

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

**Community School District 19  
Final Report**

**August 2007**

**Submitted to  
District 19**

**Submitted by  
Learning Point Associates**



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2045\_08/07

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

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

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

# District Background

## Overview

Community School District 19<sup>1</sup> is located in the eastern section of the borough of Brooklyn. Brooklyn is one of the 5 boroughs of New York City. District 19 serves the community of East New York and is in Region 5.

Data from 2005 indicate that District 19 served a total of 30,822 students with 672 prekindergarten students; 28,050 K–12 students; and 2,100 *ungraded* students.<sup>2</sup> Of those students enrolled, 2 percent were white, 54 percent were black, 39 percent were Hispanic, and 6 percent were Asian, Pacific Islanders, Alaskan Natives, or Native Americans. The 2004–05 Annual District Report for District 19 is based on 38 schools: 18 elementary schools, seven middle schools, four elementary through middle schools, one elementary through high school, and eight high schools. Data from 2002–03, 2003–04, and 2004–05 school years indicate that the majority of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (89 percent, 89 percent, and 85 percent, respectively). District data also indicate that the percentage of ELL students was consistent across these three years (11 percent for each of the three years reported). The percentage of special education students enrolled during these years was also consistent, ranging from 11 to

12 percent of the student population. In 2002–03, the district’s average spending per student (direct services only) was \$11,067 while in 2003–04, this amount per student rose to \$11,428.

## Student Academic Performance

As of 2005–06, District 19 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 SWD and ELL student accountability groups did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in elementary- and middle-level ELA. No accountability groups that made AYP in secondary-level ELA in 2004–05.

The state accountability status in mathematics for District 19 in all levels has been designated *in good standing*.

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<sup>1</sup> This is “one 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 April 19, 2007, from page 9 of the *Parent Guide and Glossary to the 2004–2005 Annual School Report for Elementary and Intermediate Schools* ([schools.nyc.gov/daa/SchoolReports/05asr/Guides/PG\\_EM\\_English.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/daa/SchoolReports/05asr/Guides/PG_EM_English.pdf)).

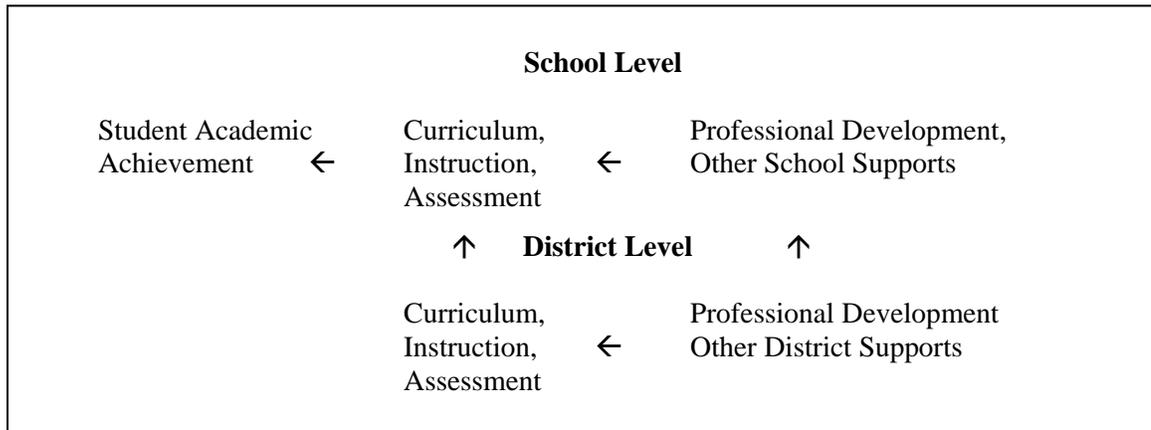
<sup>2</sup> The district data came from the *2004–2005 Annual School Report* for District 19, produced by New York City Public Schools and available online ([schools.nyc.gov/daa/SchoolReports/](http://schools.nyc.gov/daa/SchoolReports/)).

## Theory of Action

The theory of action starts with 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<sup>SM</sup> 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 district's 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 Learning 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 in order to get a “snapshot” of the instructional practices being used. These observations were not individually prescheduled but instead involved observing multiple classes, primarily in the identified subject areas (ELA, mathematics, or both), during a three-hour block of time for each subject. The observations were conducted on three different days for each school during the 2006–07 school year. While in schools, observers visited eight to 12 classrooms within this block of time, spending 15 minutes observing each classroom. This approach resulted in 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 specifically to 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 Learning Standards. *Vertical alignment* examines the match of curriculum and standards between grade levels. *Horizontal alignment* is defined as the breadth and depth of the curriculum. In addition, it is important to examine the depth of understanding for the topics addressed in ELA. Cognitive demand categories provide a structure to measure the depth of understanding for each topic.

The ELA curriculum alignment process was developed using the literacy competencies from the New York State Learning 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 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 ensure 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 ensure 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**

<b>Guiding Questions</b>	<b>Student Achievement Data</b>	<b>Surveys of Enacted Curriculum</b>	<b>Observations</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Document Review</b>	<b>Curriculum Alignment</b>	<b>Special Education Review</b>	<b>ELL Review</b>
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 these materials 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/ 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/ 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 19, 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 was action planning. This process resulted in an action plan focused on the areas identified in the audit. The actions will be integrated into the DCEP and eventually at the school level in the CEP.

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

## Key Findings

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

After a review of multiple data documents, participants in the co-interpretation meeting in District 19 generated a list of 10 key findings. These key findings, along with district-generated hypotheses, are explained in this section.

### Key Finding 1

**The district is struggling to make AYP in ELA, and subgroup categories such as SWDs, low-income students, various ethnic groups, and secondary-level students.**

This key finding is related to the achievement and accountability theme and Guiding Question 1, “Where is the district struggling most in terms of content areas and demographic groups over time?” The reports from the Special Education review and the ELL review, show the district’s challenges in meeting the needs of all students.

According to the Special Education report, District 19 did not make AYP for all students, including the subgroup of SWDs, in ELA at the elementary and middle school levels. For ELA at the secondary level, none of the subgroups, including SWDs, made AYP for the 2004–05 school year. The achievement gap between general education students and SWDs was striking. Eighty percent of general education students scored at Levels 3 or 4, while the SWD subgroup had no students scoring at those levels. The ELL report corroborated findings from the Special Education review and reported that District 19 is not meeting NCLB requirements for the ELL subgroup in ELA.

### Hypotheses

Participants at the co-interpretation meeting suggested a few possible hypotheses for this finding. Two hypotheses noted that there was a lack of knowledge with reference to AYP and student population targets within the district and that better communication about district AYP status to school staff is needed. Two other hypotheses addressed support, stating that there is insufficient support and rigor at the high school level and that professional development is not meeting teacher needs. Other hypotheses pointed to an inconsistent use of assessments to drive instruction and a lack of technology use in the classroom.

## **Key Finding 2**

**Based on the documents reviewed, there is insufficient evidence to support that the written ELA curriculum is aligned with the state standards.**

Within the context of the standards and curriculum theme and Guiding Question 6, “Is the written curriculum aligned with the state standards?” this key finding is based on several data sources. First, the student achievement data caused participants at the co-interpretation meeting to conclude that if the district’s curriculum is not aligned to the New York State Learning Standards and literacy competencies, one would be unable to determine whether or not all students have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum. Second, the document review provided insufficient evidence to support that the written curriculum is aligned with the state standards. Furthermore, the document review also found no evidence that the curriculum is aligned vertically and horizontally with the state standards. The document review was backed up by the interviews, in which there was some confusion about whether the curriculum is aligned with state standards. In fact, in half of the schools, the materials used for instruction were perceived to be not aligned with New York State Learning Standards.

### **Hypotheses**

Participants at the co-interpretation meeting suggested a few possible hypotheses for this finding. One hypothesis is that there are conflicting mandates and insufficient support from the regional administration concerning the curriculum and its alignment with the state standards. Participants believe that a direct connection between formal and informal observation with the alignment of state standards and curriculum is needed. In addition, they believe that schools need a matrix that displays the detailed alignment among schoolwide programs, available resources, and the state standards.

## **Key Finding 3**

**Based on documents reviewed, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that students have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum. This was evidenced by Special Education, general education, and ELL teachers in the topic areas and academic demand areas.**

Within the context of the standards and curriculum theme and Guiding Question 7, “Do all students have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum?” this key finding is well triangulated across several data sources. For example, while the Special Education review showed that the district is implementing effective instructional programs, such as the Wilson Reading System and the Schools Attuned Program, the ELL teachers interviewed for the ELL review reported that ELLs are excluded from rigorous curricula such as Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses.

Based on the curriculum alignment documents reviewed, there is no indication that additional supports for nonproficient students are aligned to the curriculum. In addition, insufficient evidence was found in the documents to demonstrate that students have access to a rigorous and

challenging curriculum. Content topics are not written with a focus on student expectations and the cognitive demands of the district's ELA curriculum could not be determined.

While the SEC report showed teachers' statements that the district framework strongly influenced their ELA instruction, the teachers interviewed suggested that for the curriculum to be more effective and for students to benefit from some instructional programs, such as America's Choice, some students need a better academic foundation.

### **Hypotheses**

Participants at the co-interpretation meeting suggested a few possible hypotheses for this finding. Participants believe that teachers lack the expertise necessary to implement a rigorous and challenging curriculum. They also believe that teachers' comfort zones impede academic rigor. It was suggested that more professional development is needed regarding performance standards. Teachers need more support in order to implement rigorous and challenging curriculum programming. Last, it was suggested that an advanced and challenging curriculum needs to be offered to all students, not limited to general education students.

### **Key Finding 4**

#### **Poor student behavior, absenteeism, truancy, and transient patterns of the school population impede maximizing best practices and research-based practices.**

Within the context of the theme of instruction and assessments and Guiding Question 9, "Does classroom instruction maximize the use of best practices and research based practices?" this key finding is substantiated by the interview and Special Education reports. The interview report noted that student behavior has a tremendously negative impact on instruction at all levels and, in secondary schools, truancy and chronic student absenteeism are challenges.

According to the Special Education review, expectations for behavior are the same across the board for general education students and SWDs. The report indicates that school behavior policies are uniformly enforced (92 percent) and principals report that behavior policies and expectations apply and are communicated to all students in the same manner.

### **Hypotheses**

Participants at the co-interpretation meeting suggested a few possible hypotheses for this finding. These findings included a lack of incentives, support, and staff guidance; and a failure to recognize the value of each child and the school as a community . In addition, it was suggested that students with special needs and ELLs need instruction tailored to their needs (i.e., instruction needs to be bilingual).

## **Key Finding 5**

### **There is a limited use of computers in ELA classrooms.**

This key finding also is related to the theme of instruction and assessments and Guiding Question 9. Evidence for this key finding draws heavily from data in the SEC and observation reports. The classroom observations showed a lack of technology used for ELA instruction. Technology use was either not observed or rarely observed in the all of the K–12 classrooms visited.

The SEC report indicated similar findings. The use of computers and other technology was found to be moderate to nonexistent and students in all grades engaged in little electronic media.

### **Hypotheses**

Participants at the co-interpretation meeting suggested a few possible hypotheses for this finding. A lack of professional development and an outdated and inappropriate choice of computers and programs were noted. For professional development, participants in the co-interpretation meeting suggested that teachers receive more training on how to group for instruction and manage the classroom for computer use. Training for teachers to better use computers and to integrate technology with lesson planning also was cited as a need.

## **Key Finding 6**

### **The use of best practices to maximize instruction is inconsistently implemented across the district. In addition, there is an overemphasis on test-taking strategies and limited use of technology.**

The sixth key finding once again relates to Guiding Question 9 and the theme of instruction and assessments and is well triangulated across data sources. The SEC teacher responses for Grade 5, for example, indicate a decline in instruction practices and assessments in topic areas and cognitive demands using the state standards, which emphasize demonstration in the topic areas of speaking and presenting, listening and vocabulary, language study, and comprehension.

The document review also indicates a lack of using best practices. Based on the documents submitted, there is no evidence meeting the criteria of classroom instruction maximizing best practices and research-based practices. There is also insufficient evidence of a policy or plan for using scientifically based instruction. There is, however, substantial evidence of guidelines and materials for Title I programs and a policy and plan for safety.

While the interview report noted that schools must follow the curriculum prototype very closely, observations showed little in the way of using research-based practices. For example, direct instruction was observed too often in the district, with little cooperative learning and student group work observed. Also, there were not enough hands-on learning situations, student discussions, and independent research observed across schools. In addition, there was a lack of team teaching in K–12 classrooms.

Although the special population reviews (SWD and ELL) found that teachers vary instructional practices and utilize research-based instructional strategies to meet the needs of their students, the ELL review found that there is a lack of specified programming to meet the needs of ELL and SWD students. For ELL teachers, identifying prior knowledge, lesson purpose, learning vocabulary, and demonstrating student understanding are the most frequently occurring instructional activities. Teachers also set specific language-learning goals and incorporate them into their lessons.

A gap indicated in the ELL report drew the attention of the meeting participants. ELL program teachers devoted their lessons to skill-based activities, whereas general education teachers used a mixture of skills and concepts in their lessons. This suggests that ELL students do not have the same level of access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum as do the general education students.

### **Hypotheses**

Participants at the co-interpretation meeting suggested a few possible hypotheses for this finding. Some participants noted the lack of clear, consistent vision and the constant changes in curriculum and programs. In addition, it was suggested that there is a disparity among schools, cohorts, regions, and districts and that there is poor communication among teachers, administrators, and district personnel. Last, it was suggested that there is too much emphasis on test preparation.

### **Key Finding 7**

#### **Teachers do not consistently use assessment data to drive instruction.**

This key finding is in response Guiding Question 11, “Do teachers use assessment data to inform instruction?” and the instruction and assessment theme. According to the interview data collected, teachers and administrators use assessment data to make instructional decisions across the district. During classroom observations, the use of assessments was seldom seen in Grades K–12.

The document review found no evidence to support that assessment data is used to inform instruction. The assessment data were reportedly not accessible to teachers. According to the ELL review, however, teachers use assessment data to inform their instructional practices. The Special Education review also noted that the use of assessment data to inform instruction was employed and that administrators consistently used assessment data to target instruction to students scoring at Levels 1 and 2 (for which Academic Intervention Services [AIS] provides assistance).

### **Hypotheses**

Participants at the co-interpretation meeting suggested a few possible hypotheses for this finding, including a lack of necessary professional development to model using data to drive instruction and a failure to make sure that data are understood, properly interpreted, and shared.

## **Key Finding 8**

**There is a need for more collaboration among ELL teachers, general education teachers, and Special Education teachers.**

This key finding is in response to Guiding Question 13, “Is the professional development (regional, district, and school levels) of high quality and focused on the content/pedagogical areas of need?” and the theme of professional development. Evidence was derived from three sources. First, the interview report noted a need for more collaboration between general education teachers and Special Education teachers, especially in middle schools. Second, the ELL report noted that collaboration among ELL teachers, general education teachers, and support staff needs to be strengthened. Third, the SEC report noted that teacher collaboration exists informally, but teachers engage in a limited amount of collaboration with their peers.

### **Hypotheses**

Participants at the co-interpretation meeting suggested a few possible hypotheses for this finding. Co-interpretation meeting participants noted insufficient scheduling time for proper collaboration due to staggered preparation times and pullout time. Participants also believe that the needs of students are not being met and that teachers not only should be aware of students receiving interventions, but also should receive feedback from the providers. Other participants noted inconsistent teaching methods, different instructional practices, and no evidence of interdisciplinary instruction.

## **Key Finding 9**

**New-teacher support is limited and sporadic.**

This key finding is in response to Guiding Question 15, “Are there sufficient supports in place for new teachers?” which also falls under the professional development umbrella. This key finding is supported by two data sources. First, the interview report indicates that new teachers could benefit from a better school-based system of induction and more professional development in classroom management. Second, the ELL report notes that the region, schools, and United Federation of Teachers (UFT) provide support systems for new and beginning ELL teachers; however, there remains a need for better new-teacher support districtwide.

### **Hypotheses**

Participants at the co-interpretation meeting suggested a few possible hypotheses for this finding, such as a general lack of support, insufficient funds to support teacher professional development, and a need for professional development that is specific to each teacher.

## **Key Finding 10**

### **Parents wish to become more active in their children’s education and to be more informed about curriculum and instruction.**

This key finding is in the context of Guiding Question 16, “Do district and school plans prioritize the needs identified by NCLB?” and the achievement and accountability theme. Although this key finding only received one vote by the participants at the co-interpretation meeting, there was a consensus among participants that it be included in the final report along with a recommendation for action. While the data sources for the findings are unclear, it is clear that parental involvement was important to the school and district attendees at the co-interpretation meeting. The findings included the following:

- Parents who speak primarily Spanish and little English want classes to learn English.
- Parents report that schools informed them—via Spanish/English letters and flyers—about meetings, classes for both students and parents, and changes taking place in the school.
- While some parents were clear about their children’s participation in general education, others were confused.

There is still work to be done in this important area of educational improvement.

### **Hypotheses**

Participants at the co-interpretation meeting suggested a few possible hypotheses for this finding. First, there is insufficient information disseminated to parents about curriculum and instruction or workshops offered by schools. Participants believe that parent workshops need to be offered in the evenings and weekends to accommodate working parents. They believe that translators are needed at workshops and meetings (in addition to translations of notices and communications inviting parents). They also believe that outreach should originate within the school and go out to the parents. A parent coordinator could facilitate programs and survey parents to determine how best to address their needs. In addition, there is insufficient parental representation on school leadership teams, which are designed for parents to actively participate in decision-making processes.

## **Recommendations for Action Planning**

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

The key findings that arose out of co-interpretation meeting with District 19 led Learning Point Associates to make five recommendations.

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

### **Recommendation 1**

**Revise the written K–12 ELA curriculum to ensure alignment with New York State Learning Standards and include a monitoring system to make certain curriculum implementation is consistent across the district.**

#### **Link to Findings**

District 19 submitted the NYSED ELA Core Curriculum as one of its core curriculum documents. The district also submitted the Region 5 Literacy Prototype: Grades K–12. This prototype represents an instructional framework and identifies timeframes for classroom activities related to reading and writing. The literacy framework identifies instructional activities but does not identify expected student outcomes at each grade level. There also is another District 19 overlay of expectation for teachers to address the skill of the week; however, the link to the NYSED ELA Core Curriculum is not clear, nor is the overlay linked to specific statements of student outcome.

Although some strategies are identified within the District 19 literacy prototype instructional framework, they do not cover the depth and breadth of student expectations in terms of the literacy competencies identified in the NYSED ELA Core Curriculum. In addition, even though the academic challenges and competencies needed to meet those challenges increase at the high school level, currently District 19 students in Grades 9–12 are served by the same instructional framework identified in the Grades 9–12 Literacy Prototype—which does not address the expanded academic challenges faced by students requiring intervention services or the strategies for meeting the needs of this population.

A curriculum that identifies student outcomes in Grades K–12 relative to the state literacy competencies or performance descriptors has not been made explicit for District 19 schools, and

cognitive demand expectations for the District 19 ELA curriculum could not be determined. In order to evaluate for cognitive demand at all levels of the curriculum, the content topics in reading, writing, and listening and speaking would need to be written relative to student expectations of literacy competencies and student performance descriptors.

Region 5 made the greatest gains of all the New York City regions in terms of student scores on state assessments. Their success can be expanded even further if the district expands the literacy prototypes by aligning them more specifically to the NYSED ELA Core Curriculum literacy competencies and student performance descriptors.

### **Link to Research**

Research shows that 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 state 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 student academic achievement (Sandholtz, Ogawa & Scribner, 2004).

The learning process becomes transparent when there is an explicitly written curriculum that provides clear information of ongoing goals and expectations for student learning. Curriculum design includes processes for selecting, prioritizing, and sequencing specific instructional content (Simmons & Kame'enui, 1996). The instructional framework refers to the methods used and the time allocated for teaching activities related to specific (in this case, literacy) learning. The Teachers College Reading and Writing Framework, based on the research of educator Lucy Calkins, provides a theory-based instructional framework for improving literacy in Grades K–5 in many schools in the district, but it is not aligned to specific and explicit learning outcomes for each grade level.

Any instructional framework, however, must be flexible enough for teachers to make day-to-day teaching decisions based on a clear understanding of student expectations and ongoing assessments of students' immediate learning needs. Given that District 19 is experiencing an influx of new teachers with varied degrees of professional training, the district will want to link expectations for instruction to specific literacy competencies. This strategy will help teachers make instructional decisions in terms of what to teach during the identified instructional framework.

A fully articulated and aligned curriculum with specific objectives, performance indicators, assessments, and strategies provides teachers with a common set of expectations. When curriculum materials, programs, and assessments are aligned, student progress can be monitored

throughout the year (Porter, 2002). Benchmark goals that specifically state what students should know and be able to do as a result of classroom instruction throughout the year allow teachers to ensure that student progress is on track for meeting the learner outcomes. If a curriculum is poorly aligned to the state's literacy competencies and performance descriptors, it is more difficult to assess the actual impact of instruction on students (Anderson, 2002).

If both the content of the standards and the content of the curriculum align, student performance will still lag if the level of cognitive demand required by the standards differs from the cognitive demands reflected in classroom instruction and/or assessment (Corallo & McDonald, 2002). Therefore, a consideration of cognitive demand must be a part of the curriculum design process.

Langer (2000) identifies six features of effective ELA programs; one important feature is that assessment should be embedded in classroom instruction. Using assessments that are aligned to specific learning standards and student outcomes during instruction can aid in planning instruction, monitoring student progress, and determining when and what curricular changes need to be made.

Curriculum alignment, therefore, must extend beyond the written curriculum to be most effective. The research literature has identified a link between assessments and the curriculum. Curriculum not only must be clearly aligned to state standards, but also to state assessments, local assessments, instructional strategies, and professional development (Burger, 2002; Holcomb, 1999). Standards alignment uses local content standards to foster the use of multiple assessment sources, describes how classroom instruction and assessment relate to one another, and aligns assessment with learner outcomes (Burger, 2002). The use of multiple assessments also supports the idea that students learn knowledge and skills in multiple ways and therefore teachers must be well versed in differentiated instruction to meet student needs (Langer, 2000). If used wisely, curriculum alignment that coordinates the written, taught, and tested curricula can effectively help teachers develop units and lessons that will interest students and enable them to perform well on high-stakes tests (Glatthorn, 1999).

Research also indicates an overlap of cognitive demands for reading and writing, thus both reading and writing need to be addressed in instruction. The NYSED ELA Core Curriculum identifies separate reading and writing literacy competencies and performance descriptors that must be addressed in a fully aligned curriculum (Biancarosa & Snow 2006; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991). Writing about reading reinforces comprehension and, if the district fully addresses the existing literacy competencies and student performance descriptors when enhancing and expanding the instruction of students in Grades 6–12, student opportunities for academic success will increase.

Researchers support professional development aligned to curriculum implementation. Tying student learning or achievement to professional development makes it imperative that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the goal (Guskey, 2000). While teachers are learning, they need support from building- and district-level leaders. Continuous and consistent curriculum implementation requires knowledgeable, skilled, committed, and supportive building- and district-level leaders (Fullan, 2003). Such leadership consists of leaders working together to motivate others and to monitor curriculum implementation.

## **Implementation Considerations**

Learning Point Associates recommends that District 19 staff members review their current instructional framework to create a written ELA curriculum that provides specific and clear guidance to teachers, addresses the range of topics in the state standards, and requires students to work at a range of cognitive demands. This task could be accomplished through a variety of formats, such as curriculum mapping, benchmarking, and/or a written scope and sequence.

The current instructional framework also should be reviewed more closely at the secondary level, with an emphasis on the multiple literacies needed in high school and beyond. Increasing vocabulary instruction and building background knowledge will help improve student comprehension through understanding and using academic vocabulary. District staff should consider including performance descriptors that are not addressed though large-scale assessments but are necessary for academic success. Such descriptors could include building background knowledge, inquiry-based learning, selecting and evaluating various sources of information, and collaborative learning. One way of approaching such a review would be to convene a team of teachers, literacy coaches, and other district support personnel to review and align instruction to the specific literacy competencies and performance descriptors identified in the NYSED ELA Core Curriculum. Such a team would need to complete the following tasks:

- Identify literacy competencies considered essential for student learning.
- Ensure that all essential content can be addressed in the amount of time available for in-school instruction.
- Include suggestions for modified and differentiated instruction.

In order to implement the revised K–12 ELA curriculum, it is important to communicate the essential content to both teachers and students. To this end, district personnel should set up a plan to share expectations and information about the curriculum with educators across the district. This plan should be designed to support teachers as they build a common understanding of the curriculum. Furthermore, it is critical for all general education and Special Education teachers to be invited to all ELA professional development sessions.

Finally, the district should implement a monitoring system to ensure that the revised curriculum materials are utilized properly and are meeting student needs. The development of such a system might include forming a committee of district- and school-level leaders, with teacher representation, to review and develop written policies and procedures for monitoring the implementation of a written curriculum aligned to the NYSED ELA Core Curriculum. Implementation may also require revising or creating instruments for monitoring (e.g., observation tools).

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## Additional Resources

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## Recommendation 2

**Identify research-based instructional strategies, including the use of technology, to enhance ELA instruction and support the use of these strategies across the district.**

### Link to Findings

Within the context of the theme of instruction and assessments and Guiding Question 9, “Does classroom instruction maximize the use of best practices and research-based practices?” three key findings (Key Finding 4, Key Finding 5, and Key Finding 6) are being combined for this recommendation and are stated as follows:

- Poor student behavior, absenteeism, truancy, and transient patterns of the school population impede maximizing best practices and research-based practices.
- There is a limited use of computers in ELA classrooms.
- The use of best practices to maximize instruction is inconsistently implemented across the district. In addition, there is an overemphasis on test-taking strategies and limited use of technology.

These key findings were substantiated by the interview and observation reports, the SEC results, the document review, and the ELL and Special Education reports. Therefore, the data underlying this recommendation is well triangulated across data sources, which show a lack of using best practices consistently across the district. In addition, the data show a lack of technology used for ELA instruction. These issues may result in a less-than-optimal environment for learning and may contribute to the behavior issues noted by teachers. In short, teachers noted that student behavior has a tremendously negative impact on instruction and, in secondary schools, truancy and chronic student absenteeism are challenges.

Data reviewed at co-interpretation meeting found that direct instruction was the primary instructional strategy utilized in classrooms throughout the district. For all grade levels throughout the K–12 continuum, instruction expecting students to use a variety of cognitive demands—such as student discussion, project-based learning, individualized instruction, cooperative learning, hands-on learning, and use of technology—were observed infrequently if at all, in classrooms. However, teachers self-reported using a variety of strategies (such as the region’s instructional prototype) and documentation provided by the district indicates that best practices in instruction are being implemented in classrooms across the region and district. Thus, there is a disconnect between what is being observed in the classroom and what the teachers believe they are implementing.

Reasons given for these key findings during the co-interpretation meeting include a lack of incentives, support, and staff guidance as well as a failure to recognize the value of each child and the school as a community. SWDs and ELLs need instruction tailored to their needs (i.e., instruction needs to be bilingual). Professional development is lacking, and the choice of computers and programs is outdated and inappropriate. Teachers need more training on how to group for instruction and manage the classroom for computer use. Teachers need training to make better use computers and to integrate technology with lesson planning. Clear, consistent

vision is lacking, and constant changes are occurring in curriculum and programs among schools, cohorts, regions, and districts. There is poor communication among the teachers, administrators, and district personnel. There is too much emphasis on test preparation.

This recommendation addresses only a handful of these hypotheses as they relate to the use of technology and best practices for ELA instruction in the classroom. Although teacher professional development is addressed here, it is also included in Recommendation 3 and is the focus of Recommendation 4.

Implementation of this recommendation is critical because although direct instruction can be an effective instructional strategy, using a variety of strategies—including those that encourage higher-level thinking and use technology—are likely to be more effective for the vast diversity of students across the district.

### **Link to Research**

**Reading Research.** The National Reading Panel (2000) has identified five areas of reading in which readers need instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The amount of instructional time provided in each of the five areas varies depending on the knowledge and ability of the reader. As instructional time decreases in phonemic awareness and phonics, instructional time in comprehension increases. Comprehension is the construction of meaning between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 2005). Successful readers use multiple strategies flexibly to construct meaning as they read. There are scientifically based reading strategies for instruction in the multiple areas of comprehension; for example, inferencing and summarizing (National Reading Panel, 2000). Choosing a number of strategies allows students to use these same approaches in multiple situations over time. Research has shown that the most effective instructional model includes teacher modeling and practice, including discussion and feedback during the process (Roller et al., 1987).

Middle school and high school students need to use the multiple comprehension strategies across the content areas as well as in language arts classes. Teaching reading comprehension in all content areas is most effective if it is embedded into the content itself, providing a context for understanding that is dependent on the concepts. Too often, students are asked to absorb content information without having learned the strategies for planning, organizing, and synthesizing the material (Langer, 2001). Practicing these strategies will help readers develop these skills and strategies and eventually allow them to apply these skills independently across all content areas.

With the increased national interest in accountability, high-stakes exams often influence the selection of curriculum and learning activities. Higher performing schools integrate the essential skills measured by high-stakes tests into classroom instruction as a means to boost student performance on state assessments. The underlying skills and knowledge required to take the tests are examined by teachers, principals, and district-level administration; subsequently, strategies are developed for teaching and learning these skills and incorporated into the curriculum (Langer, 2001).

In addition, staff development can become more focused when it is aligned to the language arts curriculum. Moreover, professional development that is tied to student learning allows all stakeholders to have a clear understanding of the instructional goals (Guskey, 2000). Teachers need support as they begin to make changes in their instruction. School leadership plays a large part in reinforcing best practices in schools. School administrators who consistently emphasize, provide training for, and reinforce best instructional practices are able to increase their teachers' confidence in supporting and embracing state assessment as the driving force behind each student's success (Kaplan & Owings, 2001).

Student motivation to learn and engagement in learning are growing concerns at the middle school and high school levels. Often people think of struggling readers at the middle school and high school levels as those students who are having difficulty reading words accurately or comprehending what they read (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Carr, Saifer, & Novick, 2002; Kamil, 2003). However, there is a group of students who read well but who are not engaged in learning. A engaged learner is defined as someone who is motivated intrinsically, builds knowledge, uses cognitive strategies, and interacts socially to learn from text (Guthrie et. al., 2004). This lack of engagement is often the reason that skilled readers and writers do not progress in literacy at the middle school and high school levels.

Guthrie et al. (2004) performed research with adolescents that showed that once students become engaged in learning, they are more receptive to learning new skills. When students are engaged in learning, they see a use for their skills and successfully use them. This awareness allows students to become involved and motivated in their learning. Students who are successful in learning develop self-efficacy, or the confidence that they are capable (Alvermann, 2003). Technology is one of the tools found to motivate these students (National Commission on Writing, 2003).

**Technology for ELA Instruction.** Technology has many uses. In this case, we are concerned with using technology to teach literacy, which in turn requires a level of technological literacy. The primary goal of NCLB, Title II, Part D—the Enhancing Education Through Technology Act of 2001—is to improve student academic achievement through the use of technology in elementary and secondary schools (NCLB, 2002). In addition, NCLB calls for schools to ensure that all students are technologically literate by the time they complete eighth grade. It also encourages the effective integration of technology resources and systems with teacher training and curriculum development to establish research-based instructional methods that can be widely implemented as best practices by state and local educational agencies (NCLB, 2002). Therefore, it is imperative that districts and schools use technology to teach ELA and to create technological literacy in its own right.

To use technology to its best advantage, sufficient technological literacy is important for teachers as well as students. Teachers require adequate staff development to feel comfortable with technology and to use it in the way it was intended to gain maximum effect (Learning Point Associates, 2007). For students, it important that they achieve—at a minimum—the standards developed by the U.S. Department of Education and the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), which include the following:

- Understand the use and purpose of a variety of technology devices and learning resources.
- Use technology for creative purposes and for content-specific activities to support learning and research.
- Understand the social, ethical, and human issues dealing with technology, such as working collaboratively with others and understanding the changes that information technology has had on society.
- Use technology to gather information, communicate with others, and create products either independently or collaboratively.
- Use technology research tools for problem solving and illustrating ideas in order to accomplish a variety of activities.
- Use technology problem-solving and decision-making tools to evaluate electronic sources (Learning Point Associates, 2007).

### **Implementation Considerations**

Given the above evidence, it is recommended that District 19 review the research on reading, ELA, and content-area instructional strategies, then identify a core set of instructional strategies for implementation. These strategies should be differentiated by grade level or grade cluster (e.g., middle school or Grades K–2). Once a core set of strategies has been selected, the district should focus professional development in ELA both on literacy skills that students need to acquire and on implementation of research-based instructional strategies in the classroom.

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### **Additional Resources**

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## **Recommendation 3**

**Implement a districtwide system that will support the use of data to drive instructional decision making.**

### **Link to Findings**

According to Key Finding 7, teachers currently do not use assessment data to drive instruction consistently. Participants at the co-interpretation meeting stated that additional professional development is needed for teachers to model using data to drive instruction and to make sure data are understood, properly interpreted, and shared.

Key Finding 7, which addresses instruction and assessment, was derived from several data sources. First, according to the interview data collected, teachers and administrators use assessment data to make instructional decisions across the district. During classroom observations, the use of assessments was seldom seen in Grades K–12. In addition, document analysis found no evidence that assessment data are used to inform instruction. In fact, assessment data were reportedly not accessible to teachers. At best, there appears to be an inconsistent use of data across the district. The participants at the co-interpretation meeting agreed that this inconsistency needs to be addressed.

### **Link to Research**

Millhollen (2002, p. 86) reminds us of Willa A. Foster’s comment, “Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution. It represents the wise choice of many alternatives.” Using data and research properly and consistently is the key to making wise choices.

The research literature is replete with arguments for creating a data-driven culture in schools and districts. The reasoning behind these arguments is that in order for a district’s student achievement to improve and to be in compliance with NCLB, the teachers, building administrators, and district personnel need to collect and use data to make the best decisions for instruction and learning (Kimmelman, 2006). Data-driven decision making essentially requires schools and districts to be consistent in using actual data to examine the current state of affairs in their school or district, to plan a course for improvement, and to measure whether or not this improvement has actually taken place (Deligiannis, 2005).

One way to think about building a data-driven culture is to build and use knowledge effectively. Former superintendent Paul Kimmelman (2006) describes using a knowledge model to build organizational capacity that can lead to school improvement. In his view, this is a three-part process consisting of knowledge acquisition, knowledge management, and knowledge implementation. The first part—knowledge acquisition—uses data and research to build a foundation for school improvement. Analyzing data and using credible research will allow teachers and administrators to make informed decisions. These data can come from sources such as formative and summative assessments and credible resources such as the What Works Clearinghouse ([www.whatworks.ed.gov](http://www.whatworks.ed.gov)), sponsored by the federal Institute of Education

Sciences (IES). The district already has a plethora of data, but the data need to be put to good and consistent use by the appropriate people—namely building administrators and teachers. These school personnel need to examine the data, determine avenues for improvement, and then consult the research in order to make changes.

School personnel who use data effectively share the following characteristics:

- “They ask the right questions before gathering data.
- They gather a wide variety of data.
- The most effective performance data is taken from locally developed assessments.
- They operate in a model of longitudinal, continuous improvement.
- They work with data and make decisions collaboratively, across and between levels.
- They have support from the district, leadership, teachers, and community.” (Deligiannis, 2004, p. 1)

If teachers do not have access to data, and reportedly they do not, they cannot use it to make instructional decisions. As Lachat and Smith (2005) note, “Teachers are better able to modify their instructional strategies when they have current information about the skill levels and proficiencies of their students.” This deficit can be addressed using the second part of Kimmelman’s (2006) process. As Kimmelman states, “It is more important than ever to manage knowledge in schools—that knowledge is primarily data encompassing staff and student demographic information, student achievement results, and research.” This situation requires managing the available data and research through an accountable instructional management system. For such a system to be effective, it needs to track both formative and summative assessments in a way that makes data accessible and useful for teachers. For a model of such a program, the district can investigate the Northwest Evaluation Association’s Measures of Academic Progress or an instructional management solution, such as SchoolNet. The former allows educators to track individual student performance over time, and the latter provides the means to manage, analyze, and act on essential student performance data.

Once the district has acquired the appropriate data and research and is managing it effectively, it is time for the last piece of Kimmelman’s (2006) knowledge framework—implementation. Knowledge implementation throughout the organization is done through targeted and high-quality professional development. Time and training are necessary for staff to use data effectively (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004).

Research shows that effective professional development that has a positive impact on teacher instruction is of considerable duration, concentrates on specific content areas and/or instructional strategies, requires a collective participation of educators (grade-level or school-level teams), is coherently organized, and is infused with active learning rather than the stand-and-deliver model (Lauer & Snow-Renner, 2005). Several strategies that can increase the effectiveness of a professional development experience include the following:

- “Active learning and coherence in professional development [will] significantly increase teachers’ use of active, project-centered instruction in their classrooms. ...

- Professional development focused on specific, higher-order teaching strategies increases teachers' use of those strategies in the classroom....
- [Tthe use of ] collective participation, active learning, and coherence [in professional development] increase[s] the impact of professional development activities that focus on specific, higher-order teaching strategies.” (Porter, Garet, Desimone, Yoon, & Birman, 2000, p. 24).

According to Lachat and Smith (2005), engaging teachers in the process of data analysis is essential. This engagement is best ensured through systematic professional development that allows them to learn about and practice data use in a variety of settings. The use of data coaches and other professional development methods can build teacher capacity for data use. In essence, “Teachers need to learn how to obtain and manage data, ask good questions, accurately analyze data, and apply data results appropriately and ethically” (Lachat & Smith, 2005).

Lachat and Smith (2005) also suggest establishing a data team and identifying a data coach who can help school staff stay focused on using data for continuous school improvement. Their study found that “the activities of the data teams were central to increasing communication among school staff about the trends and issues shown in the data.” The work of a data coach can improve the data literacy skills of staff members who have little or no experience using data.

### **Implementation Considerations**

Since the initial development of this recommendation, NYSED has rolled out two initiatives: the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System, providing schools and districts with better access to student data; and the Children First Intensive, providing rigorous professional development for school teams on the utilization of student data to inform instruction. It is likely that these initiatives will meet the implementation requirements of this recommendation. However, District 19 should nonetheless monitor the progress of creating a data-driven culture and take appropriate measures to improve this culture as necessary.

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### **Additional Resources**

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## Recommendation 4

**Design a professional development program to provide teachers with strategies for implementing differentiated instruction in the classroom. This professional development should be achieved in the context of professional learning communities in individual school buildings to support collaborative professional development based on building needs.**

### Link to Findings

Guiding Question 13 asks whether the professional development (regional, district, school) is of high quality and focused on the content and pedagogical areas of need. Key Finding 8 states that there is a need for more collaboration among teachers—including ELL, general education, and Special Education teachers. This key finding also states that professional development topics do not address the needs of differentiated instruction for all teachers. Last, the finding notes that there is no indication of how professional development topics are chosen.

Data from teacher interviews indicate a need for greater collaboration among peers. This indication was reinforced with data from the ELL teacher interviews, as well as SEC data, which showed that teachers collaborate informally but lack formal opportunities for collaboration.

Teacher interview data also suggest that professional development is not meeting teacher needs in terms of content and frequency of sessions. In addition, teacher interview data (including general education, Special Education, and ELL teachers) indicate a lack of professional development for implementing differentiated instruction in classrooms. In particular, ELL teachers indicate that the ELA professional development does not address ELL student needs or the needs of monolingual teachers with ELL students in the general education classroom.

While the document analysis found no evidence of how professional development topics are chosen, SEC data indicate teachers are strongly prepared in the scope of content to be taught, but are less confident with student self evaluation, diversity, needs, and learning styles. This situation causes District 19 teachers to experience a lack of confidence in their abilities to address different learning styles.

### Link to Research

**Professional Learning Communities.** The development of learning communities within District 19 schools would allow for professional collaboration and would encourage the sharing of teaching strategies to address students with diverse learning styles. Learning communities would also provide a support system for new and transfer teachers in a school.

Bolam, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas, and Wallace (2005) noted the following with regard to professional development:

- “An effective professional learning community (EPLC) fully exhibits eight key characteristics: [1] shared values and vision; [2] collective responsibility for pupils’ learning; [3] collaboration focused on learning; [4] individual and collective professional

learning; [5] reflective professional enquiry; [6] openness, networks and partnerships; [7] inclusive membership; [8] mutual trust, respect and support.

- Pupil learning was the foremost concern of people working in PLCs and the more developed a PLC appeared to be, the more positive was the association with two key measures of effectiveness—pupil achievement and professional learning.
- PLCs are created, managed and sustained through four key operational processes: [1] optimising resources and structures; [2] promoting individual and collective learning; [3] explicit promotion and sustaining of an EPLC; and [4] leadership and management. Furthermore, the extent to which these four processes are carried out effectively is a third measure of overall PLC effectiveness.
- Staff in more developed PLCs adopt a range of innovative practices to deal with the inhibiting and facilitating factors in their particular contexts. Many of these practices are potentially useful for other schools.” (p. i)

Moving in the direction suggested by these findings may fortify the structures that District 19 already has in place. That is, professional learning communities have been shown to increase student achievement and the professional learning of teachers. Findings clearly indicate that educators in District 19 need more formal collaboration opportunities to integrate effective professional development into their teaching. The research of Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) echoes the approach to using collective learning to improve professional development as suggested in the following paragraph:

First, [these results] provide empirical confirmation on a national probability sample of the assumptions in the literature on “best practice” in professional development. For example, our results indicate that sustained and intensive professional development is more likely to have an impact, as reported by teachers, than is shorter professional development. Our results also indicate that professional development that focuses on academic subject matter (content), gives teachers opportunities for “hands-on” work (active learning) and is integrated into the daily life of the school (coherence), is more likely to produce enhanced knowledge and skills.... Reform activities tend to produce better outcomes primarily because they tend to be of longer duration. Traditional and reform activities of the same duration tend to have the same effects on reported outcomes, and there is considerable overlap in span and contact hours for these two forms of activities. Thus, to improve professional development, it is more important to focus on the duration, collective participation and the core features (i.e., content, active learning and coherence) than type. (pp. 935–936)

This approach also is supported by the work of Hiebert (1999), as follows:

Research on teacher learning shows that fruitful opportunities to learn new teaching methods share several core features: (a) ongoing (measured in years) collaboration of teachers for purposes of planning with (b) the explicit goal of improving students’ achievement of clear learning goals, and (c) anchored by attention to students thinking, the curriculum, and pedagogy, [and] (d) access to alternative ideas and methods and

opportunities to observe these in action and to reflect on the reasons for their effectiveness. (p. 15)

In addition to the importance of collective participation and the coherence of professional development activities, activities that are linked to teachers' other experiences, aligned with other reform efforts, and encourage professional communication among teachers also support change in teaching practice (Garet et al., 2001). The report by Garet et al. (2001) also provides empirical support that the collective participation of groups of teachers from the same school, subject, or grade is related both to coherence and active learning opportunities, which in turn are related to improvements in teacher knowledge and skill and changes in classroom practice.

It is clear that building-level learning communities in District 19 would provide sustained professional development to groups of teachers who teach similar or the same students, with opportunities to conduct hands-on work that is integrated into the school day. One final note on this topic comes from the work of Griffin (1983), who states that despite differences in context and format, most staff development programs share a common purpose: to bring about change. "Educators generally agree that the three major outcomes of effective staff development programs are changes in (1) teacher beliefs and attitudes, (2) teacher instructional practices and (3) student learning outcomes" (Griffin, 1983). District 19 learning communities would allow groups of educators opportunities to discuss and implement instructional strategies based on best practices with students of similar needs.

**Differentiated Instruction.** A rationale for differentiated instruction comes from theory, research, and educational common sense. Consider the following from the work of Tomlinson (2003):

Today's classrooms are becoming more academically diverse in most regions of the United States (and elsewhere, for that matter). Many, if not most, classrooms contain students representing both genders and multiple cultures, frequently include students who do not speak English as a first language, and generally contain students with a range of exceptionalities and markedly different experiential backgrounds. These students almost certainly work at differing readiness levels, have varying interests, and learn in a variety of ways. (p. 153)

Culture has an important bearing on how individuals learn. While it is clearly not the case that all members of a given culture learn in similar ways, it is the case that learning environments and procedures that are comfortable for many members of one cultural group may not be so to many members of other cultural groups. Students whose classrooms are a cultural misfit often do poorly in school. In classrooms where varied cultural groups are represented, a single approach to teaching and learning is unlikely to serve all students well. In fact, because students in any cultural group also vary, even classrooms that are more culturally homogeneous would benefit from multiple approaches to teaching and learning. (p. 154)

The opportunity to learn in ways that make learning more efficient is also likely to make learning more effective. Attention to a student's preferred mode of learning or thinking promotes improved achievement. (p. 154)

## Implementation Considerations

Given the student diversity within District 19, the need for differentiated instruction is clear. Focusing on differentiated instruction in the context of effective professional learning communities will allow educators of varying experience to learn the skills necessary to meet the needs of students in ELL, Special Education, and general education classrooms. The work of Brimijoin and Alouf (2003) suggests a two-phase professional development process that would be helpful in promoting differentiated instruction. In the first phase, mentor teachers are trained in guiding new teachers, overseeing field experiences, and supervising student teachers. In the second phase, teachers are asked to form study groups focusing on applying principles of differentiated curriculum and instruction. Brimijoin and Alouf note the effectiveness of a professional development model that combines mentoring, coaching, and study groups.

As educational leaders, building administrators play an important role in the success of professional learning communities. Principals must assist in scheduling, facilitating, and monitoring all elements of these initiatives and may need support as they acquire the facilitation skills necessary for successful implementation.

Teachers also will need training in process and collaboration skills to be effective members of professional learning communities within their buildings.

Professional development on differentiated instruction will require detailed plans for learning, implementing, and monitoring the progress of student achievement. A strong building facilitator, such as the literacy coach, must provide ongoing support in the context of the professional learning communities. A needs assessment tool with an array of data sources should be administered to determine areas of focus by content, grade level, and student needs.

Several school-based data sets should be used to strengthen connections between educators in the professional development learning communities. Examples of student work could be used to determine student needs and student learning. Lesson study protocols could be incorporated to meet teacher needs for difficult lessons or units. Common assessments could be developed as differentiated instruction tools.

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## **Recommendation 5**

**Implement a comprehensive new-teacher induction program for all new teachers throughout the district that includes the following elements:**

- **A mentorship program for new teachers.**
- **Continued professional development that addresses the needs and concerns of new teachers.**
- **Ongoing opportunities for teacher collaboration.**
- **A system for monitoring the induction program to ensure that it achieves desired outcomes.**

### **Link to Findings**

Key Finding 9 indicates that new-teacher support is sparse and inconsistent throughout the district. Participants at the co-interpretation meeting noted a lack of support for new teachers. They also noted that training and professional development do not meet the needs of many teachers and that funds to support teacher professional development are insufficient.

Key Finding 9, which addresses lack of new-teacher support across the district, was derived from several data sources. First, according to the interview data collected, new teachers could benefit from a better school-based system of induction and more professional development in classroom management. However, the ELL report noted that UFT provides support systems for new and beginning ELL teachers. Therefore, it appears there are inconsistent support systems in place for new teachers. The participants at the co-interpretation meeting agreed that this inconsistency needs to be addressed and new-teacher support needs to be enhanced. New-teacher support is vital as a tool for teacher retention, school morale, and student achievement.

### **Links to Research**

Nationally, the growing concern regarding high teacher turnover rates has placed teacher retention at the forefront of the educational policy agenda. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that 41 percent of new teachers leave within their first few years of teaching (Marvell et al., 2005). In addition, low-income, urban schools—like many of those found in District 19—have higher teacher turnover rates than other schools (Strunk & Robinson, 2006). To combat this trend, teacher support should be a priority from the day a new teacher is hired. The National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools (2005) found that new-teacher support in the form of induction programs is “highly effective in keeping quality teachers in the profession” (p. 11). Furthermore, in a cost-benefit analysis of a high-quality induction program, Villar and Strong (2007, p. 35) reported that the students of new teachers who experienced strong induction “in general, achieve in patterns that mirror the achievement rates of students assigned to more experienced mid-career teachers.” They also discussed the cost-effectiveness of new-teacher induction, asserting that the costs to develop and maintain a new-teacher induction program can be partially offset by increases in teacher retention and decreases in the costs of teacher turnover (Villar & Strong, 2007).

## Implementation Considerations

Consistency and uniformity are key elements of an effective and comprehensive new-teacher induction program (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). It is essential for the district to design a support program that will continue throughout the first one to two years of each new teacher's career. Induction programs help develop novice teachers into high-quality professionals who can better assist students in reaching their full academic potential (Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005). The following components are also vital to a successful induction program (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004):

- Mentorship programs
- Ongoing professional development
- Opportunities for teacher collaboration during the school day

**Mentorship Programs.** Pairing beginner teachers with mentor teachers is a highly effective support strategy. Research suggests that mentors should be experienced teachers—or content coaches—who teach in the same content area within the district and preferably in the same school building (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Retired schoolteachers who are familiar with the district might also serve as good mentors. Mentors might support new teachers by helping them develop lesson plans, observing their lessons, providing them with feedback in a timely fashion, modeling effective instructional practices, and/or conducting periodic meetings to review their progress. Mentor teachers also could serve as instructional leaders in professional development workshops.

**Professional Development.** Well-structured professional development enables teachers to grow professionally and enhance their knowledge base and skills, which in turn benefits both teacher and students (Holland, 2005). Currently, many schools in District 19 offer professional development related to instructional programs in use and professional development required by NYSED. However, additional professional development can be influential in retaining new teachers if it addresses concerns and needs specific to new teachers—such as classroom management strategies, differentiated instruction, using data to drive instruction, working with high populations of ELLs and SWDs, aligning the taught curriculum with the state content standards, and understanding the culture of the students and school.

**Teacher Collaboration.** Collaboration between teachers provides “opportunities for adults across a school system to learn and think together about how to improve their practice in ways that lead to improved student achievement” (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004, p. 2). Effective teacher collaborations are focused on student achievement, informed by data and research, and offer conditions conducive to efficient teamwork (e.g., convenient time, comfortable meeting location). Recognizing the importance of teacher collaboration, many schools have adapted their schedules to ensure that teachers have time to collaborate through team meetings; critical friends groups; lesson study, in which teachers collaboratively plan, observe, and analyze classroom lessons; or other forms of professional development (Raywid, 1993).

## **Other Considerations**

Understandably, some LEAs and districts may question their ability to initiate a comprehensive induction program due to limited funding or resources. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2004) recommends that districts utilize NCLB Title II funds to finance the induction program, which includes the preparation, training, and recruitment of high-quality teachers and principals.

In order to ensure success over time, the operational consequences, strengths, and weaknesses of the new-teacher induction program and its components will need to be continually and systematically appraised.

## **Examples of District-Level Induction Programs**

Several states and districts have developed comprehensive induction programs designed to provide novice teachers with the support they need in their first few years of teaching. These programs often include extensive, targeted professional development and mentoring.

The Toledo Public School District in Ohio has a new-teacher induction program that incorporates teacher collaboration, mentorship programs, and new-teacher evaluations (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). Toledo Public Schools collaborated with union officials to create a peer-assistance and review panel to determine quality controls of the program. The Intern Board of Review Panel responsibilities include hiring and monitoring consulting teachers and accepting and/or rejecting new-teacher evaluations brought forth by the consulting teachers. The nine-member panel includes four school administrators and five teachers. The panel assigns consulting teachers to work as mentors with new teachers and to evaluate the progress of new teachers during their first year of teaching. The principal assumes the role of consulting teacher during a new teacher's second year. The induction program requires all first-year teachers to participate and costs the district about \$3,395 per teacher. Implementing the new-teacher program in Toledo is more cost-effective than releasing underperforming veteran teachers or incurring the additional expense of constant teacher turnover.

Louisiana FIRST Online ([www.doe.state.la.us/lde/pd/625.html](http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/pd/625.html)) under the direction of the Louisiana Department of Education, provides district resources to better meet the needs of new teachers. Its manual, titled *The Induction Component*, designed for districts that want to create induction programs, includes everything from agendas for orientation sessions to worksheets and flyers.

Guidance for developing a new-teacher induction program can also be garnered from The New Teacher Center's (2006) policy paper about New York City's induction program, formed in 2004 and now ready to be shifted to schools. This document includes information about release time and provides a mentor-quality checklist.

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## Appendix Data Map

During the co-interpretation process for District 19, participants analyzed eight individual reports (data sets). Participants identified findings from across the data sets in each of the areas examined through the audit. They worked together to identify which findings were most significant and then articulated hypotheses on the root cause of each key finding. The following data map documents the results of this co-interpretation process.

The data map details all of the findings—including key and critical key findings—by guiding question, if applicable. During the co-interpretation meeting held April 23–24, 2007, Learning Point Associates staff guided district- and school-level staff through a process to develop findings based on review and interpretation of the data sets listed. The key findings were developed by organizing all findings according to a common theme, synthesizing the information across data sets, and then consolidating key findings to incorporate the purpose and intent of the individual findings. Participants then voted to prioritize the consolidated findings and create critical key findings using the following criteria:

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

Participants were then guided in the following process:

- Identify a set of hypotheses or root causes that are supported by evidence for each key finding.
- Determine the significance of the hypotheses based on the following criteria:
  - Does the district have control to enact change associated with the hypothesis?
  - If the hypothesis is addressed, will it effect change?
  - Does the hypothesis address at least one of the 16 guiding questions?
  - Do the data exist, or can data be generated to support the hypothesis?
- Vote to prioritize the hypotheses by identifying the top-rated hypotheses to use in developing recommendations for the district. For each question answered, the “+” symbol indicates *yes*, the “-” symbol indicates *no*, and “0” indicates *don’t know* or *no change*.

The data map organizes the findings under four themes that incorporate the applicable guiding questions. District 19 staff identified 10 critical key findings. Data sources are provided for individual findings, and the final votes for critical key findings are indicated. Several of the key findings were combined across themes. The themes and data sources are as follows:

### **Theme 1. Achievement and Accountability**

- GQ1 Where is the district struggling most in terms of content areas and demographic groups over time?
- GQ12 Is there a process in place within the district to monitor the effectiveness of instructional programs?
- GQ16 Do district and school plans prioritize the needs identified by NCLB?

### **Theme 2. Standards and Curriculum**

- GQ2 Are teachers teaching the written curriculum in their classrooms?
- GQ3 Does the district provide materials that support the implementation of the written curriculum and are they being used?
- GQ4 Are the teachers teaching to the state standards?
- GQ5 Is the taught curriculum aligned with the state standards?
- GQ6 Is the written curriculum aligned with the state standards?
- GQ7 Do all students have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum?

### **Theme 3. Instruction and Assessment**

- GQ8 What does the district/school do for students who are not scoring at proficient levels according to NCLB (within and outside the school day)?
- GQ9 Does classroom instruction maximize the use of best practices and research-based practices?
- GQ10 Do teachers identify and provide appropriate additional instruction for students who are not proficient?
- GQ11 Do teachers use assessment data to inform instruction?

### **Theme 4. Professional Development**

- GQ13 Is the professional development (regional, district, school) of high quality and focused on the content and pedagogical areas of need?
- GQ14 Are teachers translating professional development into effective classroom practice?
- GQ15 Are there sufficient supports in place for new teachers?

### **Data Sources**

DR—Document Review  
CA—Curriculum Alignment  
ELL—English Language Learners  
GQ—Guiding Question  
IP—Instructional Practice

INT—District and School Interviews  
OBS—Observations  
SA—Student Achievement Data  
SE—Special Education  
SEC—Surveys of Enacted Curriculum

## Critical Key Findings

### Theme 1. Achievement and Accountability

Critical Key Finding 1	Findings	Source & Page
<b>Final votes: 11</b>  <i>Guiding Question 1</i>  <b>1. The district is struggling to make AYP in ELA, mathematics, and subgroup categories such as:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>SWDs</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Low-income students</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Various ethnic groups</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Secondary level students</b></li> </ul>	1. District 19 did not make AYP for all students, including the subgroup of SWDs, in ELA at the elementary and middle school levels.	SE p. 6
	2. For ELA at the secondary level, none of the subgroups, including SWDs, made AYP for 2004–05.	SA p. 3
	3. Eighty percent of general education students scored at Level 3 or 4, while SWDs had zero percent scoring at that level.	SE p. 6
	4. The district is struggling to make AYP for SWDs in ELA and mathematics.	SE p. 6
	5. District 19 failed to make AYP in ELA for all students, including the subgroup of SWDs in the elementary grades.	SE p. 6
	6. District 19 is not meeting NCLB requirements for ELLs in ELA.	ELL p. 1
	7. District 19 is designated as <i>in corrective action</i> , and is participating in the curriculum audit.	ELL p. 2
<b>Hypotheses for Key Finding 1</b>		<b>Votes</b>
1. Inconsistent use of assessments to drive instruction.		6 (++++)
2. Professional development is not meeting teacher needs.		6 (++++)
3. Lack of technology use in the classroom.		6 (++++)
4. Insufficient support and rigor at the high school level.		6 (++++)
5. Better communication to schools and staff is needed. Schools do not know about district AYP and status.		6 (++++)
6. Lack of knowledge with reference to AYP and student population targets.		6 (++++)

## Theme 2. Standards and Curriculum

Critical Key Finding 2	Findings	Source & Page
<b>Final votes: 7</b>  <i>Guiding Question 6</i>  <b>2. Based on the documents reviewed, there is insufficient evidence to show that the written curriculum is aligned with the state standards.</b>	1. Based on the documents reviewed, there is insufficient evidence to show that the written curriculum is aligned with the state standards.	CA p. 5
	2. Based on the documents submitted, there is no evidence that the curriculum is aligned vertically and horizontally with the New York State Learning Standards.	CA p. 5
	3. According to half of the schools, materials were perceived to be not aligned with New York State Learning Standards.	INT p. 6
	4. There is some confusion about whether the curriculum is aligned with New York State Learning Standards.	INT p. 4
	5. If the district’s curriculum is not aligned to the New York State Learning Standards and literacy competencies, one would be unable to determine whether or not all students have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum.	SA all pages
<b>Hypotheses for Key Finding 2</b>		<b>Votes</b>
1. There are conflicting mandates.		4 (++++)
2. Insufficient support from regional/administration on curriculum and state alignment.		4 (++++)
3. There needs to be a direct connection between formal and informal observation with the alignment of state standards and curriculum.		4 (++++)
4. Schools need matrix(es) that display detailed alignment between schoolwide programs, resources, and state standards.		6 (++++)

Critical Key Finding 3	Findings	Source & Page
<p><b>Final votes: 15</b></p> <p><i>Guiding Question 7</i></p> <p><b>3. Based on documents reviewed, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that students have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum. This was evidenced by Special Education, general education, and ELL teachers in the topic areas and academic demand areas.</b></p>	1. ELL teachers interviewed reported that ELLs are excluded from rigorous curricula such as advanced placement and honors courses.	ELL p. 20
	2. Based on documents reviewed, there is no indication that additional supports for nonproficient students are aligned to the curriculum.	CA p. 6
	3. For the curriculum to be more effective, some students need a better foundation to benefit from the curriculum (such as America’s Choice).	INT p. 4
	4. On the SEC, teachers indicated that in the IP charts 127 and 128, the state’s district framework strongly influenced their ELA instruction.	SEC p. 32
	5. Based on documents reviewed, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that students have access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum. Content topics are not written with a focus on student expectations.	CA all pages
	6. The cognitive demands of the district’s identified ELA curriculum could not be determined.	CA all pages
	7. The district is implementing effective instructional programs such as the Wilson Reading System and the Schools Attuned Program.	SE p. 16
<b>Hypotheses for Key Finding 3</b>		<b>Votes</b>
1. Teachers lack enough expertise to implement a rigorous and challenging curriculum.		4 (++++)
2. Advanced and challenging curriculum needs to be offered to all students, not limited to general education students.		9 (++++)
3. Evidence and documentation need to be put in place to demonstrate rigorous and challenging curriculum programming.		6 (++++)
4. More professional development is needed regarding performance standards.		6 (++++)
5. Teacher comfort zones impede academic rigor—as do attitudes of laziness, taking the easy way out, and too much work.		6 (-++-)

### Theme 3. Instruction and Assessment

Critical Key Finding 4	Findings	Source & Page
<p><b>Final votes: 11</b></p> <p><i>Guiding Question 9</i></p> <p><b>4. Poor student behavior, absenteeism, truancy, and transient patterns of the school population impede maximizing best practices and research-based practices.</b></p>	1. Expectations for behavior are the same across the board for general education students and SWDs.	SE p. 19
	2. Student behavior has a tremendously negative impact on instruction.	INT p. 15
	3. In secondary schools, truancy and chronic student absenteeism are challenges.	INT p. 15
	4. Principals report that behavior policies and expectations apply and are communicated to all students in the same manner.	SE p. 18
<b>Hypotheses for Key Finding 4</b>		<b>Votes</b>
1. Lack of incentives, support, staff guidance, value of child, school as community.		12 (++++)
2. Students with special needs and ELLs need instruction tailored to their needs (instruction needs to be bilingual).		12 (++++)

Critical Key Finding 5	Findings	Source & Page
<b>Final votes: 9</b>  <i>Guiding Question 9</i>  <b>5. There is a limited use of computers in ELA classrooms.</b>	1. Teachers indicate in IP chart 119 that students in all grades engage in limited to no electronic media.	SEC p. 30
	2. Teachers indicate in the IP chart that the use of computers and other technology was moderate to none.	SEC p. 72
	3. Technology use was not observed or rarely observed in the classrooms visited (K–12).	OBS pp. 6, 10
<b>Hypotheses for Key Finding 5</b>		<b>Votes</b>
1. Outdated computers and programs.		6 (++++)
2. More professional development needed in grouping for instruction.		4 (++++)
3. Lack of teacher training and skills with use of computers.		6 (++++)
4. Inappropriate choice of software and computer programs.		6 (++++)
5. Need for instructing teachers in classroom management for effective use of computers.		6 (++++)
6. Need for integrating technology with lesson planning.		6 (++++)

Critical Key Finding 6	Findings	Source & Page
<p><b>Final votes: 8</b></p> <p><i>Guiding Question 9</i></p> <p><b>6. The use of best practices to maximize instruction is inconsistently implemented across the district.</b> <i>(combined)</i></p> <p><b>In addition, there is an overemphasis on test-taking strategies and limited use of technology.</b></p>	1. Teachers set specific language learning goals and incorporate them into their lessons.	ELL p. 13
	2. Teachers vary instructional practices and utilize research-based instructional strategies to meet the needs of their students.	SE p. 17
	3. Mission is success in general education classrooms.	SE p. 18
	4. Teachers implement differentiated instructional practices to address ELL needs.	ELL p. 14
	5. For ELL teachers, identifying prior knowledge, lesson purpose, learning vocabulary, and demonstrating student understanding were the most frequently occurring instructional activities.	ELL p. 25
	6. Teachers employ specific instructional techniques to meet the needs of ELLs.	ELL p. 21
	7. ELL program teachers devoted their lessons to skill-based activities, whereas general education teachers used a mixture of skills and concepts in their lessons.	ELL p. 33
	8. Teachers report a lack of specified programming to meet the needs of ELLs and SWDs.	ELL p. 22, 42.
	9. Not enough hands-on learning, student discussion, and independent research was observed across schools.	OBS p. 6
	10. There is a lack of team teaching in K–12 classrooms.	OBS pp. 6, 10
	11. Direct instruction was observed too often in the district, with little cooperative learning and student group work observed.	OBS p. 6
	12. Schools must follow the curriculum prototype very closely, but there is room to expand upon the prototype.	INT p. 5
<b>Hypotheses for Key Finding 6</b>		<b>Votes</b>
1. Poor communication between the teachers, administrators, and district.		6 (++++)
2. Lack of clear, consistent vision.		6 (++++)
3. Too much emphasis on test preparation.		6 (++++)
4. Constant changes in curriculum and programs (inconsistency).		6 (++++)
5. Disparity between schools, cohorts, regions, and districts.		6 (++++)

Critical Key Finding 7	Findings	Source & Page
<p><b>Final votes: 11</b></p> <p><i>Guiding Question 11</i></p> <p><b>7. Teachers do not use assessments data to drive instruction consistently</b></p>	1. The use of assessments was not observed very often in K–12 classrooms.	OBS pp. 6, 10
	2. Based on the document review, there is no evidence to support that assessment data is used to inform instruction. Data were not accessible to teachers.	DR p. 9
	3. The teacher responses in all grades indicate there is limited instructional emphasis in all topics in all cognitive demand areas as compared to the state assessments.	SEC pp. 4, 13, 15, 17
	4. Administration consistently described assessment data to target instruction to students scoring at Levels 1 and 2. AIS are then provided.	SE p. 21
	5. Teachers use assessment data to inform their instructional practices.	ELL pp. 16, 23
	6. Teachers and administrators use assessment data to make instructional decisions across the district.	INT p. 7
	7. Teachers are using assessments to inform instruction by way of problem-of-the-day, spiraling homework, and conferencing with students.	SE p. 22
	8. There is a great deal of emphasis on test preparation.	SE p. 22
<b>Hypotheses for Key Finding 7</b>		<b>Votes</b>
1. Data is not understood, properly interpreted, shared, or explained.		6 (++++)
2. Teachers are not knowledgeable in using data to drive instruction.		6 (++++)
3. Additional professional development needed to model using data.		6 (++++)

## Theme 4. Professional Development

Critical Key Finding 8	Findings	Source & Page
<p><b>Final votes: 10</b></p> <p><i>Guiding Question 13</i></p> <p><b>8. There is a need for more collaboration among teachers and their peers, also among ELL teachers, general education and Special Education teachers.</b></p>	1. There needs to be more collaboration between general education teachers and Special Education teachers, especially in middle schools.	INT p. 9
	2. Collaboration among ELL, general education teachers, and support staff needs to be strengthened.	ELL p. 11
	3. Teachers indicate in the IP Charts 180–189 and Chart 192 that teacher collaboration exists informally but teachers engage in limited collaboration among their peers for professional growth. IP Charts 190, 191.	SEC pp. 48–54
	4. Professional development is provided to general education and Special Education teachers together to ensure common understanding, coordination, and cohesion between general education and Special Education teachers—each contributes to the other.	ELL p. 8
	5. Insufficient professional development on ELL issues for monolingual general education teachers.	ELL pp. 41–42
	6. Teachers indicated in the IP Charts 140–149, 153, 156, and 157, teachers are strongly prepared in the scope of their content but are less confident with student self-evaluation, diversity, needs, and learning styles IP charts 150–155.	SEC pp. 38–47
	7. ELA professional development does not address ELL needs.	ELL p. 15
	8. The frequency of professional development is not meeting the needs of teachers at the school level.	INT p. 13
	9. Based on document review, there is no evidence as to how professional development topics are chosen.	DR p. 11
	10. Teachers have received guidance on the use of effective differentiated instruction.	SE p. 25
	11. General education and Special Education teachers need more staff development in differentiated instruction.	INT p. 9
	12. According to district staff, extensive professional development is provided for all teachers working with ELLs.	ELL pp. 8, 22

<b>Hypotheses for Key Finding 8</b>	<b>Votes</b>
1. Not enough scheduling time—staggering preps and pullout time.	6 (++++)
2. Teaching methods not consistent.	6 (++++)
3. Instructional practices—different.	6 (++++)
4. Needs of students are not being met.	6 (++++)
5. No evidence of interdisciplinary instruction.	6 (++++)
6. Teachers should be aware of students receiving interventions and receive feedback from the providers.	6 (++++)

<b>Critical Key Finding 9</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Source &amp; Page</b>
<b>Final votes: 5</b>  <i>Guiding Question 15</i>  <b>9. New-teacher support is limited and sporadic.</b>	1. New teachers not addressed for Special Education review.	SE p. 2
	2. New teachers could benefit by a better school-based system of induction and more professional development in classroom management.	INT p. 14
	3. District 19, schools, and UFT provide support systems for new and beginning ELL teachers	ELL pp. 10, 15
<b>Hypotheses for Key Finding 9</b>		<b>Votes</b>
1. Lack of support.		6 (++++)
2. Insufficient funds to support teacher professional development.		4 (++++)
3. Training and professional development should be specific to the teacher.		6 (++++)

## Miscellaneous Critical Key Finding

Critical Key Finding 10	Findings	Source & Page
<b>Final vote: 1 (Sufficient Consensus)</b>  <i>No applicable Guiding Question</i>  <b>10. Parents wish to become more active in their children's education and be more informed about curriculum and instruction.</b>	1. Parents who speak Spanish and little English want classes to learn English.	Not specified
	2. Parents report that schools kept them informed via letters and flyers (Spanish and English) about meetings, classes, classes parents can take and changes in school.	Not specified
	3. Some parents were clear about their children's participation in general education while others were confused.	Not specified
<b>Hypotheses for Key Finding 10</b>		<b>Votes</b>
1. Not sufficient information disseminated to parents about curriculum and instruction or workshops offered by schools.		6 (++++)
2. Not enough parental representation on school leadership teams of parents actively participating in the decision-making process.		6 (++++)
3. Parent workshops need to be offered in the evenings and weekends to accommodate working parents—outreach from within the school to the parents—parent coordinator to facilitate programs (convenience).		6 (++++)
4. Parents need to be surveyed and their needs addressed.		6 (++++)
5. Translators are needed at workshops, meetings, and leadership meetings. Need translations of notices and communications inviting parents.		6 (++++)

## Key Findings

### Theme 1. Achievement and Accountability

Key Finding	Findings	Source & Page
<p><b>Guiding Question 12</b></p> <p>Evidence was found that there is a process in place to monitor instructional effectiveness using the following data sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snapshots</li> <li>• Student performance</li> <li>• Reading First</li> </ul>	12.1 A process is in place to monitor instructional effectiveness (school and district administrators)—a “district snapshot.”	ELL p. 17
	12.2 Yes, there is a process to monitor effectiveness. District data is disseminated to school principals to track student performance.	SE p. 24
	12.3 Evidence was found on implementation and monitoring of instructional effectiveness in the Reading First Initiative. (Note: the report does not mention who monitors this program.)	DR p. 10
	12.4 Monitoring was done in multiple ways (on multiple levels) across the district.	INT p. 5
	12.5 No mechanism is in place for monitoring and evaluating program models at the district level.	ELL pp. 9, 23

Key Findings	Findings	Source & Page
<p><b>Guiding Question 16</b></p> <p>Evidence was found that school and district plans do prioritize needs based on NCLB for SWDs and ELLs; however, there is no evidence of implementation or monitoring about NCLB needs, reflected instruction assessment, and professional development.</p> <p>Teachers are not well informed about NCLB goals and do not participate in constructing the district educational plan.</p>	16.1 Evidence was found of school and district plans to prioritize needs based on NCLB for SWDs and ELLs. Other groups were omitted.	DR p. 13
	16.2 Based on documents submitted, no implementation or monitoring evidence about meeting NCLB was reflected in instructional assessment in professional development.	DR p. 13
	16.3 High concentrations of ELLs in some schools create issues for NCLB compliance in those schools.	INT p. 18
	16.4 Teachers have very little involvement in constructing the district improvement plan.	INT p. 26
	16.5 Teachers do not understand the goals of NCLB and the challenges of their schools in meeting target goals.	INT p. 16

## Theme 2. Standards and Curriculum

Key Findings	Findings	Source & Page
<p><b>Guiding Question 2</b></p> <p>Based on visits and observations, a slim majority of teachers are teaching the curriculum written by the regions, state.</p> <p>Based on findings, the IEPs are being written to reflect the designated curriculum.</p> <p>New York state curriculum is taught to both general education students and SWDs.</p>	2.1 District 19 is teaching the NYSED Core Curriculum (from district and teacher interviews).	ELL pp. 6, 18–19
	2.2 Document review data does not show evidence of implementation or monitoring of written curriculum.	DR p. 2
	2.3 New York State says you cannot modify the curriculum—you can adapt and accommodate but not change the curriculum.	SE p. 7
	2.4 New York State Part 200 regulations specify that SWDs are to be held to the general education curriculum.	SE p. 7
	2.5 The Special Education teachers describe more modifications of the curriculum and differentiated instruction for their students than SETSS teachers.	SE p. 10
	2.6 Curriculum taught in the schools is based on state standards and is the same for both general education and Special Education but is modified based on SWDs.	SE p. 7
	2.7 Test preparation is the same for general education and Special Education in terms of who monitors the review and implementation of IEPs for students in the building.	SE p. 12
	2.8 Review of IEPs show that the curriculum alignment is not explicit. IEPs are not used as the “guiding curriculum document.”	SE p. 8
	2.9 The document submitted has time frames and activities that could be included in the literature block; however, there are no specific student outcomes or details noted; the format does not allow alignment to the New York State Learning Standards using literature competencies.	CA p. 6
	2.10 Staff members report customizing the ELA curriculum according to the ELA prototype for ELLs.	ELL p. 6

<b>Key Findings</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Source &amp; Page</b>
<p><b>Guiding Question 3</b></p> <p>Based on documents submitted, there was no evidence of implementation and monitoring of the written curriculum.</p> <p>Based on the documents reviewed, the district does not consistently provide materials that support implementation of the written curriculum (i.e., for the Special Education and ELL populations).</p>	3.1 Based on documents submitted, there was no evidence of implementation and monitoring of the written curriculum.	DR p. 4
	3.2 Based on the documents, evidence of materials was provided but not how it is monitored or implemented.	CA p. 4
	3.3 Teachers report the district does not provide specialized curriculum materials for ELL programs.	ELL pp. 7, 27 & 41
	3.4 SWDs have access to materials that fit their needs.	SE p. 12
	3.5 There are not enough reading materials for lower-level and ELL students.	INT p. 6
	3.6 According to half of the schools, materials were perceived to be not aligned with New York State Learning Standards.	INT p. 6
	3.7 Based on the document submitted, limited evidence was given to support use of resources (text and materials).	DR p. 4

<b>Key Findings</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Source &amp; Page</b>
<p><b>Guiding Question 4</b></p> <p>The teacher responses in the SEC for second grade indicated limited instructional focus on the higher-order thinking skills of demonstration, investigation, evaluation in the areas of listening and viewing, speaking and presenting, writing components, comprehension, critical reading, vocabulary, and phonics as compared to the New York State Learning Standards.</p>	4.1 ELL teachers interviewed reported that they are teaching to the state standards.	ELL pp. 6, 12, 18
	4.2 The teacher responses in Grades 3–6 indicate limited and/or no emphasis on demonstration and investigation in all topics as compared to the New York State Learning Standards.	SEC pp. 10, 12, 14

Key Findings	Findings	Source & Page
<p><b>Guiding Question 5</b></p> <p>The SEC second-grade teacher responses indicate that instruction is broad based, covering all topic areas as compared to the New York State Learning Standards, which require emphasis on cognitive demand areas of demonstration, investigation, and evaluation in speaking, presenting listening, viewing, and comprehension.</p> <p>Based on interviews, the ELL teachers responded that the core curriculum as written and taught is aligned with state assessments.</p>	<p>5.1 The SEC second-grade teacher responses indicate that instruction is broad based, covering all topic areas as compared to the New York State Learning Standards, which requires emphasis on cognitive demand areas of demonstration, investigation, and evaluation in speaking, presenting listening, viewing, and comprehension.</p>	<p>SEC p. 9</p>
	<p>5.2 The ELL teachers interviewed reported that the core curriculum (as written and taught) is aligned to state standards.</p>	<p>ELL p. 11</p>
	<p>5.3 ELA and mathematics curriculum are aligned with assessments used to determine AYP.</p>	<p>SE p. 7</p>
	<p>5.4 Eighty-six percent of the teachers agree that ELA and mathematics curricula are aligned with assessments.</p>	<p>SE p. 7</p>
	<p>5.5 The teacher responses in all grades indicate there is a limited instructional emphasis on all topics in all cognitive areas as compared to the New York State assessments.</p>	<p>SEC pp. 11, 13, 15, 17</p>

### Theme 3. Instruction and Assessment

Key Findings	Findings	Source & Page
<p><b>Guiding Question 8</b></p> <p>Evidence shows that District 19 has a plan in place for students who are not scoring at proficient levels according to NCLB by providing Academic Intervention Services (AIS) assistance to ELL and SWD populations. However, there is no evidence documenting the monitoring of these intervention services or their effectiveness.</p>	8.1 Evidence was found regarding policy and plans for additional support for struggling students based on documents submitted.	CA p. 6
	8.2 AIS, including afterschool programs and tutorial block, help to support struggling students.	SE p. 17
	8.3 Evidence of access to and participation in supplemental services for ELLs and SWDs.	ELL pp. 14–15
	8.4 The Special Education continuum is designed to provide support for Special Education, related services, accommodations, modifications in general education, Special Education classes, SETSS, CTT, and self-contained classes.	SE p. 17
	8.5 Based on the documents submitted, there is evidence that plans and policies are in place for students not scoring at proficient levels. However, there is no evidence of implementation or monitoring of these plans.	DR p. 2
	8.6 Based on the documents reviewed, there is insufficient evidence of implementation and monitoring of additional supports for struggling learners.	DR p. 6
	8.7 Based on the documents reviewed, there is no evidence to support attendance or the number of participants for intervention programs.	DR p. 6
	8.8 Special Education teachers modify curriculum based on individual needs and not just previous lower-level work.	SE p. 13
	8.9 The Special Education report indicated that there is evidence of differentiated instruction that provided a variety of instructional programs.	SE p. 16
	8.10 Administrators consistently described using assessment data to target instruction for students scoring at Levels 1 and 2. AIS are provided for these students.	SE p. 21

## Theme 4. Professional Development

Key Findings	Findings	Source & Page
<p><b>Guiding Question 13</b></p> <p>Professional development topics do not address the needs of ELL teachers and differentiated instruction and there is no indication of how professional development topics are chosen.</p>	13.1 There needs to be more collaboration between general education teachers and Special Education teachers, especially in middle schools.	INT p. 9
	13.2 Collaboration among ELL, general education teachers, and support staff needs to be strengthened.	ELL p.11
	13.3 Teachers indicate in the IP charts 180–189 and 192 that teacher collaboration exists informally but teachers engage in limited collaboration among their peers for professional growth. IP charts 190, 191.	SEC pp. 48–53
	13.4 Professional development is provided to general education and Special Education teachers together to ensure common understanding, coordination, and cohesion between general education and Special Education teachers—each contributes to the other.	ELL p. 8
	13.5 Insufficient professional development on ELL issues for monolingual general education teachers.	ELL pp. 41–42
	13.6 Teachers indicated in the IP charts 140–149, 153, 156, and 157, teachers are strongly prepared in the scope of their content but are less confident with student self-evaluation, diversity, needs and learning styles. IP charts 150–155.	SEC pp. 38–46
	13.7 ELA professional development does not address ELL needs.	ELL p. 15
	13.8 The frequency of professional development is not meeting the needs of teachers at the school level.	INT p. 13
	13.9 Based on document review, there is no evidence as to how professional development topics are chosen	DR p. 11
	13.10 Teachers have received guidance on the use of effective differentiated instruction.	SE p. 25
	13.11 General education and Special Education teachers need more staff development in differentiated instruction.	INT pp. 9–10
	13.12 According to district staff, extensive professional development is provided for all teachers working with ELLs.	ELL pp. 8, 22
	13.13 Based on the document review, evidence shows monitoring and implementation of professional development but not how topics are selected.	DR p. 10

Key Findings	Findings	Source & Page
<p><b><i>Guiding Question 14</i></b></p> <p>Professional development topics do not address the needs of ELL teachers and differentiated instruction and there is no indication of how professional development topics are chosen.</p>	<p>14.1 Teachers in general education reported a good deal of administrative support in the area of classroom behavior management.</p>	<p>SE p. 24</p>
	<p>14.2 The impact of coaches was quite positive and helped align professional development with school needs.</p>	<p>INT p.12</p>
	<p>14.3 Teachers are translating professional development into effective instructional practice.</p>	<p>ELL p. 9</p>