arose out of co-interpretation with District 12 led Learning Point Associates to make five recommendations: in-depth alignment of curriculum to standards, professional development to address specific teaching and learning needs, improved services for ELLs, improved services for SWDs, and the implementation of focused teacher recruitment and retention strategies.

In aligning the ELA curriculum to the standards, Learning Point Associates urges that care be taken to incorporate the breadth and depth, including cognitive demands appropriate to each grade level. In addition, curricula should be available for all grade levels, written clearly, and disseminated widely so teachers can and will actually use and be guided by it. Gaps in alignment or ignorance of the standards by teachers places the district's children at a disadvantage when it comes to improving achievement.

Professional development content and delivery also need to be examined. They should be focused specifically on what teachers need to know and be able to do as evidenced by self-identified needs and by student achievement data. In addition, it must become part of the culture of the school (picture the school as an inquiry-based learning community) and embedded in everyday practice rather than offered up as a smorgasbord of workshops. Professional development also should be followed up to ensure translation or adaptation to classroom practice.

Schools in the district are encouraged to find more effective means of fully and equitably serving ELLs and SWDs. General education teachers need additional professional development, materials, and ongoing administrative support to be able to address the varied capabilities, needs, strengths, and challenges their students bring to the classroom. Better integration of approaches (e.g., differentiated instruction), awareness of similarities and differences, and adaptation of ELL and SWD protocols in the general education classroom would inform improved instruction for all students.

The recommendation for improved teacher recruitment and longer term retention is a serious one. Although recruitment may be a function of the NYCDOE's Human Resources Department,

schools and districts can have an impact on attracting and keeping good teachers. It is suggested that districts consider working more diligently with the community in addressing issues of safety, transportation and parking, and affordable housing. Within school buildings, administrators might consider ways of creating community and reducing isolation so newly trained teachers will have a fertile environment in which to put down roots and grow.

The reader will note that there is not a monitoring recommendation as such; however, each recommendation has embedded within it a monitoring element, encouraging practitioners to track and assess the implementation of the recommendation. Monitoring should not operate as a punitive device or solely to ensure compliance. Rather, monitoring should be conducted to collect data to support the district's continuous improvement efforts.

Finally, although there is no one recommendation specific to secondary schools, Learning Point Associates would like to note that many of the concerns these recommendations address were greater at the middle school level than at the elementary, and still more troublesome at the high school level. These include gaps in the literacy curriculum's alignment to state standards (no ELA curriculum documents were submitted for Grades 9–12), lack of resources, inability to meet the needs of all students, problematic student behavior, decreasing utilization of assessment data by teachers, less monitoring of instruction, and difficulty retaining principals. At the same time, the influence of content coaches and professional development was deemed less significant in secondary schools than in the elementary schools.

With this in mind, each one of the recommendations that follow is of particular concern at the high school level, and some contain specific secondary school elements. Learning Point Associates encourages District 12 to focus closely on its secondary schools as part of its ongoing school improvement efforts.

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 Findings

Learning Point Associates conducted an alignment of the ELA curriculum with materials supplied by Region 2 and District 12. 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 12

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 12 did not submit for review any ELA curriculum documents for Grades 9–12.

Link to Research

Research shows that the curriculum is one of the major factors contributing to student achievement. Marzano's (2003) review of research in this area found that having a guaranteed and viable curriculum is one of the strongest indicators of improving student performance. Marzano contends that the curriculum is guaranteed and viable when it: (1) provides students with the opportunity to study and learn the specified content by providing teachers with clear guidelines on what is to be taught, and (2) establishes realistic expectations for what content can be covered within the amount of time available for instruction. Aligning a curriculum to a state's content standards is an important initial step in establishing a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Academic standards are intended to create more intellectually demanding content and pedagogy, thereby improving the quality of education for all students. By establishing a standards-aligned curriculum that is guaranteed and viable, districts are one step closer to producing greater equality in students' academic achievement (Sandholtz, Ogawa, & Scribner, 2004).

When aligning the curriculum, more than curricular topics should correspond to the state standards. If both the content of the standards and the content of the curriculum align, student performance 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 12 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 12 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 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 12 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

Work to improve ELA instruction at all levels by implementing the following three-pronged approach to professional development:

1. **Provide targeted district- and school-based professional development in three specific areas:**
    a. **For new teachers, professional training on classroom management skills and working with at-risk students.**
    b. **For high school teachers, professional development on aligning ELA instruction with state standards and assessments.**
    c. **For all teachers, strategies that will prepare them to effectively utilize differentiated instruction with ELLs and SWDs in their classrooms.**

2. **View each school as a learning community and contextualize teacher-centered professional development within that learning community. Make professional development an integral aspect of school culture, embedded in daily classroom practice and ongoing collaborative teacher activity.**
3. **Track the application of new learning (from professional development) to classroom practice, and evaluate targeted professional development for effectiveness.**

Link to Findings

There is ample evidence in the findings that teachers at all levels seek specific professional development in targeted areas, despite whatever professional development opportunities they have already had. General education teachers identify needing skills in differentiating instruction for special populations, new teachers ask for greater skill in dealing with student behaviors and classroom management, and high school teachers need skills in understanding state standards and assessments and aligning instruction accordingly.

Many schools are facing an influx of high-need students. Teachers feel they do not have the knowledge and skills to meet these students' needs (School Interview Report, pp. 18, 19; SEC Report, pp. 63, 65, 66). Schools recognize that these students have complex social and emotional issues, but school buildings do not have an adequate number of counselors and social workers. Many staff are concerned that they are not meeting the needs of low-level students or other special populations and are not given adequate professional development on differentiating instruction (School Interview Report, pp. 4, 5, 10; ELL Report, pp. 15, 19). For example, to work effectively with ELLs, teachers need to know about oral language development, especially cognitive academic language proficiency (ELL Report, pp. 8, 10). For SWDs, as another example, teachers should know about accommodations and modifications needed in the academic instructional environment, not just in the testing environment (Special Education Report, p. 6). The district indicated (District Interview Report, p. 23) that it could use intervention specialists to help teachers learn about alternatives to referrals. Two of the four secondary schools indicated that they were not at all meeting the needs of SWDs. One high school indicated that the needs of ELLs were not met at all, and one high school indicated that needs of lower level students were not met at all (School Interview Report, p. 9).

New teachers as well as administrators have identified "behavior and classroom management skills" (School Interview Report, pp. 10; 16) as necessary for inexperienced teachers. Secondary schools have more issues than elementary schools with student behavior; in two schools there were serious concerns. There are issues with policies and consistent behavior codes and concerns about the high number of special-needs students who transfer in as well as concerns expressed about new teachers' inability to manage classrooms. New teachers indicate the need for more one-on-one support from veteran teachers. Three of four secondary schools mentioned concerns about teacher turnover. The high rate of teacher turnover and a sense of isolation seem to be attributable to insufficient individual support and skill development as well as assignment to the most challenging classes.

Respondents indicated that the initiatives introduced in the secondary schools are a response to deep-seated secondary school problems (that probably have not been resolved yet), including

literacy curricula "that were all over the map—with no alignment between grade levels and not enough alignment between standards, assessments, and what was happening in the classroom" (Curriculum Alignment Report, p. 25). Unfortunately, there is no evidence of alignment to New York state standards for Grades 9–12. Based on teacher interviews and SEC responses, however, teachers believe the curriculum is aligned because they have pedagogical choices to meet student needs within the district's instructional framework. However, based on a review of the curriculum submitted by the district, SEC data, and interview data, all students do not have a rigorous and challenging curriculum, particularly at Grades 9–12.

It appears that in the higher grades there is not only little alignment to standards, but a decline in such emphasis in professional development. In Grades K–1, 40 percent of teachers report it is a major emphasis while in Grades 9–12, 50 percent of teachers report an emphasis of *none* (SEC Report, p. 78). Some secondary schools find it challenging to implement consistent professional development (School Interview Report) so it is perhaps not surprising that, as grade levels progress, teachers report receiving fewer hours of professional development (SEC Report, p. 68). Furthermore, the majority of K–8 teachers see professional development as a continuum. Teachers in Grades
9–12, however, are split in their opinions—50 percent say they sometimes view it as such, and 50 percent say *rarely* or *never* (SEC Report, p. 76).

Link to Research

Targeted Professional Development. Involving teachers in decision making about professional development is a critical ingredient to success. While it is important to tie professional development programs to citywide and schoolwide goals, it is also important to include educators in the planning and selection process. In the case of District 12, teachers and administrators identified the need for new teachers to be able to manage students and classrooms better and for all teachers to have the capability of working with any kind of student. When teachers participate in designing their own professional development, they are likely to feel a greater sense of involvement in and commitment to their own learning. A critical aspect of adult learning is its self-directed nature. This engagement increases motivation, empowers teachers to take risks, ensures that what is learned is relevant to a particular context, and makes the school culture more collaborative (Corcoran, 1995; Hodges, 1996; NPEAT, 1999).

In describing a hypothetical school, authors Zmuda, Kuklis, and Kline (2004) indicate that "Assembling teachers for a mass delivery of information that is unconnected and unfulfilled reinforces the isolationist tendencies of teachers…." They add, "Reforms have entered and exited the building with limited results not because the teachers 'don't get it' or 'don't try' but because they are never really embraced as change agents" (p. 8).

Research increasingly supports targeted professional development. Although building teachers' knowledge and skills is important, teachers enhance their capacity even more when they understand the theory behind new skills (NPEAT, 1999). Understanding the theory helps in two specific ways. Because changing practice often entails changing beliefs about how students learn or about teacher roles, teachers who examine their own beliefs and reconsider them are more likely to change their approaches in the classroom (Borko & Putnam, 1995; NPEAT, 1999). In

addition, understanding the theory underlying new skills and knowledge makes it possible for teachers to adapt their learning to specific and changing circumstances (Pink & Hyde, 1992).

In the case of District 12, student data were examined and teachers indicated that they needed specific professional development and more support to improve their ability to work with particular populations (e.g., ELLs, SWDs, and students whose behavioral problems were disruptive of classroom management). Analyzing these data allows schools to set schoolwide, team, and individual professional development goals. Schools that follow this approach target their professional development toward the highest priority needs and pursue activities with the greatest chance of improving student performance (Geiser & Berman, 2000). Regarding ELLs for example, a staff development program would provide educators with strategies to meet students' social and emotional needs. "Good programs also give teachers information about second-language acquisition, diverse cultures, and differentiating instruction for ELLs" (Haynes, 2007, p. 106). As with other students, the lecture format can be difficult for ELLs so teachers need to know how to adjust their instruction for a variety of learning needs and styles.

Embedded Professional Development. The following are from research on embedded professional development:

- "'Collaboration' improves performance" (Schmoker, 2004).
- "If people begin sharing ideas about issues they see as really important, the sharing itself creates a learning culture" (Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004, p. 18).
- "Staff development that improves the learning of all students organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district." (National Staff Development Council [2001, p. 11], cited in O'Neill & Conzemius, 2006, p. 128).

"The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is building the capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community," according to Milbrey McLaughlin (Schmoker, 2004). Three years later, Schmoker (2007) continues to identify the key to better schools: "a willingness to establish clear expectations for instruction, to arrange for teachers to work in teams so they can meet and exceed those expectations, and to institute simple routines for honestly and continuously monitoring teaching to ensure its effectiveness."

When professional development is built into routine practices of schooling, it becomes a powerful tool for teacher growth. Instead of relegating professional development to specific inservice days, schools with excellent programs make professional development a part of teachers' everyday work lives (Hassel, 1999; Sparks, 1999). By using everyday activities, such as lesson planning, staff meetings, and curriculum development as opportunities for professional growth, schools can develop a culture of collaboration and shared inquiry (Fullan & Miles, 1992; WestEd, 2000; Wood & McQuarrie, 1999). When these activities are focused on meeting agreed-upon goals for student learning, they are especially powerful. Because they are relevant to the real problems teachers face in their work, they allow teachers to see immediate evidence of what they are learning.

Research suggests that the most effective professional development occurs in a highly collaborative school environment where teachers work together to identify and solve problems (WestEd, 2000). Whole-school improvement is more likely to happen in an environment where there are opportunities to observe one another's classrooms and provide feedback, to compare and discuss student work, and to initiate research projects designed to address areas of concern (Little, 1996). To facilitate this sharing, schools sometimes establish study groups or action research projects or designate grade- or department-level team meeting time for the purpose of examining student work or developing performance assessment (Wood & McQuarrie, 1999). Because teachers traditionally work in isolation, breaking down the *culture of privacy* and involving educators in these kinds of activities is a challenging task (Little, 1996). Those who do it successfully say that schools need to reallocate time to make it happen, and they need to provide tangible evidence to teachers that their efforts are having an impact on student learning (Hassel, 1999).

Evidence-based professional development is most successful when it is connected to a comprehensive change process. New York City is certainly in that process. Once the change process begins to become more structured and goal driven at the school level or within the network of a support organization, it is expected that teachers will be able to integrate improvement in practice with local goals, including school improvement. One national survey of teachers found that when teachers report a connection between professional development and other district and school improvement activities, they are much more likely to say professional development has improved their teaching practice (Parsad, Lewis, & Farris, 2001). Another study of exemplary organizations in both the educational and private sectors found that professional development was most successful when it was coordinated with organizational goals (Laine, 2000). In other words, professional development needs not only to address articulated teacher needs in a responsive way, but it is more effective when it is contextualized within the structuring of a larger change or purpose.

One study of several low-performing schools found that examining the data was a powerful form of professional development. Supporting teachers and their administrators to determine which students are achieving at which levels and in what areas helps educators focus on their own ideas about achievement and take the next step to determine the specific needs of their students (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Geiser & Berman, 2000; Shinn, Collins, & Gallagher, 1998). This could be especially helpful as District 12's high schools examine their graduation rate data.

National surveys confirm that successful professional development takes place over a long period of time. In one study, the simple duration of an activity predicts its success; when teachers report that their activities extended over a longer period of time, they cite more improvement in teaching practice (Garet, Birman, Porter, Desimone, &Herman, 1999). Other studies suggest that it takes months and even years to fully implement new practices (Hodges, 1996). If teachers have the opportunity to try out new practices and then to discuss with their colleagues any insights or concerns that develop, they are more likely to persevere in implementing those new practices (NPEAT, 1999). One way that schools ensure follow-up is by tying professional development goals to teachers' ongoing self-assessments (McColskey & Egelson, 1997).

The following quote (O'Neill & Conzemius, 2004) captures the change the system needs to consider in institutionalizing professional development:

> We will need to stop depending upon single-shot workshops that expose teachers to new concepts but do nothing to help them translate that learning into practice. We will need to stop offering a smorgasbord of choices that are not aligned to the key learning needs of our students. We will need to build in more job-embedded professional learning in which teams of teachers have ongoing opportunities to share instructional practices, examine student work, visit each other's classrooms, go on field site visits together, and experience other ways to learn together while on the job, instead of only learning at a conference or a workshop. We need to start aligning professional development choices with the greatest area of learning need for *students*, and we need to support teachers in planning professional learning goals that align with their… student learning goals. (p. 137)

Monitoring and Evaluation of Professional Development. In District 12, while school administrators indicate that they monitor instruction for effectiveness, interviews indicate that monitoring is inconsistent at the high school level. This concern is compounded by the struggle the district has had in finding experienced and capable principals and the opening (in the past three years) of 40 new small schools. Leadership training is an emphasis of the district. By offering early training in some of the skills that school leaders will need to plan and implement professional development, districts can build the capacity of leaders to work effectively. These skills include setting high standards for professional development, data analysis, change leadership, working with outside providers, instructional design for adults, resource reallocation, and evaluation (Halsam, n.d.; NPEAT, 1999; North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2000).

Schools that develop clear goals for professional development are better able to evaluate whether certain professional development activities are having the desired impact on teacher practice and, ultimately, student achievement. When it is done well, evaluation can bolster professional development efforts no matter what the results. If evaluation shows that the activities are successful, it strengthens educators' participation and commitment. If it shows less promising results, evaluation can lead to changes in professional development that make it more effective.

Researchers suggest that districts and schools design evaluations so they help educators reflect on their practice; use multiple sources of information, including teacher portfolios, observations of teachers, peer evaluations, and student performance data; and collect evidence of impact at multiple levels—educator reaction, learning, use of new knowledge and skills, organizational support and change, and student learning (Guskey, 2000; Guskey & Sparks, 1991; Hodges, 1996; NPEAT, 1999).

Throughout the planning and implementation process, schools that develop effective professional development programs realize that continuous improvement is critical to long-term success. For this reason, at every stage of the process, they make a deliberate effort to build the capacity of the staff (Hassel, 1999).

Implementation Considerations

Subgroup Students. Subgroups of students include ELLs, SWDs (e.g., physical, cognitive, affective), low-performing or struggling students, Students with Interrupted Formal Education, and students with behavioral problems (perhaps emotional problems). It is important to acknowledge the following:

- None of these groups are homogeneous.
- A student may fall into more than one of these categories or classifications.
- Not all ELLs speak Spanish.
- Some ELLs may not be readers in their primary language.
- There are students from English-speaking countries who are not fluent in American English and may not know how to read.

All teachers should be skilled at adapting classroom instruction and accommodations effectively for each student's abilities, needs, or multiplicity of concurrent challenges. Bilingual and ESL teachers, special education teachers, and school guidance counselors and social workers could be invited to help design professional development with a focus on the needs of special populations. School administrators should consider participating in this professional development.

New Teachers. Although it is not the only variable, professional development plays a major role in attracting and retaining new teachers and reducing teacher isolation and turnover. Embedded professional development and support may take the form of partnering new teachers with veteran teachers, creating a buddy system, collaborating in lesson planning and coteaching, scheduling study groups and team meetings, modeling, and mentoring. Since findings indicate that new teachers frequently are teaching in high-need districts, may be assigned to the most challenging classrooms, and often feel isolated and unsupported, it is incumbent upon the school and the district to provide direct support by allocating resources to increase competency and a sense of agency as quickly as possible and by engaging new teachers in the life of the school community to reduce their sense of isolation. (For further research and resources on this topic, see Recommendation 5.)

High Schools. In 2004, an Urban Institute study (Institute for Competitive State Government, 2004) cited New York state as having the worst graduation rates for blacks and Hispanics in the United States (35 percent and 32 percent, respectively, in New York City as compared to 50 percent and 53 percent nationally). Greg Toppo's (2006) article stated that New York City, the largest school district in the country, had the third lowest overall graduation rate of the 50 largest cities (38.9 percent).

All teachers, especially at the high school level, need to align instruction to the content and cognitive demands of grade-level state standards and to assessments. For this purpose they should be able to the following:

- Thoroughly explain state standards and assessments.
- Develop lesson plans aligned to the content and cognitive demands of state standards.

- Utilize a range of appropriately aligned materials with skill and confidence.

School administrators should consider participating in this professional development. ELA coaches and teachers could be invited to help design professional development in these areas. Professional development in aligning instruction to state standards and assessments is especially urgent for the high schools, which might, as part of data gathering, examine the district's high school graduation rates.

School Culture. Three considerations inform a shift toward creating a culture of learning in each school building, as follows:

- Recent literature on the success of learning communities and increased awareness of adult education (how adults learn).
- An NYCDOE move toward increasing the authority, autonomy, and accountability of school building principals.
- The loss, in the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) contract, of 100 minutes a week of required professional development, resulting in a reduced amount of dedicated professional development time.

Different modalities of embedded professional development ought to be considered, determined, and formalized in school-day or -year scheduling. This may include meetings, study groups, collaborations, coplanning and coteaching, mentoring, modeling, intervisitations, and observing. Principals might consider collaborating with other schools (across a grade or across all grades), universities, support or partnering organizations, the UFT, and community-based organizations in the development and delivery of professional development to meet student and educator needs.

Monitoring Progress. Monitoring the successful application of professional development learning to classroom practice and regularly evaluating its overall effectiveness will help ensure that both the felt and the observed and assessed learning needs of educators at all levels are addressed specifically and contribute to continuous improvement in student achievement.

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Recommendation 3

Develop a districtwide system in which communication, curriculum mapping, and materials selection and acquisition effectively support the academic achievement of ELLs.

1. **Create a system that effectively reaches all of those who make decisions about education for ELLs, especially principals and teachers, including general education, ESL, Transitional Bilingual Education, and dual-language teachers. The system should explicitly and effectively communicate information about student performance data, the Language Allocation Policy, and ELL services. Furthermore, the system should include steps for implementation at the school level.**
2. **Revise the curriculum map at each school to explicitly and effectively reflect the importance of, and process for, differentiated instruction for ELLs. The district should provide a template to guide this process. Train teachers, coaches, and building administrators in the implementation of the revised curriculum map and in appropriate differentiating practices for ELLs.**
3. **Secure and disseminate sufficient and adequate supplemental materials and support to help ELLs meet curricular demands.**

Link to Findings: Communication

Data in the ELL Report for District 12 reveal that the district has plans, policies, procedures, and student performance data for ELLs. The district places emphasis on informing personnel about the core curriculum through multiple channels, including literacy and mathematics coaches at the school level, the regional network, the Instructional Support Specialists (ISSs) and other professional development. District communication and dissemination occur through a turnkey model, with the ISSs focusing on the principal, assistant principal, and coaches who, in turn, work with teachers. At each school there is a Language Allocation Policy.

Despite the existence of multiple vehicles for communicating information, a gap in communication exists within the district. Data in the ELL report reveal that general education teachers do not know of the existence of district planning for ELLs. Teachers who know of planning have little or no understanding of it. None of the general education teachers interviewed are aware of their school's Language Allocation Policy. ELL needs are determined by the principal, and feedback on student performance generally is not provided to teachers.

On one hand, district-level administrators are under the impression that information is being communicated effectively and explicitly to all stakeholders within the schools. On the

other hand, teachers interviewed at all five schools say that they have no knowledge of this information, do not understand the information, or are not using it to make decisions about ELLs. Therefore, at the school level, teachers are not applying critical information in making appropriate decisions about ELL instruction. This may mean that teachers are not receiving the information, choose not to use it, or do not know how to apply it to their particular decisions and tasks.

While the topic of this recommendation is conveyance of information to teachers of ELLs, it is important to consider the broader context in which the topic is situated. The responsibility for communicating plans and policies regarding instruction of ELLs is shared by multiple entities, including district staff, principals, and teachers. The district communicates information to schools through multiple pathways, but the communication system lacks a mechanism for checking on how effectively the information is passed on and acted upon. The same is true for the communication path within the school.

Link to Research: Communication

Given the paucity of research in the specific area of effect of the communication systems on ELL school performance, Learning Point Associates can draw on the limited research on comprehensive school reform (CSR) and ELLs. Studies in this area yield some information on the importance of consideration of ELL needs in the planning of any new school or district initiative and the importance of ELL support from the entire school staff.

Research on CSR suggests that responsibilities at the district level can include administering an appropriate accountability system. It is important for districts to work with individual schools to ensure that programs specifically address the needs of ELLs. Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, & Woodworth (1995) documented the district's role in supporting reform at eight schools considered exemplary in involving ELLs. A common characteristic of the actions of these districts included circulation of information about reform efforts to school staff.

Alignment of district and school policies on curriculum assessment and instruction are areas that affect the success of ELLs. In a comparative study of 11 school districts, Dentler and Hafner (1997) found that in the three districts in which student scores improved, teachers were knowledgeable about the learning needs and characteristics of ELLs. Systematic responsiveness to ELLs occurred only in locations where administrators, teachers, and nonteaching staff shared an understanding of the assets and needs ELLs bring to school.

Drawing from research literature on district reform at large may provide helpful guidance regarding effective communication of district policies and plans to teachers. Mclaughlin and Talbert (2003) utilized survey data and case studies from California districts to identify communication and planning strategies, such as enhancing professional development for teachers and involving teachers in district planning, as ways to encourage teacher support of district reform. Similarly, Spillane (2000) explored district leader theories of teacher learning and change, concluding that the training paradigm of professional development for teachers is a barrier to effective communication and change.

Implementation Considerations: Communication

In implementing this portion of the recommendation, the district may wish to consider the following action steps:

- At both the district and school levels, revisit the ways in which information is disseminated, explicated, and implemented.
- Analyze the current systems of communication for weak links and address weaknesses.
- Develop a culture of accountability at the school level in which information that pertains to ELLs is shared and acted on by all those responsible for their education.
- Create a feedback loop to ensure that all stakeholders receive, understand, and apply information about ELLs in their work with them, reexamining instructional practices and curricular choices as necessary.

Link to Findings: Curriculum Maps

Data from the ELL Report reveal that schools implement the ELA core curriculum so ELLs are able to demonstrate what they have learned in a variety of ways, including state-mandated standardized tests. The ELA curriculum in use across the district is perceived to be aligned with New York state standards for ELA and state standards for ELL instructional services, but the document review showed that there are significant gaps in alignment with state standards in curriculum maps, particularly beyond Grade 6. Since the emphasis is on school-level attention to student learning needs, individual schools need to align their ELA core curriculum with New York state ELA standards throughout the K–12 experience. (For further details on ELA curriculum alignment, refer to Recommendation 1.) Once this issue has been addressed adequately, schools need to create a curriculum map that incorporates differentiation specifically for ELLs while paralleling the core ELA curriculum standards.

Findings from the District 12 report indicate that there is a range of perceptions regarding the standards to which ELLs are held. General education elementary teachers generally indicate that there are either no modifications made in the ELA curriculum for ELLs and that they are held to the same standards as general education students while ELL program teachers say there are modifications, such as translations or simplified materials, provided for ELLs that follow the core curriculum. At the middle and high school levels, there is less confidence that ELLs are being instructed in the core ELA curriculum or that they are being held to the same standards as general education students. Secondary teachers state that lower level ELLs in particular are not being prepared well in the core curriculum.

It appears from the report that merely exposing ELLs to an undifferentiated general education ELA curriculum is not meeting the needs of the ELL students. At the same time, ELL program teachers often are left on their own to devise instruction that they feel meets the language-learning needs of their students. Instruction varies not only from school to school, but often between ELL program offerings at the same grade level within schools. Teachers are responding to the perceived needs of their ELL students, but there is no consistent plan or curriculum map

to guide them in meeting the needs of various levels of ELL students within the core ELA curriculum framework.

Link to Research: Curriculum Maps

Responsiveness to the unique needs of every student must form the basis for instructional practice, especially as applied to ELLs. Differentiated instruction offers teachers an adaptive toolkit of practices that can be deployed in varied formats to meet the needs, strengths, and learning preferences of students. (For further information on differentiated instruction, see Recommendations 2 and 4.) ELLs are challenged and engaged through activities that are based on content, process, and product. Resources regarding differentiated instruction are available on the *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development* website at **www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/menuitem.3adeebc6736780dddeb3ffdb62108a0c**. In particular, the works of Tomlinson (1999) and Tomlinson and Strickland (2005) on differentiated instruction and Marzano's (2004) work on differentiated instruction building for academic language will be valuable and useful.

As a model for lesson planning and implementing sheltered instruction, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model offers a unified framework for ELL instruction (www.siopinstitute.net/research.shtml). It emphasizes the instructional practices most important to ELLs (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004); makes content comprehensible to ELLs; and provides examples of the aspects of sheltered instruction that benefit them the most (Vogt & Echeverria, 2006). SIOP also gives researchers and administrators a system for observing teachers and supplying them with concrete feedback.

Implementation Considerations: Curriculum Maps

In implementing this portion of the recommendation, the district may wish to consider the following action steps:

- Develop a guidance document and model the development of curriculum maps that include ELLs.
- Develop curriculum maps that differentiate instruction specifically for ELLs at the school level. These maps will address teacher responsibility for building background knowledge to fill content knowledge and skills gaps.
- Train both ELL and general education teachers who have English-proficient ELLs in implementing supportive instruction for ELLs that enables them to work on language and curricular content aligned with the ELA core curriculum and New York state ELA standards.
- Define differentiated instruction for ELLs according to the various English proficiency levels. Provide professional development for teachers in effective differentiation for ELLs. Build teacher knowledge in the areas of second-language acquisition, inclusive curriculum, culturally responsive practice, and cognitive academic language instruction as it pertains to ELLs.

- Given that principals are responsible for making decisions about ELL instruction, provide professional development to build their knowledge of language acquisition, inclusive curriculum, culturally responsive practice, and differentiated instruction as it pertains to ELLs.

Link to Findings: Curriculum Materials

Data from the ELL Report reveal a mix of perceptions among district and school staff as to whether schools have sufficient and adequate materials to support ELLs. District staff interviews indicate the belief that both personnel and material supports are available to schools to implement curriculum. Supplementary materials provided to schools to inform and complement instruction include published materials, charts, posters, manuals, and software. District staff report that schools can purchase materials using their Title III allocation.

General education teachers and ELL program teachers express different opinions concerning the adequacy and sufficiency of supplemental materials for ELLs. School staff report that for general education students there are adequate materials aligned to the curriculum; however, more supplemental materials and support, particularly sets of materials, are lacking for ELLs and for lower level readers to meet curriculum demands. All of the ELL program teachers interviewed report adequate availability of supplementary material, but only two of six general education teachers make the same assertion. Furthermore, the Learning Point Associates District Interview Report and School Interview Report indicate that none of the general education ELA teachers interviewed said they had adequate materials to meet the needs of lower level readers and ELLs; this was noted as a particular problem at the secondary level. Most teachers say the materials they do have are of high quality. Most classrooms have a native language collection.

Link to Research: Curriculum Materials

To reshape curriculum so it becomes culturally responsive requires that curriculum challenge students to develop higher-order knowledge and skills (Villegas, 1991). Ismat Abdal-Haqq (1994) states, “Curriculum that is culturally responsive capitalizes on students’ cultural backgrounds rather than attempting to override or negate them.”

Good instruction is enhanced by appropriate standards-aligned instructional resources. For ELLs, texts in English need to be designed with supporting graphics, linguistic accessibility, and helpful formats to engage students with text in a language they have not yet mastered. In addition, resource materials, academic texts, and other instructional resources in the home language are needed for students to bolster knowledge of academic content and develop literacy (Ansary & Babaii, 2002; Olsen, 2006).

Studies of student engagement show that engagement is related strongly to reading achievement. A study of students at ages 9, 13, and 17 showed greater achievement for more highly engaged readers than for less engaged readers (Campbell, Voelkl, & Donahue, 2000). Engaged readers can overcome obstacles to achievement and become agents of their own reading growth (Guthrie, Schafer, & Huang, 2001). An ample supply of texts relevant to learning goals contributes to engagement. In a study examining readers’ text interest, Wade, Buxton,

and Kelly (1999) found that texts with important, new, and valued information were associated with student interest.

Texts also must match the cognitive competence of the learners (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). In elementary classrooms, trade books of diverse difficulty levels and with a number of illustrations serve this function. Ample texts within the classroom and connections to resources outside of the classroom, such as libraries and the Internet, are known to increase motivation (Morrow & Young, 1997) and increased reading achievement (Guthrie, Schafer, Von Secker, & Alban, 2000).

Implementation Considerations: Curriculum Materials

In implementing this portion of the recommendation, schools in the district may wish to consider the following action steps:

- Tie the disbursement of material funds tightly to curriculum goals.
- Prior to purchase, vet materials for linguistic level and cultural appropriateness, appealing presentation, intellectual and academic integrity, multilevel activities that take students beyond knowledge of content to real-world application, and activities that offer a variety of ways of representing knowledge and understanding. Closely examine materials against priorities stated in the curriculum map.
- Once materials have been selected, model the use of materials to teachers to supplement the core curriculum.

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Recommendation 4

Implement the following four strategies for ensuring that SWDs are supported comprehensively in realizing maximum academic achievement:

1. **Optimize the content and check the consistent utilization of IEPs.**
2. **Offer embedded professional development at all levels (including coaches, administrators, and general education teachers) in working with SWDs.**
3. **Remove barriers to participation currently experienced by SWDs by increasing appropriate ELA classroom materials and administrative support for teachers and ensuring that scheduling and transportation considerations do not preclude engagement in academic intervention or enrichment services.**
4. **Regularly review and assess the implementation of services afforded to SWDs to improve service delivery and access.**

The overarching goal of this recommendation is to increase each school's ability to meet AYP targets for the SWDs subgroup. The recommendation is intended to increase teacher capacity to provide high-quality, standards-aligned, differentiated instruction to SWDs in general education classrooms. This may be accomplished by providing professional development and ongoing technical assistance, coaching, and support and—in schools with the greatest concentration of SWDs—increasing utilization of the CTT model. It is recognized that this effort will build on the already substantial investment that the district has made in professional development opportunities and in the CTT model. Adequate planning and access to appropriate materials, resources, expertise, and support should allow the district to fully implement the recommendation over time.

Link to Findings

In the redacted IEPs reviewed, there were notes regarding the use of adaptations for testing but not for classroom academic instruction. Aside from CTT classrooms and adherence to the least restrictive environment (LRE) rule, there was little mention of modifications for academic instruction. The differentiated instructional methods were limited to the use of small groups and cooperative learning (with occasional one-on-one instruction), both of which seem to enhance inclusion, peer acceptance, access to the general education curriculum, and improved student achievement (Special Education Report, pp. 9, 10) based on classroom observation data. In

following the Balanced Literacy approach, evidence indicates that teachers use guided reading and small-group instruction. They adapt instruction for ELLs and general education students; however, there is little evidence that this applies to instruction of SWDs (SEC Report, ELL Report, School Interview Report).

General education teachers report a low level of administrative support and a lack of strategies and materials to fully meet the academic needs of SWDs. Of teachers interviewed, 25 percent said that the materials they use for ELA instruction do not meet the needs of their students. Of teachers of SWDs interviewed, 30 percent had not received any professional development in instructional techniques, classroom management skills, or behavior management strategies to be utilized with this student population. Of teachers interviewed, 28 percent had not received any professional development in utilizing student achievement data. In fact, 30 percent of the IEPs reviewed were not written based on objective student performance data. There were several teachers who reported that the IEP goals of their students were not aligned with the general education curriculum (Special Education Report, p. 6). About half of the teachers interviewed did not know how IEP implementation is monitored.

Most agree that SWDs have access to the general education curriculum to the degree they are in general education or CTT classrooms; have general education, grade-specific indicators or educational objectives written into their IEPs; or there is a specified common planning time in the school day during which general and special education teachers work collaboratively (Special Education Report, p. 5). The research team agreed (Special Education Report, p. 4) that in some cases they had to deduce that students did have access to the general education curriculum. SWDs did not, however, have access to enrichment programs. It was indicated (Special Education Report, p. 13) that many SWDs cannot participate in afterschool or Saturday programs because there is no bus transportation available to them.

Although poor student behavior was not a major concern, it was listed (Special Education Report, p. 14) as one of several disruptive factors (along with pullout programs, in-school announcements, and telephone calls). The inability to deal effectively with behavioral issues or other interruptions were problematic at times (Special Education Report, p. 15). Most teachers were not familiar with behavioral support plans for SWDs (Special Education Report, p. 12), and 20 percent of teachers interviewed said that student behavior policies are not uniformly enforced, or are unclear.

One of the regional administrators said, “We try to prevent kids from getting referred inappropriately. We believe in improving instruction before referral” (Special Education Report, p. 13). There was, however, an indication that more resources were needed and that closer monitoring of instructional choices was necessary (Special Education Report, p. 13), particularly at the time a special education referral is made.

Link to Research

The following section presents information related to three areas that, taken together, may positively impact the achievement of SWDs: (1) access to the general education curriculum; (2) CCT; and (3) differentiated instruction.

Access to the General Education Curriculum. The 1997 reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) introduced the requirement that SWDs have access to the general education curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as that is provided to students without disabilities [34 C.F.R. § 300.347(a)(1)(i)]). Closely linked with IDEA's requirement to educate SWDs in the LRE, general education placement is associated with better outcomes for SWDs across all types (Hebbeler, 1993). Baker, Wang, and Walberg (1994–95) reported on three meta-analyses, finding a small-to-moderate beneficial effect of inclusive education on the academic outcomes of special education students. Moreover, they also found that there is considerable evidence in the last 15 years to suggest that segregation of students in separate special education is actually detrimental to their learning and that students in special education generally perform better on average in a regular classroom. Sharpe, York, & Knight (1994) and Stevens and Slavin (1995) also report positive gains in academic and language skills for SWDs in general education versus self-contained classroom settings (Fisher, Roach & Frey, 2002). Fisher and Frey (2001) found that students with significant disabilities can and do access the core curriculum with appropriate accommodations and modifications. Other research has shown that even students with very significant cognitive disabilities can be educated effectively in the general education classroom with appropriate supports (Brown, Schwarz, Udvari-Solner, Kampschroer-Frattura, Johnson, & Jorgensen, J., et al., 1991).

Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) Starting in Schools With the Highest SWD Populations. Villa, Thousand, and Nevin (2004) provide a definition of coteaching that seems to fit the CTT model used in some New York City schools: "a general and special educator who teach the general education curriculum to all students as well as implement Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with disabilities" (p. 24). Both educators on the coteaching team share responsibility for instructional planning and delivery, assessment of student achievement, and classroom management (Cramer, Nevin, Salazar, & Landa, in press). Coteaching can be one way to increase access of SWDs to the general education curriculum (Bahamonde & Friend, 1999; Garrigan & Thousand, 2005; Salazar & Nevin, 2005). Recent studies have shown the benefits of a coteaching model for students, teachers, and school organizations (Dieker, 1998; Friend, Reising, & Cook, 1993; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2004).

Although CTT may necessitate creative reallocation of resources (e.g., fiscal, human, time and scheduling), collaborative models have been shown to streamline instruction, prevent removal of students from the general education classroom, and ensure the integration of goals and standards to create success within the curriculum (Flemming & Monda-Amaya, 2001; Friend & Cook, 2000). Academic growth for students with severe emotional disabilities is attributed to more teacher attention, reduced teacher-pupil ratios, and more individual assistance provided through collaboration (Carter, 2000).

Differentiated Instruction. The U.S. Department of Education–funded Access Center (www.k8accesscenter.org) defines differentiated instruction as follows:

> To differentiate instruction is to recognize students' varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning and interests, and to react responsively. Differentiated instruction is a process of teaching and learning for students of differing abilities in the same class. The intent of differentiating instruction is to maximize each student's growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is, and assisting in the learning process. (Hall, Strangman, & Meyer, 2003, pp. 2–3)

The current emphasis on standards-based instruction and accountability may appear to be in conflict with principles of individualization and differentiation (Tomlinson, 2000). Thus Tomlinson proposes differentiation as a "way of thinking about the classroom" (p. 6) and defines it as a "refinement of, not a substitute for, high-quality curriculum and instruction" (p. 7). She maintains that there is no contradiction between effective standards-based instruction and differentiation. "Curriculum tells us *what* to teach: Differentiation tells us *how*" (p. 8); in other words, how to teach the same standard to a range of students by using a variety of teaching and learning strategies.

Tomlinson (2001) identifies three areas for differentiation: content, process, and products. Under NCLB it is clear that SWDs are expected to have access to instruction that is aligned with state content standards. Differentiation in content means that several different instructional elements and materials may be used to support the content of the instruction. The variation seen in a differentiated classroom is demonstrated most frequently in the manner in which students gain access to important content rather than by changing the content itself. As noted by Hall, Strangman, and Meyer (2003), "Instruction is concept-focused and principle-driven" (p. 4).

Differentiation in process includes flexible grouping, effective classroom management, and instructional strategies. Differentiation in products includes initial and ongoing assessment of student progress. Students are expected to be active learners, and there may be variations in what is expected in terms of student response. According to Hall, Strangman, and Meyer (2003), other practices that are typical of differentiated instruction have been validated in the effective teaching research in the past two decades, including effective management procedures, grouping students for instruction, and engaging learners (Ellis & Worthington, 1994).

As Hall, Strangman, and Meyer (2003) explain, differentiated instruction is an instructional process that has excellent potential to positively impact learning by offering teachers flexibility in providing instruction to a range of students in today's classroom situations.

According to the literature review conducted by the Access Center (2005), qualitative and meta-analysis research indicate that students in differentiated classrooms achieve better outcomes than students in classrooms without differentiation (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Tomlinson, Brighton, Hertberg, Callahan, Moon, & Brimijoin, et al., 2003); and when instructional materials are differentiated to meet student needs, interests, and readiness, academic gains increase (Kulik, 1992; Lou, Abrami, Spence, Poulsen, Chambers, & d'Apollonia, 1996).

If SWDs have access to the general education curriculum, primarily in a general education classroom with nondisabled peers, using instruction that is individualized (i.e., differentiated based on student learning styles, readiness levels, and preferences for response), it may be expected that their achievement will improve and AYP targets for the SWDs subgroup will be reached.

Implementation Considerations

1. Revisit and revise IEPs to ensure that they include the following:
    a. Educational goals that are aligned with the general curriculum.
    b. Behavioral goals as needed.
    c. "The nature of and degree to which environmental modifications and human or material resources are required to enable the student to benefit from instruction" (NYSED, 2005).
    d. Strategies for comprehensive service delivery in the LRE.
2. Provide embedded and experiential professional development (see Recommendation 2 for full professional development suggestions) for appropriate general and special education teachers, including new teachers, and coaches at all grade levels in the following topics:
    a. Differentiating instruction (especially for teachers with SWDs in their general education classrooms).
    b. Managing student behavior (especially for new teachers).
    c. Designing of modifications and adaptations for instructional use in the classroom.
    d. Understanding IEP development and interpretation.
    e. Using data-driven (based on student achievement data) continuous improvement to guide instruction (see NYCDOE Quality Review).
    f. Engaging in strategies to address the needs of SWDs (which may include remedial literacy instruction).

In addition, schools with large SWD populations may want consider having administrators, coaches, and appropriate general and special education teachers start participating in embedded professional development on CTT or begin exploring the Response to Intervention model. These can become part of a long-term plan to ensure that SWDs increasingly will have access to a standards-based general education curriculum.

3. Remove barriers to instructional program participation currently experienced by SWDs in District 12.
    a. Increase availability of appropriate ELA instructional materials for SWDs and administrative support for their teachers; this support may include administrator participation in professional development for data-driven continuous improvement and strategic planning for SWDs.

b. Revisit the scheduling of extracurricular enrichment programs so they occur during the school day (perhaps at the high school level) or can be accommodated by a once-a-week altered or expanded bus schedule, so SWDs have more equal access to these programs.

c. Convene school-level teams to regularly examine logistical barriers impeding full participation by SWDs and determine strategies to increase access.

4. Implement ongoing strategies that analyze the feasibility of and actualize these considerations. This would include generating more consistent IEP content and tracking implementation, observing instructional modifications and adaptations in classroom use, ensuring teacher utilization of differentiated instructional practices that address the needs of SWDs, mobilizing and encouraging teacher and peer respect for SWDs, applying equitable behavioral expectations and consequences, creating protocols for using student achievement data to guide instruction, and considering innovative approaches and models for addressing the academic needs of SWDs.

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Recommendation 5

Address teacher turnover in District 12's schools, especially secondary schools, with efforts to facilitate the equitable distribution of teachers. These include strategies related to recruitment, hiring and placement, and retention, such as the following:

- **Recruiting and hiring teachers who have been prepared to work in at-risk secondary schools or who have experience with at-risk secondary schools or secondary students who are at-risk.**

- **Retaining high-quality teachers in secondary schools by offering increased support, particularly for new teachers as well as concentrating on issues related to improved working conditions, including financial incentives, resources, and quality leadership.**

Link to Findings

District and school respondents expressed concerns about hiring and retaining qualified teachers. The Learning Point Associates site visitors noted the high proportion of new teachers who were interviewed as well as the high number of teachers who indicated they were fairly new to the school. Table 2 depicts the percentage of interviewed teachers who, at the time they were interviewed, were new to the teaching profession (with one to two years of teaching experience) and who were new to the school in which they were working (one to two years in the school). The table depicts this information for the two general groups of schools: elementary and secondary (which includes middle and high schools).

Table 2. Percentage of New Teachers Interviewed

District	Elementary		Secondary	
	% of teachers with 1–2 years of experience	% of teachers in school only 1–2 years	% of teachers with 1–2 years of experience	% of teachers in school only 1–2 years
District 12	24% (*n*=34)	39% (*n*=33)	47% (*n*=17)	65% (*n*=17)

The percentage of teachers new to the schools where they were working when interviewed is markedly higher than the percent of new teachers. As the table suggests, again using the interviewed group as a representative district sample, district schools experience very high teacher turnover. In both school groups, teachers new to the schools exceeds 20 percent—a figure that reflects the data contained in the district's 2005 District Report Card, which indicates that across the district 43 percent of teachers have been in their current schools for fewer than two years. This issue illustrates the *revolving door* about which some principals and district personnel spoke when discussing teacher mobility.

Interviewed respondents offered a number of hypotheses for high teacher turnover, including the following:

- A high number of teachers is hired through alternative certification programs, with teachers making only a two-year commitment to their position or the profession.
- The Open Market Hiring System makes it easy for teachers to transfer to different districts and schools in New York City.
- New and inexperienced teachers are assigned to the most difficult schools and classrooms.
- There is ineffective school administration.
- The New York City salary base for teachers, which is low given the high cost of living in the city, makes it appealing for teachers to transfer to suburban schools.

- The district offers high levels of support to first-year teachers but not second-year teachers.
- Status as a secondary school where teacher turnover is somewhat higher than in elementary schools.

The impact of having inexperienced teachers and high teacher turnover is strong. District and school personnel indicate that they have to focus high levels of time and resources on recruitment and training every year. The capacity of schools to effectively implement instructional programs is reduced when turnover is high. Teachers unfamiliar with instructional programs and materials may be ineffectively using or underutilizing instructional materials. Finally, district administrators and co-interpretation participants reported that new teachers find it more difficult to differentiate instruction than experienced teachers; thus, there is more reliance on the direct instruction approach.

Link to Research

Student Achievement and Teacher Quality. Quality teachers have an indisputable impact on student achievement, particularly the achievement of students who tend to be at risk (Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Many of District 12's students fit this profile. In 2006, more than 85 percent of the district's students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and the district's student test results were lower than the state's in mathematics, ELA, and science. When schools and districts similar to District 12 have difficulties recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers in their schools, student growth is compromised. Unfortunately, several studies have shown that teachers systematically move away from schools with low levels of achievement and high concentrations of poor children of color (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005; Carroll, Reichardt, Guarino, & Mejia, 2000; Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2003; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). Districts and schools have a responsibility to make concerted efforts toward reducing the concentration of less qualified teachers, including those with little to no experience, in at-risk schools.

Teacher Attrition. Nationally, there has been a growing concern about high teacher turnover rates and this has placed teacher retention at the forefront of the educational policy agenda. In 2003, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003) reported, using Schools and Staffing Survey data, that approximately one third of America's new teachers leave teaching sometime during their first three years and almost half leave during the first five years. Turnover among teachers is particularly prominent in at-risk schools, making most of them hard to staff. In New York state, more than one fifth of teachers leave within the first three years (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). Teacher turnover is also especially high in certain subject areas, such as special education. For example, each year more than 13 percent of special educators leave the profession or transfer to general education; every four years, half of all special education teachers have departed (McLeskley, Tyler, & Flippin, 2003). Ingersoll (2001) notes that these staffing issues are frequently a result of demand rather than an insufficient supply of teachers. In other words, it is not necessarily the case that there are not enough teachers to fill most positions—although, this is often true for certain subject areas such as mathematics, science, and special education—but more the case that teachers are moving or leaving their jobs at relatively high rates.

At-risk schools, including those in District 12, have a disproportionate number of new teachers, and studies show that approximately 50 percent of new teachers leave their initial teaching assignment within the first five years (Allen, 2005; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). Research shows that teacher experience matters, but only in the first few years of teaching (Rice, 2003). Teachers reach their peak performance by increments within the first four or five years of teaching. After that, student learning is affected little by additional years of teaching. Furthermore, data from New York City show that teachers are more likely to quit if they live far away from the school (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005).

Impact of Strategic Recruitment and Hiring. In recent years, there has been an influx of students who are low-performing or SWDs into District 12 schools because of the Schools of Choice program. The district, more than ever, needs teachers who can work with these students. Getting and keeping high-quality personnel for at-risk schools is often a function of recruiting and hiring teachers and leaders who match school positions reflective of their knowledge, experience, and expertise.

Some of the factors that drive teacher candidates away from at-risk schools can be addressed during teacher preparation. Field placement in an urban school, training in multicultural awareness, and examination of deeply held beliefs can make teacher candidates more comfortable and more confident in their ability to teach in an at-risk school (Cushman, 1999; Lyons & Quartz, 2005; Lyons, 2005; Yeo, 1997). Unless teachers are prepared to be successful in at-risk schools, they will continue to leave classrooms at troubling rates. Targeting recruitment and hiring of school personnel with these and other similar types of backgrounds and experiences may help ensure that the fit between the teacher or principal and the position are aligned (Liu, 2005). If positions do not closely match new teachers' preparation, interests, and preferences, they may not stay in them for long.

Research also shows that urban schools often miss out on the best and brightest teachers for their vacancies because of budget timelines and hiring delays (Levin & Quinn, 2003; Scollen & Fifield, 2005). Urban districts often lose stronger applicants because they have an earlier opportunity to accept positions in schools that are not hard to staff, commonly in suburban districts with higher pay.

Impact of Working Conditions to Facilitate Teacher Retention. The decision for a teacher about whether to stay or leave a school frequently is influenced by the working conditions found in the school, including salary, support mechanisms, school conditions, and class size (Horng, 2005). Qualitative studies have found that many teachers move voluntarily from school to school in search of an environment that makes good teaching possible (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). These factors certainly reflect some of the job difficulties mentioned by teachers and leaders of District 12.

Working conditions related to support mechanisms are particularly important for inexperienced teachers looking for guidance and orientation in their new positions. Most new teachers leave the profession and especially leave at-risk schools because of a lack of support, a poor professional environment, and a feeling of isolation—all factors noted by secondary school teachers in District 12 interviewed as part of the curriculum audit. Comprehensive induction programs

can produce a high rate of return on investment when novice teachers stay long enough to develop into professionals who help students meet their academic potential (Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005). In her review of public opinion data, Coggshall (2006) mentions that another common reason for leaving a school is the lack of administrative support, particularly from school leaders.

Implementation Considerations

To implement the recommendation to recruit, distribute, and retain more high-quality teachers across District 12's schools, there are several potential strategies to pursue. These strategies can be implemented to varying degrees depending on the context. However, strategies focused on reducing teacher turnover should work in tandem as recruitment efforts likely will fail if retention efforts related to working conditions are not improved.

Teacher Preparation. Some findings point to the notion that new teachers are coming out of teacher preparation programs without enough training reflective of the realities of being a teacher, particularly in the schools that make up District 12. Teachers for District 12 schools should able to work with students who have the potential to be at risk, including those in poverty; students whose first language is not English; and students with special needs. Educators also need to be able to address the cultural gaps that often exist between them and their students.

These issues often can be addressed through field experiences. Kathleen Cushman (1999) notes that "teacher education field work can serve as a powerful force for school change, by helping the school identify its reform priorities and building a cadre of prospective teachers" (p. 4). Field experiences in secondary schools would be especially helpful for District 12. For example, Chicago's Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) (www.ausl-chicago.org) offers residents hands-on experience for one school year to learn best practices, habits, and beliefs of successful urban school teachers and leaders. Cohorts of graduates are placed into carefully selected underperforming schools in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), where they work for at least five years. In the last six years, AUSL has trained 153 teachers who serve more than 4,500 low-income CPS children. The program maintains a 95 percent retention rate of its program graduates.

The Broad Foundation has a similar program for principal training in which principals are trained to work in public schools in the 100 largest urban school districts in the country. Similar programs in New York include Teach For America (www.teachforamerica.org) and the New York City Teaching Fellows Program (www.nycteachingfellows.org). Teachers from these programs, however, often do not stay in the school beyond their two- or three-year requirement. This is frequently the case for District 12 as well as for other urban areas that use the same or similar programs. Therefore, retention efforts are vital to keep these teachers on board. One resource designed to address this issue is the *Urban Teacher Academy Project Toolkit: A Guide to Developing High School Teaching Career Academies* (Berrigan & Schwartz, 2000). The toolkit helps school districts plan and institutionalize high school teaching academies to nurture and grow prospective teachers committed to serving their schools and communities.

Furthermore, District 12 should consider the degree to which the district works with or has the potential to work with institutions of higher education or other alternative routes to certification programs to collaborate on preparation programs targeted to District 12 schools.

Human Resources and Hiring. Another potential strategy includes focusing human resources efforts on targeted hiring that positively impacts at-risk schools such as those in District 12. By streamlining human resources systems and removing the barriers to making early hiring decisions, schools and districts can select candidates from a larger and more qualified applicant pool. Teachers are more likely to accept jobs with efficient application and screening processes. This is also true of principals. A recent report by The New Teacher Project (2006) proposed four key steps for an effective principal hiring process: (1) recruitment; (2) initial eligiblity screen; (3) district competency screen; and (4) school fit panel interviews. Late hiring is primarily the result of late student enrollment predictions; delayed budget decisions; prioritized transfer processes; and poorly organized central offices. Liu and Johnson (2003) recommend information-rich, school-based hiring, including interviews with more than just the school principal and observations.

It is also important to understand, recruit, and hire the kinds of teachers who are known to traditionally remain in District 12's schools. For example, using data from New York City, Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2005) report that teachers prefer to teach in areas close to home that are similar to where they went to high school. To target hiring practices, District 12 might bring to the attention of the NYCDOE Department of Human Resources processes that create barriers in the hiring process for teacher candidates as well as any components of the city's collective bargaining agreement that seem to be contributing to teacher turnover.

Professional Development and New Teacher Induction. For those teachers without the benefit of hands-on experiences during teacher preparation or to continually enhance teaching for those who did have those experiences, sustained and targeted induction and professional development are vital. These efforts should be targeted to the specific needs of District 12's teachers, which may include mentoring new teachers, bridging cultural gaps, and employing classroom management. Teachers in District 12 report that they are not always a part of the ongoing process to determine and address their specific needs for differentiated professional development. Furthermore, retention strategies focused on induction and professional development should be embedded in the job to create school communities centered on teaching and learning. Secondary school teachers in District 12 report much less professional development than elementary school teachers. Comprehensive induction can build relationships among teachers as well as develop leadership and instructional practices for all of those involved in the process. It literally can open doors for shared classroom observations and discussions of student learning as well as create more effective support and assistance. Furthermore, the connection of experienced and novice teachers can lend emotional support to new teachers. Teachers and other staff working in such a mutually supportive learning community will be more effective in supporting and promoting students in at-risk schools.

Research shows (Bartell, 2005; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Johnson, 2004) that critical components of a high-quality new teacher induction program include the following:

- Providing release time so new teachers can observe their effective veteran colleagues and veteran teachers can observe and provide feedback to new teachers.
- Creating a professional growth plan for new teachers and conducting regular, standards-based assessments of the new teachers' progress and performance to provide feedback and targeted support.
- Incorporating a formal mentoring process by which new teachers receive regular guidance from matched, trained veteran teachers.
- Providing ongoing, standards-based professional development for new teachers that addresses their needs.

Working Conditions. In addition to enhanced support through induction and professional development, District 12 and NYCDOE also must focus on retention strategies around improved working conditions. These include access to resources, competitive salary, tolerable class sizes, and assistance with behavior management. Suggestions related to teacher preparation, hiring, and professional support will fall short if the schools are not conducive places to work relative to teachers' other nearby options.

The city might consider offering financial incentives or accessing educator candidates who are benefiting from state-level financial incentives to teach in at-risk secondary schools. For example, Arkansas Secondary Education Loan Program (Arkansas Department of Higher Education, 2002) provides financial assistance to students who are pursing a degree leading to secondary teaching licensure in content areas of high need, such as mathematics, science, special education, and foreign language. Recipients agree to teach full-time in Arkansas in one of the high-need content areas. Subsequently, the loan will be reduced at a rate of 20 percent each year that the recipient fulfills this commitment. While many financial incentives programs traditionally have not been effective, instances where they are targeted, of sufficient amounts, and sustained may offset some teacher turnover. Some findings show that the high cost of living in New York City makes it difficult, particularly for new teachers, to live near the district in which they teach. In addition, teachers want to live close to where they work so efforts to offset the cost of living (e.g., assistance with commuter fees, housing fees) may have small impacts on teacher turnover. New York City has a program that offers housing subsidies to lure mathematics, science, and special education teachers to teach in the city's hard-to-staff schools.

The Center for Teaching Quality (n.d.a.) is working with the Clark County School District, which struggles with many of the same issues as District 12, to assess teacher working conditions and develop feasible action steps for improvement. The collaborations between the organization and the district first survey teachers in the district about issues related to time, leadership, resources, empowerment, and professional development. Results from those surveys are analyzed, and customized reports about the status of working conditions are provided to the districts. Schools and districts also may access the *Teacher Working Conditions Toolkit* (Center for Teaching Quality, n.d.b.), which helps users identify effective strategies for reform related to working conditions. Four toolkit topics that look particularly relevant for District 12 are time, professional development, facilities and resources, and leadership.

Conclusion

Schools, districts, and states must work to stem the tide of teacher turnover and provide environments that allow good teaching to happen. District 12 has taken the steps to identify areas of need and now must take the steps to address those areas of need through targeted recruitment and retention strategies to attract and keep a high-quality teacher in every classroom.

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Appendix

Data Maps

District 12
Co-Interpretation Key Findings and Hypotheses

During the co-interpretation process, participants analyzed eight individual reports (data sets). Participants identified findings from across the data sets under each of the areas examined through the audit. Participants worked together to identify which findings were most significant. No hypotheses were offered at the co-interpretation due to time constraints. The following tables document the results of this co-interpretation process.

Data Source Codes

- Curriculum Alignment—CA
- District Interview Report—DI
- Document Review—DR
- English Language Learner Report—ELL
- Observations—SOM
- School Interview Report—SI
- Special Education Report—SE
- Student Achievement—SA
- Surveys of Enacted Curriculum—SEC

Theme 1: Achievement and Accountability

Table A-1. Key Finding 4

District processes to assess program implementation and effectiveness are not fully developed. According to teacher and district interviews, there is a high presence of monitoring to support the delivery of instruction. However, there was no clear evidence submitted by the district documenting implementation and monitoring. **VOTES: 0** The district has plans to monitor the use of assessment data, implementation of instructional programs (including Academic Intervention Services [AIS]), and the alignment of student data with instructional practices. However, there is no formal indication that these plans have been enacted. **VOTES: 0**	**Supporting Findings**	According to teacher and district interviews, respondents from most schools—elementary and secondary—indicated monitoring has high presence in their school.	SI p. 6
		According to interviews, there is a high presence of monitoring to support the delivery of instruction, except for one secondary school where respondents rated monitoring as low.	SI
		Principals and assistant principals monitor instruction for effectiveness by reviewing achievement data and periodic walkthroughs.	ELL p. 16 (elem. SOM)
		Although there was a plan to monitor the implementation of the written curriculum, there was no district data submitted to show this actually took place	DR p. 2
		Although curriculum planning took place, there is no clear evidence that implementation took or takes place.	DR p. 2
		According to the documents reviewed, there is evidence of plans to monitor the use of assessment data	DR p. 8
		According to the documents reviewed, although there is evidence of policies and plans regarding the use of assessment data, there is no evidence to confirm that monitoring has taken place.	DR p. 8
		No documents were submitted to provide evidence that tools to monitor AIS services have been used and that monitoring has occurred.	DR p. 5
		Use of assessment data is fairly high by both teachers and administrators.	SI
		Assessment is valued in those schools where administrative use of data is very high. (Communication across the school is important.)	SI p. 8
		Data are used by teachers to design appropriate instruction for students.	SI p. 9
		There is a mixture of assessment data, standardized test, and informal teacher's assessment.	SI p. 8
		The frequency of the assessment is not evident.	SI
		Teachers need to create more frequent informal assessment to inform their instruction.	SI

	Supporting Findings	Standardized test scores do not address the needs of the students.	SI
		We are unable to tease out MS data, which is a major Region 2 (District 12) focus.	SOM p. 6
		Another respondent noted that testing English language learners (ELLs) in English one year after coming into this country is bizarre—very true.	SI
		Rubrics are barely displayed or rarely referenced.	ELL p. 26
		Accommodations are provided as required for ELLs taking standardized tests.	ELL p. 9
		District advises monitoring of teacher quality in instruction to ELLs.	ELL p. 9 (DI)
		According to the documents reviewed, monitoring and implementation of research-based practices is unclear.	DR p. 6
		District and regional staff monitor progress toward adequate yearly progress (AYP) through ongoing evaluation and spot checks during school visits.	ELL p. 8
		District says there are mechanisms to monitor ELL programs in effectiveness.	ELL p. 9
		District says general education instruction is monitored for how it addresses needs of ELLs.	ELL p. 9
		District evaluation of ELL engagement and access to curriculum: portfolios, teacher reports, walkthroughs, and standardized tests.	ELL p. 6
		There is solid evidence of a yearly cohesive plan to monitor and implement instructional strategies.	DR p. 9
		Secondary classrooms showed fewer assessment practices than in elementary classrooms.	ELL p. 33
		In one [secondary] school where monitoring is rated as low, a number of teachers reported that no one keeps track of instruction. This situation is viewed as a loss by some teachers who seldom have anyone come into their classrooms to observe or assess their instruction.	SI
		In Grades 9–12, 100 percent of teachers spend little time in test taking strategies.	SEC p. 38
		District staff is waiting for a better mechanism to track school performance information (NYSTART).	ELL p. 9

Theme 2: Curriculum and Standards

Table A-2. Key Finding 1

Although interviewed teachers perceived the curriculum to be aligned to the New York state standards, a number of sources indicated that there are gaps in alignment. A notable number of the literacy competencies identified in the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) Literacy Standards for Grades K–8 are not identified specifically in the current ELA curriculum maps. Significant gaps occurred at Grades 6 and 8, especially in the areas of word recognition, background, and comprehension. The district did not submit ELA curricula for Grades 9–12. Based on teacher interviews and *Surveys of Enacted Curriculum* (SEC) responses, teachers believe that the curriculum is aligned because they have pedagogical choices to meet student needs within the district's instructional framework. However, based on a review of the curriculum submitted by the district, SEC data, and interview data, all students do not have a rigorous and challenging curriculum, particularly at Grades 9–12.	**Supporting Findings**	The second grade is most aligned to the competencies.	CA
		In phonemic awareness in Grade 1, although teachers are touching on the subject, it lacks focus and time spent as compared with the state standards.	SEC p. 9
		When comparing the data collected by the SEC, in phonemic awareness in Grade 2, teachers spend more time overall in phonics when compared to state standards.	SEC pp. 10, 13, 16, 19
		Grade 4 state assessment focuses heavily on critical reading. Grade 4 district instruction has no focus.	SEC p. 28
		Utilizing SEC data, in the category of vocabulary Grades 1–5, the district spends less time and does not go into enough depth when compared to state standards.	SEC pp. 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19
		When comparing district instruction to state assessments in Grades K–5, the district spends more time and effort with an overview as opposed to targeting and focusing on specific topics by grade.	SEC
		Sixth-grade standards require students to demonstrate knowledge (cognitive demands) across most ELA topic areas. Instruction in Grades 5–6 is most focused on comprehension across cognitive demand levels.	SEC p. 19
		When compared to state standards, district instruction in writing components and writing processes lack appropriate depth and focus in Grades 5–12.	SEC pp. 19, 21, 23
		At the middle school level, state standards require students to focus on critical reading, specifically to compare across texts at the investigate level. District instruction lacks this focus.	SEC p. 22
		Across grade levels, district instruction in speaking and presenting lacks appropriate depth and focus when compared to state standards.	SEC pp. 9, 10, 13, 16, 19, 21, 23
		As grade levels increase, the number of literacy competencies addressed decreases in the written curriculum.	CA (Q6)

There was no evidence that showed alignment of the district's curriculum to the New York state performance indicators for Grades 9–12. Overall, teachers use assessment data to make instructional decisions. In some schools, decisions are limited while in others a great variety of decisions are made. Use of assessment data by teachers drops in Grades 7 and 8 (ELL, SI, SE, SEC, DR). **VOTES: 9 Red**	**Supporting Findings**	The largest gaps in the lack of curriculum alignment in K–8 occur at Grades 6 and 8. Grades 6 and 8 have the least number of competencies addressed in curriculum alignment.	CA (Q6)
		At least 80 percent of K–8 teachers claim that state curriculum framework or content standards have at least a somewhat positive influence on what to teach in ELA.	SEC p. 54
		No curriculum documents were submitted for Grades 9–12, according the documents reviewed.	DR p. 2
		Since the curriculum mapping done by the district was largely by topic, the cognitive demands (relative to expectations of what students should know and be able to do) could not be determined.	CA (Q6)
		SEC data indicate that for Grades 3–12, ELA instruction in comprehension and critical reading lack the significant focus required by state assessments in those topic areas.	SEC pp. 27–31
		In interviews, teachers believe the curriculum is aligned to New York state standards, despite different programs (e.g., Balanced Literacy).	SI p. 4
		Curriculum is perceived as being aligned to standards and effective in meeting the needs of most students.	SI
		There are variations in the definition of curriculum among schools and sometimes within schools.	SI p. 4
		In all but one sample school, the curriculum has to be followed closely.	SI p. 5
		No evidence that there is a measurable and attainable system used to align data and instructional practices.	DR p. 8 (Q11)
		Although there was evidence of implementation tools to facilitate the use of data to inform instruction, in the documents reviewed there was no evidence that teachers use these tools or use assessment data to inform instruction.	DR p. 8 (Q11)
		Most classrooms were consistent in aligning practices to English as a Second Language (ESL) standards.	ELL p. 21
		District says curriculum is aligned with New York state ESL and ELA standards.	
		The level of rigor as defined by cognitive demand could not be determined because the district curriculum map is by content topic.	CA, DR

	Supporting Findings	District-level instruction in comprehension, specifically comprehension strategies, lacks appropriate depth and focus across grade levels (K–12) when compared to New York state standards, covering all topics only at a surface level.	SEC pp. 12, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23
		All students do not have a rigorous and challenging curriculum from Grades 9–12. Curriculum alignment has not been completed.	CA
		Some ELL program teachers said ELLs cannot meet the same standards.	ELL p. 17
		A general education teacher says that the standards are more “flexible” for her intermediate ELLs.	ELL p. 12
		More than elementary schools in the district, in meeting the needs of students with disabilities, secondary schools are not doing well.	SI p. 9
		Two out of four secondary schools indicated they are not meeting the needs of Students with Disabilities (SWDs).	SI p. 9
		Teachers interviewed stated that teachers are practicing curriculum alignment using the state standards as a framework. Teachers are able to maintain the consistency of the state standards in the process of developing effective teaching strategies that address the needs of their students.	SI p. 4
		When compared to state standards, district K–12 instruction lacks appropriate focus in listening and viewing and lacks depth and focus in Grade 5–12 writing components and writing processes.	SEC pp. 9, 10, 13, 16, 19, 21, 23
		Under instructional influence, 75 percent of Grades 9–12 staff surveyed reported that the district curriculum had little or no influence on teaching.	SEC p. 54 (Q128)
		Teachers say curriculum is the same for all students and aligned with state standards, but they have choices (within the framework) of text and pedagogical choices.	ELL p. 11
		It is common that teachers indicate they have high discretion while coaches and supervisors say teacher discretion is limited by the requirements of the curriculum.	SI p. 6

Theme 3: Instruction and Assessment

Table A-3. Key Finding 2

The region and district has defined plans, policies, and resources to address the needs of ELLs and SWDs. However, poor communication or ineffective implementation related to the district plans was evident in a number of the district schools that participated in the audit. Although the district has plans and policies in place regarding instruction of ELLs (dissemination of student performance data, Language Allocation Policy, ELL services as described in District Comprehensive Education Plan [DCEP]), this information is not conveyed successfully to teachers of ELLs. Furthermore, there is no evidence in the curriculum map that instruction is differentiated for ELLs, and teachers of ELLs indicate a need for more supplemental materials and support to help ELLs to meet curriculum demands. (This finding is the result of collapsing the four subkey findings.) **VOTES: 8 Red**	**Supporting Findings**	**Subkey Finding A** While communication in native language has improved, ELL parental feedback strongly indicates inconsistent communication between the home, teachers, schools and the district, particularly concerning services (e.g., psychological; making well-informed choices).	
		Parents receive more communication from the district and New York City Department of Education than from the school.	ELL p. 37
		Translation into parents' language appears to be a big issue (perhaps awareness of services).	ELL p. 38
		Parents are sometimes frustrated by lack of information to make well-informed decisions.	ELL p. 37
		Parent communication varied from teacher to teacher and from school to school.	ELL p. 36
		Parents appreciate increasing communication in Spanish.	ELL p. 37
		Parents are not informed of psychological services.	ELL p. 38
		Subkey Finding B Although the district has plans and policies in place regarding instruction of ELLs (dissemination of student performance data, Language Allocation Policies, ELL services as described in the DCEP) this information is not successfully conveyed to teachers of ELLs.	ELL, DR
		Expectations were not clearly articulated to the staff.	SI p. 17
		Achievement scores are examined to show evidence of academic growth and New York State English as a Second Language Test (NYSESLAT) scores are used to assess language development.	ELL p. 8
		Teachers have to rely on themselves to monitor ELL progress.	ELL p. 16
		Teachers employ specific instructional techniques to meet ELL student needs.	ELL p. 18
		All lessons followed stated purpose and most differentiated instruction by language level.	ELL p. 21

All SWDs and ELLs do not have access to or instruction in the general education curriculum. Specific accommodations and modifications are not uniformly embedded to ensure that all students learn. Research-based program materials and administrative support for SWDs and ELLs vary. (See Subkey Findings A_1 and B_1 at left). **VOTES: 6 Red** In teaching Balanced Literacy, evidence indicates that teachers use guided reading and small-group instruction. They adapt instruction for ELLs and general education students. There is little evidence, however, that this applies to instruction of SWDs (SEC, ELL, SI). **VOTES: 1 Red; 5 Green** The district has established structures (e.g., teams, professional development) to address the needs of subgroups; and while there is documentation of professional development to address these needs, there is no documentation of monitoring for effectiveness of these supports. (SI, DR) **VOTES: 1 Red**	**Supporting Findings**	**Subkey Finding C** There is a district plan for identification and placement of ELLs, but there is no evidence in the curriculum map that instruction is differentiated for ELLs.	DR, ELL
		District indicates that each school has a Language Allocation Policy.	ELL p. 6
		In documents reviewed, there is no evidence that curriculum maps are explicitly differentiated for SWDs or ELLs.	DR p. 12
		The district has procedures in place for identification and placement of ELLs. The district collects evidence of ELL learning and access to curriculum.	ELL p. 7
		The district indicates that ELL learning needs are determined by the principal.	ELL p. 6
		The district indicates that ELLs are placed in programs according to NYSESLAT results.	ELL p. 6
		For ELLs and SWDs the individualized education program (IEP) is primarily a source for ongoing services.	ELL p. 9
		Feedback on student performance data are not generally provided to teachers.	ELL p. 20
		While instruction for ELLs and SWDs is moving in the right direction, there are still several significant barriers effectively teaching these populations.	SI p. 10
		ELA and ELL program used similar mix of classroom activities (e.g., small group, individual, whole group).	ELL pp. 22, 30 (second SOM)
		Some teachers group ELLs by English proficiency level and they receive instruction in English commensurate with needs.	ELL p. 12 (elem SI)
		General education teachers do not know about district planning for ELLs; communication is an issue for them. Teachers had little or no understanding of specific district school plans. None of the general education teachers were aware of a specific Language Allocation Policy.	ELL pp. 13, 18
		"I follow Balanced Literacy a little bit, but gear it toward the needs of ELLs."	ELL p. 12
		Teachers have the flexibility to meet the needs of their students within the structure of the curriculum.	SI p. 14

	Supporting Findings	Most classes followed stated purpose and were grade appropriate; when not it was due to disjointed lesson delivery.	ELL p. 29
		All teachers indicate using practices to differentiate instruction for ELLs.	ELL p. 13
		Subkey Finding D Teachers interviewed stated that there are adequate materials aligned to the curriculum; however, more supplemental materials and support are needed for ELLs to meet the curriculum demands.	
		Materials are perceived to be adequate in most schools, but there are not enough materials for lower level readers.	SI p. 7
		High-quality materials aligned to curriculum and standards are evident.	SI p. 7
		Most teachers (19 of 25) said the materials they use fit the needs of their students.	SE p. 7
		General education teachers do not have adequate supplemental materials for ELLs.	ELL p. 13
		Only half say they receive specific supports to help ELLs meet curriculum demands.	ELL p. 18
		Sets of materials are not widely available to support ELLs.	ELL
		At least (60 percent) of teachers Grades K–12 claim students' special needs have at least a somewhat positive influence on what they teach in ELA.	SEC p. 57
		Teachers were unaware of special assistance available to assist ELL and SWDs	ELL p. 14
		Classrooms had moderate resources and materials but were sparsely resourced for ELL learning needs.	ELL p. 34
		Teachers indicate ELA materials do not meet the needs of the lowest level students (reading well below grade level)	SI p. 11
		In Grades 9–12, 50 percent of teachers have little knowledge on how to use resources.	SEC p. 35
		District says there is personnel and materials to support curriculum implementation for ELLs.	ELL p. 7
		ELL program classes were especially well-equipped with technology resources.	ELL p. 34
		There is additional supplemental instruction for ELLs in afterschool, tutoring, and secondary classes.	ELL p. 14

	Supporting Findings	**Subkey Finding A_1** For ELLs and SWDs there are instructional challenges that reveal low administrative support and some inadequacy of the programs and materials to suit the needs of these subgroups.	
		Subkey Finding B_1 Based on special education interviews with regional and school staff and review of documents, the district ensures that all SWDs have access to and are instructed in the general education curriculum. However, there is little evidence of specific accommodations or modifications needed to ensure that all students are learning.	
		Two parents of SWDs said their children are taught the same thing, but they don't know whether their children are learning it.	SE p. 5
		"We try to prevent kids from getting referred inappropriately. "	SE p. 13
		Nearly everyone listed accommodations or modifications needed for testing and also provided promotional criteria. However, only a few listed specific accommodations or modifications needed in the academic instructional environment.	SE p. 6
		The district seems to ensure that all SWDs have access to and are instructed in the general education curriculum, based on interviews with regional and school staff, and the review of documents.	SE p. 4
		In Grades K–1 more than 50 percent of time is used for silent reading and independen skills; 40 percent of teachers use more than 50 percent of instructional time allowing students to read silently and select books of their own.	SEC p. 33
		In Grades 5–6, 100 percent of teachers spend only some to little time on journal writing. In contrast, 100 percent of teachers in these grades believe that students learn best when they engage in this practice.	SEC pp. 43, 45
		Grades 6 and 8 do not have a creative curriculum that is challenging or aligned to state standards.	CA
		In high school, 75 percent of teachers spend considerable time in journal writing. In contrast, Grades 5–8 spend some to little time.	SEC p. 43
		The majority of teachers spend more than 50 percent of their time in guided reading in Grades K–4, whereas in Grades 5–8 the majority of teachers spend some time (11 percent to 25 percent of their time).	SEC p. 39

		The majority of teachers in Grades K–2 and 7–12 spend a considerable amount of time in small-group work, whereas in Grades 5–6, 60 percent of the teachers spend some time (11 percent to 25 percent of their time).	SEC p. 36
		At least 60 percent of teachers surveyed in Grades K–12 feel prepared to perform tasks in cooperative learning groups (ELA).	SEC p. 60
		In Grade 1, 40 percent of teachers use more than 50 percent of their instructional time for students to read silently books of their own choice.	SEC p. 33
		A majority of teachers of Grades 2–8 spend 25 percent or less time engaging in speech, oral presentation, and performance.	SEC p. 42
		20 percent of teachers in Grades K–1 spend 50 percent of their time using technology, whereas 40 percent spend 50 percent of their time viewing film and videos.	SEC pp. 41, 37
		Technology is not utilized for instruction or as a learning tool.	SOM pp. 6, 10
		In Grades K–8 at least 75 percent surveyed felt the district curriculum had a strong or somewhat positive influence on what they teach.	SEC p. 54
		Moderate discretion is evident in teacher decisions regarding adapting instructional methods and selecting materials.	SI p. 5
		Resources seem to be lacking in most schools, including teachers (turnover) and resources.	SI p. 18
		Although there was evidence of a plan to monitor the written curriculum, there is no evidence that monitoring actually took place, according to the documents reviewed.	DR p. 2
		In the documents reviewed, there was no evidence that curriculum monitoring took place	DR p. 2
		Re: ELL/SWD—All schools appear to be facing the same challenges.	SI p. 9
		Re: ELL/SWD—There are programs in place to address the needs of students	SI p. 9
		Re: ELL/SWD—Social, emotional, and language issues are not adequately addressed.	SI p. 9
		There were huge concerns regarding the ELL students and SWD subpopulations. Most shared a clear focus and commitment to supporting these students.	SI p. 27
		High-rated schools designed school-specific approaches to working with low-	SI

		achieving students.	
		No student self assessment is reported in K–12	SOM pp. 6, 10
		The fact that NCLB is a federal mandate compels both district and schools to use the appropriate materials and resources to address the need of all students. This is quite evident among the ELL and SWD students.	SI
		Schools and districts are now using data to provide appropriate instruction for struggling students.	SI
		Classroom observations were inconclusive regarding whether the district instructional programs are fully implemented in class.	SE p. 4 (Q2)
		Project-based learning is almost never observed (92 percent not observed).	SOM p. 6
		Independent inquiry and research is almost never observed. (88 percent not observed).	SOM p. 6
		Student self-assessment is almost never observed (80 percent not observed)	SOM p. 6
		Student discussion was infrequently observed (80 percent not observed; 34 percent rarely observed)	SOM p. 6
		None of the instructional orientations were observed with great frequency (individual tutoring; cooperative/collaborative learning or team teaching). (K–12)	SOM p. 4 (K–12)
		We see a lot of teachers acting as coach or facilitator noted in observation data.	SOM p. 6
		High academically focused class time is evident in observation data.	SOM p. 6
		ELL students are not prepared adequately for Regents exams.	ELL p. 17
		General education used activating prior knowledge more often.	ELL p. 26
		One ELL program teacher said collaborating with other teachers was a challenge.	ELL p. 19
		Classroom observations did not reveal interruptions to be a serious issue in most classrooms (25 of 29 classes).	SE p. 14
		Four of five building special education administrators said the district has procedures to monitor IEP implementation, and they are in contact with district staff.	SE p. 7
		The team also witnessed effective team teaching that maximized instructional time	SE p. 15
		Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFEs) encounter major structural	ELL p. 8

		programming issues as they attempt to meet core curriculum requirements for graduation.	
		District staff advise devoting more effort to SIFEs.	ELL p. 9

Theme 4: Professional Development

Table A-4. Key Finding 3

Teachers of various experience levels, with responsibility for all student subgroups, including the least experienced teachers who are assigned to the most challenging classes, indicate a need for differentiated professional development specific to their needs. In the case of new teachers, these needs include student behavior management; and in the case of special education teachers, they include instruction differentiated specifically for ELLs and SWDs. **VOTES (Total Combined): 9 Red** Translating professional development into classroom practices, educators are not always proactively reflective of instructional practices, nor do they always take responsibility for their own professional growth. **VOTES: 3 Red**	**Supporting Findings**	**Subkey Finding A** In general, teachers do not feel prepared to teach subgroups (e.g., special education, ELLs).	
		ELL program classes showed evidence of implementing professional development content, primarily with AIM and Do Now lesson structure or format.	ELL p. 32
		ELL program teacher showed implementation of professional development strategies.	ELL p. 32
		ELL program classrooms used more assessment activities then ELA classrooms.	ELL p. 33
		One third of teachers said *no* professional development is aligned with best practices for ELLs.	ELL p. 19
		Teachers indicate that professional development was not geared specifically for ELLs.	ELL p. 15
		The district feels that ELL program teachers need professional development on how to use assessment data to guide improvement of instruction.	ELL p. 8
		The district feels that ELL program teachers need professional development on language learning issues, CALP, and instructional strategies.	ELL p. 8
		In Grades 9–12, only 50 percent teach students with limited English proficiency somewhat well.	SEC p. 66
		In Grades 5–12, at least 75 percent of teachers feel only somewhat prepared to teach SWDs.	SEC p. 65
		Teachers indicated a need for more professional development on instructional strategies and classroom management approaches for use with ELLs and SWDs	SI p. 10
		34 percent of teachers in Grades 2–4, 60 percent of teachers of Grades 5–6, and 75	SEC p. 66

		percent of teachers of Grades 7–12 feel, at best, only somewhat prepared to teach students who have learning disabilities that impact ELA learning.	
		In Grades 5–12, at least 75 percent feel only somewhat prepared to teach students with physical disabilities.	SEC p. 65
		In Grades 5–8 at least 50 percent of teachers feel only somewhat prepared to teach students with diverse abilities and learning styles.	SEC p. 65
		Loss of 100-minute professional development constricts consistency of professional development delivery.	SI p. 13
		Subkey Finding B In translating professional development into effective classroom practices, teachers report they are not always a part of the ongoing process of determining and addressing their specific needs for differentiated professional development.	
		Professional development is closely aligned to their (school's) instructional objectives.	SI p. 13
		Teaching staff are not given adequate professional development on differentiating instruction.	SI pp. 4, 5
		In most schools, teachers indicated that professional development has a positive impact on their instruction.	SI p. 14
		The chancellor has agreed to replace 100 minutes of professional development with small-group tutoring, which is consistent with less professional development.	SI p. 13
		Positive impact indicated because professional development is aligned to instructional objectives. Teacher receptivity is a factor that contributes to utility and impact of professional development.	SI p. 14
		Principals and coaches report that materials are not the issue as much as teacher comfort with the materials and teacher ability to differentiate instruction. Materials are adequate, but teacher capacity to use the material is uneven, particularly with struggling students.	SI p. 11
		The majority of teachers do not participate in college courses or summer institutes that support ELA, reading or literature.	SEC pp. 68, 69
		100 percent of Grades K–1 teachers report collaborating with others on curricula or lesson plans when 40 percent of Grades 5–6 teachers never have.	SEC p. 73
		80 percent of teachers in Grades 5–6 report that they rarely or never collaborate, lead	SEC pp.

		discussions, demonstrate lessons or skills. 60 percent don't participate in study groups.	70, 73
		Teachers in Grades 5–12 felt they did not have adequate time for collaboration with peers.	SEC p. 52
		Teachers in Grades K–6 report that they rarely or never receive mentoring or coaching; 60 percent in Grades K–1; 30 percent in Grades 2–4; 40 percent in Grades 5–6.	SEC p. 72
		20 percent of teachers Grades 5–6, 25 percent in Grades 7–8, and 50 percent in Grades 9–12 feel only somewhat prepared to teach writing at their assigned level.	SEC p. 63
		In Grades 5–8, at least 50 percent of teachers feel only somewhat prepared to teach students with diverse abilities and learning styles.	SEC p. 65
		At least 75 percent teachers in Grades K–8 feel prepared to provide instruction that meets ELA standards.	SEC p. 61
		5 percent of teachers in Grades 2–4 and 20 percent of teachers in Grades 5–6 feel only somewhat prepared to teach reading at their assigned level. 25 percent of teachers in Grades 7–8 do not feel prepared.	SEC p. 62
		34 percent of teachers in Grades 2–4, 60 percent of teachers in Grades 5–6, and 75 percent of teachers in Grades 7–12 feel, at best, only somewhat prepared to teach students with learning disabilities that impact ELA learning.	SEC p. 66
		Regional special administrators report there is significant professional development provided, especially in differentiated instruction. Professional development in Balanced Literacy, guided reading, and POEM are uniform in the district.	SE p. 16 (Q13)
		Professional development is through workshops and biweekly meetings at the school level.	ELL p. 6 (DI)
		In documents reviewed, there was no evidence that professional development offerings are consistent across schools in the district.	DR p. 11 (Q13)

Table A-5. Key Finding 5

Attracting and retaining high-quality school-based personnel is a critical issue for the district. District 12 schools experience an unusually high degree of teacher turnover, particularly at the secondary level. Several sources suggest that high rates of teacher turnover, which include the annual arrival of teachers new to the profession, greatly impact how professional development is directed and school capacity to meet the needs of students. District personnel interviewed also perceive a shortage of experienced and effective principals and are concerned about the impact of ineffective building leadership on school capacity to improve instruction and learning. **VOTES: 2 Red**		**Subkey Finding A** Least experienced teachers are assigned to the most challenging classes.	SI p. 10
		Less experience is evident in using practices for ELLs in ELL program.	ELL p. 21 (Elem SOM)
		Subkey Finding B Support for new teachers varies across the district from school to school. Although some feel high levels of support, others report insufficient individualized attention. Professional development is not differentiated according to their needs, such as student behavior or management. Most teachers report that support comes primarily from coaches and other school-level staff.	
		Most new teacher support comes from school level, primarily from coaches.	SI p. 14
		Most schools offer high levels of support to new teachers.	SI p. 14
		Professional development for teachers early in their career varies from principal to principal.	ELL p. 9
		Individualized support is lacking in schools where teachers perceived too little support.	SI p. 15
		Emphasis on new teachers—content-specific professional development.	SI p. 15
		Professional development for new teachers is not differentiated to their needs in terms of student behavior or management.	SI p. 16
		Having only regional or district support of new teachers is inadequate.	SI p. 15
		Teacher turnover is a challenge to schools (the biggest).	SI p. 17
		Staff has been spread thin and is serving too many schools (regional or district capacity).	SI p. 29
		Teacher turnover is a problem in District 12 schools, particularly at the secondary level.	SI pp. 19, 20
		It is difficult to find experienced, capable principals; administrative programs are being cut.	SI p. 29
		There is a structure in place to assist new teachers to be more efficient in the classroom.	SI

Table A-6. Additional Finding

Based on school-level interviews, teachers and principals state that curriculum teams in some schools have positive impact on teaching and learning which is evident in effective classroom practices. **VOTES: 12 Green**	**Supporting Findings**	Coach impact—The influence of the coach is described as moderate or high. In high-rated schools (rated by data analysts as high-performing schools based on the interview data), the impact is partially due to teacher receptivity.	SI p. 13
		Coach role—Principals speak highly of the coaches, saying they are effective in supporting teachers in helping with curriculum mapping.	SI p. 12
		Coaches provide technical assistance to teachers. Effectiveness varies between new teachers and experienced teachers.	SI pp. 12, 13
		Teachers feel there is a need for more professional development, and it should be differentiated.	SI p. 12, 13

Miscellaneous Theme: High School

Table A-7. Key Finding 6

District 12 secondary schools exhibit problems related to curriculum materials, curriculum alignment, resources, meeting the needs of all students, student behavior, and recruiting and retaining principals and teachers. In addition, the influence of content coaches and professional development was perceived to be lower in secondary schools than elementary schools. 50 percent of teachers of Grades 9–12 state that they rarely or sometimes see professional development as a continuum.	**Supporting Findings**	**Subkey Finding A (Professional Development)** Evidence shows that K–8 teachers report a continuum of professional development with a focus on state standards. 50 percent of teachers Grades 9–12 state that they rarely or sometimes see professional development as a continuum; they also report no emphasis on state standards.	
		The majority of K–8 teachers see professional development as a continuum. Grades 9–12 teachers are split—50 percent say sometimes and 50 percent say rarely or never.	SEC p. 76
		There appears to be a decline in the emphasis in professional development on state standards as grade levels increase; 40 percent report a major emphasis in Grades K–1, 50 percent Grades 9–12 report none (i.e., no emphasis).	SEC p. 78
		Professional development had a high impact in two of four secondary schools, a very low impact in one, and a moderate impact in another. Only one of the six elementary schools, by comparison, indicated that professional development had less than a strong impact. Some secondary schools find it challenging to implement consistent professional development.	SI

There was no evidence that showed alignment of district curriculum to New York state standards. While school administrators indicate that they monitor instruction for effectiveness, interviews indicate that monitoring is inconsistent at the high school level. **VOTES: 9 Red**		As grade levels progress, teachers report fewer hours of professional development.	SEC p. 68
		There is fairly low impact of the coach in secondary schools. In none of the four schools did respondents indicate that the coach had a strong impact on instruction.	SI
		Subkey Finding B (Achievement and Accountability) While school administrators indicate that they monitor instruction for effectiveness, interviews indicate that monitoring is inconsistent at the high school level.	
		Instructional monitoring with feedback to teachers occurs inconsistently at the high school level.	SI p. 6
		Subkey Finding C (Curriculum and Standards) There was no evidence that showed alignment of the district's curriculum to the New York state performance indicators for Grades 9–12.	
		The district has not provided a curriculum aligned to the New York state performance indicators at the high school level.	DR (Q2)
		There is no evidence of alignment to New York state standards for Grades 9–12.	CA (Q6)
		50 percent of teachers Grades 9–12 claim the state curriculum and content standards have little or no influence on what they teach in ELA.	SEC p. 54
		In one [secondary] school where the curriculum is not closely followed, the coach indicated that teachers are not required to follow a curriculum—teachers indicated confusion regarding curriculum alignment and also said they were unclear about the school's instructional focus. In this school, one teacher reported that no curricular requirements are imposed on Grade 12 classes because the state exam already had been taken.	SI pp. 5, 6
		Subkey Finding D (Instruction and Assessment) Respondents indicated that the initiatives introduced in the secondary schools are a response to deep-seated secondary school problems (that probably have not been resolved yet), including literacy curricula "that were all over the map—with no alignment between grade levels and not enough alignment between standards, assessments, and what was happening in the classroom." Also based upon what region and district learned about principles of learning, a respondent said, "We could see these were not in place." Respondents said middle schools need work on (and they are still working on) academic rigor.	DI p. 25

		One respondent indicated there is a lack of clarity at the middle school level on what students need to learn to be better prepared for success in high school.	DI p. 25
		Teachers in high school levels spend more time and cover more content in vocabulary compared to what the state standards indicate (dictate).	SEC pp. 23, 24
		Ratings for classroom environment were generally lower for secondary schools than elementary schools	ELL p. 34
		Overall, teachers use assessment data to make instructional decisions. In some schools, decisions are limited while in others a great variety of decisions are made. Use of assessment data by teachers drops in Grades 7 and 8.	
		SEC respondents indicated that they are more influenced by the state curriculum than the district curriculum—although the influence is not particularly high when compared to teachers in Grades 7–8. The district curriculum had little or no influence on the instruction of the high school respondents, although there was a strong influence on the Grades 7–8 teachers. State tests or results had little or no influence on instruction.	SEC p. 54
		Compared to the elementary schools in the sample, one high school was not performing well on any of the standards (e.g., low on assessment use, low on following the curriculum, low impact of professional development).	SI
		More than elementary schools, secondary schools were not doing well in meeting the needs of SWDs. Two of the four secondary schools indicated they were not at all meeting the needs of SWDs. One high school indicated that needs of ELLs were not met at all; one high school indicated that the needs of lower level students were not met at all.	SI p. 9
		On the SEC, half of the teachers said they were not prepared to teach SWDs with physical difficulties.	SEC
		Three of the four secondary schools did not assess instructional materials as adequate, and two schools indicated that there were serious problems related to materials. In some cases there was a materials shortage. Teachers also said they need more materials and books of many types that address different reading levels. Related to this, on the SEC, six of eight secondary respondents (i.e., three from Grades 7–8, three from Grades 9–12) said they did not have adequate materials for instruction. None of the teachers said they *did* have adequate materials.	SI pp. 7, 9; SEC p. 52

		Secondary schools have more issues than elementary schools with student behavior. In two schools there were serious concerns: issues with policies and consistent behavior codes, concerns about the high number of special-needs students who transfer in, and concerns about new teachers' inability to manage classrooms. SEC data indicated that absenteeism is a problem in high school (three fourths indicated this is the case).	SEC p. 53
		Observations indicate a lack of variety in student learning activities at the secondary level. Student writing was the only activity observed with any consistency.	SOM p. 10
		Secondary students exhibit a high level of interest and engagement only 20 percent of the time.	SOM p. 10
		Secondary ELLs encounter structural programming issues because they may need additional support—courses that do not get Carnegie credit.	ELL p. 8
		Participation of secondary students is much less, and many drop out.	ELL p. 41
		The region and district have created small schools from large middle and high schools, resulting in about 40 new small schools in the past three years. At the same time region and district respondents said it is difficult to find experienced, capable principals. Region and district were emphasizing leadership training. Respondents indicated uneven building administration and said the principals have a huge influence on professional development, use of new instructional materials, and opportunities to discuss instruction.	DI p. 24
		Teacher turnover is a problem in District 12 schools, especially at the secondary level.	SI pp. 19, 20
		Three of four secondary schools mentioned concerns about teacher turnover. Of the 17 teachers for whom there are data, 9 have one to two years of experience (53 percent), six of those nine were first-year teachers. Of the 17 teachers, 15 had five years of experience or fewer. Only one teacher had three to four years of experience. The other two had 23 and 30 years.	SI

Other Miscellaneous Findings

	Supporting Findings	**Student Behavior**	
		Impacted by other external factors (e.g., homeless shelters)	SI p. 16
		Students with emotional and social problems who are inappropriately placed.	SI p. 16
		School Size and Stability	
		School size was a factor (in school leadership).	SI p. 17
		Small school size in secondary is seen as beneficial, supporting collaboration and teacher and student interactions.	SI p. 17
		School leadership has a positive impact on school morale.	SI p. 17
		Transient student population affects the schools operating budget.	SI p. 18
		Changes in the organizational structure cause concerns, including decreases in staffing, increased responsibility, turnover of region and district staff, and lack of organization stability.	SI p. 29
		Information and Community-Based Organizations	
		Community-based organizations say it is hard to reach them because parents work.	ELL p. 40
		Parents are frustrated with lack of weekend and summer activities for parents in the Bronx.	ELL p. 38
		Barriers to receiving information from community-based organizations are not only linguistic but cultural as well.	ELL p. 39
		Community-based organizations say schools are overwhelming parents with too many alternatives.	ELL p. 40
		Parents do not have enough information on community-based organizations.	ELL p. 38
		Some parents have Internet but do not use it to get information about school.	ELL p. 37
		Behaviors and Expectations	
		Two ELL program classrooms showed disrespectful behavior, student-to-student or teacher-to-student.	ELL p. 27
		All schools perceive student behavior to be at least a moderate or occasional problem.	SI p. 16
		This region really puts forth a message of equity for all students.	SE p. 13
		District promotes high expectations for SWDs, judging from interviews and observations.	SE p. 10