

**New York State Education Department
Audit of the Written, Taught, and
Tested Curriculum
Community School District 24
Final Report**

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**Submitted to
District 24**

**Submitted by
Learning Point Associates**



1120 East Diehl Road, Suite 200
Naperville, IL 60563-1486
800-356-2735 • 630-649-6500
www.learningpt.org

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

The focus of the audit was on the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum for 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 24¹ is centrally located in the borough of Queens. Queens is one of the five boroughs of New York City. The communities served by Community School District 24 include the following: Corona, Elmhurst, Glendale, Ridgewood, Middle Village, Maspeth, Woodside, and portions of both Jackson Heights and Long Island City. District 24 is part of Region 4.

Data from 2005 indicate that District 24 served a total of 48,997 students, with 599 prekindergarten students, 46,892 K–12 students, and 1506 *ungraded* students.² Of those students enrolled, 16 percent were white, 5 percent were black, 61 percent were Hispanic, and 18 percent were Asian, Pacific Islanders, Alaskan Natives, or Native Americans. The 2004–05 Annual District Report for District 24 is based on 40 schools: one early-childhood elementary school (no grade level above 2), 23 elementary schools, one elementary through middle school, seven middle schools, one elementary through high school, and seven high schools. Data from 2002–03, 2003–04, and 2004–05 school years indicate a steady rate of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (72 percent annually). District data also indicate that the percentage of ELL students enrolled during these years was also consistent, at 22 percent, 24 percent, and 24 percent, respectively. The percentage of SWDs enrolled during these years was consistent at 9 percent across all three years.

Student Academic Performance

As of 2005–06, District 24 has been designated as a district *in need of improvement—Year 3*. The state accountability status in all levels of ELA has been designated as *requiring academic progress—Year 4*. In 2004–05, the SWD and ELL accountability groups did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in elementary-level and middle-level ELA. In addition, the Hispanic student group did not make AYP in middle-level ELA. The following groups did not make AYP in secondary-level ELA: SWDs, black students, Hispanic students, and ELLs.

¹ 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).

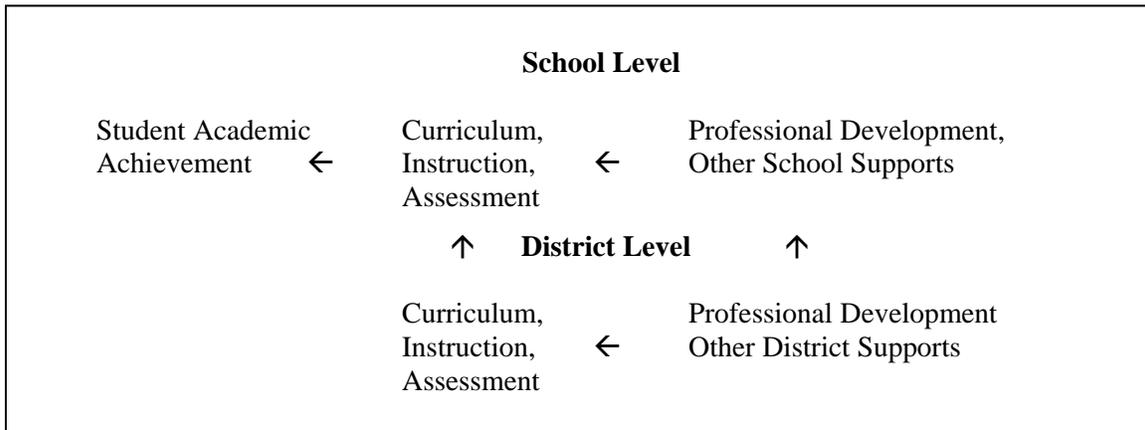
² District data were obtained from *the 2004–2005 Annual District Report* for District 24, produced by New York City Public Schools and available online (schools.nyc.gov/daa/SchoolReports/).

Theory of Action

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

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

Figure 1. Theory of Action



Guiding Questions for the Audit

To address both the needs of individual districts and the requirements of the audit, Learning Point Associates identified 16 essential questions to guide the work. In addition, a number of these guiding questions were further refined to more specifically address concerns related to ELLs and SWDs.

1. Where is the district struggling most in terms of content areas and demographic groups over time?
2. Are teachers teaching the written curriculum in their classrooms?

For SWDs:

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

For ELLs:

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

For SWDs:

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

For ELLs:

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

For ELLs:

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

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

For SWDs:

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

For ELLs:

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

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

For SWDs:

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

For ELLs:

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

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

For ELLs:

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

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

For SWDs:

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

For ELLs:

- Do teachers of ELLs use varied, researched-based instructional strategies in ELA and mathematics (where appropriate) to address the individual needs of ELLs?
 - Does the district promote high academic expectations of ELLs?
10. Do teachers identify and provide appropriate additional instruction for students who are not proficient?

For ELLs:

- Is there an established, formative process or tool for identifying varying levels of proficiency among ELL students?
11. Do teachers use assessment data to inform instruction (monitoring, diagnosis, reteaching)? Are data accessible?

For SWDs:

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

For ELLs:

- Is there a process in place to monitor the effectiveness of ESL, bilingual, or Dual Language programs?
13. Is the professional development (regional, district, school) of high quality and focused on the content/pedagogical areas of need?

For SWDs:

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

For ELLs:

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

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

For ELLs:

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

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

For English language learners:

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

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

For SWDs:

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

For ELLs:

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

Audit Process Overview

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

Phase 1: Planning

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

Phase 2: Data Collection and Analysis

To conduct this audit, Learning Point Associates examined district issues from multiple angles, gathering a wide range of data and using the guiding questions to focus on factors that affect curriculum, instruction, assessment, and other school supports. All of these data sources work together to bring focus and clarity to the main factors contributing to the districts' corrective-action status. Broadly categorized, information sources include student achievement data, the *Surveys of Enacted Curriculum* (SEC), observations of instruction, interviews, review of key district documents, and curriculum alignment. Parent and community focus groups also were included in the Special Education and ELL audits.

Student Achievement Data

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

Surveys of Enacted Curriculum

To examine whether instruction was aligned to the New York State 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 conducting approximately 300 classroom observations across the district.

Interviews

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

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

District Document Review

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

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

Curriculum Alignment

A district's written curriculum demonstrates its program of ELA studies for students. The curriculum alignment process was used to examine both the vertical and horizontal alignment of the written curriculum to the New York State 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 assure the inclusion of at least one intermediate school 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 school and one high school.

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

Table 1. Alignment of Data Sources With Guiding Questions

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

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

Phase 3: Co-Interpretation of Findings

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

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

Interpretation of the Data

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

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

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

Identification of Key Findings

As the investigative groups presented their findings to the whole group during the co-interpretation meeting for District 24, 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 also can be mapped back to the original data sets, are included in the data map in the Appendix.

After a review of multiple data documents, participants in the co-interpretation meetings in District 24 generated a list of four key findings. These key findings were prioritized and, along with district-generated hypotheses, are explained in the following.

Key Finding 1

In general, district schools are struggling to meet the needs of all the students, particularly ELLs and SWDs. Although resources and programs have increasingly targeted these populations, and with positive impact, the growing population and the complexity of their needs makes it difficult to address and fully support students with special needs.

This finding is supported by information from the ELL report, the Special Education report, and the school interview report. On a positive note, each of the reports affirms the district's commitment to effectively serving these populations, including teacher training, a variety of programs, and processes for monitoring and evaluation. Both the ELL report and the Special Education report stated that the curriculum offered to students is the same as curriculum offered for the general education students. On the other hand, the reports convey that schools are still struggling to meet the needs of all students. The school interview report indicates that in five of the six elementary schools and in three of the five secondary schools, ELL student needs are not met at a high level. Respondents in four of the five secondary schools and two of the six elementary schools indicated that the needs of SWDs were not met at a high level.

The ELL report noted that there were some problems with teachers accessing the Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)/ESL program curricula in secondary schools. In several schools, particularly elementary schools, respondents interviewed for the school interview report indicated that the ELL population is growing and that the schools need more ELL instructors, more classes for students who are just beginning to learn English, and more opportunities for general education teachers to collaborate with ELL teachers.

In teaching SWDs, teachers expressed mixed opinions about teaching the general education curriculum. Some teachers said they struggled to make mainstream instructional programs work for both ELLs and SWDs. A district respondent also shared this concern, saying the region/district emphasis is on adapting programs such as Teachers College Workshops and America's Choice to meet the needs of all students, even though the programs are not designed as "one-size-fits-all" programs. Similarly, in the Special Education report, findings indicated teacher frustration with not having simpler, supplemental materials to use with their SWDs. Reflecting this opinion, one teacher said, "We are not given supplemental materials for our special education students....we were not allowed to simplify by using a different author, but

they [SWDs] didn't learn to enjoy reading....it wasn't fun for them." The Special Education report noted that a high percentage of teachers expressed confusion about accommodations and modifications for SWDs, and how these were to be implemented in the classrooms. Those teachers who were not Special Education teachers understood accommodations and modifications in relation to participation in state or district assessments but did not make the connection to their instruction.

Key Finding 2

Teacher professional development is not meeting the needs of all teachers, particularly those who teach ELL students, those who come up through alternative certification programs and, in some cases, experienced teachers.

This finding is supported by the school interview report, the ELL report, and the district interview report. As the reports indicate, the region/district views teacher professional development as critical to improving student achievement. Reports also indicate that more differentiation is needed.

The ELL report found that more teacher training may be needed in elementary schools, as nearly half of the interviewed teachers said they had not received enough training in ELL instructional practices. Teachers who enter the ranks through alternative certification programs may need more in-depth professional development on teaching ELL students, since they have not had to fulfill the same preservice requirements as education majors. Professional development on using student assessment data also was needed, according to the ELL report, as half of the teachers interviewed said they had not received training on how to use assessment data to make instructional decisions.

The school interview report indicates that overall, respondent views on the impact of professional development were mixed. In only four schools did teachers, principals, and coaches clearly indicate that professional development had a strong influence on instruction. Comments from teachers indicate that in some cases, professional development should be differentiated. For example, 33 percent of the teachers interviewed for the school interview report had one or two years of experience. Respondents indicated that new teachers would like professional development on discipline, what and when to teach, time management, and planning—topics related to basic classroom management. A number of respondents stated that new teachers coming up through alternative certification programs need more support than other teachers. On the other hand, experienced teachers said the professional development they receive often reiterates information and skills they have already learned.

Key Finding 3

Communication between parents and school personnel is not adequate and limits parents' involvement in their child's education.

This finding is primarily supported by data from the ELL report, the Special Education report, and also from the school interview report. The school interview report indicates in general that

inconsistent involvement of parents in the school system is a problem, and limits opportunities for parents and schools to work together to address student needs. With respect to ELLs, parents indicated that language barriers are a primary cause of poor parent-school communication. Parents who were interviewed for the ELL report indicated that when they were scheduled to meet with school personnel, they were sometimes kept waiting for an hour or more until a staff member who could translate for them was found. A number of parents said they were not always provided with adequate information about academic programs for their children, and they sometimes received more reliable information from nonschool sources.

Parents of SWDs indicated that communication with teachers is inconsistent and depends on teacher as well as parent availability. Some parents reported satisfactory communication with teachers, while others were frustrated that they were not informed about their child's progress.

Key Finding 4

There is insufficient evidence to support that the written curriculum is aligned with the state standards.

In reviewing the results of the co-interpretation meeting with District 24, the auditors identified an important finding that had been overlooked. This finding addresses curriculum alignment with state standards and literacy competencies and is based on the document review report and the curriculum alignment report. Neither report found sufficient evidence that the written curriculum is aligned with the state standards. Furthermore, a thorough curriculum alignment study could not be completed. As stated in the curriculum alignment report:

An alignment of the ELA curriculum to the state standards or literacy competencies must rely on the details in the documents submitted (to ensure integrity of the alignment process). Although the submitted curriculum calendars include information about [reading and] writing, no information was found on specific student outcomes. Therefore, a curriculum alignment of these ELA materials to the New York state standards could not be completed. (pp. 2, 5)

The report also noted that the same was true for the standards and competencies in listening and speaking. Granted, a lack of documentation for alignment does not necessarily mean the curriculum is not aligned. However, within a district, assurances regarding a comprehensive curriculum alignment to standards and literacy competencies are important for selecting materials, developing pacing calendars, and creating curriculum maps that influence instruction in the schools.

The document review and curriculum alignment reports were backed-up by the interview report, which noted that there was some confusion about whether the curriculum is aligned with New York State Learning Standards among teachers. Although personnel in the sampled schools believed that their curriculum was aligned, the interview report stated:

In the sample schools, respondents referred to the curriculum differently, depending on whether they referred to the Teachers College approach or a specific program, such as America's Choice. This variation made it somewhat difficult to assess common ratings

for alignment to standards and curricular effectiveness because what respondents in the schools were referencing as their “curriculum” sometimes differed, even within the same school. (p. 4)

Given the lack of firm evidence for curriculum alignment and given that other New York districts, using similar curricular approaches, have been found to be *unaligned* with New York State Learning Standards, a key finding concerning this issue is warranted.

Recommendations for Action Planning

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

The key findings that arose out of co-interpretation with District 24 led Learning Point Associates to make four recommendations. The first recommends establishing a written ELA curriculum for Grades K–12 that is clearly aligned to the New York State Learning Standards. Two others address the needs of SWDs: one regarding the provision of differentiated instruction and one that addresses helping educators develop stronger IEPs. One additional recommendation is based on the need to utilize student data to drive instructional decisions. The final recommendation addresses the need for the development of a program of support for new teachers, a critical issue in District 24.

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

Recommendation 1

Revise the written K–12 ELA curriculum so that it reflects the depth and breadth of the NYSED ELA Core Curriculum. The revisions to this curriculum must ensure that it is clearly articulated and explicit enough for teachers to implement consistently, and should include a plan for implementation across the district.

Background

A curriculum that is in alignment will present the content to be taught (as outlined by the state standards) with links to the following: an array of resources from which teachers may choose in teaching this content; a pacing calendar and/or suggested timeframe for covering the curriculum material; a description of expectations for both the teacher’s role and the student level of cognitive demand to be exhibited; and a defined set of student outcomes—that is, what the student should know and be able to do as a result of having mastered this curriculum.

The curriculum alignment conducted as a part of this audit, reviewing coverage of topics and depth of knowledge in ELA, was performed using the literacy competencies (Grades 2, 4, 6, and 8) and performance descriptors (Grade 10) as defined by the state’s ELA standards. These components of the NYSED ELA Core Curriculum standards were chosen because the literacy competencies and performance descriptors reflect the state’s expectations for students at each grade level. These written expectations identify content topic as well as the depth of knowledge

or level of cognitive demand required of the student. By conducting a two-step alignment that includes expected student outcomes, a focused discussion of the range of topics and depth of knowledge in the written ELA curriculum is possible. Gap analysis is also a byproduct of this process.

District 24 submitted the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Kindergarten— Grade 5 Curriculum Calendars as its written curriculum. The Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Calendars represent an instructional framework for allocating time for specific literacy activities for Grades K–5. The calendars make reference to some instructional strategies but these strategies were not aligned to the New York State ELA Core Curriculum literacy competencies at each grade level. The district indicated that it also uses the America’s Choice Program for the upper elementary grades; however, these documents were not reviewed. District-level personnel stated that a specific alignment of the America’s Choice program to the New York ELA Core Curriculum literacy competencies was not conducted at the district level. No documents were included relating to any district written curriculum for ELA for the high school grades.

Learning Point Associates believes that alignment of published programs to the standards is the responsibility of the district or region. The scope of this audit does not include the alignment of published programs. Learning Point Associates does not endorse any published programs.

A curriculum that identifies student outcomes in Grades K–12 relative to state literacy competencies or performance descriptors has not been designed or implemented in District 24.

Link to Research

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

A curriculum that is aligned to the specific literacy competencies of the NYSED ELA Core Curriculum will also aid ELLs. If learner outcomes are clearly articulated through the use of the NYSED ELA Core Curriculum literacy competencies, teachers will be better able to modify instruction to address ELL needs, and at the same time include the academic rigor necessary to prepare students to be integrated into the mainstream educational program (Necochea & Cline 2000).

Expectations for Student Learning. The learning process becomes transparent when an explicitly written curriculum that provides clear information of ongoing goals and expectations for student learning is implemented. 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 has not been aligned to specific and explicit learning outcomes at each grade level.

Mapping instructional content is one way to ensure that instructional priorities are met consistently across the district for all students. The Wiggins and McTighe backward curriculum design process, which identifies specific student learner outcomes, determines evidence through identified benchmarks and assessments and then creates a plan for the learning experiences and instruction (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Using this approach, the district could work backward by identifying and prioritizing instruction relative to the New York State Learning Standards and specific literacy competencies and student performance descriptors, reviewing existing assessments relative to student performance indicators, and aligning both of these to the instructional frameworks of Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, America's Choice, and any other selected or mandated instructional frameworks in use within the district.

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 24 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.

Benchmark goals that state specifically 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 learner outcomes. If a curriculum is poorly aligned to the state's literacy competencies and performance descriptors, it becomes more difficult to assess the actual impact instruction has on students (Anderson, 2002).

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

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.

The Role of Assessments. Langer (2000) identifies six features of effective ELA programs; one important feature is that assessment should be embedded in classroom instruction. Using assessments 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; 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 curriculum can effectively help teachers develop units and lessons that will interest students and enable them to perform well on high-stakes tests (Glatthorn, 1999).

Professional Development and Support for Teachers. 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 monitor curriculum implementation.

Implementation Considerations

We recommend that District 24 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 district should pay particular attention to implementation at the high school 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 through large-scale assessments but are necessary

for building academic success. Such descriptors could include inquiry-based learning, selecting and evaluating various sources of information, and collaborative learning.

One way of approaching such a project 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 New York ELA Core Curriculum. Such a team would need to complete the following tasks:

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

In order to implement a 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, Special Education, and ELL 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 leadership, including 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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Recommendation 2

Provide professional development to Special Education and general education teachers, administrators, IEP teams, and each Committee on Special Education. This professional development should be focused on (1) determining and addressing modified promotion criteria in IEPs, and (2) developing IEPs that identify accommodations and modifications to be implemented during classroom instruction.

Link to Findings

IEP reviews conducted in District 24 revealed inconsistencies and inadequacies in written IEP documents in terms of accommodations and modifications for classroom instruction, suggesting that teachers do not have a thorough understanding of the process of developing accommodations and modifications.

Based primarily on administrator and teacher interviews, reviewers found that for SWDs in general education settings, the general education curriculum is reportedly being taught and teachers perceive the taught curriculum to be aligned with state assessments. (*Note:* This perception is in direct contrast to the findings of the curriculum alignment portion of the audit, as outlined in the miscellaneous findings). IEPs, however, do not consistently describe the instructional accommodations and modifications that will be made for the individual student in order for him or her to access the general education curriculum. There appears to be a gap between what teachers and administrators describe and what the IEP documents reflect.

The use of modified promotion criteria in the IEP further indicates that SWDs may not be receiving instruction on grade-level content or achievement standards, and that they are not being held to those standards in order to be promoted to the next grade. In fact, it appears that many SWDs are being promoted based on expectations that are considerably below the grade in which they are enrolled. For example, a statement from one IEP read, “Must meet 10 percent of the third-grade ELA and math standards.” This example comes from a fourth grade (age 10) student’s IEP. If this criterion is met, the student will be promoted and enter the fifth grade, having mastered only 10 percent of the third-grade ELA and mathematics state standards. If this student then participates in the state assessment for the grade level in which the student is enrolled (Grade 5), there will clearly be a discrepancy between the level of previous instruction, the level at which mastery of the standards is demonstrated, and the level at which the student is assessed. (See the District 24 Special Education report, p. 14.)

Expectations may be appropriate given the student’s present levels of performance and level of functioning; however, these modified expectations indicate that students may be assessed based on curricula to which they have neither been exposed nor for which they are prepared. Students are reportedly participating in the general education assessment for the grade in which they are enrolled. (Nearly all reviewed IEPs did specify accommodations to be provided for students during participation in state and district assessments.) For this reason, there appears to be lack of alignment between the goals, objectives, and modified promotion criteria that are included in student IEPs, and the content assessed on grade-level state tests.

In summary, there is conflicting evidence regarding the alignment between what is taught, what is tested, and what is expected for SWDs. The IEP is the primary method through which to develop and document the instructional accommodations the student is receiving, how the student will be assessed, and to what standards the student will be held. Thus, it is important for general and Special Education teachers and administrators to receive clear guidance, professional development, supervision, and support in appropriately developing and implementing IEPs for SWDs.

Link to Research and Policy

As indicated above, SWDs are required to participate in state assessments with or without accommodations. Therefore, students that are being assessed on the state tests should be receiving instruction based on state standards. If IEPs are not aligned with state standards, it is unrealistic to expect that SWDs will meet state standards or succeed on state tests. The following section addresses the following factors considered relevant to the issue of alignment between what is taught, what is tested, and what is expected for SWDs.

Standards. Neither the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) nor NCLB require that IEPs explicitly reference state standards, except for students who will be assessed using an alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). The U.S. Department of Education, however, explains the rationale for writing IEP goals that are aligned with academic content standards: IEP goals based on grade-level academic content standards are “goals that address the skills specified in the content standards for the grade in which a student is enrolled” (p. 27); IDEA 1997 required access to the general education curriculum for SWDs and required that IEPs “support their involvement and progress in the general curriculum” (p. 27). Benefits of IEPs aligned with states standards include higher expectations for SWDs, instruction that is focused on the standards students are expected to achieve, increased collaboration between general and Special Education, and increased exposure for SWDs to the general education curriculum content (The Access Center, 2004; Hock, 2000; McLaughlin, Nolet, Rhim, & Henderson, 1999; Thompson et al., 2001). To the degree that SWDs have access to curricula aligned with state content standards, their test scores should improve and the achievement gap between Special Education and general education should be reduced (The Access Center, 2004).

The U.S. Department of Education (2007) explains the distinction between academic content standards and academic achievement standards as follows:

[Academic content standards are] “statements of the knowledge and skills that schools are expected to teach and students are expected to learn” [and academic achievement standards are] “explicit definitions of how students are expected to demonstrate attainment of the knowledge and skills of the content standards. A score from a test aligned with the content standards is one method of defining an achievement standard.” (p. 12)

State Assessments. IEPs that are aligned with state standards should also be aligned with the state assessments designed to measure those standards. Ongoing informal assessment using classroom tests is one way to measure student progress. Classroom tests should also be aligned to

measure student progress against IEP goals that are aligned with and linked to state standards. Warger (2005) notes that understanding the design of standards-based state assessments provides a starting place for developing IEPs that guide and improve instruction using a standards framework. Tienken and Wilson (2001) recommend the following steps to assist teachers in aligning classroom tests with state and/or district assessments: (1) perform a content analysis of the state standards and choose a unit of study; (2) examine and compare classroom resources, local curriculum, activities, skills, level of difficulty, format, and classroom tests to the standards, indicators, and state assessment to ensure congruity; (3) design lessons and activities, gather resources, and create classroom tests that are congruous with the skills and level of difficulty for the standards, state assessment, and curriculum; and (4) use these calibrated activities, classroom tests, resources, and lessons as part of instruction.

State Policy and Procedures. The Project Forum at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education performed a study of state policy regarding using standards-based IEPs and found that some states already require standards-based IEP goals and have developed extensive training materials and professional development opportunities for learning how to write IEP goals that are tied to state content standards (Ahearn, 2006). Ahearn's study described New York state's policy on standards-based IEPs and noted that IEP goals do not have to reference a specific standard and indicator, but they must reflect the learning that will lead to the standards. Goals should articulate what the student needs in order to access and make progress in the general education curriculum but IEP goals are not intended to reiterate the curriculum.

Ahearn's report is confirmed by the New York City Department of Education ([NYCDOE], 2005), which describes how annual goals are to be written. NYCDOE (2005) specifies that "there must be a direct relationship between the annual goals and the present levels of performance" and further indicates that annual goals must "be related to the educational standards or skills appropriate for the student given his/her current level of performance" (p. 36). In addition, "annual goals are linked to the learning standards established for all students by reflecting the foundation skills (e.g., reading, writing, listening) and/or the strategies the student requires to master the content of the curriculum and meet standards for all students" (NYCDOE, 2005, p. 36). NYCDOE does not require standards-based IEPs; rather, NYCDOE's interpretation is that IEPs should be linked to state standards by addressed the foundational skills that are prerequisites to mastering the curriculum (2005).

Professional Development. Professional development can impact the degree to which teachers are able to develop IEPs that are aligned with local and state standards. Professional development has been found to increase the participation of SWDs in large-scale assessments and to improve the consistency between IEP goals and instruction (Shriner & Destefano, 2003). Teachers with a concrete understanding of content and disability can ensure that students receive the necessary accommodations to meet the high expectations of IEPs aligned to state standards. Ongoing training and technical assistance can affect alignment significantly (The Access Center, 2004). Professional development, ongoing technical assistance, and accessible written guidance about standards-based IEPs can improve IEP and curriculum alignment (Thompson et al., 2001). Districts should ensure that IEP teams thoroughly understand and use state and district content standards to ensure that IEP goals and objectives are aligned (Joint Task Force on Achievement Standards and Assessments for Students with Disabilities, 2001). Professional development and

ongoing assistance can improve the ability of IEP teams to ensure that IEP goals are linked to age-appropriate state content standards and also to discern which standards may be currently inappropriate for the student, based on an analysis of the student's present level of educational performance, but which may be appropriate for the student at some future date (Johnson, 2003).

Professional development should focus on the organization and writing of IEPs, thus giving team members tools to use to structure their analysis. For example, Walsh (2001) describes a staff development program to assist Special Education teachers in aligning IEPs with the general education curriculum, implemented with good effects in the Anne Arundel County Maryland Public Schools, that uses "Curriculum Alignment Organizers" and "Big Picture" matrixes that offer teachers a structure to ensure that IEP goals and instruction are directed to specific standards. Professional development should also address the crafting of instructional accommodations and modifications that the student will need in order to access instruction. Studies show that SWDs gain more opportunities to meet high expectations with appropriate supports and accommodations as defined in the aligned IEP (The Access Center, 2004).

Accommodations and Modifications. The Families and Advocates Partnership for Education (2001) offers the following definitions: *Modification* is defined as "an adjustment to an assignment or a test that changes the standard or what the test or assignment is supposed to measure." An *accommodation* "allows a student to complete the same assignment or test as other students, but with a change in the timing, formatting, setting, scheduling, response and/or presentation. This accommodation does not alter in any significant way what the test or assignment measures" (Families and Advocates Partnership for Education, 2001, p. 1).

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (Thompson, Morse, Sharpe, & Hall, 2005) developed a guidance document for states on the use of accommodations for instruction and assessment for SWDs. CCSSO defines *accommodations* as "practices and procedures in the areas of presentation, response, setting, and timing/scheduling that provide equitable access during instruction and assessments for students with disabilities" (Thompson et al., 2005, p. 14). CCSSO offers four categories of accommodations: presentation accommodations, response accommodations, setting accommodations, and timing and scheduling accommodations. CCSSO also notes the difference between accommodations and modifications:

Accommodations do not reduce learning expectations. They provide access. However, modifications or alterations refer to practices that change, lower, or reduce learning expectations. Modifications can increase the gap between the achievement of students with disabilities and expectations for proficiency at a particular grade level." (Thompson et al., 2005, p. 15)

Determining appropriate instructional and assessment accommodations is the responsibility of the individual student's IEP team and should be based on information obtained from the IEP summary of the student's present level of educational performance. This summary is a required component of the IEP. Thompson et al. (2005) note that IDEA identifies several areas of the IEP where accommodations should be addressed:

1. " 'Consideration of Special Factors' [Sec. 614 (d) (3) (B)]. This is where communication and assistive technology supports are considered.

2. ‘Supplementary Aids and Services’ [Sec. 602 (33) and Sec. 614 (d) (1) (A) (i)]. This area of the IEP includes ‘aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes or other education-related settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.’
3. ‘Participation in Assessments’ [Sec. 612 (a) (16)]. This section of the IEP documents accommodations needed to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities in general state and districtwide assessments.” (p. 16)

Appropriately describing accommodations in the IEP is apparently a fairly widespread problem. In a study of two states by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (Shriner & Destefano, 2003; Thurlow, Ysseldyke, Bielinski, House, Trimble, Insko, et al., 2000; Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Seyfarth, Bielinski, Moody, & Haigh, 1999), findings showed that explanations for accommodations in student IEPs were either absent (20 percent) or insubstantial (19 percent). Research findings demonstrate that many IEP forms lack the necessary components to guide instruction and ensure participation in the general education curriculum (The Access Center 2004). The IEP team has an important responsibility in documenting decisions about the extent to which the content of the general curriculum is appropriate (Shriner & Destefano, 2003). The IEP is a critical tool for enhancing student access to the general education curriculum (Karger, 2004; Sopko, 2003).

Summary

The discussion of existing research and policy guidance supports the position that in order for SWDs to meet AYP objectives, ideally there should be alignment between state standards, what is assessed on state tests, the curriculum to which SWDs are exposed, the IEP goals and objectives written for each individual student, and the level of mastery expected for that student. However, it appears that for many SWDs in District 24, there is a gap between what is written on IEPs, what is taught in the general education curriculum, and what is tested on the state exams. Determining how best to meet federal and state requirements, while providing specially designed instruction for each student with a disability, is a central challenge facing states and school districts.

Implementation Considerations

The balance between the individual needs of each SWD and the requirements of state and district content and achievement standards is a delicate one. Although federal requirements regarding participation in state and districtwide assessments and access to the general education curriculum for SWDs are clear, *how* to provide appropriate individualized instruction within the framework of state standards is a complex issue that needs to be addressed through ongoing dialogue and professional development between state, city, and district administrators, teachers, and parents.

The following suggestions may help provide guidance as District 24 seeks to implement this recommendation:

- Clarify with the NYCDOE the state requirements and expectations for writing standards-based IEPs.
- Clarify the NYCDOE IEP requirements.
- Clarify the purpose of modified promotional criteria and provide training to school personnel on how to appropriately write this section of student IEPs.
- Provide professional development in the form of written guidance and/or face-to-face training alone will not ensure that IEPs are being written and implemented appropriately. Provide ongoing supervision, support, technical assistance, and on-site coaching for teachers and administrators. Consider having appropriate administrators participate in actual IEP meetings when goals, objectives, and promotional criteria are being developed. Use IEP meetings as a way to provide guidance to IEP teams.
- Provide formal and job-embedded professional development experiences to general and Special Education teachers together to expose them to the same information and to reinforce the concept of shared responsibility for the education of all students.

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Recommendation 3

Provide increased and ongoing professional development, including on-site observation and coaching, to general and special educators on how to differentiate instruction for students across ability levels in the general education and CTT classroom settings.

Link to Findings

Achievement data for SWDs were acquired through the 2004–05 Annual District Report, downloaded from the New York City Department of Education website. The Annual Report for District 24 indicates that the district met AYP targets for “all students” with the exception of the subgroup of SWDs in elementary ELA. At the middle level, the district made AYP for all students in ELA and mathematics but not for the subgroup of SWDs in either subject area. The district did not make AYP for the subgroups of SWDs and ELLs for elementary level in ELA for 2004–05. The district did make AYP for SWDs and ELL for elementary mathematics and science.

The 2004 Regional/District Comprehensive Education Plan (R/DCEP) indicates that the Special Education subgroup scored lower than other subgroups and had a lower percentage of students achieving at Levels 3 and 4. Implications for instruction were to establish and maintain a system of coordinated articulation between similar schools and within school levels to insure continuity of instruction and alignment of instructional methodology. Academic Intervention Services (AIS) are based on individual needs of the target population. Priorities were to develop opportunities to encourage group process work leading to enhanced curriculum continuity (intra- and inter-) and articulation of curriculum expectations between schools and levels. For example, the Reader’s and Writer’s approach to literacy (p. 22) was incorporated. Implications were to include Special Education, ELL, cluster, and funded program staff in professional development and support activities in the region in order to create a “community of learners” (p. 24).

The 2006–07 Application for Special Reading and Academic Programs (Categorical Reading) was submitted by the district. It indicates that ELLs and SWDs did not make AYP in a relatively high number of schools in the district and as a result the district is *in need of improvement—Year 3* for the 2005–06 school year.

District 24 has invested heavily in professional development for general and Special Education teachers in differentiated instruction, collaborative team teaching, and in specific programs such as the Wilson Reading System and Urban Schools Attuned (p. 22). The CTT model is being used to facilitate increased inclusion of SWDs in classrooms with nondisabled peers (p. 23). However, while the majority of teachers interviewed believe that SWDs are making progress (p. 33), teachers also report struggling with how to help SWDs reach state standards and progress in the general education curriculum (p. 12).

Link to Research

The U.S. Department of Education-funded Access Center (Hall, Strangman, & Meyer, 2003) defines differentiated instruction as follows:

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

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

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

Differentiation in process includes flexible grouping, effective classroom management, and instructional strategies. Differentiation in product includes initial and ongoing assessment of student progress. Students are expected to be active learners and there may be variations in what is expected in terms of student response. Citing the work of Ellis and Worthington (1994), Hall et al. (2003) state that "other practices noted as central to differentiation have been validated in the effective teaching research conducted from the mid 1980's to the present. These practices include effective management procedures, grouping students for instruction, and engaging learners" (p. 6).

As Hall et al. (2003) explain, differentiated instruction is an instructional process that has excellent potential to positively impact learning by offering teachers a means to provide instruction to a range of students in today's classroom situations. (Additional Resources to assist schools with differentiated instruction are listed following the References section.)

If SWDs have access to the general education curriculum, primarily in a general education classroom with nondisabled peers, using instruction that is individualized (i.e., differentiated based on student learning styles, readiness levels, and preferences for response), then it may be expected that their achievement will improve and AYP targets for the SWDs subgroup will be reached. However, the positive impact of differentiated instruction is not limited to the SWD subgroup. Utilization of such strategies has the potential to impact the achievement of students across all subgroups and at every level.

Implementation Considerations

The overarching goal of this recommendation is to increase schools' abilities to meet AYP targets for the SWDs subgroup. This recommendation is intended to increase teacher capacity to provide high-quality, differentiated instruction that is aligned to state and district standards through professional development, coteaching, ongoing technical assistance, and coaching and support to SWDs in general education settings. This effort will build upon the already substantial investment that the district has made in professional development opportunities and in the CTT model. Adequate planning and access to appropriate materials, resources, and expertise should allow the district to fully implement the recommendation over time.

The following suggestions may help the district guide its approach:

- Provide opportunities for Special Education and general education teacher teams to receive professional development and ongoing coaching together.
- Provide dedicated planning time for CTT teacher teams.
- Consider establishing a problem-solving team or building-based teacher/student support team at particular grade levels or within each school to support regular classroom teachers who are having difficulty developing appropriate instructional strategies for particular students. This team could be implemented as part of a response to intervention approach (Mellard et al., 2004) to school improvement.
- Consider how to utilize the literacy coaches and other school support personnel already present in many schools to provide on-site coaching and support to CTT teacher teams.
- To prevent “tracking,” ensure that the proportion of SWDs to nondisabled peers is appropriately balanced in CTT classes and that the placement of general education students is heterogeneous (i.e., not based on ability or achievement levels).
- Develop a long-range plan to increase the availability of CTT classes across the grades, including middle and high school.
- Consider the CTT classroom as a general education placement, not a Special Education placement, provided that the proportion of SWDs in the classroom remains at appropriate levels.

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Websites

The Access Center
www.k8accesscenter.org

Center for Applied Special Technology
www.cast.org

Clearinghouse on Educational Policy and Management
eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest079.html

Elementary & Middle Schools Technical Assistance Center
www.emstac.org

The Knowledge Loom
www.knowledgeloom.org/index.jsp

The Learning Toolbox
coe.jmu.edu/LearningToolbox/

National Center on Accelerating Student Learning
www.kc.vanderbilt.edu/casl/

National Center on Student Progress Monitoring: Student Progress Monitoring
www.studentprogress.org

National Institute for Literacy
www.nifl.gov

Special Connections
www.specialconnections.ku.edu/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/speconn/index.php

What Works Clearinghouse
www.w-w-c.org

Recommendation 4

Direct and support each school in creating a schoolwide system that explicitly and effectively improves both classroom instruction and academic achievement for ELLs. This schoolwide system needs to include the following components:

- **A schoolwide communication plan**
- **Professional development**
- **Monitoring**

A schoolwide communication system should accomplish the following four important actions:

- All teachers receive information about curriculum requirements for ELLs.
- All teachers learn of professional development activities pertaining to ELL topics in a timely manner.
- All teachers are provided with both individual and disaggregated group student performance data on regular, scheduled, timely dates.
- All teachers receive feedback on their instructional practice with specific reference to differentiation for ELL students.

The ultimate goal of this communication system is to ensure that the academic performance of ELLs is a priority within the school and is the responsibility of the entire school staff. School leadership must deliver this message to all school personnel.

A professional development component provides all teachers and administrative staff with knowledge and skill in the areas of second language acquisition, cultural competence, and effective instructional practice for students who are in the process of acquiring academic language and literacy in English. Teachers learn about the diversity among students within the ELL population and the importance of differentiating classroom instruction and assessment within this group as well as within the general education population.

An extensive, integrated monitoring system provides data on student performance, instructional effectiveness, and professional development impact. Teachers receive assessment data on individual students and on disaggregated groups to inform effective differentiated instructional planning. Instructional leaders monitor classroom instruction to ensure that best practices for ELLs are incorporated into lesson planning, delivery, and follow-up. Student achievement and instructional practice are monitored to assess the impact of professional development on improvement of teaching and learning for ELLs.

Link to Findings

This recommendation is linked to Guiding Question 13, “Is the professional development (regional, district, school) high quality and focused on the content/pedagogical areas of need?” In addition, this key finding falls under the professional development theme. According to the ELL review, nearly half of the teachers reported that they did not receive professional development

about how to use assessment data to inform instruction. In addition, the report suggests that teachers need more Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) professional development and, in general, more support through professional development.

The interview report noted that teachers need more support to differentiate instruction. The report also noted that professional development should no longer be provided as a one-size-fits-all model. The region offers a catalog of choices to differentiate instruction for teachers based on need. It is unclear whether the region is not offering enough classes in the areas of need or that teachers are not taking proper advantage of the opportunities afforded them.

Much is known from the research and practice literature about the importance of shared responsibility for the academic success of ELLs by all those within a school, about the critical influence of school leadership in establishing a school culture of shared responsibility, and about the efficacious role of informed, committed teachers in engaging ELLs at every stage of language acquisition. Schools that make the academic achievement of ELLs a priority can access the tools they need to help ELLs achieve to high standards.

Link to Research

It is important for districts to work with individual schools to ensure that programs specifically address the needs of ELLs. Berman et al. (1995) documented the district's role in supporting reform at eight schools considered exemplary in involving ELLs. A common characteristic of the actions of these districts is the circulation of information about reform efforts to school staff.

Alignment of district and school policies on curriculum, assessment, and instruction are areas that affect the success of ELLs. Coady et al. (2003) cite the work of Dentler and Hafner regarding ELLs:

Dentler and Hafner (1997) conducted a comparative study of 11 demographically changing districts. They found that in the three districts where student scores improved amidst increasing diversity, teachers and non-teaching personnel were knowledgeable about the learning needs and characteristics of English language learners. That is to say, systematic responsiveness to ELLs occurred only in locations where administrators, teachers, and non-teaching staff shared an understanding of the assets and needs ELLs bring to school. (p. 10)

McLaughlin and Talbert (2003) utilized survey data and case studies from California districts to identify communication and planning strategies, such as enhancing professional development for teachers and involving teachers in district planning, as ways to encourage teacher support of district reform.

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model (www.siopinstitute.net) offers a unified framework for effective lesson planning and instruction for ELLs. SIOP emphasizes the instructional practices most important to ELLs (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004) and provides examples of the aspects of sheltered instruction that are most beneficial to them. SIOP also

provides researchers and administrators with a system for observing teachers and supplying them with concrete feedback.

Implementation Considerations

To implement this recommendation, each school in District 24 might create a team of stakeholders at the beginning of the 2007–08 school year. This team could include school leadership, teachers (general education teachers from all content areas, TBE teachers, ESL teachers, bilingual teachers, and Special Education teachers), administrative staff, parents, union representatives, and other personnel who might offer resources and support. This team would design the strategic and action plans for implementing the new system and for building connections to other schoolwide improvement efforts.

This new system and its components require the commitment of school resources in terms of money, time, and effort on the part of many individuals. Resources will need to be allocated or reallocated to create and maintain this system. This process may result in conflict with other priorities—both explicit and tacit—or with specific projects. District 24 schools enroll significant numbers of ELLs, both those designated as Limited English Proficient and those who have entered general education classes but continue to need support. NCLB requires that adequate attention and support be given to all segments of the student population, as all segments are to be held accountable for learning to high standards. The ELL population is currently underserved. The learning requirements of these students need to be addressed immediately.

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Appendix Data Map

During the co-interpretation process for District 24, participants analyzed eight individual reports (data sets). Participants identified findings from across the data sets under 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 tables document 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, 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?

The data map organizes the findings under four themes that incorporate the applicable guiding questions. District 24 staff identified six 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	INT—District and School Interviews
CA—Curriculum Alignment	OBS—Observations
ELL—English Language Learners	SA—Student Achievement Data
GQ—Guiding Question	SE—Special Education
IP—Instructional Practice	SEC—Surveys of Enacted Curriculum

Critical Key Findings

Critical Key Finding 1	Findings	Source & Page
<p>Schools, particularly on the secondary level, struggle to meet the needs of all students, especially those students with special needs.</p> <p>Final votes: 13</p>	1. There is evidence of use of a tool for monitoring the written curriculum. However, it is not clear if this is an example tool or a possible sample for schools to use.	DR p. 2
	2. Further analysis of special sub groups needs to be investigated and disaggregated so that targeting areas in need of improvement can be more specific.	SE p. 7
	3. ELLs with special needs: Teachers did not provide details regarding any collaborations to assist ELLs with disabilities. One teacher “did not do anything special for ELLs and SWDs” and was not aware of any special assistance available for them.	ELL p. 18
	4. Schools, particularly secondary, still strive to make AYP with their SWDs, as reported in the interview report and the Annual School Report.	
	5. Most of the ELL teachers were not aware of any special or separate curriculum for TBE/ESL/Dual Language program students, although one teacher referred to the use of Scott Foresman materials for ESL students that are available to teachers.	ELL p. 14
	6. The District 4 Region provides training and resource needs.	SE
	7. On the whole, secondary teachers either had no sense or only a vague sense of what was being planned, as indicated by the following response from two ELL teachers: “That’s more of an elementary level thing because they don’t really care about the high schools.” There was no professional development offered in ESL in the content areas.	ELL p. 23
	8. ELLs are on a second and inferior tier. Materials are not provided equitably to teachers (and therefore students) of non-ELLs versus ELLs.	ELL p. 8, 9
	9. Limited evidence on implementation and monitoring of teachers’ use of assessment data and access to assessment data.	DR p. 10
	10. There is limited evidence of implementation and monitoring of the use of assessment data to evaluate instructional effectiveness.	DR p. 11
	11. Monitoring for the schools—no evidence for districtwide.	DR p. 11
	12. No evidence of monitoring information was found in any of the documents 2006–07 school year.	DR p. 4
	13. Limited evidence of implementation or monitoring of instruction was found in documents.	DR p. 8

Critical Key Finding 2	Findings	Source & Page
<p>While data sources show that there are high academic and behavioral expectations for SWDs, this may not be true of the general student population.</p> <p>Final votes: 6</p>	1. High expectations for SWDs are evident in classrooms; general school environment; administration—behavior expectations.	SE p. 23
	2. The district is heavily invested in a variety of research-based instructional programs.	SE p. 22
	3. The IP data (IP 66) indicate that there is no consistent expectation for student self-evaluation of their work.	SEC p. 20
	4. IP data indicate that students spend a limited amount of time examining primary and secondary sources, evaluating credibility and utility of information sources.	SEC p. 29
	5. IP data indicate that there is a lack of targeted instruction in the area of developing research.	SEC p. 27
	6. IP data indicate that there is no particular grade level targeted for learning to use resources.	SEC p. 21
	7. ELLs are “taught at their level and then aspire.” The curriculum is state mandated.	ELL p. 1
	8. IP data indicate that there are no consistent expectations for high school level students.	SEC p. 21

Critical Key Finding 3	Findings	Source & Page
<p>Professional development is needed to address the special needs of ELLs. Teachers who instruct ELLs and SWDs need more support in differentiated instruction.</p> <p>Final votes: 10</p>	1. Teachers need more SIFE professional development. Support is needed through professional development.	ELL p. 10
	2. Nearly half of the teachers reported that they did not receive professional development on how to use assessment data to inform instruction.	ELL p. 19
	3. ELLs with special needs: Teachers did not provide details regarding any collaborations to assist ELLs with disabilities. One teacher “did not do anything special for ELLs and SWDs” and was not aware of any special assistance available for them.	ELL p. 18
	4. Most of the ELL teachers were not aware of any special or separate curriculum for TBE/ESL/Dual Language program students, although one teacher referred to the use of Scott Foresman materials for ESL students that are available to teachers.	ELL p. 14
	5. The level of regional professional development is comprehensive and focused on the content/pedagogical areas in need, including differentiating instruction, collaborative team teaching, Special Education teacher support services, and aligning instruction to NYSED performance indicators for IEP development. In addition, both general education and Special Education teachers have received professional development in data, Wilson and Schools Attuned through Region 4 on-line professional development catalogue.	SE pp. 18, 34

Critical Key Finding 4	Findings	Source & Page
<p>While there is strong evidence that there is an ongoing emphasis on high quality and focused professional development, teachers reported that they did not receive sufficient professional development about how to use assessment data to inform instruction.</p> <p>Final votes: 8</p>	1. Nearly half of the teachers reported that they did not receive professional development on how to use assessment data to inform instruction.	ELL p. 19
	2. The level of regional professional development is comprehensive and focused on the content/pedagogical areas in need, including differentiating instruction, collaborative team teaching, Special Education teacher support services, and aligning instruction to NYSED performance indicators for IEP development. In addition, both general education and Special Education teachers have received professional development in data, Wilson and Schools Attuned through Region 4 on-line professional development catalogue.	SE pp. 18, 34
	3. Professional development is no longer one-size-fits-all. There are choices to differentiate instruction for teachers based on need.	INT p. 19
	4. IP data indicate that teachers used resource centers and Internet resources often.	SEC p. 46
	5. There is ongoing emphasis on professional development.	ELL p. 6
	6. On June 6, 2003, the district held monthly meeting—full day, by grade—to ensure alignment with the curriculum. In 2006–07, differentiated professional development to address schools’ need.	ELL p. 6
	7. Multiple opportunities for professional development (classroom management, instructional techniques).	SE
	8. The most common content area for professional development was ELA for both general education and ELL teachers.	ELL pp. 24–25
	9. There is ongoing emphasis on professional development.	ELL
	10. Teachers need more support to differentiate instruction.	INT p. 21
	11. Teaching is based on standards with 85 percent trained in Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) at this time.	ELL p. 7
	12. Four ELL program teachers described intensive ongoing professional development as well as embedded professional development for ELLs.	ELL p. 25

Critical Key Finding 5	Findings	Source & Page
<p>Based on interviews, class size and student mobility were identified as priorities in district and school plans in terms of their impact on instruction.</p> <p>Final votes: 13</p>	1. Student mobility has a negative impact on the consistency of instruction.	INT p. 22
	2. General education teachers noted that with respect to SWDs, small classes would be nice.	INT p. 9
	3. Many schools are overcrowded and class sizes are too large.	INT p. 22
	4. Evidence of implementation of AIS services was not provided, especially for Grades 8–12. But, a plan was in place.	CA p. 7
	5. Evidence of plans to prototype NCLB needs was found in three documents.	CA p. 14
	6. The capacity and approach to address the needs of all student groups are perceived to be somewhat problematic.	INT p. 7
	7. Schools struggle to meet the needs of SWDs, especially at the secondary level.	INT p. 8
	8. The improvement plan is the CEP—done by committee (teachers are not involved?). School plans are aligned with the district implementation plan. The needs of SWDs are addressed in the DCEP.	SE p. 36

Critical Key Finding 6	Findings	Source & Page
<p>The data sets from ELL study show an inconsistency in the views of teachers and parents with respect to parental input, which has led to a need for increased communication between the parents and the school community.</p> <p>Final votes: 10</p>	1. Parents indicated that the school kept them waiting due to the language (barrier). Many times they had to wait more than an hour until a staff member was found that would translate.	ELL p. 41
	2. Parents of ELLs are not always provided complete information about programs.	ELL p. 9
	3. Parents indicated that information they received came from sources outside of the schools.	ELL p. 39
	4. Parents in this group were satisfied with the schools programs and policies. Those schools were SES schools.	ELL p. 40
	5. The majority of the parents interviewed for the parent focus group were of Hispanic descent. Many of them immigrants.	ELL p. 39
	6. Parents made their choices of profession for a variety of reasons—influenced by children’s needs.	ELL p. 40
	7. There is an inconsistency of parental involvement across the district.	INT pp. 14–15
	8. IP data indicate a stronger influence than expected from parents or community preferences.	SEC p. 36

NOTE: Due to the unsubstantiated nature of the following critical key findings they were dropped by the auditors.

Deleted Critical Key Finding	Findings	Source & Page
<p>There is an inaccuracy between numbers of SWDs reported in data and actual number of SWDs attending schools which were audited.</p>	<p>“Selective Labeling” (student data collection protocol)—It seems that the SWD subgroup does not include all students on IEPs. It should include all students who are on an IEP regardless of the services they receive or where they are placed.</p>	<p>SE pp. 6–8</p>

Deleted Critical Key Finding	Findings	Source & Page
<p>The grade-level of state tests are not aligned with SWD’s IEPs and modified promotional criteria.</p>	<p>The validity of the ELA and mathematics tests are being questioned due to the fact that there is no alignment of IEPs, promotional criteria, and the grade level of the test administered.</p>	

Key Findings

Theme 1. Achievement and Accountability

Key Finding	Findings	Source & Page
<p>GQ 12</p> <p>There is inconsistent evidence of monitoring of the implementation and effectiveness of instructional programs. (12.1–12.7)</p> <p>Note: GQ 1 is addressed by Critical Key Findings 1 and 2. GQ 16 is addressed by Critical Key Finding 4</p>	12.1 Teachers sometimes monitor themselves, but they are also monitored by building and district administrators.	INT p. 5
	12.2 Monitoring for the schools—no evidence for districtwide.	DR p. 11
	12.3 When asked about ways in which instruction was monitored for effectiveness, most teachers reported through administrative walk-throughs.	ELL p. 26
	12.4 Implementation—is not clear if tool used for implementation was developed by school, district, or region.	DR p. 2
	12.5 No evidence of monitoring information was found in any of the documents 2006–07 school year.	DR p. 4
	12.6 Limited evidence of implementation or monitoring of instruction was found in documents.	DR p. 8
	12.7 The Annenberg Institute for School Reform has a rubric in place to measure the implementation of AIS. No examples or information were included about the tool.	DR p. 8
	12.8 This is conflicting data. There are no rubrics in general education; more in ESL.	ELL p. 37
	12.9 40 percent of principals are new to the position.	INT p. 23
	12.10 The data says that the use of professional development should be monitored through observation or other process.	ELL p. 9
	12.11 There are extensive processes in place to monitor effectiveness of instructional programs (district wide data, checklists, and multiple ways).	SE pp. 31–32

Theme 2. Standards and Curriculum

Key Finding	Findings	Source & Page
GQ 2 Documents and teachers indicate a vague sense of the curriculum, and level of implementation is not clear. (2.1–2.9)	2.1 The validity of the ELA and mathematics tests are being questioned due to the fact that there is no alignment of IEPs, promotional criteria, and the grade level of the test administered.	SE p. 7
	2.2 Evidence of implementation of the written curriculum is not clear in school district, regional tool.	DR p. 2
	2.3 No documents included about written curriculum for Grades 11–12.	DR p. 2
	2.4 There is evidence of use of a tool for monitoring the written curriculum. However, it is not clear if this is an example tool or a possible sample for schools to use.	DR p. 2
	2.5 General education teachers are not as familiar as Special Education teachers with IEPs.	SE p. 12
	2.6 Policy is in place for use of written curriculum.	DR p. 2
	2.7 Disconnect between (Learning Point Associates protocol) interpretations and expectations of reviewers and NYSED regarding the inclusion of specific standards on IEPs.	SE p. 14
	2.8 A curriculum that identifies student outcomes in Grades K–12 relative to NYSED competencies has not been implemented.	CA p. 2
	2.9 ELA/mathematics—Instructional programs are fully implemented in the classroom.	SE p. 21

Key Finding	Findings	Source & Page
GQ 5 The SEC report shows limited alignment between teacher reported instruction in comprehension and phonics, as well as at the evaluate cognitive level. (5.1–5.5)	5.1 In Grade 6 district-level instruction, teacher responses indicate that there is limited alignment to the assessments in comprehension and critical reading at the investigate level.	SEC p. 15
	5.2 Grade 4 teacher data indicate no alignment in phonemic awareness, phonics, and speaking and presenting at all cognitive levels as compared to assessments. Also, limited alignment with critical reading and comprehension at the recall and investigate levels compared to assessments.	SEC p. 13
	5.3 In Grade 10, there is significant alignment between teacher reported instruction and the assessments in all areas except comprehension, critical reading, and author’s craft at the demonstrate and investigate levels.	SEC p. 17
	5.4 Grade 3 teachers indicated limited emphasis at all topic and cognitive levels compared to the assessments, which call for significant emphasis in comprehension and critical reading at the recall, demonstrate, and investigate levels.	SEC p. 11
	5.5 Grade 6 teacher data indicate moderate alignment in comprehension at the demonstrate level, and limited alignment in all other topic and cognitive demand levels.	SEC p. 14
	5.6 Yes, curriculum is aligned with assessments, but this is not reflected in the IEPs.	SE p. 19

Key Finding	Findings	Source & Page
GQ 6 ELL and Special Education teachers believe the curriculum is aligned. Documents indicate that there is limited alignment to NYSED listening competency.	6.1 Most teachers affirmed that the curriculum is aligned with state mandate.	ELL p. 16
	6.2 Listening and speaking TD/AC did not include information about the areas of listening and speaking or specific student outcomes.	CA
	6.3 There is a discrepancy between what is required/written by the state re: Quality IEP and the state’s expectations for what is included in the IEP.	SE
	6.4 A curriculum which identifies student outcomes in Grades K–12 relative to the NY Standards Literacy Competencies is not written for the district.	CA

Key Finding	Findings	Source & Page
<p>GQ 7</p> <p>Note: Findings for GQ 3 are addressed by Critical Key Finding 2; those for GQ 4 are addressed under General Findings.</p>	7.1 Nearly half of the teachers reported that they did not receive professional development about how to use assessment data to inform instruction.	ELL p. 19
	7.2 The level of Regional professional development is comprehensive and focused on the content/pedagogical areas in need, including differentiating instruction, collaborative team teaching, special education teacher support services, and aligning instruction to state performance indicators for IEP development. In addition, both general education and Special Education teachers have received professional development in data, Wilson and Schools Attuned through Region 4 on-line professional development catalogue.	SE pp. 18, 34
	7.3 Professional development is no longer one-size-fits-all. There is choice to differentiate instruction for teachers based on need.	INT p. 19
	7.4 IP data indicate that teachers used resource centers and Internet resources often.	SEC p. 46
	7.5 There is ongoing emphasis on professional development.	ELL p. 6
	7.6 June 6, 2003, District 24 held a monthly meeting (full day, by grade) to ensure alignment with the curriculum. 2006–07—Differentiated professional development to address schools’ need.	ELL p. 6
	7.7 Multiple opportunities for professional development (classroom management, instructional techniques).	SE
	7.8 The most common content area for professional development was ELA for both general education and ELL teachers.	ELL pp. 24–25
	7.9 There is ongoing emphasis on professional development	ELL
	7.10 Teachers need more support to differentiate instruction.	INT p. 21
	7.11 Teaching is based on standards with 85 percent trained in QTEL at this time.	ELL p. 7
	7.12 Four ELL program teachers described intensive ongoing professional development as well as embedded professional development for ELLs.	ELL p. 25

Key Finding	Findings	Source & Page
<p>GQ 8</p> <p>There is a wealth of academic intervention support services available to students not meeting proficiency levels.</p> <p>Administrators use data to make decisions, and hold teachers accountable for teaching to student needs. (8.1–8.8)</p>	8.1 The district is addressing ELL needs by expanding the district leadership program and teaching ESL through the arts.	ELL p. 6
	8.2 Libraries are an important resource for ELLs to develop academically.	ELL p. 8
	8.3 There are materials available generally, but there is a need for more materials for struggling readers, ELLs, and SWDs.	INT p. 6
	8.4 Teachers feel they have discretion to modify the curriculum to meet the needs of students.	INT p. 5
	8.5 Providing services for one year after ELLs are mainstreamed is a mandated requirement.	ELL p. 11
	8.6 Generally, there are adequate programs to support struggling students.	INT p. 8
	8.7 Additional support is being provided to ELLs via extended day programs; for example, “Early Bird.”	ELL p. 18
	8.8 The district provides a wealth of programs for students not performing at proficiency levels.	SE p. 22
	8.9 Administrators use data to make decisions and hold teachers accountable for teaching what students need to improve upon.	INT p. 7
	8.10 The curriculum is not meeting the needs of students well below grade level.	INT p. 4
	8.11 It is difficult for many schools to meet ELL needs.	INT p. 8
	8.12 Funding supports for special needs students requires closer inspection.	INT p. 24
	8.13 Data shows that ELLs are an afterthought in development of America’s Choice.	ELL p. 2
	8.14 With the exception of one “no response,” all teachers responded that they provide additional supplemental support.	ELL p. 18

Theme 3. Instruction and Assessment

Key Findings	Findings	Source & Page
<p>GQ 9</p> <p>Teaching strategies and tools were varied, differentiated, and effectively modeled to include total physical response visual aid, and all were aligned with the focus of each lesson.</p> <p>Project-based learning was rarely, if ever observed in Grades K–12.</p> <p>The use of higher level questioning was observed at a moderate level in Grades K–12.</p> <p>Technology is moderately used as a teaching tool throughout the grades.</p>	9.1 I like to engage the students, make my classroom lively, and give my students group activities.	ELL p. 24
	9.2 Project-based learning was rarely observed in the classroom (K–12).	OBS p. 6, 10
	9.3 The use of higher level questioning was seen at a moderate level (K–12)	OBS p. 6, 10
	9.4 Use of computers and other technology is limited throughout the grades.	SEC p. 23, 30
	9.5 Technology use was rarely observed in the classroom (K–12)	OBS p. 6, 10
	9.6 The most frequently occurring types of instruction include: identifying prior knowledge, introducing new concepts, communicating the purpose of the lesson, developing understanding, learning vocabulary, and demonstrating understanding.	ELL p. 28
	9.7 Respect is an expectation of students across the board—for general education students and SWDs.	SE p. 24
	9.8 Evidence of plans and policy for consistent implementation of strategies or models for all students was not found in any of the documents.	DR p. 8
	9.9 No evidence of implementation or monitoring of scientifically based instruction was found in the documents.	DR p. 8
	9.10 Integration of subject areas was rarely observed in classrooms (K–12).	OBS pp. 6, 10

Key Findings	Findings	Source & Page
<p>GQ 10</p> <p>Interdisciplinary instruction was rarely observed.</p> <p>Evidence of student engagement was high in Grades K–8, but only moderate in Grades 9–12.</p> <p>Note: GQ 11 is addressed under General Findings.</p>	<p>10.1 Interdisciplinary instruction was rarely observed.</p>	<p>OBS</p>
	<p>10.2 Evidence of student engagement was high in Grades K–8, but only moderate in Grades 9–12.</p>	<p>OBS pp. 6, 10</p>

Theme 4. Professional Development

Key Findings	Findings	Source & Page
<p>GQ 13</p> <p>Document shows that there is training and resources provided in some schools.(13.4–13.10)</p> <p>Teachers who instruct ELLs and Special Education students need more support in differentiated instruction. (13.11)</p> <p>There is evidence of effective professional development for ESL teachers in QTEL. (13.12–13.16)</p>	13.1 Teachers need more SIFE professional development. Support is needed through professional development.	ELL p. 10
	13.2 Nearly half of the teachers reported that they did not receive professional development about how to use assessment data to inform instruction.	ELL p. 19
	13.3 The level of regional professional development is comprehensive and focused on the content/pedagogical areas in need, including differentiating instruction, collaborative team teaching, special education teacher support services, and aligning instruction to state performance indicators for IEP development. In addition, both general education and Special Education teachers have received professional development in data, Wilson and Schools Attuned through Region 4 on-line professional development catalogue.	SE pp. 18, 34
	13.4 Professional development is no longer one-size-fits-all. There is choice to differentiate instruction for teachers based on need.	INT p. 19
	13.5 IP data indicate that teachers used resource centers and Internet resources often.	SEC p. 46
	13.6 There is ongoing emphasis on professional development.	ELL p. 6
	13.7 June 6, 2003, District 24 held a monthly meeting (full day, by grade) to ensure alignment with the curriculum. 2006–07—Differentiated professional development to address schools’ needs.	ELL p. 6
	13.8 Multiple opportunities for professional development (classroom management, instructional techniques).	SE
	13.9 The most common content area for professional development was ELA for both general education and ELL teachers.	ELL p. 24–25
	13.10 There is ongoing emphasis on professional development	ELL
	13.11 Teachers need more support to differentiate instruction.	INT p. 21
	13.12 Teaching is based on standards with 85 percent trained in QTEL at this time.	ELL p. 7

Key Findings	Findings	Source & Page
<p>GQ 13 (repeated from previous page)</p> <p>Document shows that there is training and resources provided in some schools. (13.4–13.10)</p> <p>Teachers who instruct ELLs and Special Ed students need more support in differentiated instruction. (13.11)</p> <p>There is evidence of effective professional development for ESL teachers in QTEL. (13.12–13.16)</p>	13.13 Professional development is aligned with the ELL instructional practice.	ELL p. 19
	13.14 Teachers of ELLs have supports.	ELL p. 25
	13.15 Teachers need more SIFE support through professional development.	ELL p. 10
	13.16 IP data indicate that teachers do not feel well prepared to help students evaluate and document their work.	SEC p. 42
	13.17 Professional development is provided to teachers in a differentiated manner. Teachers provided differentiated instruction.	ELL p. 6
	13.18 IP data indicate teachers do not feel very well prepared to teach students who have limited English proficiency.	SEC p. 43
	13.19 Teachers of ELLs have no relevant training in best practices.	ELL p. 19
	13.20 Coaches were highly effective in supporting teachers.	INT p. 11
	13.21 Some teachers do not know about the challenges their school faces comply with NCLB.	INT p. 14

Key Findings	Findings	Source & Page
<p>GQ 15</p> <p>There is evidence of support for new teachers. However, there is an inconsistency across the district!</p> <p>Note: GQ 14 is addressed under General Findings.</p>	15.1 There is evidence of support for new teachers. However, there is an inconsistency across the district!	
	15.2 Not addressed in interviews. Mentoring is available through their unions.	SE p. 36

General Findings

GQ	General Findings	Source & Page
3.1	Most of the ELL teachers were not aware of any special or separate curriculum for TBE/ESL/Dual Language program students, although one teacher referred to the use of Scott Foresman materials for ESL students that are available to teachers.	ELL p. 14
3.2	The District 4 Region provides training and resource needs.	SE
3.3	On the whole, secondary teachers either had no sense or only a vague sense of what was being planned, as indicated by the following responses from two ELL teachers: “That’s more of an elementary level thing because they don’t really care about the high schools.” There was no professional development offered in ESL in the content areas.	ELL p. 23
3.4	ELLs are on a second and inferior tier. Materials are not provided equitably to teachers (and therefore students) of non-ELLs versus ELLs.	ELL pp. 8–9
4.1	There is no evidence of monitoring for teaching or alignment to the ELA standards.	DR p. 2
4.2	In Grade 10, district level instruction compared to standards indicates that there is moderate alignment in comprehension, critical reading, and author’s craft at all of the cognitive demand areas.	SEC p. 16
4.3	In the topics of listening and viewing and speaking and presenting, there is very limited alignment at all cognitive demand levels to the Grade 6 standards, which call for significant emphasis at the demonstrate level.	SEC p. 14
4.4	Surveyed Grade 3 teacher data indicate limited alignment to the state standards at the demonstrate level for all topics.	SEC p. 10
4.5	Grade 2 surveyed teacher data is in strong alignment with phonics and phonemic awareness, and somewhat with comprehension, but need to focus more on listening and viewing and speaking and presenting at the investigate, evaluate, and create levels.	SEC p. 9
4.6	The Grade 4 surveyed teacher data indicate limited alignment at the investigate, evaluate, and create cognitive levels, and very limited alignment on the speaking and viewing at the create and evaluate levels.	SEC p. 12
4.7	The curriculum is perceived to be aligned to the NYSED Learning Standards.	INT p. 4
4.8	There was a consistency across the schools and district interviews that the curriculum is aligned to the state standards.	INT
4.9	All of the teachers reported that they set specific language goals in addition to content learning.	ELL p. 23
4.10	Yes, the teachers are teaching to the state standards.	SE p. 18

GQ	Findings	Source & Page
11.1	Nearly half of the teachers reported that they did not receive professional development about how to use assessment data to inform instruction.	ELL p. 19
11.2	Student assessment data is central to both Special Education and general education instruction	SE p. 30
11.3	Limited evidence on implementation and monitoring of teachers' use of assessment data and access to assessment data.	DR p. 10
11.4	In general, the use of assessment data to make instructional decisions is very high.	INT p. 7
11.5	There is limited evidence of implementation and monitoring of the use of assessment data to evaluate instructional effectiveness.	DR p. 11
11.6	Teachers should have assessment books for their students.	ELL p. 11
11.7	There is no data assessment for ELLs.	ELL p. 26
11.8	There is use of assessments conducted to inform instruction.	ELL p. 10
11.9	I look at my own students, look at their needs, and decide what to teach. This is responsive teaching.	ELL p. 14
14.1	It was not possible to assess the degree to which teachers are translating professional development into effective classroom practice.	SE p. 36
14.2	Limited evidence of implementation or monitoring of professional development. There was a shift in policy for 2006–07. Therefore, there is no evidence of monitoring.	DR p. 12
14.3	IP data indicate that a significant number of teachers have not participated in helping students document and evaluate their own work.	SEC p. 46
14.4	Although professional development is closely aligned and is consistent, it showed only a moderate impact in the classroom.	INT p. 12
14.5	There is evidence of QTEL "Collaborative Poster" in lessons for ELLs.	ELL p. 36
14.6	The district is addressing ELLs needs by expanding the Dual Language program and teaching ELLs through art.	ELL p. 6
	Miscellaneous Findings	Source & Page
18.1	Principal leadership has a strong influence on instruction and instructional change.	INT p. 22
18.2	School strengths sometimes include in-school collaboration; building leadership; and strong teaching staff.	INT