

# **New York City Department of Education English Language Arts Curriculum Audit**

## **English Language Arts Professional Development Document Review Report**

**September 2008**



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## **Introduction**

Professional development often is a key component of successful school reform (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Fullan, 2007; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2002). The vital question for a district to address is how professional development should be defined and implemented to ensure that it contributes to improved instruction and learning.

Many schools and school districts that have provided targeted English Language Arts (ELA) professional development have witnessed improved student achievement (Breaux, Dandridge, & Pearson, 2002; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999; Taylor et al., 2002; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2005). As part of its improvement process, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) may wish to examine the interrelationship among its professional development; its ELA curriculum; and the New York state ELA learning standards, performance indicators, and literacy competencies presented in the ELA Core Curriculum (New York State Education Department [NYSED], 2005).

## Methodology

In response to a request from NYCDOE, Learning Point Associates reviewed ELA professional development catalogs compiled by the NYCDOE Office of Curriculum and Professional Development (OCPD) within the Division of Teaching and Learning, as well as professional development materials prepared by all four NYCDOE learning support organizations (LSOs). The LSOs are as follows: Knowledge Network LSO, Community LSO, Leadership LSO, and Integrated Curriculum and Instruction LSO.

Between June 24, 2008, and July 3, 2008, Anita Cassity, OCPD chief of staff, gathered and sent 11 professional development catalogs, consisting of 122 professional development offerings (see the Appendix), to Learning Point Associates to review for this report. Four staff members from Learning Point Associates independently reviewed each ELA professional development offering for the following questions:

1. Which areas of literacy (reading, writing, listening, or speaking) are covered in the offering?
2. Does the offering focus on content or instructional strategies?
  - *Content focused:* The professional development offering covers ELA content—the “what” of English language arts.
  - *Instructional-strategies focused:* The professional development offering covers classroom instruction—the “how” of English language arts.
3. Does the professional development offering focus on the ELA needs of English Language Learners (ELLs) and/or Students With Disabilities (SWDs)?
4. If content-focused, does the offering align with the NYSED ELA learning standards?

After each person completed an individual review, all the reviewers held a meeting to reach consensus regarding the review of the professional development offerings.

Learning Point Associates staff anticipated being able to examine the professional development materials in the following areas: (1) possible redundancy of professional development offerings between and across providers; and (2) alignment of offerings to NYSED ELA learning standards, performance indicators, and literacy competencies. However, the content of the professional development catalogs did not allow for these levels of analyses.

## Findings

### Summary Analysis of Professional Development Offerings

The offerings in each catalog were analyzed with regard to the questions identified in the Methodology section of this report. Results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Analysis of Professional Development Offerings, by Catalog Source**

Source of Catalog	Analysis of Professional Development Offered
<b>Knowledge Network LSO: Professional Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Knowledge Network LSO offered <b>five</b> professional development sessions in ELA.</li> <li>• All of the sessions focused on reading and writing; none focused on listening or speaking.</li> <li>• These course offerings focused on instructional strategies, not content of instruction.</li> <li>• None of these sessions focused on the needs of ELLs or SWDs.</li> </ul>
<b>Community LSO: Elementary Professional Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the elementary level, the Community LSO offered <b>three</b> professional development sessions.</li> <li>• Two of the three sessions focused on reading, and the remaining session covered both reading and writing; none focused on listening or speaking.</li> <li>• These sessions covered instructional strategies, not content.</li> <li>• None of these sessions focused on the needs of ELLs or SWDs.</li> </ul>
<b>Community LSO: Middle School Professional Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the middle school level, the Community LSO offered <b>three</b> professional development sessions.</li> <li>• Two of the three sessions focused on reading. The other session did not emphasize any one particular area of ELA.</li> <li>• It was possible to determine the focus of the professional development in two of the three sessions; both of these sessions focused on instructional strategies.</li> <li>• Two of the three sessions discussed ELLs. No sessions covered the needs of SWDs.</li> </ul>

Source of Catalog	Analysis of Professional Development Offered
<p><b>Community LSO: High School Professional Development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the high school level, the Community LSO offered <b>seven</b> professional development sessions.</li> <li>• The area of literacy could be determined in six out of seven sessions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For five of these six sessions, reading was an area of focus.</li> <li>▪ The remaining session focused on writing.</li> <li>▪ None focused on listening or speaking.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• It was possible to determine the focus of the professional development session in six of the seven sessions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Six of the seven sessions focused on instructional strategies.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• One session focused on the needs of ELLs. No sessions covered the needs of SWDs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Leadership LSO: Literacy Events</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leadership LSO offered <b>40</b> professional development sessions on literacy.</li> <li>• For a little more than half of the sessions (21 sessions), no information other than the title of the session was provided. Of the remaining 19 sessions, three sessions covered reading and writing, six sessions focused on speaking, and the remaining 10 covered all areas of literacy: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.</li> <li>• It was possible to determine the focus for 33 of the 40 sessions; these 33 sessions focused on instructional strategies.</li> <li>• Of the 40 offerings, 15 focused on ELLs. No sessions covered the needs of SWDs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Integrated Curriculum and Instruction LSO: ELA Professional Development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Integrated Curriculum and Instruction LSO offered <b>12</b> ELA professional development sessions.</li> <li>• Information provided was insufficient to determine the literacy area of focus in these sessions.</li> <li>• Five sessions focused on instructional strategies, and one session covered ELA content. The focus of the remaining six sessions could not be determined from the information provided.</li> <li>• Two sessions explicitly covered the needs of ELLs and SWDs.</li> </ul>

Source of Catalog	Analysis of Professional Development Offered
<p><b>NYCDOE After School Professional Development Program Catalog</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This program is administered by the director of After School Professional Development Programs, NYCDOE Division of Human Resources.</li> <li>• The catalog contains <b>12</b> ELA course offerings that teachers elect to complete to receive “P” credit (professional credit).</li> <li>• The literacy area could be determined in half of the courses. Generally, these courses focused on either reading or writing, such as Teachers College Reading and Writing Institutes.</li> <li>• Five of the 12 courses covered both ELA content and instructional strategies. The remaining seven sessions focused solely on instructional strategies.</li> <li>• Five sessions covered the instructional needs of ELLs. One session covered the needs of SWDs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>NYCDOE January 2008 Professional Development Calendar</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The January calendar contained <b>two</b> ELA professional development offering.</li> <li>• The literacy area covered could not be determined in one of the offerings. The other offering covered reading and writing.</li> <li>• Both of the offerings focused on instructional strategies.</li> <li>• One session covered the needs of ELLs. Neither of the sessions focused on SWDs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>NYCDOE February 2008 Professional Development Calendar</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The February calendar contained <b>two</b> ELA professional development sessions.</li> <li>• Insufficient information was provided, making it impossible to determine the specific area of literacy covered in these sessions.</li> <li>• Both of the offerings focused on instructional strategies.</li> <li>• Both offerings focused on the needs of ELLs. Neither of the offerings focused on SWDs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>NYCDOE Summer 2008 Professional Development Calendar</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Three</b> ELA professional development sessions were offered during the summer session.</li> <li>• Two of the three sessions focused on writing, and one session covered reading.</li> <li>• All three professional development sessions focused on instructional strategies.</li> <li>• None of the sessions explicitly covered the needs of ELLs or SWDs.</li> </ul>

Source of Catalog	Analysis of Professional Development Offered
<p><b>NYCDOE Division of Teaching and Learning Winter/Spring 2008 Catalog</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Center for Teaching and Learning offered <b>33</b> ELA professional development sessions.</li> <li>• For the 20 sessions in which the literacy area of focus could be determined, reading and writing were the areas most frequently discussed.</li> <li>• For the sessions in which sufficient information was provided, 26 of the 27 sessions focused on ELA instructional strategies.</li> <li>• Nine of the sessions explicitly covered the needs of ELLs. None of the sessions focused on SWDs.</li> </ul>

## Summary Findings Related to the Review Questions

The Appendix lists specific professional development programs reviewed for this report, grouped by source. Brief summaries of the Learning Point Associates analysis of these programs are presented for each review question.

**Areas of Literacy**—Related to Question 1. *Which areas of literacy (reading, writing, listening, or speaking) are covered in the offering?*

Reading was covered most frequently in the professional development offerings reviewed. Writing also was the focus on occasion. Listening and speaking were rarely covered in the professional development offerings.

**Focus on ELA Content or Instructional Strategies**—Related to Question 2. *Does the offering focus on content or instructional strategies?*

- *Content focused:* The professional development offering covers ELA content—the “what” of English language arts.
- *Instructional-strategies focused:* The professional development offering covers classroom instruction—the “how” of English language arts.

The majority of professional development offerings focused on instructional strategies and not ELA content. In other words, approximately 9 out of 10 of the professional development offerings focused on the “how” of ELA instruction—*not* on the “what.”

**Focus on Subpopulations: ELLs and SWDs**—Related to Question 3. *Does the professional development offering focus on the ELA needs of ELLs and/or SWDs?*

A few professional development offerings focused on the needs of ELLs by covering such topics as accelerating language development. However, no ELA professional development offerings focused on SWDs.

**Professional Development Offerings in Relationship to Standards** (Related to Question 4:  
*If content-focused, does the offering align with the NYSED ELA learning standards?)*

A limited number of content-focused professional development offerings were submitted. Therefore, it was not possible to review the relationship between professional development offerings and the NYSED learning standards. In the few offerings for which enough information was provided, the offerings generally aligned with Standard 1, which involves reading, writing, listening, and speaking for information and understanding.

Frequency counts of professional development programs, by review question and source, are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Frequency of Professional Development Offerings,  
by Catalog Source and Review Question**

Source of Catalog	Focus of Review Question				
	Literacy Area: Reading (R), Writing (W), Listening (L) Speaking (S)	ELA Focus: Content (C) or Instructional Strategies (IS)	Focus on Sub- populations: ELL or SWD	Professional Development in Relation to Standards (1, 2, 3, 4)	Total Frequency by Source
Knowledge Network LSO: Professional Development	R-5 W-5	IS-5	N/A	N/A	5
Community LSO: Elementary Professional Development	R-3 W-1	IS-2	N/A	N/A	3
Community LSO: Middle School Professional Development	R-2	IS-2	ELL-2	N/A	3
Community LSO: High School Professional Development	R-5 W-2 L-1 S-2	IS-6	ELL-1	N/A	7
Leadership LSO: Literacy Events	R-12 W-12 L-9 S-15	IS-32	ELL-15	N/A	40
Integrated Curriculum and Instruction LSO: Professional Development	N/A	IS-1	ELL-5 SWD-2	N/A	12
NYCDOE After School Professional Development Program	R-1 W-1 L-1 S-1	C-5 IS-12	ELL-5 SWD-1	St. 1-1 St. 4-1	12
NYCDOE January 2008 Professional Development Calendar	R-1 W-1	IS-2	ELL-1	N/A	2
NYCDOE February 2008 Professional Development Calendar	N/A	IS-2	ELL-2	N/A	2
NYCDOE Summer 2008 Professional Development Calendar	R-1 W-2	IS-3	N/A	N/A	3
NYCDOE Division of Teaching and Learning Winter/Spring 2008 Catalog	R-16 W-7 L-1 S-3	IS-25	ELL-9	N/A	33
<b>Total Frequency by Review Question</b>	<b>R-46 W-31 L-12 S-21</b>	<b>C-5 IS-92</b>	<b>ELL-40 SWD-3</b>	<b>St. 1-1 St. 4-1</b>	

*Note.* N/A is recorded in table cells if a professional development brochure or document did not provide sufficient details necessary to make a reasonable determination of the number of offerings in that category. If a subcategory is not mentioned in a cell, no professional development offerings addressed the topic.

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## **Appendix**

### **Professional Development Catalogs or Programs Submitted for Review, by Catalog Source**

#### **Knowledge Network LSO: Professional Development Calendar, April 2008**

- “Digging Deeper Into Instruction: Fostering Student Autonomy in Reading and Writing” (offered five times, targeting different educators and administrators)

#### **Community LSO: Elementary Schools Professional Development Calendar, April 2008**

- “The Write Stuff and Word Study Our Way: Coach Study Groups Will Meet to Investigate Their Topics”
- “The Ultimate Book Club, Session 2”
- “Word Study 3: Piecing It All Together: Planning Dynamic Word Study Programs for Your Classroom”

#### **Community LSO: Middle Schools Professional Development Calendar, April 2008**

- “Young Adult Literature Study Groups: An Exploration of the Literature”
- “Teaching Beginning ELLs (II): Introduction to Literature for Beginning ELLs and Lesson Planning”
- “Curriculum Alignment: Scaffolding Strategies That Support ELA Instruction”

#### **Community LSO: High School Professional Development Calendar, April 2008**

- “Continuation of Brooklyn Cohort Book Study Group: *Fair Isn't Always Equal* by Rick Wormeli”
- “Continuation of Lower Manhattan Cohort Book Study Group: *Strategic Reading* by Jeffrey Wilhelm” (three sessions: one for cohort 1, one for cohort 2, one for an unidentified cohort)
- “The Regents and Beyond: An Overview of the Shared Inquiry Process (Socratic Seminar Plus!!) with Linda Barrett from Great Books and L. Harriton”
- “How to Capitalize on Our Capacity: Design Programs That Meet Our Students’ Needs; Creative Writing; Incorporate Language and Content in Lesson Design”
- “Focus on Assessment: Diagnostic Literacy Assessments for Targeted Intervention Programs”

#### **Leadership LSO: Literacy Events**

- “Creating Literacy Mini Lessons for the Early Childhood Classroom” (two sessions for Grades PK–2)
- “From Observation and Assessment to Planning and Instruction” (three sessions for Grades PK–2)
- “Using Data and Student Work to Inform ELA Instruction” (six sessions total: three for Grades K–5, three for Grades 6–8)

- “Strategies for Teaching Reading and Writing Across the Content Areas” (three sessions for Grades 2–5)
- “Motivating Middle School Students in Content Literacy” (three sessions for Grades 6–8)
- “Using Curriculum Maps to Develop Units of Study” (three sessions for Grades 6–8)
- “Creating a Rigorous ELA Curriculum” (four sessions for Grades 9–12)
- “Accelerating Language Acquisition for English Language Learners” (nine sessions total: five for Grades K–5, four for Grades 6–12)
- “Developing Oral Language With English Language Learners” (six session total: three for Grades PK–2, three for Grades 6–12)

### **Integrated Curriculum and Instruction LSO: ELA Professional Development**

- “Arts Integration and Student Achievement in Literacy” (two sessions total: one for Grades K–5, one for Grades 6–12)
- “Intervention Practices That Inform Good Literacy Instruction for All Children”
- “Understanding the TC Reading and Writing Assessments—Informing Our Literacy Leadership”
- “Literacy and Leadership Series for Secondary School Principals”
- “How Can We Visit Classrooms and Determine the Most Important Next Steps in Literacy Instruction?”
- “Why Question? Promoting Comprehensive Understanding in Literacy With Inquiry and Guided Questioning”
- “How Critical Is ‘Critical Thinking in the Literacy Classroom’?”
- “Using Data to Inform Instruction”
- “Oral Language: The Link to Literacy Success—Grades K to 3”
- “Breakthrough—Book Study”
- “Essential Middle School Units of Study in Writing Workshop”

### **NYCDOE Division of Human Resources, After School Professional Development Program**

- “English Language Learners/English as a Second Language Literacy and Cultural Awareness” (online course)
- “Quality Teaching for English Learners—English Language Arts” (two sessions for Grades 9–12)
- “Storytelling for Literacy and Theater Skill Building”
- “Adolescent Literacy and English Language Learners” (online course)
- “Teachers College July Summer Reading Institute”
- “Teachers College July Summer Writing Institute”
- “Teachers College August Summer Reading Institute”
- “Teachers College August Summer Writing Institute”
- “The American Musicals Project at the New York Historical Society” (two sessions for Grades 7–8)
- “The Art of Using a Piece of Literature to Create a Mini Unit”

### **NYCDOE January 2008 Professional Development Calendar**

- “Working with ELLs for Teachers Grades K–6”
- “Digging Deeper Into Instruction: Fostering Student Autonomy in Reading and Writing for K–12 Educators”

### **NYCDOE February 2008 Professional Development Calendar**

- “Working with ELLs for Teachers: Grades K–6”
- “Working with ELLs for ESL Teachers: Grades K–5”

### **NYCDOE Summer 2008 Professional Development Calendar**

- “The Forgotten Genre: Nonfiction (Feature Article, Essay, Commentary)”
- “Nonfiction Writing in Grades 3–8”
- “Reading Workshop Essentials: Creating Classrooms Characterized by Strong Teaching, High Expectations, and Engaged Students”

### **NYCDOE Division of Teaching and Learning, Winter/Spring 2008 Catalog**

- “From Rhyme to Reason: Building Phonemic Awareness Skills in Young Children”
- “Effective Vocabulary-Building Strategies”
- “Anita Archer’s Rewards Elementary Word Attack Program”
- “Anita Archer’s Rewards Secondary Word Attack Program”
- “Building Reading Fluency Builds Comprehension”
- “Anita Archer’s Rewards (New!) Writing Program—Sentence Refinement”
- “Words Their Way—A Powerful Word Study Tool for the Early Grades”
- “Literacy Development in a PreK Classroom”
- “Applying the Standards in a PreK Setting to Strengthen the PreK Curriculum”
- “Emergent Literacy in the Prekindergarten Curriculum”
- “Critical Friends’ Circle Coaching Network”
- “Best Practices for Effective Coaching at the Middle School Level”
- “Words Their Way Institute for Grades 4–8”
- “Best Practices for Effective High School Coaching”
- “From Phonics to Fluency to Proficient Reading: Helping All Students Achieve”
- “Redefining Content Literacy Instruction for a Changing World”
- “Unpacking the LOTE Standards: Curriculum and Assessment Design” (two sessions for Grades K–12)
- “Integrating Literacy/Comprehension in Social Studies and Science” (two sessions for Grades 9–12)
- “Scaffolding Academic Uses of English in Middle School ELA for ELLs”
- “Step-Up to High School Science for ELLs Institute”
- “Quality Teaching for English Learners: Beginning ESL”

- “Quality Teaching for English Learners: English Language Arts for High School”
- “Quality Teaching for English Learners: Building the Base”
- “Beyond English Proficiency: English Language Arts Standards for ELLs”
- “Supporting Your Child With Elements of Second Language Learning”
- “Scaffolding Academic Uses of English in Middle School ELA for ELLs”
- “The Schoolwide Enrichment Model Reading Framework to Challenge All Readers”
- “Smartboard: Core Content Area Focus—Literacy (Level 2)”
- “Podcasting: Using Digital Productions in the Content Areas—PC Users”
- “Creating, Publishing, and Sharing Online Word Walls”
- “Second Grade Science Research and Publishing Project”
- “History as Story: Using Content Picture Books for Instruction”