

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

**Kingston City School District
Final Report**

May 2009

**Submitted to
Kingston City School District**

**Submitted by
Learning Point Associates**



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Contents

	Page
Introduction.....	1
District Background.....	2
Overview.....	2
Student Academic Performance.....	2
Theory of Action.....	3
Guiding Questions for the Audit.....	4
Audit Process Overview	5
Phase 1: Planning.....	5
Phase 2: Data Collection and Analysis.....	5
Phase 3: Co-Interpretation of Findings.....	9
Phase 4: Action Planning.....	10
References.....	10
Positive Key Findings and District Strengths	11
Prioritized Key Findings.....	16
Priority Key Finding 1: Curriculum Alignment.....	17
Priority Key Finding 2: Collaborative Planning.....	18
Priority Key Finding 3: Professional Development.....	19
Priority Key Finding 4: Data Use to Inform Instruction.....	20
Priority Key Finding 5: Instruction.....	21
Priority Key Finding 6: Academic Intervention Services.....	21
Additional Key Findings.....	24
Miscellaneous Findings	25
Additional Findings From the Auditor	25
Recommendations for Action Planning.....	26
Recommendation 1: Curriculum and Instruction.....	27
Recommendation 2: Data Use	48
Recommendation 3: Academic Intervention Services.....	62
Recommendation 4: Professional Development/Collaboration.....	74
Appendix. Data Map of Co-Interpretation Key Findings.....	90

Introduction

This final report is the result of an audit of the written, taught, and tested English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum of Kingston City School District by Learning Point Associates. In 2008, five 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 ELA curriculum for all students, including students with disabilities (SWDs). 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 provides an outline of the process, data, and methods used as well as the key findings that arose through co-interpretation. The Recommendations for Action Planning section provides research-based recommendations to address the challenges identified by the prioritized key findings as well as implementation considerations to support the action planning process. The districts are required to incorporate recommendations from the audit in their action plan—their deliverable to NYSED. Once approved by NYSED, the action plan is incorporated into the district's Comprehensive District Education Plan or Consolidated Application, as appropriate.

District Background

Overview

Geographic Description

Kingston City School District is one of 10 school districts in Ulster County, located in the Historic Hudson Valley area of New York state. The city of Kingston reflects a topography that varies from meadows to gently sloping mountains.¹ Kingston comprises at least three distinct neighborhoods, informally known as uptown, midtown, and downtown. The estimated total population of the city in 2007 was 22,620.²

Student Population

Data from the *2006–07 Accountability and Overview Report* indicate that Kingston City School District served a total of 7,363 students, with 7,272 K–12 students and 91 ungraded students.³ Of those students enrolled, approximately 71 percent were white; 17 percent were African American; 8 percent were Hispanic; and 3 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, Alaskan Native/Native American, or Multiracial.

Demographics

In Kingston City School District there are 14 schools: 11 elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school.⁴ Data from the 2004–05, 2005–06, and 2006–07 school years indicate that more than a third of the student population was eligible for free or reduced-price lunch—38 percent, 35 percent, and 38 percent respectively. District data also indicate that the overall percentage of English language learners (ELLs) fluctuated between 2 percent and 3 percent for this time period. In the 2006–07 school year, the percentage of SWDs enrolled was approximately 15.8 percent.⁵ According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2005–06 the district's average spending per student was \$16,206.⁶

Student Academic Performance

As of 2006–07, the state accountability status of Kingston City School District has been designated as a district *in need of improvement—Year 3* in the area of ELA, specifically for the SWD subgroup. In 2006–07, the SWD accountability group did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for ELA in the secondary school, for the third year in a row. Previously in 2005–06, the SWD accountability group at the elementary and middle schools had not made AYP in ELA. In addition, the ELL student accountability group did not make AYP for ELA in the elementary and middle schools for the first time.

¹ <http://www.ci.kingston.ny.us/content/138/142/default.aspx>, retrieved April 9, 2009.

² <http://www.city-data.com/city/Kingston-New-York.html>, retrieved April 9, 2009.

³ <https://www.nystart.gov/publicweb-rc/2007/3a/AOR-2007-620600010000.pdf>, retrieved April 9, 2009.

⁴ <http://www.kingstoncityschools.org>, retrieved April 9, 2009.

⁵ <http://eservices.nysed.gov/sepuprep/mainservlet?f=report0607&school=620600010000>, retrieved April 9, 2009.

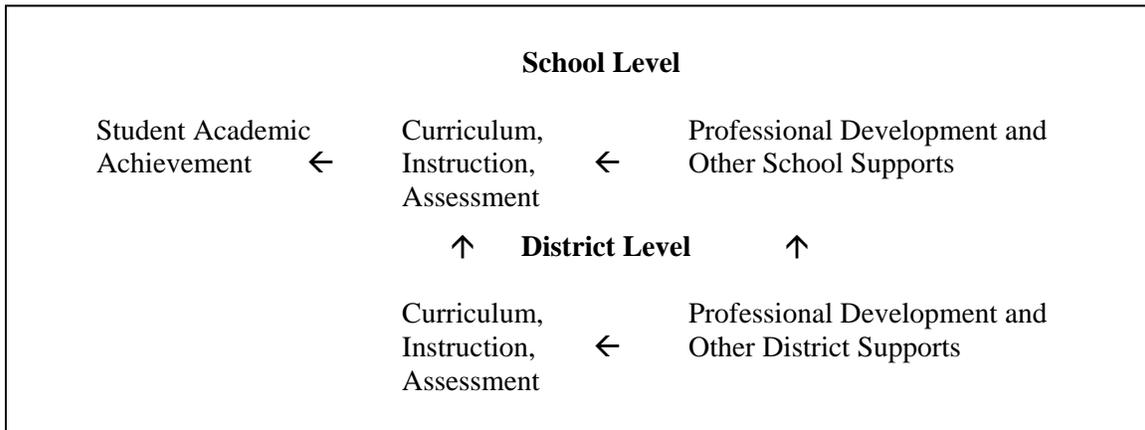
⁶ http://www.greatschools.net/cgi-bin/ny/district_profile/333, retrieved April 9, 2009.

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 sustained 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 sustained 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 the following six essential questions for the focus of the audit:

1. To what extent is a comprehensive, clearly articulated, and aligned curriculum guiding instruction across the district?
2. How does instruction focus on the effective delivery of the curriculum?
3. What academic interventions are available for students who need additional academic support?
4. What professional learning opportunities that support instruction and student learning are provided to teachers?
5. To what extent do student achievement data (formative as well as summative) inform academic programming, planning, and instruction?
6. What staffing practices and profiles are utilized to effectively support teaching and learning across the district?

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; selecting a school sample and teacher samples; and planning and delivering communications about the audit to the district's key stakeholders, including a kickoff meeting involving the larger district community.

Phase 2: Data Collection and Analysis

To conduct this audit, Learning Point Associates examined district issues from multiple angles, gathering a wide range of data and using the guiding questions to focus on factors that affect curriculum, instruction, assessment, and other school supports. All of these data sources work together to bring focus and clarity to the main factors contributing to the district's corrective-action status. Broadly categorized, information sources included NCLB accountability status, the *Surveys of Enacted Curriculum*, observations of instruction, educator surveys, interviews of school and district personnel, review of key district documents, alignment of the district's written ELA curriculum with state standards, and reviews of the special education and ELL programs.

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

NCLB Accountability Status

Learning Point Associates compiled NCLB accountability data for the most recent three years available. These data provided the district with an overview of student achievement trends by level and subgroup.

Surveys of Enacted Curriculum

To examine whether instruction was aligned to the New York state standards and assessments, teachers in the district completed the *Surveys of Enacted Curriculum* (SEC). Based on two decades of research funded by the National Science Foundation, the SEC are designed to facilitate the comparison of the enacted (taught) curriculum to standards (intended curriculum) and state tests (assessed curriculum), 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 general education 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 across the district to create a picture of the pedagogy within schools, including a snapshot of the instructional practices being used. They involved observing multiple classes, primarily in the identified subject areas (e.g., ELA, mathematics, or both), during a three-hour block of time for each subject. While in schools, observers visited 8–12 classrooms within this block of time, spending 15 minutes observing each classroom. Each individual classroom observation was aggregated with all of the others conducted in that school on that day to create a single school observation snapshot. Observation data were aggregated to the district by school grade levels: elementary, middle, and high schools. For schools that span Grades K–8, observations were conducted in the elementary grade levels and the data were included with other elementary observation data. For schools that spanned middle through high schools, observations focused on Grades 9–12 and the data were included with other high school observation data.

Educator Surveys

Learning Point Associates developed a 20–30 minute educator survey for use in a curriculum audit context, focusing the questions on induction, professional development, school climate, and leadership development to complement the staffing profile section of the document review. Data were further enhanced by associated questions in the teacher interview protocols, which allow for more in-depth responses on each subject and related examinations of these issues in the district's key documents.

Interviews

To garner additional data concerning the alignment of the written, taught, and tested ELA 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 40 minutes in length for teachers and 60 minutes or more for content/instructional coaches, principals, and district staff. The protocols were developed specifically to address the guiding questions of the audit 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/instructional 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 content/instructional coach

interviews had questions designed to elicit longer, more elaborate responses. District personnel interviews were even more open-ended. When agreed to by the interviewees, 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.

Key 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 matrix was developed and used to synthesize document information against a subset of the audit's guiding questions. The matrix was designed to determine whether each submitted group of documents contained clear evidence of district plans and/or policies, implementation of those plans/policies, and internal monitoring 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 three Learning Point Associates analysts, working independently, to ensure multiple perspectives during the process. After individual reviews 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. Learning Point Associates focused its attention on two key areas for this curriculum alignment process. First, Learning Point Associates used the Revised Taxonomy Table (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) to code and compare school district learning objectives/expectations and performance indicators from the New York State English Language Arts Core Curriculum (New York State Education Department, 2005), in terms of levels of knowledge and cognitive demand. Second, using criteria for identifying and describing a cohesive, comprehensive, and clearly articulated curriculum identified in literature cited above, Learning Point Associates examined curriculum alignment documents submitted by the district. In both areas, materials were examined and analyzed at Grades 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10.

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 their special education program. Data collection activities that informed the special education review included the following: district or regional staff interviews; teacher interviews (including 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 six guiding questions developed for the audit.

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	SEC	Observations	Educator Surveys	Interviews	Key Document Review	Curriculum Alignment	Special Education Review
1. To what extent is a comprehensive, clearly articulated, and aligned curriculum guiding instruction across the district?			X	X	X	X	X
2. How does instruction focus on the effective delivery of the curriculum?	X	X	X	X	X		X
3. What academic interventions are available for students who need additional academic support?			X	X	X		X
4. What professional learning opportunities that support instruction and learning are provided to teachers?	X		X	X	X		X
5. To what extent do student achievement data (formative as well as summative) inform academic programming, planning, and instruction?	X		X	X	X		X
6. What staffing practices and profiles are utilized to effectively support teaching and learning across the district?			X	X	X		X

Phase 3: Co-Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of co-interpretation was to interpret the data collected, in a collaborative group setting.

The co-interpretation process had several steps, starting with the interpretation of the data within individual data sets and followed by the identification of key findings across data sets. These steps occurred in a two-day co-interpretation meeting with key district, school, and community stakeholders. 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 (e.g., document review, curriculum alignment, interview data, SEC data, classroom observations, educator surveys, and special education) in a small-group setting. Individual groups were assigned one or more data reports. They were asked to first select the findings from their data report(s) that they believed were most significant and then to categorize those findings according to one of the six topic areas addressed by the guiding questions: curriculum, instruction, academic intervention services, professional development, data use, and staffing.

Identification of Key Findings

Participants were then assigned to topic-area groups for the purpose of grouping individual findings across data sets, along common themes. From various data sources, the participants used the method of triangulation (using supportive and explanatory data, from multiple data sources or data collection methods, that affirm findings and enhance understanding of those findings) to provide support for combining and subsuming some of the findings. As the investigative groups presented their findings to the whole group, some natural combining and winnowing of results occurred.

The whole group used a voting process to prioritize the findings. Participants were then led through a discussion process to rate the prioritized findings based on the following criteria:

- Is the identified key finding 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, would there be a measurable, positive impact systemwide?

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

Identification of District Strengths

Identification of district strengths occurred during the kickoff meeting as part of the planning process. In this stage, participants brainstormed to generate a list of characteristics the district was proud of and identified those that would provide momentum for the audit process. These are listed in the Positive Key Findings section of this report.

Phase 4: Action Planning

Submission of the completed action plan to NYSED is the responsibility of each district.

Implementation of the Process

The recommended process for action planning includes the following steps: goal, objective, and strategy setting; action and task planning; integration and alignment of actions; and integration and alignment with other district plans in use, such as the Comprehensive District Education Plan or Consolidated Application.

In the goal, objective and strategy-setting steps, the district team identifies what it wants to achieve during the next three years. For each goal, the team sets specific objectives and identifies key strategies along with success indicators for each. Strategies drive more detailed action development by those who will be assigned to implement the plan. Learning Point Associates will work not only with the action planning team but also with smaller teams and individuals responsible for developing actions and rollout plans.

Rollout of the Plan

Prior to submitting the action plan to NYSED, the district is encouraged to share it with the local Board of Education. The final component of the action planning process is communicating the audit action plan to the larger school community. This process is critical to ensuring that schools are aware of the district's action plan and are prepared to revise their Comprehensive Education Plans or other guiding plans as necessary to reflect it.

References

- Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives* (Complete ed.). New York: Longman.
- New York State Education Department. (2005). *English language arts core curriculum (prekindergarten–grade 12)*. Retrieved May 1, 2009, from <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/ela/elacore.pdf>

Positive Key Findings and District Strengths

As indicated 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 school and district administrators, teachers, parents, and district technical assistance providers identified key findings across multiple data sets.

The supporting findings, which can be mapped back to the original data sets, are included in the data map in the Appendix.

The reason that positive key findings and district strengths are listed before the prioritized key findings is twofold. First, it is to the district's advantage to approach action planning from a strengths-based perspective (What do we do well? What works effectively for our students?) and to leverage what has been working, as well as areas where the district is strong and solid. Second, the positive key findings may indicate strength, success, talent, skill or expertise in one or more aspects of an area that nonetheless is indicated in the Learning Point Associates recommendations. The district may determine that it does not necessarily have to start from square one in addressing the recommendation; perhaps it is already on the route to achievement. Learning Point Associates wants to encourage districts to realistically acknowledge what they are currently doing well and effectively, where they can point to success, and to use those strengths as a springboard for approaching recommendations-based action planning.

Positive Key Finding 1

Teachers were generally observed to have well-planned lessons delivered in an atmosphere of mutual respect with established classroom management strategies that provided maximum use of instructional time.

This positive key finding is supported by evidence from the following two reports: the Special Education Report and the Observation Report. It addresses one guiding question of the audit: *How does instruction focus on the effective delivery of the curriculum?* (Question 2).

In the Observation Report, a high level of student attention, interest, and engagement was observed in the general education classrooms frequently or extensively 88 percent of the time at the elementary level and 80 percent of the time at the secondary level. In addition, high academically focused class time was observed frequently or extensively in 94 percent of elementary classrooms and 100 percent of secondary classrooms. This finding is supported by the observations conducted for the Special Education Report, where both general education and special education teachers appeared to have well-planned lessons and were very organized. The observed interactions between teachers and students were usually positive and reflected teachers' respect for student contributions. In addition, a majority of the visited classrooms demonstrated the use of positive classroom management strategies where routines were established to maximize instructional time and students transitioned rapidly and smoothly from one activity to another.

Positive Key Finding 2

The district offers a formal mentoring program, which includes peer coaching and conferencing, for teachers with fewer than three years of experience.

This positive key finding is supported by evidence from the following four reports: the Interview Report, the Audit Survey Report, the Document Review Report, and the Special Education Report. It addresses one guiding question of the audit: *What staffing practices and profiles are utilized to effectively support teaching and learning across the district?* (Question 6).

The Document Review Report noted that teachers with fewer than three years of experience have access to a mentoring program. In the documents reviewed for the Special Education Report, evidence showed that Kingston City School District offers formal mentoring programs designed to facilitate a productive and satisfying first-year experience for new teachers. The mentor program also is intended to foster ongoing productive professional development; the role of the mentors is to provide guidance, support, and information to new teachers. New teachers meet regularly with their mentors for up to three years if necessary. A summer orientation for new teachers is provided by the district (according to the Interview Report).

When asked about the effectiveness of the mentoring program, all district personnel (noted in the Interview Report) spoke highly of the support for new teachers. Supporting this opinion, the majority of special education leaders (noted in the Special Education Report) described the mentoring program as very effective. Special education leaders emphasized that an important component of the program's success is the quality of the mentors. The evidence from the Audit Survey Report offered somewhat different information. Although nearly half of new teachers who responded to the survey said the assigned mentor was moderately to very helpful, 84 percent of the responding new teachers stated that veteran teachers were moderately to very helpful.

Positive Key Finding 3

In Kingston City School District, SWDs (with the exception of IEP diploma students) have access to the general ELA curriculum. Teachers modify their instruction to varying degrees according to the type of setting, severity of the disability, and the IEP plan.

This positive key finding is supported by evidence from the Special Education Report. It addresses one guiding question of the audit: *How does instruction focus on the effective delivery of the curriculum?* (Question 2).

Evidence from the Special Education Report (Document Review) showed that a great majority of SWDs have access to the general education ELA curriculum. A noted exception is students in self-contained classrooms, who do not have full access to the general education curriculum.

The majority of the reviewed IEPs specified the instructional accommodations that SWDs need in order to access the curriculum. The IEP accommodations include extended time, preferential seating, refocusing, redirection, and reteaching. A majority of the interviewed general education teachers indicated that they have access to the IEPs of their SWDs and they provide instructional

accommodations instead of modifying the content of the curriculum. According to interview responses, special education teachers working in various settings referred to students' IEPs more often than general education teachers when planning instructional accommodations for SWDs.

Additional Positive Findings

The following positive findings were developed by the co-interpretation participants but were not given top priority during the voting process

Curriculum and Instruction

- The district has a policy and a plan addressing the adoption of curriculum resources, and a majority of teachers have access to curriculum resources.
- Kingston City School District presents district-created student expectations for Grade 2 that are fairly well aligned with the NYSED performance indicators regarding knowledge level and are somewhat aligned regarding cognitive process.
- Teachers reported using various teaching strategies to differentiate instruction, with more emphasis on the process (rather than content or product).

Data Use

- In the area of special education, the district uses data from a variety of sources to a great extent.

Academic Support for Nonproficient Students

- Documentation related to academic interventions exists in a Board of Education policy, a Comprehensive District Education Plan, and an Academic Intervention Plan, though the documents are not clearly articulated.

Professional Development

- The majority of professional development sessions for teachers are provided by the district, and the majority of teachers participate in professional development together.

Staffing

- Special education classrooms are provided with additional support from teaching assistants and clinical staff.
- Special education teachers report receiving support from building-level administrators.
- District staff reported no major problems with hiring and supporting new staff.

District Strengths

At the Kingston City School District kickoff meeting for the curriculum audit on October 29, 2008, participants were asked the following question: *What is going on in your district that you are really proud of or passionate about?* Responses were as follows:

Innovations in Programs

- New Montessori program, Junior Great books program, afterschool programs (particularly at elementary level), alternative education programs, looking at what students need to learn in alternative settings

Positive Professional Development

- Professional development provided by Louise Cleveland (middle school level), appreciate current professional development offerings

Student Services

- The successes in special education at high school (students can complete diploma in 5–6 years), Learning Center, ELL services, total integration

Strong Teachers

- Staff are invested in kids and district, aware of higher expectations and involved in curriculum writing, team teaching model, commitment of teachers

Communication and Collaboration

- Literacy task force, middle-level teaming and housing, increased parent contact

Kickoff meeting participants also were asked this question: *What is going on in your district that is consistent with the audit of curriculum and will give the process momentum or will be enhanced by the audit of curriculum?* Responses were as follows:

Focus on Curriculum Mapping

- Refining map, focus on English curriculum mapping, collaborative planning, many targeted trainings offered that support curriculum initiatives

Special Populations

- Increasing integrated programs, alignment of special education with general education, staff development based on needs of specific populations, an ELL focus such as an ELL boot camp

Mentoring and Support

- Mentor support for new teachers, mentor support for teaching initiatives in special education

Data Use

- Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), developed by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), used for pretesting and posttesting, targeted item analysis of state assessments, data supports students

Prioritized Key Findings

As indicated in the description process for Phase 3 (co-interpretation of findings) and mentioned in the previous section on Positive Key Findings and District Strengths, each key finding statement was generated through the co-interpretation process. In a facilitated process, groups of school and district administrators, teachers, parents, and district technical assistance providers identified key findings across multiple data sets.

The supporting findings, which can be mapped back to the original data sets, are included in the data map in the Appendix.

The priority key findings were prioritized by participant vote at co-interpretation and are listed in order. As indicated earlier, participants were asked to base their votes on whether the finding addressed a critical problem faced by the district and whether that problem, if resolved, would improve student achievement, move the district out of corrective action, and have a measurable positive effect systemwide.

Typically, the priority key findings are directly aligned to the data map finding with the same number. This is not the case in this report, due to the Kingston City School District co-interpretation process being somewhat shorter than usual. The synthesizing step in co-interpretation produced preliminary key findings during the meeting, and final wording of the statements was assumed by Learning Point Associates after co-interpretation. During the finalization step, findings were combined that addressed the same topics—when there was overlapping and/or complementary information. When this step was completed, the priority finding numbers did not exactly match the numbers in the data map (Appendix).

For each priority key finding presented, the number of the data map finding or findings is noted in Table 2.

Table 2. Priority Finding Numbers and Data Map Finding Number

Priority Key Finding Number	Topics Addressed	Data Map Finding Number
1	Curriculum alignment	1, 3
2	Teacher planning time, opportunities to collaborate	2, 7, 8
3	Professional development for teachers	4
4	Data use and training on data use	5
5	Curriculum, alignment related to cognitive demands	6
6	Academic intervention services, amount of services, identification of students, monitoring	10,14

Priority Key Finding 1: Curriculum Alignment

Kingston City School District curriculum documents lack evidence of alignment and continuity within content areas and across all grade levels. Specifically, the district-created student expectations for Grades 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 are lacking or are not consistently aligned with NYSED performance indicators regarding knowledge level or cognitive process.

In addition, at each grade-level and for specific populations (SWDs and ELLs), it seems unclear how the district ELA curriculum policies and plans are implemented and monitored. In some cases, these policies and plans are inconsistent or lacking.

The district has established criteria related to the alignment of the curriculum to the district's educational goals, as described in the Document Review Report. The district has a curriculum revision plan, which includes a timeline for developing, creating, and revising grade-level curriculum maps. The submitted documents did not include district guidelines on use of the curriculum maps in the schools or district plans for monitoring implementation of the curriculum.

The district ELA curriculum maps that were reviewed indicate that the district is moving forward on aligning the ELA curriculum to New York state standards. To date, the maps require more clarification and in some cases should be more comprehensively articulated—through examples, models of lessons, district expectations related to when performance standards should be addressed, and procedural guidelines. For example, for the Grade 2 curriculum, there was no significant discrepancy between the Kingston City School District and NYSED curricular standards at the cognitive levels of *knowledge* and *analysis*. However, the ELA curriculum for Grade 2 does not incorporate reading, writing, and critical thinking through literacy tasks. Also, at the elementary level, the cognitive emphasis and sequence for Grade 4, while similar to the NYSED standards, places less emphasis on the *remember* and *analyze* levels.

The performance indicators in the Grade 6 ELA curriculum map are comparable to the NYSED performance indicators (as reported in the Curriculum Alignment Report). In Grade 6, modifications and accommodations to address diverse student learning needs are not articulated in the curriculum maps. The Curriculum Alignment Report also noted that the curriculum maps in Grades 8 and 10 have a parallel relationship and reflect NYSED ELA performance indicators in all four knowledge levels.

Generally, the district has not completely articulated student learning expectations for the secondary grade levels and has not linked district expectations with state performance standards. Also, in the secondary grades, the curricula for different grades are not clearly connected to adjacent grades; for example, in the Curriculum Alignment Report, a finding is that the Grade 10 ELA curriculum does not have clear connections to the Grade 9 and Grade 11 ELA curricula.

At the school level, administrators provide varied direction on the use of district curricular resources, according to findings from the Interview Report. In three schools, there was evidence of clear administrator expectations for using the curriculum and consistent teacher use of alignment resources (curriculum maps). However, in six schools, teacher responses indicated that

teachers at some grade levels consistently follow the district curriculum maps, but not all teachers use the district map as their primary guide for instruction; some prefer to follow their own plans.

This finding related to inconsistent use of curricular materials also was noted in the Special Education Report. That report stated that access to the general education ELA curriculum varies across settings for SWDs. Teachers in self-contained settings modify the curriculum to a greater degree than teachers in inclusive settings, and special education teachers modify the curriculum more than general education teachers.

Priority Key Finding 2: Collaborative Planning

Adequate common planning time for teachers is seen as essential for effective collaboration but is currently lacking in the district. Specifically, interview respondents identified a need for formal professional development on collaboration between special education and general education teachers.

This priority key finding is supported by evidence from the following four reports: the Interview Report, the Audit Survey Report, the SEC Report, and the Special Education Report. It addresses two guiding questions of the audit: *What professional learning opportunities are provided to teachers that support instruction and learning?* (Question 4) and *What staffing practices and profiles are utilized to effectively support teaching and learning across the district?* (Question 6).

Although many teachers indicated that they collaborate with other teachers (according to the Audit Survey Report), collaborative opportunities were mainly unscheduled. Only 42 percent of the educator survey's 217 respondents collaborated with other teachers in formal, scheduled sessions weekly or more, while 43 percent of respondents attended scheduled collaborative sessions one time a month or less. From the SEC Report, teachers in Grades 9–12 reported that they have some professional development opportunities to develop curriculum or lesson plans with others.

Fifty-one percent of the educator survey respondents noted that there are not enough opportunities to collaborate with other teachers. Schools vary in the opportunities for scheduled collaboration, according to the Interview Report. In six of the 11 schools where site visits were conducted, collaborative sessions were scheduled on at least a weekly basis and teachers indicated they were generally satisfied with the amount of time they work with colleagues (though some respondents said more or longer sessions would be helpful). In other schools, respondents indicated that there is either no time built into the schedule for teachers to collaborate (two schools), or that not enough time is provided (three schools). At the same time, 66 percent of survey respondents and many interviewed teachers indicated that teacher collaboration is helpful.

The number of collaborative opportunities for special education and general education teachers is not sufficient. For example, the Special Education Report notes that different coteaching models are implemented and each requires different levels of collaboration and cooperation. In one model, teachers share equal responsibility for planning and delivering instruction; in another,

teachers take turns leading instruction; in a third, only the general education teacher plans lessons and instructs students. Currently, collaboration between special education and general education teachers are conducted informally (before and after school), according to the Special Education Report.

District personnel who were interviewed (Interview Report) said a top priority of the district is to improve the communication and cooperation of general education teachers and special education teachers. District respondents (including those interviewed for the Special Education Report and the Interview Report), as well as teachers of SWDs, identified a need for professional development on team teaching in inclusive settings, and teacher exposure to different inclusion and coteaching models.

Priority Key Finding 3: Professional Development

Although the quantity of professional learning opportunities is perceived as adequate, there is a reported need for quality, consistency, and ongoing activities to support classroom practices. Notably, the majority of general education teachers reported not receiving adequate training on how to teach nonproficient learners and SWDs in an integrated setting.

This key finding is supported by evidence from the following five reports: the Interview Report, the Document Review Report, the Audit Survey Report, SEC Report, and the Special Education Report. This key finding addresses one guiding question of the audit: *What professional learning opportunities that support instruction and learning are provided to teachers?* (Question 4).

The Kingston City School District provides professional development in a variety of settings and venues, according to the Document Review Report. Interviewed elementary and secondary school respondents noted that professional development opportunities are available in the district. However, in all but one of the sample schools, respondents offered mixed opinions on the usefulness of professional development and its positive impact on instruction. An elementary principal said district professional development during the past few years has been inconsistent, with few follow-up activities to support classroom implementation of new knowledge and skills. This statement is supported by the SEC Report, which notes that teachers only “sometimes” report that follow-up activities related to implementation are available.

Only a few professional development opportunities provided to general education teachers focus on strategies for delivering the ELA curriculum to SWDs or ELLs, according to the Document Review Report. Similar findings were presented in the SEC Report, where teachers reported that professional development opportunities have a minor to moderate focus on meeting the learning needs of special population of students. Further evidence was provided in the Audit Survey Report, which reported that 60 percent of teachers indicated professional development is either minimally or not at all focused on instruction of SWDs in a general education or inclusion classroom.

The Special Education Report highlighted concerns about professional development on instruction of SWDs. A majority of general education teachers interviewed for the report said

they did not have training on issues specific to special education. Also, 63 percent of special education teachers interviewed indicated the available professional development opportunities are not helpful to their teaching and not relevant to SWDs. This concern also was emphasized in the Interview Report, where a major challenge reported by elementary-level and secondary-level respondents is working with a large special-needs population in an integrated setting. General education teachers reported that they need more professional learning opportunities on working with nonproficient students, especially with SWDs in an integrated setting.

Priority Key Finding 4: Data Use to Inform Instruction

The district does not have a systemic approach guiding data use, and the plans and documentation associated with data use are not clearly specified. Teacher training related to assessment review and data analysis is reported to be inconsistent throughout the district.

This priority key finding is supported by evidence from the following four reports: the Interview Report, the Document Review Report, the Audit Survey Report, and the Special Education Report. It addresses one guiding question of the audit: *To what extent do student achievement data (formative as well as summative) inform academic programming, planning, and instruction?* (Question 5).

Kingston City School District has several plans and practices related to the use of student achievement data to inform academic programming, planning, and instruction, as noted in the Document Review Report. Although student achievement data are collected, the documents do not articulate how the data are, or should be, used to drive instructional decisions. According to the Interview Report, teachers are unaware of a written plan that outlines requirements related to incorporating student achievement data into planning and instruction. Many interview respondents stated that the instructional practices teachers use in their classroom related to assessment data are not driven by district guidelines.

Respondents interviewed for the Interview Report said that the current data management systems are not integrated and different types of student data are kept in separate systems. Teachers at the secondary level reported having more difficulty accessing student data than teachers at the elementary level. In the Audit Survey Report, 33 percent of all teachers indicated that data from formative assessments are not available in a timely manner. This finding is supported by the Special Education Report, in which interview respondents indicated they do not have timely access to student data to inform classroom instruction.

The Document Review Report notes that the district provides professional development opportunities related to the use of student assessment data. However, in the Interview Report, teachers at all levels said that they would like more consistent training on how to incorporate data into classroom instruction. This finding is supported by the educator survey respondents: Nearly 50 percent said they have received minimal or no training on data use topics such as diagnosing learning challenges and monitoring progress. Related to this issue, in the Special Education Report interviews, teachers reported that they generally use teacher-made tests to guide instruction.

Priority Key Finding 5: Instruction

In Kingston City School District, a broad range of ELA skills are taught at the elementary and secondary levels, but in most cases these skills are being taught at a lower level of cognitive demand and with less emphasis than suggested by the New York state standards.

This priority key finding is supported by evidence from the following three reports: the SEC Report, the Observation Report, and the Special Education Report. It addresses one guiding question of the audit: *How does instruction focus on the effective delivery of the curriculum?* (Question 2).

According to the SEC Report, the highest levels of overall alignment between reported instructional practices and the New York state standards were found at Grades 5 and 6, followed by Grades 3 and 4, and then Grades 7 and 8. When looking across all grade levels, in most cases the emphasis of instruction was at a lower level of cognitive demand than suggested by the New York state standards. For example, teachers in Grade 3 reported less emphasis on comprehension strategies than the New York state standards. At the upper grades, the Grades 9–12 teachers reported a broad range of cognitive demands, although with greater emphasis on vocabulary and language study and less emphasis on *generate*, *create*, and *demonstrate* skills as compared to the New York state standards. When compared to the New York state exam, it appears that the Grades 9–12 ELA teachers report more topics at a broader level of cognitive demand than the assessment requires.

Evidence from the Observation Report showed that direct instruction was observed frequently or extensively in 82 percent of elementary-level observations, and 90 percent of secondary-level observations. The instructional strategies of higher level questioning and higher level feedback were rarely or not observed in over 60 percent of the elementary and secondary observations. Specifically noted was a lack of observed sustained writing, where 88 percent of elementary level and 80 percent of secondary-level observations indicated this student activity was rarely or not observed. This finding is supported by evidence from the Special Education Report observations, which found that students were seldom engaged in sustained writing and reading activities. The special education observations also revealed that very few classrooms provided opportunities for students to conduct independent inquiry or research.

Priority Key Finding 6: Academic Intervention Services

Evidence suggests that the district does not have a consistent, systemic approach related to academic intervention services (AIS) and other academic supports for nonproficient students. Several concerns about AIS were described in multiple reports. These concerns include the following:

- **Not having enough AIS programs and services**
- **Limited ways to identify students for AIS, particularly in the secondary schools**
- **Insufficient guidelines for AIS curriculum and instruction**
- **Limited monitoring of AIS student progress and program outcomes**

- **Limited use of data**
- **Need for AIS specialists and/or general education teacher training at the secondary level**

This priority key finding is a combination of several key findings related to academic intervention services in the district. It is supported by evidence from the following four reports: the Interview Report, the Document Review Report, the Audit Survey Report, and the Special Education Report. This key finding addresses one guiding question of the audit: *What academic interventions are available for students who need additional academic support?* (Question 3). Each of the five concerns are addressed as follows:

AIS Programs and Services

The district has an AIS plan, which outlines interventions available to struggling students based on high and low levels of needs, according to the Document Review Report. Documents also indicate that the district provides a wide range of academic interventions and related services to SWDs. Although policies show AIS programs are available at all grade levels, 60 percent of all teachers completing the educator survey indicated there are not enough academic support programs for nonproficient students. Similar opinions were reflected in the Interview Report, where district personnel reported that more resources and programs are available for struggling students at the elementary level than at the secondary level. In addition, the Interview Report noted that across schools, respondents said more before-school and afterschool programs are needed to address the academic needs of nonproficient students. In the Special Education Report, interview respondents said that access to ELA-related AIS programs for SWDs varies across the district. Half of special education leaders interviewed said SWDs have full access to AIS programs, and the other half said these students do not have access.

Identification of Students

According to the Document Review Report, district plans include descriptions of assessments to be used to identify students for AIS services and cut-off scores related to eligibility. Documents also describe prereferral strategies on district practices for targeted academic and behavioral intervention to help all students.

According to data from the Interview Report, all six elementary schools received a high rating for identification of students for academic support. Elementary teachers use ongoing assessments to identify students, and they also can complete a teacher recommendation form and submit samples of student work to support placing a student in AIS.

At the secondary level, however, interview respondents stated that the ELA annual exams are the primary means of identifying AIS students at the beginning of the year, with the MAP assessments sometimes used for supplemental information. According to secondary school respondents, teacher recommendations are rarely a source of referral for academic support services. A common concern expressed among secondary teachers is that students may need academic support, even though they received a passing ELA score on the state exam. Other students may be incorrectly identified as needing AIS based solely on test scores.

Guidelines on Curriculum and Instruction

Related to AIS instruction, no formal alignment documents submitted for the Document Review showed alignment of AIS programs and the ELA curriculum. One of the submitted documents, which referred to a discussion of curriculum mapping, suggests that the district is taking steps to align AIS programs and the ELA curriculum. In the Interview Report, teachers said they would like an AIS curriculum or other documentation to guide instruction for nonproficient students. Related to personnel, interview respondents at the high school reported that AIS classes are taught by the general education ELA teachers who have minimal AIS training. High school respondents emphasized that nonproficient students need a qualified reading specialist to help them with basic literacy skills. Overall, interview respondents at the secondary level said most students who need additional support receive it, but it is difficult to schedule some students for AIS classes because of other grade-level requirements. Also in the Special Education Report, interview respondents said that it is a challenge to have a well coordinated schedule for SWDs to receive services without missing regular instruction in the classroom.

AIS Monitoring

Within the Document Review Report, evidence of AIS monitoring is limited, with some information provided about how the district uses student achievement data to determine whether interventions are having a positive impact and to target interventions to meet student needs. None of the submitted documents referred to a systematic districtwide approach to using student assessment data to inform AIS program decisions. Beyond documentation related to the Reading Recovery program, no documents were provided that detail how students exit the AIS program. In addition, there is evidence that summer school data are collected and reported but documents do not show how the data are used.

The inconsistency of these monitoring documents is reflected in the Interview Report, where district personnel said the district needs better data tracking to determine the effectiveness of specific academic support programs. Across all schools, inconsistent monitoring of student progress was noted (also in the Interview Report). Most elementary-level interview respondents indicated that formal assessments are administered several times a year to all students (including nonproficient students), but they said they do not know if the data are used for AIS program decisions. At the secondary level, monitoring is more limited; in general, student progress is reported informally. Support for this finding is also provided in the Special Education Report. Based on special education leader interviews, there is not a systematic approach for determining if SWDs receive AIS intervention and related services described in their IEPs.

Teacher Training and Guidance

In the high school, AIS classes are taught by general education teachers who have no training on teaching AIS classes and who do not have an AIS-specific curriculum. In this school, teachers indicated that the students need a qualified reading specialist to teach basic literacy skills. With no curriculum, there is no consistent approach to instruction and teachers have to rely on themselves to acquire materials and design lessons to meet the needs of their nonproficient students.

Additional Key Findings

Additional findings were identified as key by the district co-interpretation participants but were not prioritized for action planning. These findings are grouped according to the major domain they address.

Curriculum and Instruction

- ELA instruction is not consistently differentiated for a variety of reasons, including not having appropriate teaching materials and technology, not grouping students by ability, less than optimum use of teaching assistants, and inadequate physical space.
- The district does not have documentation that guides monitoring the delivery of curriculum either within or across schools.
- There are no provisions outlined in curriculum documents addressing curriculum resources and expectations for special populations (SWDs and ELLs).

Academic Support for Nonproficient Students

- The perceived effectiveness of AIS is inconsistent due to limiting and extraneous variables (such as student behavior, motivation, and scheduling constraints).

Professional Development and Learning

- Teachers more frequently attend district sponsored staff development sessions than in-school turnkey training sessions (in which a trained staff person conveys recently learned knowledge and skills to colleagues).
- Teachers reported that participation in professional development related to personal professional goals is more frequent than professional development related to school improvement goals.
- In ELA professional development, there is a focus on instructional strategies.
- Respondents noted a need for professional development in the areas of content standards, assessment, special education services, and technology to support student learning.
- Professional development plans are not consistently or clearly articulated for all stakeholders. Respondents indicated that professional development opportunities for building administrators are limited.
- Respondents reported that they rely on informal professional support most of the time, in part because limited direct formal support is available.
- Respondents say that some building administrators have a moderate interest in professional development.

Staffing

- Central office roles and responsibilities have expanded over time, leaving district personnel with overwhelming duties.

- District staff said the district does not have enough qualified substitute teachers.
- The district has not developed implementation and monitoring plans for areas related to staffing practices.

Miscellaneous Findings

A number of findings were identified from the data sets by co-interpretation participants but ultimately were not included in the development of the key findings outlined above. Several findings were considered outliers if the observations seemed outside the intended focus of the audit. Others are listed as being in a “parking lot,” for later consideration. These findings are outlined in more detail in the data map (see the Appendix).

Additional Findings From the Auditor

Auditors’ key findings are findings not listed by the co-interpretation participants, but which the auditors felt strongly were crucial for the district. Such a finding would have met the criteria of being a critical problem faced by the district and addressed in the audit and which, if resolved, would improve student achievement enough to move the district out of corrective action; there would be a measureable positive impact systemwide as well. There were no auditor findings for Kingston City School District.

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 the co-interpretation with Kingston City School District led Learning Point Associates to make four recommendations in the areas of curriculum and instruction, data-informed decision making, AIS), and professional development/collaboration. These recommendations are interrelated, and the district’s success in addressing one will certainly enhance its success in addressing the others. For example, a strong and comprehensive curriculum will inform instruction, AIS, and professional development. Curriculum development, data application and AIS entry and exit points will be strengthened by targeted and embedded professional development and collaborative conversations. The recommendations are intertwined and, when addressed, will result in a comprehensive ELA action plan for Kingston City School District.

The curriculum and instruction recommendation focuses on further development of an integrated and consistent curricular continuum, higher-order cognitive classroom activities and expectations, and consistency of access to as well as implementation and monitoring of the curriculum across the district. The recommendation for data-informed decision making suggests facilitating decisions by the creation, implementation, and monitoring of clear data systems and instructions for their application, along with requisite and accessible support for teachers in how to use data to inform instructional decisions. The AIS recommendation makes the case for creating, implementing and assessing a systematic multistage process (response to intervention) for bolstering and targeting academic support for all struggling students. Finally, the professional development/collaboration recommendation stresses more time for teacher collaboration—especially between general education teachers and teachers of special needs, ELL, or struggling students; relevance and relatedness of professional development topics to instruction and assessment; and consistency in follow-up and assessing the application and outcomes of new-teacher learning. This recommendation discusses the ultimate development of professional learning communities as a way to address both teacher collaboration and professional development.

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 that 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 as points of reference for consideration.

Recommendation 1: Curriculum and Instruction

It is recommended that Kingston City School District further develop and articulate a comprehensive, well-articulated, written ELA curriculum for Grades K–12 to guide instruction across the district. In particular, the district will want to:

- **Develop district-created student expectations (i.e., educational objectives) for all grade levels and align these objectives within and across grade levels with NYSED ELA performance indicators (i.e., global objectives) in terms of knowledge level and cognitive process.**
- **Incorporate frequent and explicit opportunities for all students to engage in higher-order thinking, independent inquiry, research and presentation, and sustained reading and writing for meaningful purposes in ELA and other content areas.**
- **Provide all teachers across the district with equal and unhindered access to the ELA curriculum resources and necessary instructional materials and support to provide effective instruction to all students in their charge, especially SWDs, ELLs, and those receiving AIS.**
- **Develop and execute a process to ensure that ELA policies and plans are implemented and monitored equitably and consistently in all district buildings.**

This recommendation is based on key findings that Kingston City School District representatives and advocates identified from Learning Point Associates data reports during the district co-interpretation process. The pertinent key findings are presented and discussed in the Link to Findings subsection. Relevant and important information from the professional literature is presented and discussed in the Link to Research subsection. Suggestions regarding how Kingston City School District may operationalize this recommendation in its action plan are provided in the Implication Considerations subsection. References are listed in the last subsection.

Link to Findings

During the co-interpretation process, district representatives and advocates reviewed data reports prepared by Learning Point Associates and identified some curriculum and instruction key findings they believed to be positive. For example, they determined that Kingston City School District was in the process of revising curriculum maps for targeted grade levels, using a commercial curriculum mapping product. They also found evidence of a districtwide policy for adopting curriculum materials and that the majority of teachers have access to these materials. Further, the majority of teachers observed in their classrooms presented well-prepared lessons and maximized the available instructional time. In addition to these positive findings, co-interpretation participants also identified two key findings critical of the district's current ELA curriculum and instruction.

The first key finding identified some inconsistent and missing information from the district's curriculum documents, policies, and procedures. Evidence supporting this key finding was derived from the Curriculum Alignment Report, the Document Review Report, the Interview Report, and the Special Education Report. Curriculum maps for sampled grade levels (i.e., Grades 2, 4, 6, 8, 10) were analyzed, and it was determined that district-created grade-level

student expectations (i.e., educational objectives) for Grades 2 and 4 and NYSED ELA grade-level performance indicators for these two grade levels were not aligned in terms of knowledge level and cognitive demand—though there was close alignment in some areas of Grade 2. The curriculum maps for Grades 6, 8, and 10 did list specific NYSED ELA performance indicators to address each month, but they did not present district-created grade-level student expectations; it was not possible, therefore, to conduct an alignment analysis with NYSED ELA performance indicators at these grade levels. Further, maps for Grades 2 and 4 presented contrasting formats and information from maps for Grades 6, 8, and 10. The content of the ELA curriculum was not explicitly clear within or across grade levels, and there did not appear to be a clear connection between ELA and other content areas.

Regarding curriculum policies and procedures, and quite different from the Special Education document review (Positive Key Finding 3), teachers reported (in interviews) that there was inconsistent access to and use of district curriculum maps and materials as well as appropriate instructional resources and aids across the district. As a result, many students—especially SWDs and ELLs—effectively are not having full access to the general ELA curriculum and not receiving adequate instruction and support.⁷ Finally, although the district had ELA curriculum policies and plans in place (e.g., aligning curriculum to the district’s educational goals; schedule for developing and revising grade-level curriculum maps), there was little or no evidence regarding how this curriculum was implemented and monitored, districtwide, at each grade level and for specific populations (i.e., SWDs, ELLs, students receiving AIS). How did the district determine the extent to which materials and procedures identified in the written curriculum were actually being used and followed in all classrooms, and with what level of success?

The second key finding revealed that while Kingston City School District exposed its elementary-level and secondary-level students to a broad range of ELA knowledge and skills, the district was engaging these students at lower levels of cognitive demand than suggested by NYSED ELA performance indicators. Evidence supporting this key finding was obtained from the SEC Report, the Observation Report, and the Special Education Report. The SEC Report revealed that the greatest degree of alignment between teacher’s self-reported instructional practices and the NYSED standards, in terms of cognitive demand, was at Grades 5 and 6, followed by Grades 3, 4, 7, and 8, with the least alignment found in the primary and high school grade levels. Overall, however, the majority of instruction at all levels required students to demonstrate low levels of cognitive processing, such as *remembering*, rather than higher levels (e.g., *creating/demonstrating*). The Observation Report confirmed that teacher-controlled direct instruction, with the teacher talking to students, was most prevalent in ELA classrooms observed. In contrast, higher-level questioning and feedback were rarely noticed in these ELA classrooms. Further, students were rarely engaged in sustained reading and writing and there were few opportunities provided for them to participate in independent inquiry or research.

In summary, key findings from the co-interpretation process revealed strong evidence and support for the curriculum and instruction recommendation. First, district created student expectations were provided on curriculum maps for Grades 2 and 4 but not for Grades 6, 8, and

⁷ Although this seems to dispute Positive Key Finding 3, please note that that finding came from the Special Education document review only and does not reflect how plans or policies may be enacted or the experiences of teachers working to enact said plans or policies.

10. It is possible that district-created student expectations are missing from grade-level maps not sampled. Further, there was some alignment of knowledge level and cognitive demand between district student expectations and NYSED ELA performance indicators in Grade 2 but substantial misalignment in Grade 4. Such alignment could not be determined for Grades 6, 8, and 10. Second, while teachers presented well-prepared lesson plans and maximized instructional time, students were provided few opportunities to engage in higher order thinking, sustained reading and writing, and independent research and inquiry. Third, there was evidence indicating inconsistent teacher access to and use of curriculum materials and appropriate instructional resources, resulting in some students—especially SWDs, ELLs, and students receiving AIS—effectively being denied equitable access to the full curriculum and to suitable instruction. Finally, Kingston City School District did not present evidence of how it ensures that ELA curriculum policies and plans are consistently implemented and monitored.

Link to Research

This section of the report examines the perspectives and research from four areas of the professional education literature that pertain to the recommendation and key findings:

- Creating educational objectives and aligning them to state standards in terms of knowledge level and cognitive demand.
- Engaging students in higher order thinking, sustained reading and writing, and independent research and inquiry.
- Enabling all teachers to provide equal and unhindered access to the general ELA curriculum and appropriate instructional resources so that all students—especially SWDs and ELLs—receive high-quality instruction.
- Ensuring that K–12 ELA curricular policies and plans are implemented and monitored consistently and fairly across the district.

Educational Objectives and Alignment to State Standards

There are three distinct levels of student objectives: global, education, and instructional (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Krathwohl & Payne, 1971). *Global objectives* present a broad vision of what students need to learn over one or more years, such as end-of-year grade-level student expectations devised by state education departments. The purpose of state academic standards is “to create more intellectually demanding content and pedagogy, thereby improving the quality of education for all students, and to establish uniform goals for schools, thus producing greater equality in students’ academic achievement” (Sandholtz, Ogawa, & Scribner, 2004, p. 1178). Educational objectives state a more focused vision of student learning that occurs over a matter of weeks or months and typically are used to design a local curriculum. *Instructional objectives* represent a narrow focus of what students will learn, and depict student outcomes from specific lessons. Each level of this three-tiered system of objectives serves a specific purpose, and one cannot be substituted for another. A school system’s local curriculum maps, therefore, need to include educational objectives that are based on global objectives but also clearly represent what students are expected to know, learn, and be able to do regarding the local curricular content.

A standards-based curriculum model requires school systems to align their locally determined student expectations (i.e., educational objectives) with state grade-level standards and indicators (i.e., global objectives) in terms of knowledge level and cognitive expectations (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Danielson, 2002; English, 2000; Squires, 2009). Such alignment ensures a match between local and state expectations, not only in terms of the types of knowledge students are being required to learn but also in the ways they need to engage, think about, and process this information. Successful student learning requires clear alignment of knowledge level and cognitive demand (Corallo & McDonald, 2002). Without aligning the district standards to the state standards, “students cannot achieve the knowledge and skills they need to achieve the standards” (Linn & Herman, 1997, p. 17). A school system that simply presents state standards or performance indicators as its student expectations, however, does not have an aligned curriculum (Anderson, 2002).

Curriculum may be aligned horizontally and vertically (Case & Zucker, 2005). *Horizontal alignment* examines curriculum progression and experiences within a single grade level and considers the extent to which the standards, content/materials, teaching practices, and assessments are delineated and coordinated. *Vertical alignment* examines curriculum progression and connections across grade levels and considers the extent to which the standards, content/materials, teaching practices, and assessments used in one grade are designed to support student learning and success in subsequent grade levels. One study of California elementary schools found that students in schools in which the curriculum was vertically aligned scored higher on the state assessment (Williams, Kirst, & Haertel, 2005). Aligning the curriculum—from matching local and state standards to ensuring viability and consistency of goals, content, instructional strategies, and assessment tools and procedures within and across grade levels—is a powerful and successful means for providing a guaranteed and viable curriculum, representing the essential information that students must know and can reasonably cover in the allotted time and, as a result, improves student learning and achievement (Cawelti & Protheroe, 2003; The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006; Danielson, 2002; Edvantia, 2005; Marzano, 2003; Porter & Smithson, 2001; Squires, 2009).

In summary, school systems should use global objectives—expressed as their state’s grade-level learning standards or performance indicators—to develop district-specific, grade-level educational objectives that identify what its students should know, learn, and be able to do with respect to the district’s curricular content. The two types of objectives are both necessary but are not interchangeable. Further, school systems need to ensure that the educational objectives align to the global objectives in terms of knowledge level and cognitive demand, to ensure that students not only acquire the necessary information but also engage this information through a range of cognitive processes. Some research has determined that teachers provide more focused and higher quality instruction in school systems with an aligned curriculum, resulting in improved student learning and achievement.

Higher Order Thinking, Sustained Reading and Writing, Independent Research and Inquiry

Some research has determined that students typically do well with basic literacy skills, such as decoding and comprehension, but struggle in making inferences, drawing appropriate conclusions, connecting text to their lives, and communicating complex ideas (Carr, Saifer, &

Novick, 2002). This situation may be due, in part, to the typical school environment in which students are expected to learn. For instance, students—especially those students typically marginalized by the education system (e.g., SWDs, ELLs)—are expected to interact with and memorize knowledge and skills considered—by the education system—to be important, with little attention to how this information applies in their lives (Alvermann, 2001; Daniel & Lenski, 2007; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Moje, 2000). Freire and Macedo suggested that students generally have little or no power to make decisions about what they study and learn in school and, consequently, tend to disengage, thereby causing teachers to question these students’ intellect and participation, when the actual problem is that these students feel disconnected from what they are expected to learn. Indeed, in most classrooms, teachers control the scope and tone of the discourse, and these conversations primarily focus on literal translations with little or no opportunities for students to question, interpret, or otherwise critically examine texts (Hurry & Parker, 2007; McDonald, 2004; Whitehead, 2002).

All too frequently, students are expected to seek and find the literal meaning in texts, and to merely accept what they read in texts without questioning the perspectives and possible biases of the author, the text’s relevance or irrelevancy to a given situation, and its applicability to students’ lives (Johnson & Freedman, 2005; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). This perspective stands in stark contrast to Langer’s (2002, 2004) notion of “high literacy,” whereby students who are successful readers and writers actively question and critically examine texts, and engage in thoughtful conversations with peers about their reading and writing, and construct understandings that surpass a mere literal translation. Becoming a literate person involves more than learning to read words from the page, memorizing the spellings and definitions of words, and writing complete sentences or a properly formatted essay. From a critical literacy stance, students need frequent, meaningful opportunities to construct, question, and determine meaning through transactions with texts they read and write (e.g., Bean & Moni, 2003; Haas-Dyson, 2004; Rosenblatt, 2004; Wilhelm, 1997, 2007). It is essential for all learners, including SWDs and ELLs, to be taught and routinely engage in higher-order thinking skills during instruction (Bulgren, Deshler, & Lenz, 2007; Dong, 2006; Ivie, 1998; Kamil, 2003; Pogrow, 2005). Students who are provided with more opportunities to use metacognition—thinking about their thinking—while they read and write are apt to be more engaged and inquisitive about what they read and write (Atwell, 1998, 2007), which complements respective research findings presented by Langer (2000, 2004) and Kamil (2003). To stimulate students’ interest and engagement, some teachers have incorporated aspects of popular culture into classroom instruction and activities (e.g., Ruday, 2008/2009).

In order for students to develop and hone their critical literacy skills, they need to participate frequently in sustained reading and writing, particularly of texts which offer a variety of perspectives on topics (e.g., R. L. Allington, 1994; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Berliner, 1981; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Cohen, 1999; Garan, 2001; Garan & Devoogd, 2008; Graham & Perin, 2007; Krashen, 2002, 2005; Langer, 2002, 2005). Students need time for “free” reading and writing of self-selected texts each day, along with other opportunities to read, with more input and monitoring by the teacher (Reutzel, Fawson, & Smith, 2008; Stahl, 2004). Reading and writing workshops present one model for offering a mix of teacher-controlled and student-controlled reading and writing opportunities (Calkins, 1994, 2003; Graves, 1983; Jasmine & Weiner, 2007). It is particularly important for students to see reading and writing as

interdependent activities and perspectives, whereby their reading is enhanced by imagining how the author would want to be understood, as well as how their writing may be improved by thinking how readers may view and understand what they write (Rickards & Hawes, 2006).

There is wide agreement among educators on the benefits of actively engaging students in the learning process through student-centered learning experiences that involve researching topics in greater depth—beyond a classroom textbook (Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005; Shanahan, 1997; Short, 1997; Thomas & Oldfather, 1995; Wilhelm, 1997, 2007). Generally speaking, these authors favor approaches in which the teacher ensures that the inquiry and research experience will be successful and focused on the topic or task at hand, by either sharing directly in the inquiry project with students or preselecting and structuring various sources and experiences for students. In both cases, the goal is to provide students with the resources and contexts to conduct their research and inquiry and avoid setting students off on their own with only the hope that they will be successful. Some researchers have found that reading and critically examining multiple texts on a topic provides students with valuable inquiry experiences in which they discover both assenting and dissenting perspectives (e.g., Hartman & Allison, 1996). Dunn, Elder-Hinshaw, Nelson, and Manset-Williamson (2006) and Lehrer, Erickson and Connell (cited in Dunn et al., 2006) promoted the use of inquiry projects for SWDs; students who used online and other multimedia resources and tools demonstrated active, inquisitive problem solving and gave thoughtful attention to how they researched, organized, and presented their findings.

In summary, to become good readers and writers, students need to learn and demonstrate critical literacy skills with which they question what they read and write from a variety of perspectives and engage in thoughtful dialogues with teachers and peers. Through sustained reading and writing experiences with a variety of texts, students may continue to question and deepen their understanding of topics and multiple perspectives. Students need to engage in opportunities of active inquiry and research, which may best be accomplished through the development of student-centered projects, designed by the teacher to engage students in a learning task, as well as guided or shared inquiry, in which the teacher and students together explore a topic in greater depth.

Equal Access to the General ELA Curriculum and Appropriate Instructional Approaches and Resources for SWDs and ELLs

Federal laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandate that students with special needs be granted equal access to the general curriculum. An inclusive approach prepares students for living in inclusive communities outside of school and provides them with the knowledge and opportunities they need to act more independently. Research has demonstrated that students who are provided access to the general curriculum not only benefit socially but also demonstrate improved learning when taught alongside peers in general education classroom settings (Browder et al., 2007; Fisher & Frey, 2007; King-Sears, 2001); this situation is commonly referred to as *inclusive education* (Fisher & Frey, 2001).

SWDs, ELLs, and other struggling students—along with the educators who work with them—have experienced and continue to experience challenges in gaining access to the general ELA

curriculum and appropriate instructional materials and resources (Allington, 2006; Cummins, 1994; Dong, 2006; Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006; Scanlon, Vellutino, Small, Fanuele, & Sweeney, 2005). Fortunately, these researchers and others (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Cunningham & Allington, 2007; Duffy, 1994; Edwards, Turner, & Mokhtari, 2008; Fisher & Frey, 2001; Graham & Perrin, 2007; International Reading Association, 2000; Jackson, Harper, & Jackson, 2002; Joftus, 2002; Kamil, 2003; Langer, 2002, 2004; Scammacca et al., 2007; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2002; Torgesen, Houston, & Rissman, 2007; Torgesen, Houston, Rissman, Decker, et al., 2007) have determined that all students—including SWDs, ELLs and other nonproficient students—may be successful when provided with equal access to the general ELA curriculum and appropriate and differentiated instruction provided by highly qualified teachers. These researchers emphasize the importance of retaining competent teachers and providing consistent professional learning experiences to ensure that these individuals know how to use resources effectively to plan and deliver this high-quality instruction.

All students deserve and need high-quality instruction to be successful, and an informed teacher knows how to differentiate this instruction to meet various student needs and learning styles. Educators may differentiate three aspects of instruction—content, process, products—while still maintaining the same learning objectives and expectations (Tomlinson, 2001; Tomlinson & Strickland, 2005). A teacher may vary what is taught (content), how it is taught (process), and what students create to demonstrate their learning (products), guided by the same objectives and expectations set forth for all students (King-Shaver & Hunter, 2003; Walpole & McKenna, 2007). Curriculum design models such as the universal design for learning (CAST, n.d.; Rose et al., 2005) provide guidance in creating a curriculum that is accessible and of interest and relevance to all learners.

In summary, federal laws require that all students, including SWDs and ELLs, be granted full access to the general curriculum—that is, all students are expected to demonstrate the same outcomes. Research has demonstrated that SWDs, ELLs, and nonproficient students may be successful literacy learners when provided with high quality instruction by capable teachers. To reach this goal, school systems need to provide appropriate variety and quantity of instructional materials and to ensure that all teachers and students have equal access. Further, teachers need to be knowledgeable about how to use these materials to design and deliver appropriate instruction targeted to diverse student needs.

Implementation and Monitoring of the K–12 ELA Curriculum

In order to design a system for ensuring that a curriculum is being appropriately implemented and monitored, it is essential to have a clear understanding of what constitutes a curriculum. A comprehensive, clearly articulated, and aligned ELA curriculum presents a blueprint or plan for what needs to be taught and learned, along with references to specific curriculum resources, sample lesson plans and instructional strategies, and tools for assessing student progress—to name some of the major components (Glatthorn, 1994, 1995; Glatthorn, Boschee, & Whitehead, 2008; Glatthorn, Carr, & Harris, 2001; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Unfortunately, many educators and systems have viewed and continue to equate curriculum with “coverage” of a textbook, program, or list of state standards (Ben-Peretz, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 2001;

Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Ornstein, 1994). Although the written curriculum can and should inform instruction, it is essential to acknowledge that “textbooks and programs are not curriculum delivery; they are curriculum design” (English, 2008, p. 9). Curricular pressures to use and cover certain materials, implement certain methods, and improve student performance on high-stakes assessment, among other concerns, can and do have potential negative impacts on the quality of instruction provided to students (Jackson et al., 2002). Curriculum maps should provide teachers with a wide variety of examples and samples of various instructional methods and materials, with suggestions of how to use them to help all students actively engage the curricular content and the learning process and, in turn, meet district and state learning objectives and standards (Taylor et al., 2000). In short, a curriculum should embody the essential content that students need to be taught and to learn within the instructional time available (Marzano, 2003) and also should include the many resources, tools, examples, and other supports necessary to effectively implement the curriculum.

After a school system has planned a robust and viable curriculum, it establishes a means for ensuring that this plan is implemented and monitored. Marzano (2003) identified the following five key steps to successfully implementing and monitoring such a curriculum:

1. **Differentiate essential versus supplemental content.** Step 1 is to clearly differentiate the essential content that all students must learn from supplemental content that also may be addressed.
2. **Determine appropriate pacing and coverage.** Step 2 involves ensuring that content identified as essential can reasonably be covered during the school year. If there are only 180 instructional days in an academic year, one would not propose to cover material that will take 200 or more days.
3. **Design a scope and sequence.** Step 3 calls for school system to design a scope and sequence that provides students with opportunities to access and learn the essential content in the most efficient manner possible.
4. **Monitor implementation.** Step 4 directs administrators to devise a means for monitoring the instructional implementation of the essential content. Marzano stresses that while this process may involve some classroom observations, it also must include other components such as having teachers provide documented evidence of their teaching (e.g., plans, samples of student work), holding periodic teacher conferences to discuss their instruction and possible questions), or provide what Blase and Blase (cited in Marzano, 2003) referred to as “reflective supervision.”
5. **Maximize instructional time.** Step 5 requires school systems to maximize the instructional time provided to teachers and students by minimizing interruptions or other infringements on the limited number of hours available each school day. This includes, but is not limited to, taking steps to avoid phone calls, public announcements, and student pull-outs.

Marzano’s five steps to implementing and monitoring the curriculum are strikingly similar to advice and research offered by others. For instance, school system stakeholders need to identify essential content to teach, agree on a common vision for reform and improvement, and affirm that all students (regardless of background, disabilities, or other challenges) are viewed as

capable and deserving learners and will be taught well (Glatthorn et al., 2001; Glatthorn et al., 2008; Newmann, 2002; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Glatthorn et al. (2008) identified three key stages in successfully implementing the curriculum: Planning, implementation, and institutionalization. The *planning stage* includes the development of a master plan—identifying year-by-year when new courses will be developed, when existing courses will be improved, and which areas need to be strengthened, as well as the overall scope and timing of the planned curriculum changes. The plan needs to be aligned to external standards or requirements. Also important at this stage is to develop a task force comprised of representative stakeholders who can gain the support of others in the district community. The planning phase also involves identifying potential personnel reassignments and working with teachers and the teachers’ union, if applicable, to effect these changes. The *implementation stage* commences when the newly adopted curriculum is put into place. It is essential for the district to provide continued professional development so that teachers become comfortable and competent not only with what they need to teach, but various ways to teach it based on student need. The *institutionalization stage* is reached when the curriculum is successfully implemented systemwide and becomes a stable part of its daily work. Institutionalization is evident, in part, when administrators and teachers throughout the system are consistently implementing the curriculum and demonstrate support for and a commitment to the changes.

Glatthorn et al. (2008) and Sullivan and Glanz (2004) identified several procedures that school leaders may employ during the implementation and institutionalization phases to ensure that the curriculum is successfully actualized and monitored. These procedures include informal observations or walk-throughs, where administrators, most often principals or content supervisors, make impromptu visits to classrooms to observe instruction taking place and provide teachers with quick, formative feedback. An added benefit to this method is that it makes administrators more visible to teachers, which may improve teacher-administrator relationships. Differentiated professional development is another process, whereby administrators, often principals, assume a broad view of supervision and provide more individualized instructional support and leadership based on teacher need. The result of these two procedures is that administrators observe everyone and provide differing, personalized levels of support to teachers to ensure that the curriculum is being properly implemented.

Successfully implementing and monitoring the curriculum, including all the components identified above, is possible only when guided by competent, compassionate, and committed school leaders, serving as “change agents,” who do not simply supervise others but who are knowledgeable about content matter, understand the complexities of teaching and learning, and are dedicated to supporting long-term improvement in curriculum, teaching, and learning (Brown, 2004; Fullan, 2007; Glatthorn et al., 2008; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Such school leaders attend to factors that have been demonstrated to have a high impact on effective curriculum implementation, such as: “Teachers perceive the need for the new curriculum...” or “Teachers have an opportunity to share ideas and problems with each other and receive support from supervisors and administrators” (Fullan & Park, as cited in Glatthorn et al., 2008, p. 256).

Professional learning communities represent another effective model for implementing and monitoring the curriculum. Such communities typically exist at the school-building level, are

composed primarily of teachers (sometimes with administrators), meet once or twice a month, and serve as a focused forum for examining and improving student learning and achievement with respect to the curriculum (e.g., DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). These communities provide teachers with opportunities to examine and solve instructional problems, increase their level of confidence and efficacy, assist new teachers, broaden the collection of successful instructional methods and tools, and improve effectiveness in building on fellow teachers' strengths and assisting them with their challenges.

In summary, a school system needs clear curricular policies and plans before it can develop procedures to ensure they are effectively implemented and monitored. A curriculum represents a blueprint of what teachers are expected to teach and students are expected to learn, and it includes resources, tools, and examples to guide teachers in designing and delivering effective instruction to meet the diverse needs of students, including SWDs, ELLs, and nonproficient students. An effective curriculum embodies essential content that all students must learn and presents a viable scope and sequence that teachers may use to plan and deliver instruction during the school year. Teachers may submit their lesson plans and student work samples to administrators, and participate in conferences with school leaders and at professional learning community meetings with colleagues as evidence of curriculum implementation and monitoring. Administrators need to demonstrate leadership by serving as knowledgeable and compassionate change agents dedicated to long-term improvement and by providing teachers with the curricular and instructional resources they need, including sustained and differentiated professional learning opportunities and protection of valuable instruction time from interruptions and distractions.

Implementation Considerations

To meet the provisions of this recommendation, Kingston City School District will want to delineate specific steps in its action plans. The following considerations are intended to assist in the development of these steps.

- **Create a plan for curriculum development, implementation, and monitoring.** Brown (2004), Glatthorn et al. (2008), Marzano (2003), and Wiggins and McTighe (2005) present several suggestions for constructing a guaranteed and viable curriculum plan, as well as guidelines for ensuring that the plan is successfully implemented and monitored, as follows:
 - The district needs to establish and maintain districtwide K–12 curriculum development teams to ensure that curriculum maps and materials are developed for all grade levels, disseminated, and readily available to all teachers across the district. This process should include continued development and refinement of its K-12 curriculum maps using a single system and format (TechPaths mapping system was used for maps for Grades 6, 8, and 10) to ensure consistency within and across grade levels.
 - The district can use Marzano's five steps for implementing and monitoring the curriculum. These steps may be viewed as "headings" for an implementing and monitoring policy. The Kingston City School District should identify specific action steps and ensure these steps are followed. For example, a school should determine

which hours of the day it will not allow interruptions by announcements, meetings, or other distractions, in order to preserve instructional time.

- The district should use resources like Fullan and Park’s “elements of curriculum implementation” (cited in Glatthorn et al., 2008, p. 256) to devise a checklist to ensure procedures are in place to maximize implementation and monitoring. Examples of implementation and monitoring procedures include having teachers submit lesson plans and samples of student work to be reviewed, teacher-administrator conferences, administrator walk-throughs/observations, and Professional Learning Communities. These and other tools, procedures, and support systems will help the district to ensure that its ELA curriculum is effectively under way and under observation.
- To provide the strong leadership needed for successful curriculum reform and school improvement, Kingston City School District may wish to charge a districtwide committee with the responsibility for overseeing the revision of the curriculum maps and related documents and ensuring that all teachers are provided with the curricular, instructional, and assessment materials they need based on their students’ needs (not grade level). This committee also should advise the district about creating and maintaining procedures for monitoring the curriculum (e.g., establishing policies for teachers to periodically submit plans and student work for review, building a collection of evidence of what teachers are teaching and students are learning, and creating plans for teacher and administrator conferences and administrator walk-throughs of classrooms). Further, this committee should regularly review how the district’s professional learning opportunities are aligned with curriculum and instruction goals and needs.
- **Work from existing maps.** The Kingston City School District has elected to use the TechPaths curriculum mapping system to redesign some of its grade-level maps, as evidenced by the maps for Grades 6, 8, and 10 that the district submitted to Learning Point Associates for the document review. These maps appear to be works in progress and need to be completed. In particular, district-created grade-level student expectations (e.g., educational objectives), aligned to but not substituted by NYSED ELA performance indicators, need to be presented. The district also needs to create curriculum maps for all grade levels, K–12, using the same mapping system and format, and to ensure that district-created grade-level student expectations, also aligned to but not substituted by NYSED ELA performance indicators, are presented.
- **Align student expectations to state performance indicators.** The Curriculum Alignment Report indicated that district-created student expectations for Grades 2 and 4 demonstrated some areas of near alignment and some areas of misalignment with the NYSED ELA performance indicators with regard to knowledge level and cognitive demand. The district will want to review all existing and new district-level student expectations for each grade-level to ensure they align with their respective NYSED ELA performance indicators for knowledge level and cognitive demand. The district may find Anderson and Krathwohl’s (2001) taxonomy useful in this process. The process is as follows:
 - Use one table for each grade level.

- Refer to the knowledge level/cognitive demand code for each NYSED ELA performance indicator for Grades 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 that Learning Point Associates assigned (see Appendix D in the Curriculum Alignment Report) and plot the Indicators in the appropriate cells in the table.
 - Identify the knowledge level/cognitive demand code for each district student expectation and plot these on the same table. Use two different colors, on paper or a word processor, to differentiate between district expectations and NYSED Indicators.
 - Compare expectations and Indicators. Then revise the expectations as needed to bring them in line with NYSED Indicators—i.e., the verb signals the cognitive demand, the noun phrase signals the knowledge level. District expectations should relate to the curriculum content identified by the district.
- **Articulate use of ELA materials.** Commercially and locally prepared ELA programs and other resources, including assessment tools, do not constitute the district’s curriculum. Kingston City School District needs to clearly identify how these materials will be used by teachers to teach what students are expected to learn and be able to demonstrate. Teachers need guidance on which instructional strategies they might use, including ways to differentiate this instruction based on student need. They need to acquire knowledge of when and how to group students for targeted instruction and other learning experiences (e.g., individual, partner, teacher-guided small groups, cooperative groups, whole class). Teachers also need to know how to use formative assessment tools and procedures to track student learning and to plan future instruction.
 - **Align the curriculum both horizontally and vertically.** The district will want to arrange opportunities for teachers to continue developing curriculum maps in grade-level and across-grade-level groups, to ensure horizontal alignment (within one grade level) and vertical alignment (across grade levels). An example of an alignment activity would be to track the development of student expectations across one grade level, then across more grade levels. The following questions can be asked: *To what extent are expectations presented from beginning, foundational knowledge and cognitive processes to more complex and abstract? How do expectations within a grade-level build on one another, and how do expectations from one year relate to expectations in the following year?* Professional learning communities (DuFour et al., 2005), discussed further in Recommendation 4, present a promising framework and process for undertaking such curriculum work.
 - **Help students utilize higher-order thinking skills.** Kingston City School District will want to provide more opportunities for students to use higher-order thinking skills, conduct research and inquiry, and engage in sustained reading and writing. Fortunately, there are many ways to collectively address these needs. For example, teachers may have students read multiple texts on a topic that present varying perspectives on the issues. To maximize instructional time and ensure that all students participate, teachers might build a collection of possible texts representing a range of reading levels, from which students may choose (with the teacher’s guidance). Students should be engaged in multiple opportunities to discuss, question, and write about the perspectives they and their peers read about. Students should be taught to examine how and why contexts and other factors may influence how and why different perspectives are generated. Numerous strategies are

available to assist teachers in building students' questioning and critical literacy skills (McKeown & Beck, 1993, Raphael & Au, 2005; Wilhelm, 2007). Other resources discuss the importance of sustained reading and writing and how to design literacy blocks to ensure ample time is provided for them to occur (e.g., R.A. Allington, 1994; R. L. Allington, 2006; Atwell, 2007; Calkins, 2003; Cunningham & Allington, 2007). Teachers need to ensure that students have many opportunities to read and receive targeted instruction in reading materials at their instructional level, to read other materials at their independent level, and to benefit from engaging with relevant, interesting ideas and content in texts at their frustration level. Fielding and Roller (1992) provide practical suggestions to teachers for matching children with different levels of books. In addition, online resources provide valuable and practical suggestions, lesson plans, and tools. Two relevant resources are the International Reading Association's ReadWriteThink website (www.readwritethink.org) and the Practice Guides of the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse website (ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/).

- **Provide a range of resources for teachers.** Kingston City School District needs to provide teachers with equal and unhindered access to all aspects of the ELA curriculum, including all curricular, instructional, and assessment resources. In particular, teachers must be provided with instructional resources based on the instructional needs of their students, not based on the grade level to which teachers or students are assigned. For example, Grade 3 teacher may work with students who need materials ranging in difficulty and interest level from Kindergarten to Grade 6. In other words, a single grade-level ELA core textbook or core program is not sufficient to meet the instructional needs of all students.

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Recommendation 2: Data Use

It is recommended that Kingston City School District further develop its current systems and processes to implement a districtwide systemic approach to data-informed decision making.

The requirements and methodology of this effort will allow for the following organizational conditions:

- Clearly documented and communicated expectations from district and building-level leadership regarding use of formative, benchmark and summative data to inform academic programming, planning, and instruction, including specifically identified summative, benchmark, and formative assessments, with consistent protocols respective to each
- Consistent implementation and monitoring of data-informed decision-making practices across all schools in the district
- Consistently available and effective support and professional learning opportunities, including professional learning communities, for administrators and teachers related to assessment review, data analysis, and data system use
- Established data leaders and teams among existing district staff operating within and across all buildings
- Continued progress with updates to data management systems

Further, these organizational conditions will couple with the following practices specific to the district's ELA curriculum to improve instruction as indicated by the formative, benchmark, and summative data referenced above:

- Identification of evidence to respond to the following questions: *How do we know the curriculum and instruction are being implemented as intended? Are they having the desired effect on student performance?*
- Identification of evidence to respond to the following questions: *How do we know that a particular program is effective and having the intended impact? What does success look like?*
- Determination of program data measures based on their intended impact on student performance or other critical success factors

This recommendation is based on key findings that Kingston City School District representatives and advocates identified from Learning Point Associates data reports during the district co-interpretation process. The pertinent key findings are presented and discussed in the Link to Findings subsection. Relevant and important information from the professional literature is presented and discussed in the Link to Research subsection. Suggestions regarding how Kingston City School District may operationalize this recommendation in its action plan are provided in the Implication Considerations subsection. References are listed in the last subsection.

Link to Findings

During the co-interpretation process, district representatives and advocates identified one key finding that serves as the basis for this recommendation:

There is a lack of a districtwide systemic approach to data use, implementation, and monitoring. The district plans and documentation to inform staff on data use lack clarity and articulation. Teacher training related to assessment review and data analysis is reported to be inconsistent throughout the district.

This key finding is supported by evidence from the Interview Report, the Audit Survey Report, the Document Review Report, and the Special Education Report. It addresses Guiding Question 5 of the audit: *To what extent do student achievement data (formative as well as summative) inform academic programming, planning, and instruction?* The key finding is supported by 34 findings, and it received fifteen votes from co-interpretation participants, ranking it as the fourth-highest prioritized area for improvement.

In the Document Review report, there is evidence that Kingston City School District has several plans and practices related to ensuring that student achievement data are used to inform academic programming, planning, and instruction. Evidence shows that assessment data are collected, but the documents are not clear on how the data is then used to drive instructional decisions. Even within schools rated high for data use in the Interview Report, respondents indicated that they were not aware of a written data-use plan and that expected instructional practices related to data are unofficial. Further evidence from the Interview Report indicates that administrative focus and communication on expectations regarding the use of data across schools is inconsistent, ranging from strong focus with clear communication in some schools to minor focus with no clearly communicated expectations in others.

Evidence from the Document Review Report showed that the district provides professional development opportunities on the topic of use of student assessment data. In the Interview Report, however, teachers at all levels said that they would like more consistent training on how to incorporate data into classroom instruction. This finding is supported by the Audit Survey Report, which showed that nearly 50 percent of all teachers indicated they received minimal or no training on data-use topics such as diagnosing learning challenges and monitoring progress.

According to respondents in the Interview Report, the current data management systems are not integrated and some teachers responded that they had difficulty accessing student data. In the Audit Survey Report, 33 percent of all teachers indicated that data from formative assessments are not available in a timely manner. This finding is supported by the Special Education Report, in which interview respondents indicated a lack of timely access to data in order to inform instruction. Perhaps for this reason, teacher in the special education interviews reported that they are more comfortable using teacher-made tests than state assessment data to guide instruction.

Finally, according to evidence in the Interview Report and the Audit Survey Report, there is inconsistent use of common assessments and application of data-informed instructional decisions, particularly at the secondary level.

Although multiple data sources point to some constructive efforts to ensure that instructional and programmatic decisions are based on collected and analyzed data, these efforts are implemented inconsistently across schools and grade spans throughout the district. Systemic articulation, driven by clearly defined expectations, appropriate support for staff, and convenient access to necessary data will move Kingston City School District toward an informed approach to improvement.

Link to Research

This research review focuses on data-driven decision making as a subsystem operating within the larger functional system of the comprehensive unit school district, specifically:

- Support of systemic implementation of data-driven decision making in educational organizations
- Rationale and best practices regarding professional support and professional learning for district staff to effectively inform academic programming, planning, and instruction
- Technology-based data systems to support convenient access to data
- Data that focus on instruction and learning—along with monitoring of student achievement at the individual student, classroom, school and district level

Rationale for Data-Driven Decision Making in Educational Organizations

Gallagher, Means, and Padilla (2007) describe data-driven decision making:

In an education context, data-driven decision making is the analysis and use of student data and information concerning educational resources and processes to inform planning, resource allocation, student placement, and curriculum and instruction. The practice entails regular data collection and ongoing implementation of a continuous improvement process. (p. 1)

A school district that effectively makes informed decisions using summative and formative information does so in a manner that touches all aspects of operation. Millhollen (2002, p. 86) points out Willa A. Foster’s comment, “Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution. It represents the wise choice of many alternatives.” Using data and research properly and consistently is the key to making wise choices. The results of the Kingston City School District co-interpretation clearly show that the district places high priority on moving in this direction.

The first item to understand with regard to a data-driven school district answers the question *What does this look like?* Supovitz (2006) offers the following four components as the basis of a districtwide data-use system:

- Data to provide feedback to teachers and students in order to facilitate the learning of individual students
- The use of data to hold individuals or groups accountable for their performance

- Data to monitor the implementation and impact of programs in order to make decisions about maintaining, modifying, or eliminating them
- Data to facilitate organizational learning

Earl and Katz (2006, p. 20) emphasize the cultural aspects of data use to develop a “culture of inquiry” in schools. They identify four key aspects of creating such an environment.

- “It is essential to involve others in interpreting and engaging with data so that groups of people develop a shared purpose and collaborative habits to reach goals.” (p. 20)
- “Data become a means for instilling a ‘shared urgency’ to fulfill the purposes of schooling.” (p. 21)
- “The use of data requires time that must be created within the regular schedules of schools.” (p. 21)
- “Organizations should develop critical friends who can help members reflect on data, ask questions, and probe for alternative interpretations.” (p. 21)

Pruess (2003, p. 15) advocates for schools and districts to determine their own “key indicators of student success,” which are student-centered, measurable results that become the focal point of district and school monitoring and decision making. Determination of how the key indicators are to be measured is essential in improvement efforts. Monitoring of those measures requires data collection systems—including reporting formats, timelines, and feedback structures—that will allow the district to make appropriate adjustments and inform action planning.

The theme of identifying key indicators of success and building tools and systems to monitor those indicators is a unifying approach to school and district improvement. Districts that have put in place systemic and systemwide approaches that include a clear vision focused on student learning and improving instruction, supported by multimeasure accountability and data systems and coherent professional development designed to develop districtwide strategies to improve instruction, have improved student achievement (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Organizational structures that support data use at the school level can include time set aside for teachers to review and discuss data in small groups, designated support staff, and the adoption of procedures for discussing data.

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

Professional Learning and Support for District Staff

Districts that intend to use data effectively to drive decision making need to be prepared to make a significant time and effort commitment to supporting the teachers who must carry district expectations to day-to-day classroom practices. This situation requires accepting the idea that

teachers will come to the job with varying degrees of readiness and training and school districts will be required to provide the professional learning to build this skill-set in personnel. In a study that sampled 975 schools nationwide, the U.S. Department of Education found that while 60 percent of teachers with access to student data systems reported receiving professional support on data use in the form of professional development and administrative support, less than 10 percent had formal coursework in this area (Gallagher, Means & Padilla 2007).

Wayman and Cho (2008) recommend the following:

A comprehensive professional development plan should support elements from the entire cycle of educator decision making, from access, to interpretation, to taking action and using feedback. This lens, coupled with knowledge that the backgrounds and needs of the district educators are as varied as the educators themselves, suggests that preparation offerings should be widely varied and offered at regular, frequent intervals. Educators should be provided whatever they need to continue to develop proficiency as data and data systems users. (p. 96)

Research points to several components that comprise successful implementation of professional support for data-informed decision making. Bakia, DeBarger, Means, and Padilla (2009) support their national study of implementing data-informed decision making with research from Choppin (2002) and Cromey (2000) that time to access, analyze, and plan with data is of utmost importance. They reference case studies that show structuring time so that small groups can review and discuss data increase the likelihood that data will be reviewed and lead to decisions.

Lachat and Smith (2005) indicate that engaging teachers in the process of data analysis is essential. This engagement is best ensured through systematic professional development that allows them to learn about and practice data use in a variety of settings. The use of data coaches and other professional development methods can build teacher capacity for data use. In essence, “Teachers need to learn how to obtain and manage data, ask good questions, accurately analyze data, and apply data results appropriately and ethically” (Lachat & Smith, 2005, p. 336). Participation in professional learning communities is one means to this end, combining structured development, opportunity for professional collaboration, and hands-on practice.

Professional learning communities (see Recommendation 4) are a form of the professional collaboration referenced above. They are designed to give teachers regular opportunities to collaborate to improve their teaching and expand expertise with the ultimate goal of improving student learning and achievement via this increased capacity (DuFour, 2004, 2007; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). As educators gain awareness of how reviewing teaching practices and adjusting methods fosters student learning, they become more engaged in this process and develop “assessment literacy” (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2003; Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Stiggins, 2005). Such literacy, according to Fullan (p. 142) includes the following:

Increased capacity to analyze and make critical sense of student performance data; increased capacity to use results of these analyses to develop and implement schoolwide- and classroom-based changes that will lead to improved student learning; increased capacity among teachers to be proactive and open about performance data and informed about the uses and misuses of achievement data. (p. 142)

Professional learning communities also provide development by tapping an existing expertise in many schools. Gallagher, Means, and Padilla (2008) report that in their 2007 survey, teachers with access to a student data system were asked “whether they could benefit from seven forms of professional development related to data-informed instruction and using a data system” (p. 22). Among respondents, professional development on “developing diagnostic assessments and adjusting instruction based on diagnostic data” were of the highest need (p. 22). The lowest need reported was for professional development in collaboration with other educators. If teachers already know how to collaborate well, this ability provides a resource, through professional learning communities, for districts seeking to develop data-informed decision-making skills in personnel.

In addition to using professional learning communities as a professional development option to build data use skills, appropriately constructing professional roles for district personnel in this area can provide another support system for educators. Lachat and Smith (2005) suggest establishing a data team and identifying a data coach who can help school staff stay focused on using data for continuous school improvement. Their study found that “the activities of the data teams were central to increasing communication among school staff about the trends and issues shown in the data” (p. 344). The work of a data coach can improve the data literacy skills of staff members who have little or no experience using data.

Building data-driven schools is not just a matter of training teachers; district leadership must provide support in the form of clearly articulated expectations that are consistent across every building. Another important piece of leadership support comes in the form of value-denoting considerations, such as time and resources. Bakia et al. (2009) point out the following in their study of data-informed decision making implementation:

District and school leaders need to issue the “call to arms” for improving education and using data as a tool to bring about that improvement. Typically, they play a major role in framing targets for educational improvement, setting expectations for staff participation in data-informed decision making, and making resources such as supported time available to support the enterprise. (p. 5)

Wayman and Cho (2008) agree, suggesting administration and leadership provide many opportunities each week to look at and engage with school data, and suggesting that “district leaders work with principals and other building leaders to establish clear structures describing how principals should lead faculties in using data and data systems, along with supports for carrying this out” (p. 100).

Support for data use commonly occurs as a joint effort between district leaders and school leaders. Young’s (2008) study of schools within a California district found that this effort is essential for the success of implementation as well as teacher buy-in. While district and school-based leaders set the “agenda” (p. 102), the district leadership sets expectations on which data matter and how to use these data to inform decision making and curriculum. Building leaders are the primary source of the articulation of this message in the form of “agenda-setting and norm-building efforts”(p. 102).

Implementing data-informed decision making requires what Copland, Knapp, Monpas-Huber and Swinnerton (2006) call “an organizational culture” that “has evolved that encourages inquiry into problems and practice” (p.25). This culture is more than a single policy or administrator memo and more than simply having a technology-driven data portal in place. Culture is pervasive in all parts of the organization in which it exists. Bertfield and Merrill (2008, p. 192) go as far as to call “acceptance and use” by all teachers and administrators as a requirement for understanding what is possible when establishing systemwide data use. For successful implementation, data-driven decision making is not an optional practice; this idea starts with the support of leadership.

Technology-Based Data Systems

If teachers do not have access to data, they cannot use it to make instructional decisions. As Lachat and Smith (2005) note, “Teachers are better able to modify their instructional strategies when they have current information about the skill levels and proficiencies of their students” (p. 345).

This deficit can be addressed using part of Kimmelman’s (2006) process. As Kimmelman states, “It is more important than ever to manage knowledge in schools—that knowledge is primarily data encompassing staff and student demographic information, student achievement results, and research” (p. 70). This situation requires managing the available data and action research findings through a comprehensive data management system.

Kingston City School District co-interpretation findings indicate that the district already has and uses a data management system, and improvements of this system are in progress. This is an important step in the right direction, and research dictates that certain elements must be considered for successful use of such a system.

Mills (2008) indicates that organizations need to review and analyze what they are tracking to ensure that data sets being accessed and used by teachers are of quality. Questions suggested for exploration of this topic include:

- “What data do we have now?”
- “What is the quality of our data?”
- “Is the current data format appropriate for analysis?”
- “How often are the data collected and by whom?”
- “How do we currently store and access the data?”
- “What data do we need that is not on our list?” (Mills, 2008, p. 31)

Likewise, Copland et al. (2006) present similar concerns for leaders with regard to data systems:

- “The specific data elements that reside in the data infrastructure.”
- “The accuracy and completeness of the data, and whether data sets are updated regularly.”

- “The timing and timeliness of data availability. Local educators, for example, often lament the lag time between state assessment administration and its availability to school and district audiences four to five months later, often in the school year following the year the test was administered.”
- “The architecture of the data storage and retrieval system, and whether it enables easy, flexible, disaggregated queries that relate one data element to others.”
- “The ease of access to the data system by a variety of users, with sufficient safeguards to maintain confidentiality (where necessary) and counter attempts at tampering.”
- “The cost of building and maintaining the data infrastructure.” (p. 20)

Just as teachers who cannot access data cannot use it, teachers and administrators who are not supported to use a data system cannot use one. Wayman and Cho (2008) advise that a data system, like any other piece of technology, requires its users to be properly trained to maximize effectiveness. They also emphasize time as a factor, calling for use on a “daily basis” (p. 100) and that “district personnel should clearly articulate how the system should be used to best fit district needs.” (p. 94). As with implementation and professional development, consistency and organizationwide consensus are keys to success.

Data Focused on Instruction and Learning

School districts have played an indirect role in classroom-based instruction through the allocation of resources, hiring of staff, business operations, and policy. Their role now includes ensuring high-quality instruction geared toward increased levels of student achievement.

Monitoring via data is a function of school leadership. In their meta-analysis of the effects of leadership practices on student achievement, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003, p. 12) identify “the extent to which the principal monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student achievement” to be one of the 21 leadership responsibilities significantly associated with student achievement. Cotton (1988) agrees, “The careful monitoring of student progress is shown in the literature to be one of the major factors differentiating effective schools and teachers from ineffective ones” (p. 1). Schmoker (1999) adds evidence to this, stating, “Regular monitoring, followed by adjustment, is the only way to expect success” (p. 5).

Research recommends a balance between formative and summative assessments. While summative assessments are typically utilized at the district level and building level, the use of formative assessments at the school level can impact both teachers’ instructional decisions and student motivation and academic achievement. “High-stakes data give us only one piece of evidence about student learning. Well-designed classroom data collection and analysis, the everyday information a teacher collects, forms the backbone of student growth,” note Gregory and Kuzmich (2004, p. 10). Paying regular attention to both short-term and annual measures of student proficiency allows teachers, schools, and districts to identify how close they are to reaching incremental goals and may indicate the need to change practice and/or approach to better point students towards higher achievement levels.

Formative achievement assessments yielding different types of data have always been available to teachers and administrators. Such assessments include observations, presentation and portfolio assessments, brief quizzes, classroom questions from teachers and from students to gauge understanding and comprehension, writing exercises, parent reports, and homework analyses.

Disaggregating of the results of formative and summative assessments allows for the monitoring of student progress along demographic lines. For instance, results from formative assessments can be used as a monitoring tool for special education, English as a second language programming, and other intervention services. If students are not showing individual improvement, adjustments to instruction or accommodations can be made. If a significant group of students is not showing progress, teachers and administrators can examine the appropriateness, adequacy and implementation of such services.

Implementation Considerations

To meet the provisions of this recommendation, Kingston City School District will want to delineate specific steps in its action plans. The following considerations are intended to assist in the development of these steps.

- **Build a culture of data use.** To continue towards successful change, Kingston City School District needs to thoroughly build a culture of data use that is comprehensively implemented and articulated in all buildings. According to the audit findings, this will be a bigger jump in some places than it is in others. Supovitz (2007) indicates that districts that do this successfully demonstrate six key attributes:
 - They built a foundation for data-informed decision making by settling on a systemwide curriculum and establishing goals at the system, school, classroom, and individual student levels. The stable curriculum and goals were crucial because they provided targets for which data could be collected, progress measured, and insights about variability in progress explored.
 - They established a culture of data use and continuous improvement that included established sets of norms, expectations, and mutual accountability.
 - They invested in information management systems that provided the infrastructures for data rich systems.
 - These information management systems grappled with the question of selecting the right data to best inform administrators and teachers.
 - They built capacity for data-informed decision making by investing in professional development, support, and time for teachers to investigate and collaborate around data.
 - They developed tools and processes to help principals, teachers, and district staff to act on data.
- **Use data for specific purposes.** Data-driven decision making essentially requires schools and districts to be consistent in using actual data to examine the current state of affairs in their school or district, to plan a course for improvement, and to measure whether or not this improvement has actually taken place (Deligiannis, 2004).

The district already has data, but the data need to be put to good and consistent use by the appropriate people—namely building administrators and teachers. These school personnel need to examine the data, determine avenues for improvement, and then consult the research in order to make changes. Kingston City School District has started this first part through the curriculum audit, and the subsequent action planning will continue to move this effort forward.

- **Use data as the basis for change management.** Comprehensive implementation of any district system entails a disruption of the status quo, requiring shifts in thought and behavior for all staff. Bertfield and Merrill (2008) point toward Kotter’s 1995 “structure for successful change” to outline a linear process for change management as it relates to emerging use of data in school districts, as follows:
 - “Establishing a sense of urgency”
 - “Forming a powerful guiding coalition”
 - “Creating a vision”
 - “Communicating the vision”
 - “Empowering others to act on the vision”
 - “Planning for and creating short-term wins”
 - “Consolidating improvements and producing still more change”
 - “Institutionalizing new approaches” (Kotter, 1995, cited in Bertfield and Merrill, 2008, p. 196)
- **Continue to strengthen the district vision for data use.** As it moves farther through the change management process, Kingston City School District needs to continue to strengthen its vision and gain consensus. Findings regarding data use generated during the co-interpretation drew out a common theme: inconsistency. There are two sides to this situation. The district is by no means starting from scratch with this endeavor. Planned updates to the district’s data system are in progress, which will increase the visibility of data throughout the district and work to remedy issues from the lack of timely, convenient access. Educator surveys and interviews show that many Kingston City School District teachers want the necessary training required to use data effectively as part of their jobs. Audit findings indicate that several schools currently use data to inform decision making, and that building administrators provide clear expectations and support. On the other hand, several buildings do not. The biggest challenge will be to bring effective change to ensure all district-level leaders and building-level leaders share a vision for data-informed decision making and that this vision generates consistent expectations and support so that data-informed practices occur in classrooms in every school in the district.
- **Develop the data-use capacity of all school personnel.** Bernhardt (2009) states, “For schools to see student achievement increases in every subject, at every grade-level, and with every student group, educators must look at big picture data. They must understand what is being implemented to know what needs to change” (p. 26). The support—in the form of consistent approaches and messaging from district and building administrators

and targeted professional learning opportunities—should aim to develop data-use capacity in all personnel.

According to Deligiannis (2004), school personnel who use data effectively share the following characteristics, which Kingston City School District should seek to develop in all personnel as part of implementation of this recommendation:

- They ask the right questions before gathering data.
 - They gather a wide variety of data.
 - They take the most effective performance data from locally developed assessments.
 - They operate in a model of longitudinal, continuous improvement.
 - They work with data and make decisions collaboratively, across and between levels.
 - They have support from the district, leadership, teachers, and community.
- **Determine key data indicators of student proficiency and overall success.** When programs and initiatives are put into place to improve student engagement and academic performance, key data indicators of success need to be determined for them as well. These indicators will be a means of assessing whether the program is accomplishing the goals for which it was implemented. The assessment result then needs to lead to change, based on the results of the collected data. Monitoring of student achievement data from specific programs compared to districtwide achievement measures allows teachers and leaders to inform a change to the content and methodology of the program and reevaluate its effectiveness.

There should be regular and agreed-upon measures of student proficiency that can be analyzed to determine individual student needs, specific classroom instructional decisions, and schoolwide and districtwide monitoring and decision making. The creation of group data allows teachers to monitor their own practice relative to their school and district. Group data additionally allow the schools and districts to identify areas that need improvement and the impact or effectiveness of specific interventions (Schmoker, 1999).

The scope of the efforts required for Kingston City School District to appropriately implement this recommendation will be districtwide, but district-level processes and plans will not be sufficient to realize full success. The level of focus must be fine enough to actively engage all district staff and build full implementation and articulation of data-informed decision as a function of personnel capacity and values: the components necessary for cultural integration.

Given the current state of corrective action faced by Kingston City School District, coupled with the activities already in motion throughout the district, it is apparent that a sense of urgency has been established. The district's work with Learning Point Associates throughout the curriculum audit has served to establish a collective of personnel to push improvement efforts. The recommendations presented within this report will feed the vision that the district creates and help communicate it to all stakeholders.

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Additional Resources for Review

Learning Point Associates & Educational Service Alliance of the Midwest. (2006). *Effective use of electronic data systems: A readiness guide for district and school leaders*. Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates. Retrieved May 1, 2009, from <http://www.learningpt.org/pdfs/datause/DataReadinessTool.pdf>

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Recommendation 3: Academic Intervention Services

In an effort to decrease inappropriate identification of students as having a disability and requiring special education services, and to effectively facilitate the teaching and learning of SWDs, the districtwide implementation of response to intervention (RTI) is recommended as a framework for the delivery and monitoring of appropriate and comprehensive AIS in the Kingston City School District for Grades K–12.

This recommendation is based on key findings that Kingston City School District representatives and advocates identified from Learning Point Associates data reports during the district co-interpretation process. The pertinent key findings are presented and discussed in the Link to Findings subsection. Relevant and important information from the professional literature is presented and discussed in the Link to Research subsection. Suggestions regarding how Kingston City School District may operationalize this recommendation in its action plan are provided in the Implication Considerations subsection. References are listed in the last subsection.

Link to Findings

The co-interpretation process revealed the following findings:

- 1. Although the document review revealed a description of assessments and scores to identify students in the district’s AIS plan, teachers reported a lack of a multilayered process for identifying students for AIS services, especially at the secondary level, and no exit process was reported.**
 - Document review indicated that beyond Reading Recovery, no documents detail an exit process from AIS, nor was there any mention of exit scores.
 - This component of the finding is supported by teachers interviewed at the secondary level who responded that while most students who need AIS are scheduled for additional support, district criteria for identifying students may “overlook” students close to cutoff, and teacher recommendations are rarely a source of referral for academic support services.
 - In addition, interviewed secondary teachers reported that occasions for AIS placement are made early in the school year, not throughout the year, in secondary schools. Struggling students have to wait until the following year to be placed in AIS lab. Overall, there was a concern for the lack of multilayered systematic process for identifying students requiring academic support.
- 2. There are limited appropriate AIS services for nonproficient learners, including SWDs.**
 - Although document review showed that AIS services are provided to Grades 1 and Grades 6–10 during the school day, there were no documents that addressed policy, plans, or evidence of providing AIS to ELL and SWD elementary students (except Reading Recovery in Grade 1). In addition, there was no evidence of formal alignment documents showing alignment of AIS and the ELA curriculum.

- Interview data showed that two out of three secondary schools reported that their perceived effectiveness of academic support was low, and all six elementary schools and one of three secondary schools received a moderate rating for perceived effectiveness of academic support. In these schools, student participation is moderate to high; these schools have identified several limitations related to providing effective AIS to nonproficient students. In elementary education, students did not receive services every day and time constraints were an issue. Two secondary schools received a low rating for perceived effectiveness of academic support. Respondents in these schools felt that not all students who need AIS receive support, and student participation in provided services is moderate to low. They identified multiple limitations in providing academic support to nonproficient students, including relatively few opportunities for academic support before or after school.
- About 60 percent of the respondents on the Audit Survey Report stated there are not enough academic support programs for nonproficient students, and 37 percent of the respondents agreed that academic support for nonproficient students is less than moderately effective.
- The Special Education Report revealed that access to AIS ELA-related programs for SWDs varies across the district. Inclusion students have less access, according to teachers.

3. There is inconsistent monitoring of AIS services, including inconsistent use of data to drive AIS instruction.

- Document review revealed no documents describing or referring to a systematic district approach to use student achievement data to inform decisions regarding AIS. Further, there were no documents addressing policy plans or evidence of monitoring availability of AIS during the regular school day or outside the regular school day.
- Interview data showed that one elementary and two secondary schools received a low rating for monitoring progress of students. It was reported that limited formal monitoring of the progress was completed. Two out of three secondary schools reported that the monitoring of student progress was ineffective. Secondary respondents, where a moderate rating was given for monitoring progress of students receiving academic support, noted that teachers can use formal assessments administered midyear to determine if AIS students have made progress, but there is no evidence that these data are used to make program decisions.

4. ELA instruction is not always differentiated due to a variety of factors, including a lack of teaching materials and technology, a lack of grouping by instructional levels and needs, and less than optimum use of teaching assistants and available physical space. (This additional finding, while not prioritized through the co-interpretation process, is applicable to this recommendation.)

- Classroom observation data indicated that technology use for instruction at the elementary and secondary levels was only rarely observed, as was grouping by instructional levels.

- Interview data indicated that teachers want more materials to better differentiate instruction for the lowest performing students.
- The Special Education Report revealed that instruction was not always differentiated and, when it was, it was more frequently differentiated for process rather than content and/or product.
- According to the Special Education Report, both special and general educators explained that they found it challenging to implement differentiated instruction to meet all student needs.

These key findings are supported by evidence from the Interview Report, the Audit Survey Report, the Document Review Report, and the Special Education Report. They address Guiding Question 3 of the audit: *What academic interventions are available for students who need additional academic support?* These key findings are supported by 92 findings and received 11 votes from co-interpretation participants. These findings from multiple data sources point to a need to develop a comprehensive approach to strengthen various components of AIS services, and RTI would provide a viable framework to enhance academic intervention services to better serve nonproficient learners.

Within an RTI framework, there is an expectation that instruction is differentiated to appropriately meet the learning needs of *all* students, including SWDs. Supporting the district's AIS services within an RTI framework would offer SWDs appropriate instructional interventions throughout the school day within the entire school environment, not merely through instruction delivered by the special education teacher.

Link to Research

Since September 1, 2000, school districts in New York state are required to provide academic intervention services to students who struggle academically or are at risk of not achieving the state learning standards. Section 100.1(g) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education (New York State Education Department, n.d.) requires that academic intervention services be provided to all nonproficient learners, including SWDs:

Academic intervention services are intended to assist students who are at risk of not achieving the State learning standards in English language arts, mathematics, social studies and/or science, or who are at risk of not gaining the knowledge and skills needed to meet or exceed designated performance levels on State assessments. Academic intervention services shall be made available to students with disabilities on the same basis as nondisabled students, provided, however, that such services shall be provided to the extent consistent with the individualized education program developed for such student pursuant to section 4402 of the Education Law.

Response to Intervention

Although there are many approaches for providing prevention and intervention services to nonproficient learners, RTI has been recognized increasingly as a successful instructional model (Torgesen, 2007) to work with struggling learners and to support the success of *all* students. The

President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002) made the following recommendation: "Implement models during identification and assessment process that are based on response to intervention and progress monitoring. Use data from these processes to assess progress in children who receive special education services" (p. 21). In addition, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education and Council of Administrators of Special Education (2006) issued a joint paper to ask the special education and general education communities to join forces in implementing the RTI model for identifying and working with struggling learners in *all* settings so that a better decision can be made about referring children for more targeted support.

RTI has been widely used to prevent chronic learning and behavioral problems at elementary levels (Gersten et al., 2008) and secondary levels (Duffy, 2007). Empirical research studies indicated that the use of RTI has been associated with positive behavioral outcomes (Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007; Kincaid, George, & Childs, 2007), mathematical outcomes (Ardoin, Witt, Connell, & Koenig, 2005; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Hollenbeck, 2007), and reading outcomes (Bollman, Silberglitt, & Gibbons, 2007; Callender, 2007; Ehri, Dreyer, Flugman, & Gross, 2007; Vadasy, Sanders, and Peyton, 2005), and significantly reduced referrals to special education (Torgesen, 2007; VanDerHeyden, Witt, & Gilbertson, 2007). Moreover, because of the emphasis of RTI on early identification and early intervention for at-risk students, RTI has the potential to reduce the likelihood that more intensive interventions would be necessary, and thus enables schools to use their available resources more effectively.

Implementation of RTI

For Kingston City School District to effectively implement an RTI model, it is critical that there is a districtwide expectation that appropriate, effective differentiated instruction is provided to *all* students by *all* staff. The notion that instruction is differentiated only *by* teachers of SWDs *for* SWDs becomes obsolete in this model. Although the most intense interventions occur at Tier 3, differentiated instruction for SWDs must occur at all tiers, based on the data obtained from schoolwide screening and student progress monitoring.

RTI integrates assessment and intervention within a multilevel prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. Within an RTI framework, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2009b). RTI is a schoolwide approach that helps identify all students who are struggling academically and ensures that all children receive the appropriate instruction and intervention required to be successful before they fall behind academically.

Changing Roles and Responsibilities of Teaching Professionals

A primary goal of an RTI model is to identify students who are at risk and to provide instruction in a timely fashion before they fail. As a general education initiative, RTI works in the context of general education to provide evidence-based interventions, to monitor student response to instruction and intervention services, and to ensure that all students make adequate progress. The

RTI framework is different from the traditional special education model of identification and delivery of services to students who experience learning difficulties. In RTI, the roles and responsibilities of education professionals have changed and all staff members are responsible for student learning. In some RTI models, general education teachers are responsible for universal screening, progress monitoring, and provision of interventions to students who struggle academically in both Tier 1 and Tier 2; reading specialists are working with students in Tier 2 and Tier 3; and special education teachers are providing intervention in Tier 3 and some in Tier 2 (Shapiro, 2009). RTI brings a paradigm shift that breaks the wall between “my” and “your” students and calls for a greater level of collaboration among all teaching professionals.

Schoolwide Screening

The initial step in the RTI model is universal screening, which is a type of assessment to quickly determine a student’s at-risk status. Students who are identified as at-risk for academic failure through universal screening may need to be monitored closely in their general education curriculum or to receive preventive intervention. Universal screening is usually conducted schoolwide and across grades through the use of quick, low-cost, and repeatable testing tools (Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006). Universal screening serves as a gateway to the RTI system because students who are determined as at risk for poor academic and/or behavioral outcomes might then enter into subsequent tiers of the RTI system to receive more intense intervention as needed.

Universal Screening as an Iterative Process. The research on best practice of schoolwide screening within an RTI model recommends that the universal screening with an aim to identify students at risk for academic difficulties should be an iterative rather than a one-time process (Johnson et al., 2006). One-time universal screening at the beginning of the year can result in a high rate of identification error and may identify students for intervention who indeed will become proficient learners without additional instructional support (Compton, Fuchs, Fuchs & Bryant, 2006). Thus, research (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006) supports the use of schoolwide screening at the beginning of the school year with at least five weeks of weekly progress monitoring for students identified as at risk for failure to determine whether students actually require preventive intervention. In addition, research suggests using at least two screening measures in universal screening for a particular area of risk to enhance the accuracy of screening results (Gersten et al., 2008). Universal screening conducted multiple times through the school year using multiple measures can be cost-beneficial, helping the school to deliver the costly intervention and prevention only to those students who really need additional help.

Selecting Appropriate Measures for Universal Screening. To ensure successful universal screening, it is important to select screening tools that are accurate, reliable, and simple enough to be implemented by teachers. Researchers recommend using practical assessment tools that have high reliability and validity with reasonable cost for universal screening (Gersten et al., 2008).

Tiered Intervention

The hallmark of RTI is the tiered intervention delivery model. In a multitiered system of prevention, instruction is differentiated and matched to the needs of students at various levels.

The intensity and duration of interventions increase as students move through the tiers. The number of tiers may vary in different RTI models. In this recommendation, a three-tiered RTI model is used to illustrate RTI implementation.

Tier 1 Intervention/General Education. In an RTI model, the primary prevention in Tier 1 is the universal general education core program designed for all students. It is expected that this type of service will be sufficient for 80 percent of students. Although individual accommodations and instructional support may be provided to students when needed, Tier 1 instruction is carried out by the general education teachers in the general education classrooms. To help students meet the desired academic standards and to ensure that poor academic outcome is not a result of poor-quality curriculum and instruction, it is critical for schools to adopt evidence-based curricular and instructional practices, to use qualified teachers to provide the instruction, and to provide teachers with rigorous professional development and support. High-quality delivery of the Tier 1 instruction can help a majority of the students succeed in the general education curriculum and thus precludes the need for more costly and intensive intervention in subsequent tiers. Students remain in Tier 1 instruction throughout the entire school year unless progress monitoring data indicate that students are at risk and need additional instruction in a higher tier (Johnson et al., 2006).

Tier 2 Intervention. Tier 2 intervention services are designed for at-risk students who fail to make adequate progress in Tier 1 and who need additional instruction to achieve grade-level expectations. Students who are served in Tier 2 are deemed at risk for academic failure but are above levels of a high risk for failure. Tier 2 intervention is characterized by intensive and systematic supplemental instruction in small groups for at least three times a week (Gersten et al., 2008). Research supports the use of a standard protocol approach in Tier 2 delivered by a certified teacher or aide, in which the supplemental instruction also is characterized by evidence-based practices (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005). Unlike the traditional approach to specific learning disability identification in which students undergo a lengthy referral and evaluation process before receiving supplemental instruction, Tier 2 intervention starts when students have been determined to be at risk for academic failure through universal screening and Tier 1 progress monitoring. In Tier 2, interventions last from eight to 12 weeks for each round of intervention (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005; National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, 2007). In this tier, general education teachers typically receive support from other educators to implement the interventions and monitor students' progress. It is anticipated that this type of service may be needed by approximately 15 percent of students.

Tier 3 Intervention. Students who have received Tier 2 intervention for the prescribed amount of time but still show minimal progress should be provided with more intensive individualized intervention in Tier 3, which would be targeted to approximately 5 percent of students (Hintze, 2008). Students who are referred to receive intervention in Tier 3 usually have more significant learning difficulties that require more intense, explicit, sustained, strategic supplemental interventions that are matched to their needs. Tier 3 intervention is more intense and also has longer duration than the 8–12 weeks of Tier 2 intervention. Tier 3 intervention is usually provided daily to individual students or in small groups of no more than three students with similar strengths and weaknesses by highly qualified teachers or specialists.

Intervention in Tier 3 is the most intense level provided to students in general education, and it may or may not include special education services (Hintze, 2008; National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2006). **However, for students who do not benefit from intense intervention in Tier 3, a comprehensive evaluation at this point will appropriately determine if special education services are required. The RTI model is intended to deliver services to all students including SWDs. Students in special education can receive intervention matched to their needs in Tiers 1, 2, and 3.**

Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring is a scientifically based assessment practice used to determine the extent to which students are benefiting from instruction. With progress monitoring, teachers collect and analyze student performance data regularly (usually weekly but at least monthly) and data are used to determine if students are responding to the interventions provided at each tier. Research recommends the use of “dual discrepancy” to define student unresponsiveness to intervention where a student performs substantially below the level of performance of his or her peers and the student also progresses at a learning rate substantially below than his or her peers (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007; Fuchs, Fuchs, Hintze, & Lembke, 2006). Within the multilevel RTI model, the purpose of progress monitoring shifts slightly from tier to tier. The following paragraphs describe progress monitoring in each tier of the RTI model.

Progress Monitoring in Tier 1. In Tier 1, the purpose of the progress monitoring is to determine if individual students progress in the general education curriculum at a rate that is expected. Progress monitoring should be conducted on a weekly, or at least monthly, basis for students considered at risk for failure based on universal screening data. The primary method of progress monitoring at Tier 1 is curriculum-based measurement (Johnson et al., 2006). The result of the progress monitoring can help inform subsequent instructional decisions at both the classroom and individual levels. At the classroom level, if many students in a classroom are not meeting performance standards, changes to the instruction or curriculum may need to be considered. At the individual level, if the an individual student does not meet benchmark standards over time, more intensive intervention in Tier 2 may be needed.

Progress Monitoring in Tier 2. In Tier 2, the purpose of progress monitoring is to determine if the targeted and intensive intervention is effective and if students are progressing at an appropriate rate. Curriculum-based measurement is recommended to assess student performance, and these assessment data are analyzed regularly to determine the student responsiveness to intervention and to inform instructional decisions (Fuchs et al., 2006). At Tier 2, based on the progress monitoring results, students who make adequate progress may return to primary prevention in Tier 1 with continued progress monitoring. Students who fail to respond to intervention in Tier 2 will be moved to Tier 3 to receive more intense intervention services. In some models, students who fail to make adequate progress after two rounds of Tier 2 interventions or students who receive only one round of Tier 2 intervention but whose progress is significantly below their peers may be moved to a higher tier (Tier 3) (National Center on Learning Disabilities, 2007). In Tier 2, progress monitoring is conducted weekly or at least every other week.

Progress Monitoring in Tier 3. At Tier 3, progress monitoring still plays an essential role in determining if a student is making adequate progress, guiding instruction and future instructional placements. If students are benefiting from Tier 3 interventions and meeting benchmarks, they may exit Tier 3 and return to Tier 1 or Tier 2. Progress monitoring should continue when students return to Tier 1 or Tier 2. In Tier 3, progress monitoring is conducted at least weekly and in some models twice a week.

For those students in Tier 3 who are identified for special education services, progress monitoring also is used to make special education placement decisions and guide the development of individualized instruction for meeting their learning needs. Regularly collecting and analyzing data are required by IEPs to monitor students' progress toward achieving short-term and long term goals and objectives. In special education, progress monitoring is conducted on a weekly basis (Fuchs et al., 2006)

Implementation Considerations

To meet the provisions of this recommendation, Kingston City School District will want to delineate specific steps in its action plans. The following considerations are intended to assist in the development of these steps.

- **Provide research-based data-driven interventions for all students.** The successful implementation of an RTI instructional model will require Kingston City School District to shift its focus from a “waiting to fail” model for the identification of SWDs and the implementation of appropriate interventions, to an instructional model that provides appropriate research-based data-driven interventions to all students.
- **Develop a process for universal screening.** The document review and teacher interview respondents agreed that the ELA exams are the primary means of identifying AIS students at the beginning of the year—with the MAP assessments sometimes used for supplemental information, especially at the secondary level. An iterative and systematic process of universal screening is not evident in the existing AIS plan. Because one-time assessment results have the potential of falsely identifying students for intervention services, Kingston City School District should consider adopting an iterative and systematic approach to universal screening under the RTI model by combining the existing cut-score criteria and five weeks of weekly progress monitoring to ensure accurate identification of students for AIS. As a resource, the district should use the National Center on Response to Intervention’s (2009a) recently released *Reading Screening Tools Chart*, which reflects the results of its Technical Review Committee on screening reading tools.
- **Provide adequate AIS in a tiered intervention delivery system.** Data collected from the document reviews, teacher interviews, Special Education Report, and Audit Survey Report revealed a lack of adequate AIS in the district and indicated that AIS were delivered by teachers with minimal training and without adequate guidance. There is no indication in the AIS plan that evidence-based interventions are used, how the interventions are conducted (e.g., individually, in small groups), or whether or how the interventions are tailored to meet student needs. The expectation of the use of evidence-based interventions by highly qualified personnel in a tiered intervention delivery system

in RTI would strengthen the implementation of AIS services in Kingston, ruling out the possibility that student academic difficulty is the result of poor-quality education. Kingston City School District should make available a variety of evidence-based intervention programs aligned to New York state standards, providing clear guidelines regarding the implementation of interventions at each tier. The existing professional development efforts in Kingston City School District related to the curriculum and differentiated instruction should include opportunities for training on the fidelity of implementation of these evidence-based practices.

- **Use student progress monitoring data to develop a monitoring system.** The key findings developed at the co-interpretation meeting indicated that the effectiveness of AIS services is not monitored in Kingston City School District, and there is a lack of districtwide systemic approach to data use. Progress monitoring in the RTI framework should be used to help develop a monitoring system to assess student progress, to use data to inform instruction, and to base the placement and exit criteria on assessment results in each tier. Successful monitoring depends on the skills of teachers. The district should consider including training for teachers on conducting progress monitoring in the existing district and school professional development system as an important step toward building an AIS monitoring system.
- **Incorporate RTI training into the district’s professional development plan.** Because of their changing roles and responsibilities under RTI, administrators, general and special education teachers, related service personnel, and paraprofessionals must have the proper training and required skills and attitudes to implement RTI (National Association of State Directors of Special Education & Council of Administrators of Special education, 2006). Kingston City School District should incorporate RTI training into its professional development plan (which is discussed in detail under Recommendation 4: Professional Development).

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Additional Helpful Resources on RTI

- **RTI Library**

http://www.rti4success.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=448&Itemid=93

This online library, developed by the National Response to Intervention Center, provides resources and documents related to RTI.

- **Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI): How to Do It**

http://nrclid.org/rti_manual/

The National Research Center on Learning Disability (NRCLD) has developed this manual, which provides details on schoolwide screening, progress monitoring, tiered service delivery mode, fidelity of implementation, and school examples. The manual also contains extensive resources related to each topic.

- **National Center on Student Progress Monitoring website**

<http://www.studentprogress.org>

The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring provides information and resources related to progress monitoring, including a review of tools, which can be accessed at

- **Resources for Enhancing Access to the General Education Curriculum for Students With Disabilities**

<http://www.k8accesscenter.org/index.php/category/differentiated-instruction/>

The Access Center has several resources related to instructional strategies, including differentiated instruction, graphic organizers, and peer tutoring.

- **What Works Clearinghouse**

<http://www.whatworks.ed.gov/>

This website presents examples of evidence-based interventions, which are a cornerstone of instruction within an RTI process.

Recommendation 4: Professional Development/Collaboration

It is recommended that Kingston City School District build upon its existing professional development framework to design, develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate an updated ELA-specific, districtwide, K–12 professional learning plan culminating in the institutionalization of formal professional learning communities. ELA professional development in the district should be regularly scheduled, ongoing, and consistent; targeted and relevant to practice needs; and grounded and contextualized within district goals and initiatives.

This plan should be specifically responsive to the need for general education teachers to learn how best to work with struggling learners, as well as with SWDs, and to have adequate time to collaborate, plan, and co-learn with special education teachers on a regular basis. The plan also should include follow-up strategies for sustained and embedded implementation support to assist teachers with classroom-level utilization of what they are learning.

This recommendation is based on key findings that Kingston City School District representatives and advocates identified from Learning Point Associates data reports during the district co-interpretation process. The pertinent key findings are presented and discussed in the Link to Findings subsection. Relevant and important information from the professional literature is presented and discussed in the Link to Research subsection. Suggestions regarding how Kingston City School District may operationalize this recommendation in its action plan are provided in the Implication Considerations subsection. References are listed in the last subsection.

Link to Findings

During the co-interpretation process, district representatives and advocates identified some positive key findings regarding the district’s professional development and staffing policies and practices. For example, Kingston City School District has a mentoring program whereby new teachers conference with and are mentored by veteran teachers. They also found that the district provides an adequate quantity of professional development and that teachers generally participate in this professional development together, as opposed to being divided by content area or student population served. Notwithstanding these positive findings, this group also identified four key findings that indicated concerns about the district’s professional development and staffing policies and practices.

The first key finding revealed that although district teachers and administrators believe the district provides many professional development opportunities, these opportunities lack overall quality, consistency, and follow-up to support classroom implementation of new knowledge and skills and connection to district initiatives. Evidence for this key finding was derived from the Interview Report, the Document Review Report, the Audit Survey Report, the SEC Report, and the Special Education Report. In particular, the majority of professional development opportunities provided do not address strategies for the instruction of nonproficient students and SWDs and ELLs in an integrated setting.

General education teachers indicated that they feel especially ill-prepared to teach nonproficient students and SWDs in an integrated setting, and the professional development provided by the district did not focus on or help them improve in these areas. There was broad agreement from multiple data sources that the district does not have or is not executing a systemic, coordinated, instructionally relevant, or student-achievement-focused approach to professional development.

The second related key finding in this area stated that the district lacks a formal commitment to building and maintaining collaborative teaching relationships between general education and special education teachers. This situation hinders these educators from providing all students, especially nonproficient students, with coordinated, high-quality, needs-based instruction and support. Evidence for this finding was derived from the Interview Report, the Education Survey Report, the SEC report, and the Special Education Report. The majority of general education and special education teachers reported that they frequently, but briefly, meet “informally” to plan and collaborate; however, few or no district-sanctioned professional development opportunities are provided to explicitly show them how to collaborate or to give them time to formally plan and coordinate their instruction. Special education leaders and teachers believe that all teachers need professional development to effectively coteach in a variety of inclusive settings. They also believe that a lack of common planning time during the school day limits more collaboration between general education teachers and special educators.

The third related key finding in this area showed that Kingston City School District does not articulate, implement, or monitor a districtwide plan regarding how to analyze and use student assessment data to make instructional decisions (see Recommendation 2). Evidence for this finding was obtained from the Interview Report, the Document Review Report, the Audit Survey Report, and the Special Education Report. There was some evidence that the district collects student data, has plans for using student data for instructional planning, and provides some professional development to teachers on using data. Generally speaking, however, teachers are unaware of a district plan for using student achievement data to inform lesson planning and instruction. Many general education and special education teachers reported that they do not use data for one or more of the following reasons: they cannot access it, it is not posted and made available in a timely manner, it is not explicitly relevant, or they do not know how to interpret and apply the data. Teachers expressed interest in, and a strong need for, receiving more consistent, focused training and sustained support in how to actually access, interpret, and use student data to guide their instruction.

The fourth key finding in this area revealed the lack of a districtwide approach to planning, implementing, and monitoring consistent, effective, and efficient AIS for students (see Recommendation 3). A significant component of this problem is that teachers, especially at the secondary level, do not have adequate, sustained training and support in identifying and teaching students who need and/or receive AIS. Evidence for this key finding was drawn from the Interview Report, the Document Review Report, the Audit Survey Report, and the Special Education Report. A majority of general education and special education teachers reported that an increasingly academically needy student population represents one of the primary challenges they face as teachers, but that they are not receiving sufficient training or support from the district to adequately address the academic needs of these nonproficient students. There is little documented evidence that Kingston City School District has provided teachers, especially

general education teachers, with any form of professional development in serving the academic needs of nonproficient students, including students with special needs and ELLs. Most teachers reported that the professional development they do receive through the district is of no help to them in effectively providing AIS to their students or monitoring these students' progress. Secondary-level teachers reported that state ELA exams are the primary means of identifying students for AIS, rather than teacher recommendation, which they believe results in many students who actually need AIS not being identified as such. Further, secondary teachers stated that teachers without adequate AIS training and qualifications (such as having reading/literacy teacher certification), are providing AIS instruction. This situation leaves struggling students with inadequate support and puts the district at risk of inappropriately placing struggling students in special education programs as a means of providing additional support.

In summary, co-interpretation findings revealed that although Kingston City School District has a professional development plan and provides frequent professional development opportunities for teachers, this professional development has been inconsistent and lacking in follow-through. It has not provided teachers with a formal forum for collaborating with one another to improve the quality and effectiveness of instruction for all students, including SWDs, ELLs and those needing or receiving AIS, nor are teachers consistently provided with opportunities to learn how to interpret and use student data for instructional decisions.

Link to Research

The key findings from co-interpretation indicate a common problem with professional development and staffing. In many cases, school staff are divided into “like” groups (e.g., primary grade teachers, middle school teachers, high school English teachers, special education teachers); while such opportunities to work with these colleagues are important, general education teachers and teachers working with special populations (e.g., SWDs, ELLs, nonproficient learners) rarely, if ever, have focused opportunities to work together. After the training, teachers may be encouraged or expected to apply what they learned to their classroom practices; however, little if any follow-up support and embedded mentoring are provided to sustain the learning or the practice.

As part of their comprehensive school improvement efforts, many school systems have acknowledged the need to revise their approach to professional development (Fullan, 2007). Rather than the one-time workshops on different topics, they have aligned their professional development initiatives to specific student learning and achievement goals; that is, the only professional development the district may offer is that which will have the greatest impact on improving student learning and achievement. Professional learning communities represent one powerful, evidence-based model that school systems are implementing in this regard. In addition, because professional learning communities provide an important forum and focus for professional development, districts need to view them as a component of a comprehensive professional development plan for improving student learning and achievement.

The research review that follows is divided into two sections. The first section describes the professional learning of educators, including factors that should be considered in developing an effective districtwide professional development plan. The second section discusses professional

learning communities and explains their role in focusing educators' learning and efforts on improving learning and academic achievement for all students.

Professional Learning of Educators

Researchers have concluded that simply training educators on one or more occasions is not sufficient to provide them with the knowledge, practice, and support they require to meet the needs of all children, especially those who are struggling to learn in one or more areas of the curriculum (Easton, 2008a, 2008b; Henderson, 2008; Louie, Brodesky, Brett, Yang, & Tan, 2008). Further, "improvement is...a function of learning to do the right thing in the setting where you work" (Elmore, 2004, p. 73). A teacher's most valuable learning is that which has the greatest impact on student learning, must center on this teacher's own students, in the context of his or her own classroom and school. Collectively, therefore, these studies and perspectives have found that the most effective professional activities in which educators may engage are embedded, ongoing, tailored to address specific local school system contextual factors, and involve educators working collaboratively within their schools to improve their instruction, including how to interpret, share, and use achievement data to make informed instructional decisions

Working collaboratively with other professional organizations, the National Staff Development Council (NSDC, 2001) developed a set of standards—divided into three categories: context standards, process standards, content standards—that school systems may use for planning and delivering professional learning for its educators that is standards-based, results-oriented, and job-embedded:

“Context Standards: Staff development that improves the learning of all students:

- Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district. (Learning Communities)
- Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement. (Leadership)
- Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration. (Resources)

Process Standards: Staff development that improves the learning of all students:

- Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement. (Data-Driven)
- Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact. (Evaluation)
- Prepares educators to apply research to decision making. (Research-Based)
- Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal. (Design)
- Applies knowledge about human learning and change. (Learning)
- Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate. (Collaboration)

Content Standards: Staff development that improves the learning of all students:

- Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement. (Equity)
- Deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately. (Quality Teaching)
- Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately. (Family Involvement)”

In summary, comprehensive school success requires a reenvisioning of professional learning, from the traditional training of teachers on myriad isolated skills to a sustained, embedded, focused lifelong-learner approach where teachers work together on improving their understanding, expertise, and practice in those specific areas that will lead to improved learning for all students.

Professional Learning Communities

In their review of the research on professional learning communities, Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, and Thomas (2006) concluded that there is no universal definition of professional learning communities because their functioning is highly influenced by the context in which they operate. However, these researchers and others (Louis, Kruse, & Bryk, 1995; Talbert, McLaughlin & Rowan, 1993) found that effective professional learning communities shared the following eight characteristics:

- Shared vision and values
- Collective responsibility
- Reflective professional inquiry
- Collaboration
- Group and individual learning
- Mutual trust
- Respect and support among staff members
- Inclusive membership, in which membership gradually broadens to incorporate support staff and community members outside of district employees.

Louis et al. (1999) emphasizes that professional learning communities provide teachers with the support and engaging work environments they need to continually improve their knowledge and expertise in teaching all students. Principal leadership is crucial to the vitality and success of professional learning communities, in that principals wield authority in setting the tone, opportunities, and support for professional learning communities (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, 2006).

When professional learning communities demonstrate the eight characteristics identified by Stoll et al. (2006), school systems show improvement in teachers' motivation to teach, teachers' overall job satisfaction, teachers' knowledge base and instructional effectiveness, and student performance (Andrews & Lewis, 2007; Bredeson & Scribner, 2000; Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1995; Louis, Toole, & Hargreaves, 1999; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Indeed, several recent studies of school systems undergoing reform and engaging in genuine professional learning community practices, concluded that those practices offer substantial promise for meaningful, sustainable school improvement, including improvement in the academic performance of all students (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Fullan, 2005a, 2005b; Little, 1999, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Reeves, 2006; Saphier, 2005; Schmoker, 2005; Sparks, 2005; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000; Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2005). Little (1999) reported that "available evidence suggests that students' academic achievement is greater in schools where teachers report high levels of collective responsibility for student learning" (p. 238).

School systems are cautioned, however, about assuming that professional learning communities or any other initiative will *automatically* produce more skillful and knowledgeable teachers, increase student engagement and performance, or raise scores on standardized assessments (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Marzano, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Stoll et al., 2006; Taylor et al., 2000; Taylor et al., 2005). As students, policies, and initiatives change in school systems, educators working within Professional learning communities remain vigilant and committed to the ideal that the purpose of their meetings and work is to continuously improve their practice so they positively impact student achievement (Hipp, Huffman, Pankake, & Olivier, 2008). For professional learning communities to remain viable and sustainable, it is necessary to periodically reaffirm exactly what professional learning community members are expected to do. DuFour (2007, p. 5) posed several questions, such as: "Does our team work interdependently to achieve SMART goals that are Strategic (linked to school goals), Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented (focused on evidence of student learning rather than teacher strategies), and Time-bound?"

Professional learning communities may exist at multiple levels—such as grade level or content area within a school or across the district—or with groups of teachers facing similar issues or instructing similar students (DuFour, 2004; Hord, 1997a, 1997b, 2008; Stoll et al., 2006). Researchers and other experts emphasize that *deciding* to implement professional learning communities is far easier than successfully implementing them; professional learning communities take time to mature before they produce visible results (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005; Fullan 2005b, 2006). Fullan and others (e.g., Andrews & Lewis, 2007; Fullan, Rolheiser, Mascall, & Edge, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003) have argued that in addition to time, successful implementation of school-based professional learning communities, as part of school and district reform, requires regular communication and mutual understanding among, and support from, individuals across a school system as well as the state education department. Professional learning communities are less likely to take root and be fruitful if they are supported only by principals and teachers in some schools but not by district administration and other principals and teachers..

At their core, professional learning communities are designed to provide educators with regular opportunities to work collaboratively to improve their teaching so that student learning and achievement visibly and markedly improve (DuFour, 2004, 2007; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2006; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006; Stoll et al., 2006). They represent a stark departure from the traditional approach to professional development, whereby teachers sit through a one-time presentation or workshop and then are expected to implement the strategies they were taught into their classroom practices (William, 2007/2008). Professional learning communities are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. A school or district does not have successful professional learning communities simply by announcing that they have formed professional learning communities or that educators meet regularly (DuFour, 2004, 2007).

DuFour (2007) and Fullan (2007) concede that some schools systems may succumb to the temptation to rename existing teacher work groups as professional learning communities or to become potentially distracted or confused by terminology (e.g., Patterson et al., 2006) rather than the intended focus on revising and strengthening instruction for the benefit of students. These researchers and authors emphasize that a key to successful professional learning communities is developing and maintaining a schoolwide culture that does not merely accept the purpose of Professional learning communities but embraces their strict attention to examining practice to improve student learning. Among other challenges, educators need to use professional learning community time for its intended purpose and to consciously avoid using the professional learning community as a forum for unrelated topics or business. Creating such a culture is a challenge. Research consistently shows, however, that when faculty, staff, administrators, and the larger education community come together to work on strengthening teaching and learning, improvement follows (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004; Blankstein, Houston, & Cole, 2008).

Several studies have concluded that professional learning communities can have a positive impact on school culture, professional development, and student achievement. For instance, Vescio, Ross and Adams (2008) found that teachers interacting with colleagues in professional learning communities were more willing to take risks in trying new things, were able to thoughtfully reflect on their teaching, were more forthcoming in sharing ideas and concerns with one another, and were focused on improving instructional practices to improve student learning; they felt empowered to make changes based on their professional learning community work and demonstrated increased commitment to continuous professional learning for themselves and fellow teachers. Dunne, Nave and Lewis (2000) discovered that teachers in their study, gradually shifted from teacher-directed to student-centered practices as a result of their sustained dialogues and collaborations. Hollins, McIntyre, DeBose, Hollins and Towner (2004) noted that as a result of interactions and work in professional learning communities, teachers redirected their time and effort from complaining about the challenges of teaching nonproficient students to developing instructional procedures and tools to improve the learning of these students.

As educators become increasingly aware of and engaged in examining and revising their teaching practice to foster student learning, they develop “assessment literacy” (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & William, 2003; Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Stiggins, 2005). Such literacy, according to Fullan (2007, p. 142) includes increased capacity to analyze and make critical sense of student performance data, increased capacity to use results of these analyses to

develop and implement schoolwide and classroom-based changes that will lead to improved student learning, increased capacity among teachers to be proactive and open about performance data and to be informed about the uses and misuses of achievement data. Working with teachers in professional learning communities to develop this expertise in understanding and using student data (particularly data concerning struggling students) may seem daunting; but, with dedication and persistence, it has produced positive results (Timperley, 2005; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2006; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, et al., 2006).

In summary, professional learning communities are designed to provide educators with sustained, focused opportunities to jointly critically examine and refine their practice in order to improve student learning. It takes time, dedication, and focus for members to develop and maintain an efficient professional learning community, and there must be support from district-level and building-level administration for professional learning communities to meet and function. Professional learning communities typically exist at the building level, particularly when they are first initiated; however, as needed and desired, professional learning communities that represent multiple buildings or are districtwide may be formed. The success of a professional learning community is measured most significantly by its impact on student learning.

Implementation Considerations

Key findings from the district co-interpretation revealed that many Kingston City School District educators reported feeling ill-prepared to teach SWDs, ELLs, and students receiving AIS, as well as how to use student data to make instructional decisions. General education and special education teachers also expressed concerns about how they could better collaborate to meet the needs of these students. The use of professional learning communities and other planned professional learning experiences will address these areas of concern and need. To meet the provisions of this recommendation, Kingston City School District will want to delineate specific steps in its action plans. The following considerations are intended to assist in the development of these steps.

- **Create a professional learning leadership team.** Kingston City School District should carefully identify and select members of a professional learning leadership team to develop and implement the district's professional learning plan. It should consider existing teams, such as a district professional development committee or district improvement team, and redefine its work to include the new ELA plan. Perhaps key representatives can be added to an existing team or a new team of leaders representing key stakeholders can be created. Among the leaders to consider are district administrators, school administrators that represent both elementary and secondary schools, regular and special services teachers that represent areas of student need at the elementary and secondary levels, teacher union spokespersons, and key professional development and/or community partners. This will be a working group, so Kingston City School District should exercise its best judgment in determining its size.
- **Provide books and resource guides to the team and other leaders.** Many published practical guides on developing and implementing professional learning communities are available to assist districts in establishing professional learning communities (e.g.,

Blankstein et al., 2008; DuFour, 2004, 2007; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2006; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, et al., 2006; DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005; Hord, 1997a, 1997b). The district might consider providing selected resources from among those recommended to school-based leaders charged with planning for professional learning communities and to group leaders to serve as guides and references.

- **Gather data from stakeholders.** It is recommended that Kingston City School District periodically survey its staff to ensure that educators' needs and concerns regarding professional development are being specifically addressed and to identify any other issues that may arise. A survey schedule and methodology should be included in the district's professional learning plan. Kingston City School District also might wish to develop and/or adapt and administer an instrument to gauge district stakeholders' beliefs and potential concerns regarding initiating Professional learning communities, following advice such as that given by Williams, Brien, Sprague, and Sullivan (2007/2008). The district can focus initially on surveying internal personnel—teachers and administrators—and later external individuals from the community who may be asked to participate in professional learning communities.
- **Follow research-based strategies for organizing professional learning communities.** DuFour and colleagues (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2006; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, et al., 2006) and Wiliam (2007/2008) have identified several guidelines for organizing and conducting successful professional learning community meetings. Based on these recommendations and the Learning Point Associates understanding of specific Kingston City School District contexts and circumstances, the following actions are recommended for consideration:
 - Each district school can establish its own professional learning community. Each professional learning community should consist primarily of classroom teachers, because they are the persons seeking to enhance their practice to improve student learning. An experienced teacher, trusted by all group members, can serve as the group leader. A building principal, assistant principal, or other building-level administrator could participate in a listening, contributing and supportive capacity. An instructional coach or content expert could serve as a consultant member of the team. Where appropriate, mentors and their protégés can be included within the same professional learning community, thereby optimizing the benefits of two professional learning experiences. Ideally, membership in professional learning communities will include staff who are instrumental in addressing the instructional needs of the school and the needs of SWDs, such as special and regular education teachers.
 - It may be best to start a building-level professional learning community with eight to 10 volunteers who want to be there, rather than to require that all teachers participate. Success stories from this group will radiate to other teachers, perhaps those who are somewhat reticent or reluctant, who may be more eager to join after hearing of their colleagues' successes.
 - After a professional learning community has been initiated, participants may refer to the 10 questions that professional learning community members should ask to clarify their goals, align them with other school and district professional learning initiatives, and keep themselves focused on the goals of their work—for example, “Are we clear

on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions each student is to acquire as a result of this course, grade level, and unit we are about to teach?” (DuFour, 2004, p. 5).

- Professional learning communities should meet regularly for the expressed purpose of addressing teaching and learning needs. One to two periods a week or one to two times per month for 75–120 minutes are examples of how some schools have allocated time for professional learning communities to meet. Meeting time also should be structured to support focused and productive collaboration. A sample format for a longer professional learning community meeting structures the time into segments: 5–10 minutes for introduction/review of day’s agenda; 40–60 minutes for participants to report out on their specific teaching and learning challenges and successes, and to dialogue with colleagues for feedback and suggestions on these issues; 25–40 minutes for the group leader to share and discuss something new with the group—perhaps a draft of a new assessment tool or a new set of student data and guidelines for how to interpret them and develop appropriate instruction; 10–15 minutes for teachers to set a new student learning goal to accomplish before the next professional learning community meeting; 5–10 minutes to review what was completed, identify any items to table and/or to add for the next meeting. Conversation protocols, such as the *Standards in Practice* (Looking at Student Work Collaborative, n.d.) or *The Tuning Protocol* (Allen & McDonald, 2003; McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, & McDonald, 2007), can be used to structure dialogue or guide the examination of student work during professional learning communities.
- **Provide teachers with opportunities to collaborate.** Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos (2009) found that the most effective professional learning involved educators working collaboratively on hands-on tasks, preferably demonstrating the types of practices they will be expected to use in the classroom, then analyzing and discussing results with colleagues and determining ways to make improvements. Teachers need time and opportunities to work collaboratively to critically examine and actively revise their craft. For example, Kingston City School District might provide professional learning days during which teachers plan differentiated lessons from their curriculum resources and teach these lessons to groups of colleagues. Colleagues will provide feedback and help the teacher refine the lessons to better target students’ needs. Other sessions may provide guidance to administrators in conducting effective walk-throughs and formative observations of teachers’ instruction, as well as methods for providing useful and appropriate feedback that leads to better student learning. Collaboration for collaboration’s sake does not necessarily lead to success, as people could work together on low-impact tasks; instead, effective collaboration must have improved student learning as its primary focus (Fullan, 2007; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).
- **Develop mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of professional development.** Kingston City School District should consider developing checklists and/or scoring rubrics for use in planning, monitoring, and evaluating professional learning experiences. The lists/rubrics may include information such as the NSDC (2001) standards, other research-based characteristics of high-quality professional learning experiences, district goals, staffing areas (e.g., elementary general education/special education teachers, middle school general education/special education teachers, high school general

education/special education teachers), and expected or intended impact on teacher practice and student learning. For example:

- A checklist or rubric could be completed during the planning phase to determine and refine the feasibility of a proposed professional learning experience—that is, the proposed session must receive a favorable rating, likely indicating a high impact on student learning.
- At the end of the professional learning experience, this same checklist/rubric may be used by participants to rate the experience.
- A checklist or rubric also may be used during walk-throughs and observations to identify faculty needs and to inform the development of upcoming professional learning experiences.
- Teachers also could use a checklist or rubric to identify how they are using what they learned to inform their classroom instruction and improve their students' learning.
- To ensure ongoing success, Kingston City School District will want to periodically survey its staff to ensure that educators' needs and concerns are being specifically addressed and to identify any other issues that may arise. A survey schedule and methodology should be included in the district's professional development plan.

Books on the evaluation of professional learning experiences (Guskey, 2000; Killion, 2002) can be valuable resources when developing monitoring and evaluation tools or when selecting or adapting tools developed by others for use in Kingston City School District.

In summary, these implementation considerations are intended to assist the district in delineating specific goals and processes, procedures, protocols, and policies to incorporate into its action plan regarding professional learning. As the research literature indicates, professional learning must center on building the capacity and effectiveness of a school system to improve student learning. In effect, all members of this system—teachers, building administrators, district administrators, and the Board of Education—must embrace a common vision of professional learning and a commitment to supporting efforts that will lead to improved learning and achievement by all students. A professional learning plan devoted to operationalizing the mission, vision, and guiding principles is a key first step. Developing a professional learning community culture and Professional learning communities will be a significant part of this plan, along with other opportunities for educators to focus on ways to hone their craft and ensure that all students receive appropriate instruction as well as the additional support that each may need to be a successful learner.

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Appendix: Data Map of Co-Interpretation Key Findings

Kingston City School District: February 26–27, 2009

During the co-interpretation process, Kingston City School District participants analyzed seven individual reports (data sets) and identified findings. Participants then grouped the individual findings from the data sets under each of the six topic areas examined through the audit: curriculum, instruction, academic intervention services, professional learning opportunities, data use, and staffing. Participants worked together to identify which of the resulting key findings were most significant.

The following tables document the results of the co-interpretation process. Each table lists a key finding identified by co-interpretation participants, together with the individual supporting findings from various data sources.

Key

Report Abbreviations

AS—Audit Survey Report

CA—Curriculum Alignment Report

DR—Document Review Report

INT—Interview Report

OBS—Observation Report

SE—Special Education Report

SEC—Surveys of Enacted Curriculum Report

Voting Colors

Red votes = areas for improvement

Green votes = positive areas

Key Findings: Areas for Improvement

Key Finding 1	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>Curriculum documents lack alignment and continuity within content areas and across grade levels.</p> <p>(curriculum)</p> <p>(19 red votes)</p>	The Grade 10 English language arts (ELA) curriculum does not present or discuss any instructional practices or what is to be accomplished each month.	CA p. 54
	Grade 10 curriculum maps present targeted performance indicators, but there are no district-created expectations for each month.	CA p. 54
	At the secondary level, some teachers use curriculum alignment resources consistently, but not all teachers use the district map as their primary guide for instruction.	INT p. 18
	There was no district compilation of the curriculum maps.	DR p. 4
	It appears that examples samples, models, and procedure guides are lacking in the Grade 2 ELA curriculum map.	CA pp. 35–37
	In the fourth-grade district ELA map, more clarity of evidence, expectations, and examples is needed.	CA pp. 40–43
	Documents did not contain directions for use of the maps.	DR p. 4
	Curriculum maps are in different formats and include different information.	DR p. 4
	Grade 8 shows evidence of connections: grade to grade, subject to subject, professional development to instruction, assessment to instruction, district’s student learning indicators to state standards.	CA p. 49
	100% of the observations at the secondary level did not show integration of subject areas.	OBS p. 17
	The district has established criteria related to the alignment of the curriculum to the district’s educational goals.	DR p. 3
	Four elementary schools and two secondary schools received moderate ratings for teacher use of alignment resources. Elementary school respondents said the teachers at some grade levels consistently follow the district curriculum maps, but others follow their own guidelines.	INT p. 17
	The curriculum revision plan includes a timeline for developing, creating, and revising grade-level curriculum maps.	DR p. 3
Grade 10 ELA curriculum does not appear to give any clear connections to Grade 9 and Grade 11 ELA curriculum.	CA p. 54	

Key Finding 1	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	There is fairly good agreement that there is easy access to ELA curriculum maps but perhaps too much leeway in their use.	INT p. 18
	Where response was positive, teachers cited pressure from district building administrators to provide a consistent curriculum.	INT p. 18
	There are no clear student expectations or relationships between district learning indicators and state standards in Grade 6 curriculum maps.	CA p. 44
	Modifications and accommodations for diverse student learning needs are not clearly evident in ELA Grade 6 curriculum maps.	CA p. 46
	Grade 10 ELA curriculum does not connect to other content areas (i.e., mathematics, science, social studies).	CA p. 55

Key Finding 2	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
Adequate common planning time for teachers is seen as essential for effective programs but is lacking. (staffing practices) (18 red votes)	Improving the communication and cooperation of general education teachers and special education teachers is a top priority of the district. Respondents indicated that more joint professional development opportunities will bring the two sets of teachers together.	INT pp. 6, 9
	Classroom observation data revealed a marked difference in the amount of time that general and special education teachers are engaged in providing instruction to students or support to coteachers, indicating that responsibilities are not always equally shared.	SE p. 40 (observation data)
	75% of respondents stated that professional development is related to the school's academic goals.	AS p. 12
	33% of respondents reported that they did not have enough time or opportunity for discussion.	AS p. 12
	51% of respondents indicate that there are not enough opportunities to collaborate.	AS p. 18
	Two elementary schools and one secondary school received moderate ratings for the availability of collaborative opportunities.	INT p. 48
	At the elementary level, teachers stated that they had constraints that prevented regular collaboration with peers.	INT p. 48
	One elementary school and one secondary school rated low for the availability of collaborative opportunities: Minimal formal time occurs and time is not allocated for collaborative planning.	INT p. 49
	At elementary level, it was stated that time is not built in, meeting time is consumed by	INT p. 49

Key Finding 2	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	school issues, and minimal instructional planning takes place (logistics).	
	At the secondary level, monthly ELA department meetings and professional development days provided some opportunities to collaborate. Teachers indicated that these meetings do not provide enough time for collaborative planning and that they rely on informal communication with other teachers. A secondary principal noted frustration at lack of willingness of teachers to share information.	INT p. 48
	At the secondary level, scheduled monthly department meetings and collaborative workshops are available, but teachers said this is not sufficient for successful collaboration.	INT p. 49
	Coteachers who share a classroom at the secondary level said they want more time to plan because other issues get in the way.	INT p. 49
	At the three secondary schools rated moderately for usefulness of collaboration, there were mixed responses. One principal felt she had solid teams who work well together, but some teachers felt there was not enough time to focus on instructional planning. The consensus was that more common planning time is needed.	INT p. 50
	Five of six elementary schools received high ratings for the perceived usefulness of collaborative opportunities. Almost all respondents felt that collaborating with other teachers, both within and out of their buildings, is enjoyable and helpful and that they would like to do more.	INT p. 50
	One elementary and all three secondary schools received moderate ratings for perceived usefulness of collaborative opportunities. Having limited time to meet with other teachers was the main reason offered for collaboration not being useful.	INT p. 50
	At the one moderately rated elementary school for usefulness of collaborative opportunities, the limited time given for collaboration is very useful for planning and instruction, but more time is needed.	INT p. 50
	More than one teacher suggested having more opportunities to observe other classrooms.	INT p. 48
	94% of respondents agreed they collaborate with other teachers.	AS p. 20
	In observations, 100% of general education teachers are very active in providing support during the entire class period; 31% of special education teachers were observed to do so.	SE p. 41 (observation data)
	The majority of special education teachers in coteaching were helping students or assisting general education teachers for at least half of the class period: 62% of special education teachers assisting 25% to 50% of the time; 100% regular education and 31% special	SE p. 41 (observation data)

Key Finding 2	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	education teachers assisting more than 75% of the time.	
	66% of respondents felt that the collaborative sessions were extremely or moderately helpful.	AS p. 18
	Teachers in Grades 9–12 report professional development in areas developing curriculum or lesson plans with others. They reviewed student work, scored assessments, or developed assessments or tasks more frequently than middle or elementary teachers.	SEC p. 20
	Three of six elementary schools and one of three secondary schools received high ratings for the availability of collaborative opportunities. At the elementary level, respondents said they were very satisfied with the amount of collaboration time allowed in the schedule and willingness of teachers to share information (they said they have common planning time or preparation time and meet formally once a month). At the secondary level, respondents indicated that administration supports a coteaching instructional model.	INT p. 48
	Three coteaching models are reported: (1) Special education and general education teachers share equal responsibility for planning and delivering instruction. (2) One teacher leads instruction and the other provides support in the classroom (special and general education teachers take turns leading instruction). (3) General education teachers do all the planning and instruction. Special education does not share in responsibility (two incidences of this).	SE p. 40 (interview data)
	A majority of coteachers (71%) have common planning time, but none of the teachers working in general education has common planning time and only one quarter of resource and one fifth of self-contained teachers have common planning time with other teachers.	SE p. 39 (interview data)
	Because of a lack of common planning time, collaboration between special and general education teachers most often was conducted informally (e.g., before school, after school, lunch).	SE p. 39 (interview data)
	Special and general education teachers were equally likely to report having scheduled opportunities to collaborate with other teachers. However, only 3% of special education teachers (compared to 21% of nonspecial education teachers) believed these sessions were extremely helpful in planning instruction.	SE p. 39 (data from AS)
	Teacher survey data showed more than 90% of special and general education teachers met informally to discuss instruction and learning. Nonspecial education teachers are more likely (48%) than special education teachers (21%) to hold informal meetings more than once per week.	SE p. 40 (data from AS)
	58% nonspecial education teachers reported these discussions were “extremely helpful” for planning instruction (compared to 35% of special education teachers).	SE p. 40 (data from AS)

Key Finding 3	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>KCSD has not developed in document for student expectations for Grades 6, 8, and 10.</p> <p>KCSD presents district-created student expectations for Grade 2 that are fairly well aligned with the New York State Education Department (NYSED) performance indicators regarding knowledge level and are somewhat aligned regarding cognitive process.</p> <p>KCSD presents district-created student expectations for Grade 4 that are not aligned with NYSED performance indicators regarding knowledge level or cognitive process.</p> <p>(curriculum)</p> <p>18 red votes 1 green vote</p>	There are no district-created student expectations presented to link NYSED performance indicators at Grades 6, 8, and 10.	CA pp. 44–45; 49–50; 53–54
	The performance indicators cited in the Grade 6 ELA curriculum map are comparable to the NYSED performance indicators.	CA p. 20
	There is no evidence of students applying literacy strategies in the context of meaningful tasks at Grade 8.	CA p. 49
	KCSD Grade 8 ELA curriculum does not show evidence of clear expectations for student outcomes, and there is no relationship between student goals and the state standards.	CA p. 49
	The district-cited performance indicators align closely to the NYSED Grade 8 performance indicators.	CA p. 27
	There appears to be a parallel relationship between the Grade 8 map and the overall distribution NYSED ELA performance indicators in all four knowledge levels.	CA p. 24
	The Grade 10 district map cited fewer performance indicators indicated as metacognitive in comparison to all NYSED performance indicators that were cited as metacognitive.	CA p. 30
	Specific district-created student expectations with respect to content are not evident (Grade 10 curriculum).	CA p. 54
	Grade 10 ELA curriculum provides no samples or descriptions of assessments, nor is there clear documentation of assessment tools used for formative or summative purposes.	CA p. 56
	The percentage of district-cited performance indicators is comparable to all performance indicators with respect to cognitive demand for Grade 10 ELA.	CA p. 32
	It seems that the district expectations ask second graders to create twice as much as NYSED’s do.	CA p. 12
	It seems that the district expectations ask second graders to remember twice as much as NYSED’s do.	CA p. 12
	There is no evidence that the district’s expectations in Grade 2 ELA include evaluation in regard to cognitive demand.	CA p. 12
	It appears that the NYSED performance indicator for metacognition is twice as strenuous as the district’s expectations for Grade 2.	CA p. 10
KCSD Grade 2 ELA curriculum does not show evidence of the incorporation of reading	CA pp. 36–37	

Key Finding 3	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	and writing and the requirement of critical thinking through literacy tasks.	
	The district's expectations match NYSED's expectations for analyze for Grade 2 students.	CA p. 12
	There is no evidence in the Grade 2 ELA curriculum map that the district acknowledges that reading and writing are reciprocal tasks.	CA p. 35
	There appears to be no significant discrepancy between the districts expectations and NYSED at Grade 2 knowledge level.	CA p. 9
	The district's and NYSED's emphasis of knowledge level are very similar in Grade 2.	CA p. 13
	In Grades 2 and 4, formative and summative assessments and tools are provided and linked to student outcomes, expectations, topics, units, and curricular materials.	CA pp. 35, 40
	In Grade 2 and 4, the district does a reasonable job of offering opportunities for students to apply literacy strategies in meaningful tasks.	CA pp. 35, 40
	NYSED places more emphasis on understanding than the district in Grade 4.	CA p. 17
	The district's expectations for analysis are more than double the state's for Grade 4.	CA p. 17
	In Grade 4 ELA, the order of emphasis is similar except that NYSED places more emphasis on remember and less on analyze.	CA p. 18
	NYSED's expectations for evaluation in Grade 4 are three times greater than the district's.	CA p. 18
	NYSED's expectations for evaluation in Grade 4 are three times greater than the district's.	CA p. 17
	NYSED appears to place slightly more emphasis than the district on metacognitive knowledge, while the district places slightly more emphasis with regard to factual knowledge.	CA p. 14
	The district and NYSED both most emphasize conceptual and procedural knowledge although inversely.	CA p. 14
	The district places more emphasis on the cognitive demand area of 'apply' than does NYSED in Grade 4.	CA p. 17
	The district places more emphasis on the cognitive demand area of 'create' than does NYSED in Grade 4.	CA p. 17

Key Finding 4	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>The majority of general education teachers reported not receiving adequate training in teaching nonproficient learners and students with disabilities (SWDs) in an integrated setting.</p> <p>(professional learning opportunities)</p> <p>(16 red votes)</p>	Elementary and secondary school teachers reported that a top challenge in their school is working with a large special-needs population in an integrated setting.	INT p. 54
	Elementary and secondary teachers cited the diversity of the student population as a particular challenge in their schools.	INT p. 54
	Some teachers in moderately rated schools felt they needed more professional learning opportunities on how to work with nonproficient students.	INT p. 48
	Teachers and special education leaders noted the need for teachers to learn how to team teach in inclusive settings and be exposed to different inclusion and coteaching models.	SE p. 31 (interview data)
	More than 80% of general and special education teachers said they have not received professional development in development or interpretation of individualized education plans.	SE pp. 27–28 (interview data)
	63% of special education teachers do not believe professional development opportunities were helpful to their teaching and relevant to SWDs.	SE pp. 27–28 (interview data)
	A majority of general education teachers reported a lack of training in special education issues.	SE p. 28 (interview data)
	KCSD provides few professional development opportunities about ELLs for general education teachers.	DR p. 15
	Additional professional development is needed in the following areas: (1) how to improve literacy skills and reading and writing for SWDs, and (2) helping general education teachers learn more about special education issues and the nature of various disabilities.	SE pp. 30–32 (interview data)
	Professional development related to meeting the learning needs of special population of students is in the minor to moderate range.	SEC pp. 24–25
	More training in special education needed especially with integrated students. Others felt “tortured” by the required district sessions.	INT p. 46
	Few professional development opportunities are provided to general education teachers about instructional strategies to support the delivery of ELA curriculum to SWDs.	DR p. 15
63% of teachers reported that professional development is either minimally or not at all focused on instruction of SWDs in a general education classroom; 58% reported the same in an inclusion classroom.	AS p. 11	

Key Finding 5	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>The district has plans documentation in place to inform staff on data use. These plans and documentation lack clarity and articulation. There is a lack of a districtwide systemic approach to data use, implementation and monitoring.</p> <p>Teachers at all levels report making individual decisions about which achievement data to use to inform instruction, including self-developed assessments.</p> <p>Teacher training related to assessment review and data analysis is reported to be inconsistent throughout the district.</p> <p>(data use)</p> <p>(15 red votes)</p>	Four of six elementary schools received high rating for administrative focus on data use and engaging teachers in use.	INT p. 28
	Based on the data provided in the Interview Report, teachers have a range of opinions regarding the usefulness of assessment data. Usefulness is rated from minimal to a great deal.	INT pp. 33–34
	Using the data obtained from a variety of formal and informal assessments to inform and support instruction and school improvement efforts, there does not appear to be a set of clearly written guidelines on how to use this assessment data.	SE p. 34 (interview data)
	Two elementary schools and one of three secondary schools received a moderate rating for administrative focus on data use. In these schools, the administration communicates some expectations related to data use infrequently or inconsistently. Teachers are somewhat engaged in examining data for instructional decisions.	INT pp. 28–29
	Even among schools highly rated highly for data use, there are no written data use plan or policy. Expected practices are unofficial.	INT p. 29
	Of school leaders: 25% reported a written data use guideline existed; 25% reported informal guidelines; 50% reported no guidelines available.	SE p. 34 (interview data)
	Many principals across the district place a great deal of emphasis an assessments and data use, but not all have clear expectations of how teaches should use data to inform classroom instruction.	INT p. 34
	Two secondary schools got a low rating because there was little or no administrative emphasis placed on teachers using formal assessment data for instructional planning.	INT p. 29
	A secondary principal indicated that data use in the building is a work in progress: “We haven’t really gotten to the point where we’re all doing common assessments, although we are moving in that direction.”	INT p. 29
	At the secondary school rated moderate for this variable, respondents indicated that there was pressure from the district and the school to examine and use data but that a lot of teachers disliked “teaching to the test.”	INT p. 29
The school improvement plan template includes templates for planning school improvement using data sources.	DR p. 19	

Key Finding 5	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	No documentation exists that communicates information about ELLs to regular education teachers.	DR p. 18
	The Comprehensive District Educational Plan (CDEP) includes plans to use student achievement data to more effectively instruct Students With Disabilities (SWDs), English Language Learners (ELLs), and students receiving Academic Intervention Services (AIS).	DR p. 18
	The two criteria that are related to the delivery of the curriculum were addressed by documents that described planning and implementation. Documentation on this topic was limited. The criteria for instruction are: 2a. Ensure consistent delivery of the curriculum <i>within</i> schools 2b. Ensure consistent delivery of the curriculum <i>across</i> schools	DR p. 6
	The district did not submit documents addressing district policy on monitoring data-driven decision making.	DR p. 20
	There is a lack of a comprehensive approach related to data use Grades K–12.	DR pp. 18–19
	Evidence shows that assessment data are collected, but documents are not clear about how data drive decisions.	DR p. 20
	KCSD has several plans and practices related to ensuring that students’ achievement data are used to inform academic programming, planning, and instruction.	DR p. 19
	AIS plan mentions assessments to designate students and achievement levels.	DR p. 19
	Documents indicate that the district is evaluating ongoing practices and collecting data to determine progress and adjusting practices.	DR p. 18
	60% of respondents rated analyzing student performance data and examining student work as receiving minor or no emphasis during scheduled collaborative sessions.	AS p. 17
	The district provided little documentation about providing data related to placement of ELLs and SWDs to teachers.	DR p. 20
	Evidence of implementation is documented through the district presentation on summative achievement data and how it will be used to frame revisions for instructional focus.	DR pp. 19–20
	Two elementary schools and one secondary school were ranked as “low” in the category of training on the use of assessment data. Teachers reported minimal to no recent training on data use for planning and instruction.	INT p. 31 & 32
	Professional development does not address data analysis or the use of student achievement data.	DR p. 20

Key Finding 5	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	Professional development opportunities do not address data analysis and use of data in the classroom.	DR p. 18
	Teachers at all levels would like more consistent training on how to incorporate data into instruction.	INT p. 34
	The district provides professional development for teachers on how to access and read data reports.	DR p. 18
	Documentation does not address which teachers attend training on data analysis and use.	DR p. 19
	Despite the lack of teacher training in data use, at four of six elementary schools, the majority of teachers often administer and use formal assessments in their classroom.	INT p. 32
	It is clear that some teachers and administrators have access to training on data analysis and use of data in the classroom.	DR p. 19
	Three elementary schools and two secondary schools received moderate ratings for training on use of assessment data. They reported inconsistent training and depth of training as an issue at both levels.	INT p. 32
	Topics related to data use were not highly covered, and about 50% of respondents indicated they received minimal or no training on data use such as diagnosing learning challenges and monitoring progress.	AS p. 10

Key Finding 6	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
The NYSED standards emphasize more higher-level cognitive demands than are being provided at the secondary level in KCSD. The standards require more independent inquiry, research, and presentation and more opportunities for sustained reading and writing. Elementary school respondents reported teaching a broad range	82% of the observed instruction at the elementary level was direct instruction.	OBS p. 17
	Grade 2 teachers reported emphasis on lower-level cognitive demand with regard to speaking, presenting, listening, and viewing than NYSED standards.	SEC ad hoc report
	NYSED assessment Grade 5 places greater emphasis than KCSD teachers on assessing narrative elements at the analytical/investigative level of cognitive demand with perform procedural and explain.	SEC p. 11
	NYSED assessment Grade 8 places greater emphasis at explain and analyze/investigate level of cognitive demand than KCSD teachers report instructing.	SEC p. 13
	Very few classrooms were observed providing opportunities for students to conduct independent inquiry or research.	SE p. 16 (observation data)
	Observations revealed that students were seldom engaged in sustained writing and reading	SE p. 16

Key Finding 6	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>of ELA skills. However, in most cases, they are teaching them at a lower level of cognitive demand than suggested by NYSED standards or assessed by NYSED, a finding supported by classroom observations.</p> <p>(instruction)</p> <p>(12 red votes)</p>	activities.	(observation data)
	Third-grade teachers reported instruction along all areas and cognitive levels. The state assessment focused on fluency, comprehension, and critical reasoning across all cognitive levels except for evaluate and integrate.	SEC p. 9
	Grade 1 teachers reported listening, viewing, speaking, and presenting at a lower level of cognitive demand than the NYSED standards.	SEC ad hoc report
	The reported level of instruction at high school is broader in cognitive demand than assessment requires	SEC p. 15
	In the area of critical reasoning, NYSED places a greater emphasis on validity and significance of assertion/argument than teachers report instruction at the high school level.	SEC p., 14
	NYSED assessment at the high school level places higher emphasis on listening at a lower level of cognitive demand than teachers report of their instruction.	SEC p. 15
	88% of observations noted at the elementary level indicated that sustained writing was noted rarely or not observed.	OBS p. 18
	Reported instruction at Grade 3 for comprehension is emphasized at perform procedure level while the standards emphasize comprehension at analyze and evaluate level.	SEC p. 8
	Grade 2 teachers reported less time spent on synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms with regard to higher levels of cognitive development than NYSED standards.	SEC ad hoc report
	Grade 7 ELA teachers reported significant alignment between their emphasis on Grade 7 Instructional Practice areas and the expected emphasis of the NYSED standards for Grade 7.	SEC ad hoc report
	There was a high-level of alignment between reported instructional practice at the high school level with NYSED standards, with a greater emphasis on vocabulary and language study existing in practice.	SEC p. 14
	Grade 6 ELA teachers reported more topics at a broad level of cognitive demand than the assessment requires.	SEC p. 11
	Teachers in Grades 9–12 reported less emphasis on speaking and presenting at the generate, create, and demonstrate levels when compared to the NYSED standards.	SEC p. 14
At the secondary level, no prevalent practices associated with student activities were observed.	OBS pp. 8–9	

Key Finding 6	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	Grade 5 teachers reported little emphasis on vocabulary instruction at cognitive levels memorize through analyze. NYSED assessments test at the analyze/investigate level.	SEC ad hoc report
	Grade 1 KCSD teachers reported that their comprehension instruction focused on a lower level cognitive demand when compared to NYSED standards.	SEC ad hoc report
	Grade 4 ELA teachers report more emphasis on a lower level of cognitive demand in prewriting skills and editing, while the NYSED standards emphasize a higher-level of cognitive demand (analyze and investigate).	SEC ad hoc report
	70% of the observations at the elementary level noted that higher-level instructional feedback was rarely or not observed.	OBS p. 17
	75% of observations noted that higher-level questioning was rarely or not observed at elementary level.	OBS p. 17
	In the area of writing, NYSED places higher level of cognitive demand in Grade 1 in the areas of prewriting, drafting, and revising when compared to KCSD teachers.	SEC
	In the area of vocabulary, KCSD teachers in Grade 1 reported spending a lot of time on sight words when compared to NYSED standards.	SEC ad hoc report
	80% of the observations noted at the secondary level that sustained writing was rarely or not observed.	OBS p. 18
	Grade 7 ELA teachers reported more emphasis in instruction in the area of analyzing and investigating than the NYSED standards require.	SEC ad hoc report
	Grade 4 teachers reported instruction with less emphasis at the cognitive demand level of evaluate and integrate in the area of speaking and presenting than the NYSED standards.	SEC ad hoc report
	Grade 2 teachers reported little time spent on literal and connotative meanings with regard to speaking and presenting than NYSED standards outline.	SEC ad hoc report
	Grade 1 NYSED standards place higher level of cognitive demand on teaching synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms compared to reported instruction of KCSD teachers.	SEC ad hoc report
	Teachers in Grade 6 reported less emphasis on speaking and presenting at the generate/create/demonstrate level of cognitive demand than NYSED standards.	SEC p. 10
	Grade 8 level teachers reported high course grain alignment with NYSED standards.	SEC p. 12
	Grade 8 alignment on topics of sentence paragraph and main ideas is relatively high in the generate/create/demonstrate cognitive demand level.	SEC p. 13

Key Finding 6	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	Grade 3 teachers reported less emphasis on comprehension strategies and higher cognitive demand levels than NYSED standards expect.	SEC p. 8
	NYSED assessments at Grade 5 have a strong emphasis on comprehension across all levels of cognitive demand. Teachers reported emphasis across all levels of cognitive demand.	SEC p. 11
	Grade 7 ELA teachers reported instruction with less emphasis in the area of speaking and presenting than the NYSED at the cognitive demand level of generate/create/demonstrate.	SEC ad hoc report
	Grade 6 teachers reported that instruction has a high degree of alignment with NYSED standards.	SEC p. 10
	90% of the observed instruction at the secondary level was direct instruction. Direct instruction was noted as occurring frequently in 50% of the cases and extensively in 40% of the cases.	OBS p. 17
	Teachers in Grades 9–12 reported a broad range of cognitive demand with less emphasis on generate, create, and demonstrate as compared to the NYSED standards.	SEC p. 14
	80% of the observations at the secondary level observed higher-level instructional feedback rarely (60%) or not at all (20%).	OBS p. 17
	100% of the observations at the secondary level did not show integration of subject areas.	OBS p. 17
	Integration of subject areas at the secondary level was observed rarely (20%) or not at all (80%).	OBS p. 17
	60% of observations noted at the secondary level indicated higher-level questioning was rarely or not observed.	OBS p. 17

Key Finding 7	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
Although the quantity of professional learning opportunities is perceived as adequate, there is a need for quality, consistency, and ongoing activities to support classroom practices. (professional learning)	Teachers in Grades K–8 reported a more than moderate emphasis in professional development related to instructional approaches.	SEC pp. 23–24
	Respondents at moderately rated secondary schools varied about how helpful professional development sessions have been toward instruction. One felt the “prepackaged seminars don’t address the needs of specific schools.” More experienced teachers felt the professional development should “match the level of their expertise.”	INT p. 48
	Teachers reported they are sometimes provided follow-up activities that relate to what they have learned.	SEC p. 21
	Teachers reported having to seek some professional development sessions on their own.	INT p. 46

Key Finding 7	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
opportunities) (12 red votes)	Also, the options available were not always helpful.	
	At the secondary level, teachers spoke positively about their experiences. However, several felt more training working with special education is needed.	INT p. 46
	One elementary school and two secondary schools received moderate ratings for availability of professional development. At the elementary level, respondents expressed that they were not satisfied with the amount or quality of professional learning opportunities available.	INT pp. 46–47
	One of six elementary schools received a high rating for the perceived usefulness of professional development for the instruction of their students. In this school, teachers run their own sessions with applicable materials that helped them address student needs. Also, a literacy fair was helpful.	INT p. 47
	Five elementary schools and all secondary schools received moderate ratings for the perceived usefulness of professional development. Respondents had mixed opinions about the availability of the professional development and said it was somewhat useful for instruction.	INT p. 47
	Five of six elementary schools and one secondary school received high ratings for the availability of professional development.	INT p. 46
	In moderately rated elementary schools, teachers’ opinions were mixed as to the usefulness of the professional development. One elementary principal felt that district professional development over the past few years has been inconsistent with few follow-up activities to support classroom use.	INT p. 47

Key Finding 8	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
Both school-level and district-level respondents identified a need for formal professional development on collaborative teaching for special education and general education teachers. Teachers also reported a lack of trained AIS instructors. (professional learning	Respondents at one secondary school reported that their AIS classes are taught by general education teachers who do not have an AIS curriculum and have received no training. .	INT p. 37
	Elementary teachers reported that AIS teaching assistants and parent volunteers provide additional support by reading to students or providing one-on-one time for nonproficient students. No teaching assistants are specifically dedicated to this at the secondary level.	INT p. 37
	It is a goal of district personnel to increase the number of integrated classrooms at every level to provide more training for general education and special education teachers on use of curriculum in an inclusion setting and to improve communication among teachers.	INT p. 11
	At all schools except one secondary school, respondents indicated that at least two reading	INT p. 37

Key Finding 8	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
opportunities)	or AIS specialists provide instruction for nonproficient students.	
(11 red votes)	Teachers in one secondary school felt that students need a qualified reading specialist to help them with basic literacy skills.	INT p. 37

Key Finding 9	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
Central office roles and responsibilities have expanded over time, leaving personnel with overwhelming duties.	District-level personnel interviewed have been in their current positions for five years or less. Within the central office, roles and responsibilities have changed and expanded over time. Several respondents expressed that they sometimes feel confused or overwhelmed.	INT p. 6
(staffing)		
(5 red votes)		

Key Finding 10	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
District documentation of AIS program monitoring was deemed incomplete, and interviews showed an inconsistent use of data to drive AIS instruction.	Based on special education leader interviews, there does not appear to be a consistent monitoring system in place across schools to ensure that SWDs receive intervention and related services on their IEPs.	SE p. 25 (interview data)
(academic intervention services)	Six elementary schools were continually assessed throughout the year using a variety of formal assessments.	INT p. 37
(4 red votes)	The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) appears to be given nonsystematically at different secondary schools (different times at different schools).	INT p. 39
	Four elementary schools and one of three secondary schools received moderate ratings for monitoring progress of students receiving academic support. Elementary respondents indicated that formal assessments are administered several times a year, but data are not used for program and instructional decisions.	INT p. 39
	Two of three secondary schools reported that the monitoring of student progress was ineffective.	INT p. 36
	One elementary school and two secondary schools received low ratings for monitoring progress of students. Limited formal monitoring of progress was completed.	INT pp. 39–40

Key Finding 10	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	Secondary school respondents where a moderate rating was given for monitoring progress of students receiving academic support noted that teachers can use formal assessments administered midyear to determine if AIS students have made progress, but there is no evidence that these data are used to make program decisions.	INT p. 39
	One secondary principal said that academic performance of individual students in academic services is discussed at weekly Child Study Team meetings.	INT p. 39
	KCSD uses student achievement to determine if interventions are having a positive impact and to target interventions to meet student needs.	DR p. 10
	No documents addressed policy plans or evidence of monitoring availability of AIS during the regular school day or outside the regular school day.	DR p. 11
	Much of the documentation referred to implementation. Fewer documents referred to policies, plans, or monitoring practices.	DR p. 11
	None of the documents described or referred to a systematic district approach to use student achievement data to inform decisions regarding AIS.	DR p. 11
	AIS documents do not mention exit scores or an exit policy or process.	DR pp. 9–10
	Beyond policy and Reading Recovery, no documents detail how students exit AIS.	DR p. 11
	The district provided documentation that addressed monitoring student achievement in order to make decisions regarding AIS.	DR p. 11
	Implementation and monitoring of AIS is evident from the documents.	DR p. 9
	One of six elementary schools received a high rating for monitoring progress of AIS students. In this particular school, a building leadership team actively reviews data, and the administration meets with grade-level teams monthly to review children and determine what is working and what is not.	INT p. 39
	Summer school data are collected and reported. Documents do not show how the data are used.	DR p. 11
	Monitoring is limited, but student achievement data are used to determine if interventions are having a positive impact.	DR p. 10
	Specific information about exit scores and additional assessments for Grades 6–12 is not mentioned in the documents.	DR p. 10
	No evidence was given to show how formative assessment data are used to monitor the impact of intervention on student progress.	DR p. 11

Key Finding 11	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>At each grade level and for specific populations, it seems unclear how district ELA curriculum-related policies and plans are implemented and monitored. In some cases, they are inconsistent or lacking.</p> <p>(curriculum)</p> <p>(3 red votes)</p>	It is not clear how the maps ensure curricular materials are being used.	DR p. 4
	29% of respondents reported that they do have adequate materials for ELLs (strongly agree and agree).	AS p. 2
	28% respondents reported that they do not have adequate resources for ELLs.	AS p. 2
	There is a perceived inconsistency in the administrative focus to mentoring and enforcing the use of curricular resources.	INT p. 14
	Two of six elementary schools received high ratings for teachers' use of alignment resources.	INT p. 13
	Respondents at these high-rated elementary schools indicated that they feel pressure from district building administrators and the community to provide a consistent curriculum.	INT p. 17
	Two of six elementary schools and one of three secondary schools received high ratings for administrative focus on ELA. At the elementary schools, curriculum alignment expectations are communicated frequently during faculty meeting, building leadership team, and team meetings. Within these buildings, the administration does some monitoring of alignment through review of lesson plans and observation. The secondary principal relies on ELA content expert to monitor teacher use.	INT p. 17
	How the curriculum revision plan is carried out or who is responsible for the implementation is not covered in the documents sent by the district.	DR p. 3
Curriculum policy/maps lack monitoring plans.	DR p. 4	

Key Finding 12	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>There is a lack of timely access to state and local data in order to inform instruction.</p> <p>(data use)</p> <p>(3 red votes)</p>	Teachers indicated that lack of timely access to data is a barrier to effectively using assessment data.	SE p. 35 (interview data)
	In one secondary school (low rating), data are not collected frequently and teachers don't have easy access.	INT p. 30
	40% of respondents indicated that classroom teachers do not receive data reflecting student progress in academic support programs.	AS p. 5
	33% of respondents indicated that data from formative assessments are not available in a timely manner.	AS p. 2
	At a low-rated secondary school, teachers develop assessments throughout year, and many	INT p. 30

Key Finding 12	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	questioned the value of the formal ELA assessments.	
	Teachers use classroom assessments to inform instruction more often than state and district assessment data on a daily or weekly basis.	INT p. 32
	All teachers reported relying on informal classroom data a great deal for planning and for monitoring student progress.	INT p. 34
	At the moderately rated schools in this category (two elementary schools and two secondary schools), there are no requirements or consistency in administering formal assessment. Individual teachers decide which assessments to use.	INT p. 32
	The district provides professional development on use of student assessment data.	DR p. 10
	The district provides training in data collection.	DR p. 10
	Leaders use state assessment data less often than other data to assess student performance.	SE p. 35 (interview data)
	Teachers use student achievement data to identify needs, group students, ensure mastery, and provide instruction accordingly.	SE p. 34 (interview data)
	Teachers reported they are more comfortable using teacher-made tests than state assessment data to guide instruction.	SE p. 34 (interview data)
	Elementary literacy status report states that student performance data over time are linked to programs.	DR p. 19
	Data use and access seems to be stronger at the elementary level than at the secondary level.	INT p. 34
	In schools rated at the moderate level, elementary teachers choose what assessment data they use to plan instruction.	INT p. 30
	One secondary school received a low rating in this category because the majority of teachers do not use data from formal assessments; rather, they rely on their own teacher-created assessments.	INT p. 33
	The current data management systems are not integrated or informative. The district is working on a new student management system.	INT p. 7
	Teachers at one elementary school and two secondary schools have some difficulties with accessing data and/or data are collected less frequently.	INT p. 29
	At the secondary level, ELA data arrive too late to be useful in instructional planning.	INT p. 30

Key Finding 12	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	One major limitation to data use is that the current data management systems are not integrated and information is kept in separate places.	INT p. 7
	No documentation exists showing how assessment data are distributed to teachers and administrators.	DR p. 18
	No information was given on data being provided to teachers of ELLs and SWDs in elementary or middle schools.	DR p. 18
	Availability of formative data is not addressed in the documentation.	DR p. 18
	There is a lack of a comprehensive summary of Grades 6–12 assessment (a Grades K–5 summary does exist).	DR p. 19

Key Finding 13	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>ELA instruction is not always differentiated due to a variety of factors including a lack of teaching materials and technology, a lack of ability grouping, and less-than-optimum use of teaching assistants and available physical space. Despite these findings, teachers reported using various teaching strategies to differentiate with more emphasis not on the process than content or product.</p> <p>(instruction)</p> <p>(3 red votes; 3 green votes)</p>	At the secondary level, no prevalent activities were associated with technology use or assessment.	OBS p. 8
	Teachers reported using various teaching strategies to differentiate instruction in content, process, and product.	SE p. 12 (interview data)
	Observation data revealed that differentiated instruction was more frequent in process than content and product.	SE p. 12 (observation data)
	Technology use at the elementary level was not observed or rarely observed 91% of the time.	OBS p. 18
	The amount of time paraprofessionals spent assisting teachers or students varied across settings. In general education and self-contained classrooms, the majority of teaching assistants are active throughout the class period. In cotaught settings, teaching assistants are active for approximately half the class period.	SE p. 37–38 (observation data)
	About 52% of the classrooms visited had space that could be used for multiple arrangements of desks, centers, board visibility, and teacher demonstrations.	SE p. 9 (observation data)
	At the elementary level, 75% of the observations noted ability grouping rarely (41%) or occasionally (35%).	OBS p. 17
	Regarding the availability of instructional resources among the moderately rated schools, several teachers reported that they want more materials to better differentiate instruction for the lowest level students.	INT p. 21

Key Finding 13	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	Students did not work collaboratively or use the computer to support their learning in a majority of the classrooms observed.	SE p. 14 (observation data)
	Availability of resources for lower-level students varies by grade: Grades K–3 use district-adopted series; Grades 4–5 use piloted series; Grade 6 uses unknown resources; Grades 7–8 use district-adopted series; and Grades 9–12 use district-adopted series.	INT p. 26
	At some grade levels, teachers said they need to rely 100% on their own materials.	INT p. 26
	Regarding the availability of instructional resources at the secondary level, there is an inconsistent reliance on district-, school-, and teacher-selected resources. Despite this, most secondary teachers report that they have adequate materials.	INT p. 22
	At all moderately rated schools (four elementary schools and all secondary schools), materials meet the needs of middle-performing students but not higher- or lower-performing. Teachers need to use additional resources beyond core to support all levels.	INT p. 25
	District staff reported that they believe there was a lack of input from special education teachers regarding the selection of ELA materials.	INT p. 7
	At the secondary level, 60% of the observations noted ability grouping rarely (30%) or occasionally (30%).	OBS p. 17
	ELA instruction was not always differentiated.	SE p. 20 (observation data)
	Special and general educators explained that they found it challenging to implement differentiated instruction to meet all student needs.	SE p. 15 (interview data)
	Small-group activities and one-on-one activities with teachers were rarely seen in nearly half the classrooms.	SE p. 14 (observation data)
	The use of different grouping strategies varied by educational settings and grade levels.	SE p. 14 (observation data)
	Teachers use more large-group activities but fewer small-group and one-to-one activities in the inclusive classrooms than the resource room or self-contained classrooms.	SE p. 14 (observation data)
	The quality of print-rich environments varied across settings and grade levels. Although half the classrooms had high-quality, print-rich environments, the resource room settings were least likely to have high-quality, print-rich environments.	SE p. 10 (observation data)

Key Finding 13	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	Four elementary schools and one secondary received moderate ratings regarding the availability of resources. The district provides resources to some but not all grade levels, and some teachers rely primarily on teacher-selected resources.	INT p. 21
	Three of six elementary schools and two of three secondary received high ratings regarding the use of resources.	INT p. 23
	All or nearly all teachers frequently and consistently use district- or school-selected resources.	INT p. 23
	At high rated schools, emphasis is placed on instructional consistency regarding use of resources.	INT p. 23
	Two elementary schools and two secondary schools received a high rating in availability of instructional resources. They reported that adequate ELA resources are primarily selected by district- or school-level committees. (They also may choose supplemental materials.)	INT p. 21
	Teachers seldom were observed using computers or other technology to support instruction.	SE OBS p. 13 (observation data)

Key Finding 14	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>There is an inconsistency in the availability of AIS in terms of who receives services, how they are received, and when they are received.</p> <p>At the secondary level, currently one source of criteria for identification of students needing AIS is used. After a student is identified, movement in and out of programs is limited.</p> <p>(academic intervention)</p>	No documents addressed policy, plans, or evidence of providing AIS to ELLs and SWDs at the elementary level (except Reading Recovery Grade 1).	DR p. 11
	District staff reported that there is a lack of alternative school settings for students.	INT p. 8
	Schools reported that more before- and afterschool programs needed to address the academic needs of nonproficient students.	INT p. 36
	Secondary-level administrators said it is difficult to schedule students for AIS classes because of other grade-level requirements because “schedules are tight.”	INT p. 41
	Middle school and high school schedules served as evidence that the district provides academic intervention services to ELLs and SWDs.	DR p. 11
	The most common types of support for nonproficient students are push-in/pull-out sessions, appropriate reading materials, and computer-based programs.	AS pp. 3–4
	Respondents at the secondary level said that most students who need AIS are scheduled for additional support. However, several teachers mentioned that district criteria for students may overlook students close to cutoff.	INT p. 41

Key Finding 14	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
services) (2 red votes)	Not all students are properly identified for academic services at the start of the year, and district cutoff excluded some borderline students.	INT p. 41
	Elementary teachers must complete a front-and-back one-page form and submit samples of student work in order to justify recommending a student for AIS services.	INT p. 38
	The ELA exam is the primary means of identifying AIS students at the secondary level. Sometimes the MAP assessments are used.	INT p. 38
	According to respondents, teacher recommendations are rarely a source of referral for academic support services in secondary schools.	INT p. 38
	Occasions for AIS placement are made early in the school year, not throughout the year, in secondary schools. Struggling students have to wait until the following year to be placed in AIS.	INT p. 38
	A common concern among secondary teachers is that some students may slip through on a passing ELA score while others are incorrectly identified as needing AIS based on test scores. Also, some respondents felt that some students in AIS should be classified as receiving special education services.	INT p. 38
	At the secondary level, there is a lack of a multilayered systematic process for identifying students in the academic support (although the availability of personnel received a high rating).	INT p. 35
	According to the Interview Report, if nonproficient students have problems with behavior or attendance, full academic support is difficult to provide.	INT p. 41
	66% of respondents reported that most or all of the support that nonproficient students receive is focused on remediation of literacy skills; 26% reported that some support is remedial.	AS p. 4
	60% of respondents stated that there are not enough academic support programs for nonproficient students.	AS p. 5
	Respondents were split regarding the availability of afterschool programs/sessions: 42% yes, 47% no, 11% not sure/not applicable.	AS p. 3
	55% of respondents indicated that support services are long enough and 48% indicated that they are frequent enough, but 34% disagreed that they are long enough and 40% disagreed that they are frequent enough.	AS p. 6
	Summer school is provided for struggling students in Grades K–12.	DR p. 11
Respondents reported that it is a challenge to have a well-coordinated schedule for SWDs	SE p. 11	

Key Finding 14	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	to receive services without missing regular instruction in the classroom.	(interview data)
	A scheduling challenge was overcome by push-in speech and small-group and individual instructional activities during pull-out times of SWD services.	SE p. 24
	The majority of respondents agreed that new teachers receive a high level of support.	AS p. 20
	Teachers and speech therapists expressed concern that SWDs were pulled too frequently from the classroom.	SE INT p. 22 (interview data)
	According to district staff, more resources and programs are available for struggling students at the elementary level than at the secondary level.	INT p. 8
	There are barriers to providing AIS that need to be eliminated (e.g., family needs, attendance, lack of transportation).	SE pp. 22–23 (interview data)
	Special education leaders are divided on the issue of whether SWDs have access to AIS. 50% said SWDs have full access and 50% said SWDs do not have access. And one said AIS was noted on IEP and delivered through special education teacher.	SE p. 20 (interview data)
	Documents do not identify a connection between AIS and ELLs or address SWDs (high school).	DR p. 11
	Documents show AIS services are provided during the school day to students in Grade 1 and Grades 6–10.	DR p. 10
	Access to AIS ELA-related programs for SWDs varies across the district. Inclusion students have less access according to teachers.	SE p. 20 (interview data)
	The district provides a range of academic interventions and related services to SWDs.	DR p. 22
	Additional academic support is provided in secondary schools by classroom teachers during ninth or tenth periods, but student attendance is irregular. Two teachers felt this help should be mandatory. One school offers afterschool technology-based tutoring to students who receive free or reduced-price lunch, but attendance is low.	INT p. 41
	Overall, at the secondary level, teachers are aware of availability of services; however, the process components received a low rating.	INT pp. 35–36
	One teacher said that only two elementary schools offer summer school. This is inaccurate but may reflect a need for clarity of services available.	INT p. 36
	Teachers indicated that AIS opportunities after school are voluntary and participation is up to the students.	INT p. 36

Key Finding 14	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	It is reported that one secondary school offers an afterschool tutoring and peer-tutoring program several days per week.	INT p. 36
	All three secondary schools offer a three- to four-week boot camp that is held before the ELA state exam to provide extra test preparation.	INT p. 36
	District staff stated a need for alternative school settings for the “20%-er students” (i.e., nonproficient students).	INT p. 8
	Low-performing students are required to attend help sessions during ninth and tenth periods, but this is voluntary.	INT p. 36
	Relatively few opportunities were mentioned by respondents for academic support before or after school.	INT p. 36
	The AIS plan outlined interventions available to struggling students based on their level of academic need.	DR p. 10
	Of the general and special education teachers interviewed, a majority felt SWDs were misplaced in cotaught setting. Of these same teachers, 80% felt resource SWDs were properly placed.	SE p. 23 (interview data)
	KCS D AIS plans describe assessments and scores to identify students.	DR p. 9
	Prereferral strategies policy states that the district will implement practices and strategies for targeted academic and behavioral intervention to help all district students.	DR p. 9
	Elementary cut scores in reference to additional assessments are established for Grades 1–5.	DR p. 10
	All three secondary schools received lower ratings for identification of students for academic support. It was indicated that there are limited ways to identify students and that teacher recommendations are rarely a source.	INT p. 38
	All six elementary schools received high ratings for identification of students for academic support.	INT p. 37
	At the elementary level, the report shows that teacher recommendations are considered important referral sources for students who do not fit ELA exam criteria.	INT p. 38
	Five of nine special education administrators believed that SWDs were not properly placed in their school, but they also felt the misplacement of students was inevitable.	SE p. 23 (interview data)
	AIS services are provided at levels of high and low need.	DR p. 9

Key Finding 15	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>Although the Annual Professional Performance Review provides for lesson review and observations, the district does not have documentation that provides for monitoring the delivery of curriculum or for monitoring interventions for students either within or across schools.</p> <p>(instruction)</p> <p>(2 red votes)</p>	Lesson review does not specifically address curriculum delivery within the schools.	DR p. 6
	APPR has not been revised since October 2006; most curriculum maps were created later.	DR p. 6
	Grade-level meetings and instructional council are structures through which curriculum information can be communicated.	DR p. 6
	No documents were supplied that address how the maps are used across the district or within individual schools.	DR p. 6
	Use of resources at three elementary schools and one secondary school received moderate rating: Some teachers use district-selected materials to varying degrees, and some use teacher-selected materials.	INT p. 24
	At both elementary and secondary levels, teachers have a high degree of discretion in selecting materials.	INT p. 24
	The curriculum maps do not specifically address delivery within schools.	DR p. 6
	95% of respondents agreed that they are trusted to make decisions regarding instruction and learning.	AS p. 20
	The curriculum maps represent delivery across a grade level.	DR p. 6
	The district submitted no documents that outline a specific plan for ensuring the use of district ELA curriculum within schools.	DR p. 6
	Teacher evaluation procedures are present for monitoring instruction of SWDs in special education classrooms. There is no documentation that a monitoring system is in place to ensure SWDs receive AIS.	SE p. 26 (document review data)
	The documents do not convey an overall policy or plan for delivery of a district curriculum.	DR p. 6
APPR process allows the administrator to conduct lesson review and observation within the building.	DR p. 6	

Key Finding 16	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>There is a lack of provisions outlined in curriculum documents addressing the curriculum resources and expectations to be utilized by special populations (SWDs and ELLs).</p> <p>(curriculum)</p> <p>(2 red votes)</p>	Access to general education ELA curriculum varied across settings with access defined by type of setting and severity of disabilities.	SE p. 6 (interview data)
	Teachers in the self-contained settings modified the curriculum to a greater degree than teachers in inclusive settings, while special education teachers are more likely to modify the curriculum than general education teachers.	SE p. 7 (interview data)
	Teachers reported modification of materials and pacing from lowering the difficulty of required reading materials a greater emphasis on skill sets and slowing the pace of instruction delivery.	SE pp. 6–7 (interview data)
	The majority of teachers interviewed said they have discretion to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of their students, but the extent to which they follow guidelines varies.	INT p. 19

Key Finding 17	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>Effectiveness of AIS is not consistent districtwide due to limiting and extraneous variables such as student behavior and motivation, lack of curricular alignment, and scheduling constraints.</p> <p>(academic intervention services)</p> <p>(2 red votes)</p>	Two of three secondary schools reported that their “perceived effectiveness of academic support” was low.	INT p. 36
	All six elementary schools and one of three secondary schools received moderate ratings for “perceived effectiveness of academic support.” In these schools, student participation is moderate to high; these schools have identified several limitations related to providing effective AIS to nonproficient students. In elementary education, students did not receive services every day, and time constraints were an issue.	INT p. 40
	Motivation and behavior issues affect the ability of some students to fully participate in services at the secondary level.	INT p. 41
	Effectiveness was seen as moderate at the secondary level. Respondents said they focus on tracking grades of struggling students. They do not regularly collect data specific to AIS students. There is no formalized assessment to track progress.	INT p. 41
	It was stated that something more systematic was needed for monitoring the progress of students receiving academic support.	INT p. 41
	The district’s quality improvement process refers to a plan for aligning the special education and the ELA curriculum for Grades 6–12.	DR p. 10
	District staff reported that there is a need for better data tracking to determine the	INT p. 8

Key Finding 17	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	effectiveness of specific academic support programs.	
	No formal alignment documents were submitted showing alignment of AIS and ELA curriculum.	DR p. 10
	At the elementary level, frustration arises when students are pulled too frequently from general education classrooms and behavior issues may arise.	INT p. 40
	Two secondary schools received low ratings for perceived effectiveness of academic support. Respondents in these schools felt that not all students who need AIS receive support and that student participation in provided services is moderate to low. They identified multiple limitations in providing academic support to nonproficient students.	INT p. 41
	63% of respondents agreed that academic support for nonproficient students is at least moderately effective (15% a great deal; 48% moderately).	AS p. 6
	District documents address the alignment of the summer school interventions to curriculum, although ELA curriculum is not defined.	DR p. 10
	AIS minutes refer to a discussion of curriculum mapping, which suggests that the district is taking steps to align the AIS and the ELA curriculum.	DR p. 10
	The district has collected and used data to determine the effectiveness of Reading Recovery.	DR p. 9
	There is no plan for aligning Grades K–5 AIS curriculum with the ELA curriculum.	DR p. 10

Key Finding 18	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
The majority of professional development is provided by the district. The majority of teachers participate in professional development together. Teachers are more likely to attend district-sponsored staff development. Staff are less likely to attend building-level staff turn-key trainings.	Participants in professional development appear to be at the school or department level.	SEC p. 16
	Teachers reported having participated in informal, self-directed learning more frequently than in study groups or networks or resource centers.	SEC p. 19
	Most professional development is provided by the district (54%).	AS p. 8
	ELA content-area professional development occurs in the form of workshops and in-service sessions an average of 6 to 15 hours per year.	SEC p. 18
	Teachers in Grades K–12 reported never or rarely giving lectures or presentations to colleagues.	SEC p. 20
	Professional development in ELA is more frequently accessed through workshops and in-service sessions compared to summer institutes, conferences, or college courses.	SEC p. 18
	26% of respondents stated that the building administrator does not provide professional	AS p. 8

Key Finding 18	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
(professional learning opportunities) (2 red votes; 5 green votes)	development.	
	KCSD provides professional development in a variety of settings and venues.	DR p. 15
	Approximately 75% of ELA teachers reported participating with most or all of the teachers from their grades or department in professional development.	SEC p. 22
	The majority of respondents stated that district-sponsored professional development sessions are the major type of professional development.	AS p. 8

Key Finding 19	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
District staff reported no major problems with hiring and supporting new staff; however, they noted a scarcity of qualified substitute teachers. (staffing) (1 red vote; 1 green vote)	District staff indicated no major problems with hiring or supporting new staff.	INT p. 10
	The only staffing issue specifically mentioned by district staff was a scarcity of qualified substitute teachers.	INT p. 11

Key Finding 20	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
Teachers reported that participation in professional development related to personal professional goals is more frequent than professional development related to school improvement goals. (professional learning opportunities) (0 votes)	Three quarters of respondents stated that professional development is related to the school academic goals.	AS p. 12
	One third of respondents reported that they did not have enough time or opportunity for discussion.	AS p. 12
	Teachers reported that professional development related to personal professional goals is more frequent than professional development related to school improvement goals.	SEC p. 21
	Four of six elementary schools and one of three secondary schools receiving high ratings for administrative focus on professional learning opportunities.	INT p. 44–45
	The administration expects all teachers to participate in professional learning opportunities at the elementary level.	INT pp. 44–45

Key Finding 21	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>In ELA professional development, there is a focus on instructional strategies. There is a need for professional development in the areas of content standards, assessment, related services (specialized training in special education), and technology to support student learning.</p> <p>(professional learning opportunities)</p> <p>(0 votes)</p>	There is a perception that a need exists for additional training in the use of district-level formal assessments (e.g., NWEA, Developmental Reading Assessment) so programming and instructional decisions may be made.	INT p. 7
	Teachers reported minor to moderate professional development in the area of technology to support student learning.	SEC pp. 23–24
	Related services personnel usually are not funded; they need specialized training that is not usually available inside the district.	SE INT p. 27
	Although a variety of topics were covered, the majority of topics focused on ELA instructional materials and differentiation.	AS p. 10
	Most professional development focuses on instruction; there is less on content.	DR p. 14
	Teachers reported a minor to moderate professional development emphasis on NYSED standards.	SEC pp. 23–24

Key Finding 22	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>Although a majority of teachers have access to curriculum resources, district documents lack evidence of the specific curriculum resources utilized.</p> <p>(curriculum)</p> <p>(0 votes)</p>	76% of respondents agreed that they have access to instructional technology.	AS p. 2
	Access to ELA resources and materials for proficient and nonproficient students is adequately available (70% to 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed).	AS p. 2
	No submitted documents address curricular materials provided for Grades 6–12.	DR p. 3
	The curriculum revision plan does not address alignment of materials.	DR p. 3
	No documents addressed curricular materials for Grades 6–12.	DR p. 4
	The provision of materials for ELLs and SWDs was not addressed.	DR p. 4
	Expectations on linking classroom instruction to the district curricular materials are not clearly conveyed in the documents submitted.	DR p. 4
	The criterion for the provision of materials was focused on narrowly in the documents but not for Grades 6–12.	DR p. 4

Key Finding 23	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>The district has not developed implementation and monitoring plans for areas related to staffing practices.</p> <p>(staffing)</p> <p>(0 votes)</p>	There is a perceived lack of communication among staff members.	INT p. 49
	It is not clear whether grade-level meetings are considered professional development.	DR p. 15
	Job descriptions are outdated.	DR p. 23
	KCSD did not provide documents outlining how new principals are supported in the district, so it is not clear how this criterion is met.	DR p. 23
	No documentation addressed the plans or evidence of monitoring teacher and administrator distribution across schools.	DR p. 23
	The district policy on the distribution of teachers is addressed in the collective bargaining agreement.	DR p. 22
	Distribution of administrators is not addressed in the district’s documentation.	DR p. 23
	Evidence of implementing and monitoring annual professional performance reviews was not submitted.	DR p. 23
	Documents addressing policies, plans, or evidence of monitoring support for need teachers were not submitted.	DR p. 22
	The district collects the names of those who attend professional development sessions. It is not clear how the district uses attendance records to promote participation in professional development.	DR p. 15
	The job descriptions provided by the district describe the expectation for content coaches and instructional leaders.	DR p. 23
	No evidence exists of written plans for developing content coach or instructional leadership positions.	DR p. 23

Key Finding 24	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
Professional development plans are not always clearly articulated for all stakeholders. Professional development is available for teaching staff; however, it is reported that professional development opportunities are not available for administrators. (professional learning opportunities) (0 votes)	District staff reported that principals need more support and training.	INT p. 9
	Professional development is available through superintendent’s day inservice sessions, workshops, and other classes. At the secondary level, respondents said they have easy access to formal professional development and that a series of ongoing workshops is offered throughout the year. Workshops and differentiated and student-centered learning are preferred by teachers.	INT p. 46
	At the secondary level, the administration clearly communicates that teachers are expected to participate in professional learning opportunities and are actively involved in these sessions.	INT p. 46
	A teacher’s goals must be aligned with the goals of the school and district.	INT p. 9
	District documentation did not demonstrate professional development to principals regarding ELA curriculum.	DR p. 14
	Areas for improvement on professional development include making professional development content and format relevant to students and teachers; meeting school-based professional development needs unique to each building; identifying needs of staff; defining long-term and short-term district plans committed to achieving these goals; and providing ongoing rather than “one-shot” training.	SE p. 31 (interview data)
	Policies and plans related to professional development were not identified through the supporting documentation.	DR p. 15

Key Finding 25	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
Respondents reported that they use informal support most of the time because there is limited direct formal support available. Respondents said that administrators have a moderate interest in professional development. (professional learning)	One elementary school and two secondary schools received low ratings because few teachers received training, which points to inadequacy of training.	INT p. 23
	Two elementary schools and one secondary school received moderate ratings for training with ELA resources. (Only some teachers received recent training, and there were mixed opinions about adequacy of training).	INT p. 22
	One secondary-level content expert said that administrators are unsure whether teachers use their professional development strategies in their instruction, and there is little discussion with lead teachers about these issues.	INT p. 46
	Moderately rated secondary school administrators reported that they feel there is no plan to follow up on teacher participation in professional learning opportunities beyond	INT p. 45

Key Finding 25	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
opportunities) (0 votes)	informal means. One principal reported feeling frustrated and disappointed when teachers opt out of conference days and professional development opportunities.	
	Respondents said that district administration has communicated some expectations related to professional learning opportunities and somewhat monitors teacher participation and use of professional development.	INT p. 45
	Teachers reported rarely recurring coaching or mentoring about instruction from an activity teacher, coach, or mentor.	SEC p. 20
	67% of teachers reported that support from the on-site instructional leader was at least moderately helpful.	AS p. 15
	Regarding the availability of on-site ELA content experts, all schools were rated moderately. Someone serves in the capacity of ELA content expert, but does not provide full-time, direct instructional support.	INT p. 51
	At the secondary level, there are experts, but they support teachers part-time due to their teaching obligations. Teachers use assistance to varying degrees.	INT p. 51
	3 of 6 elementary schools received high rating in the training in and use of ELA resources. Teachers at these schools noted that training was better this year than previous years.	INT p. 22
	At the elementary level, AIS and reading teachers are available for support when they are not teaching, but they are not instructional leaders.	INT p. 51
	Approximately 75% of ELA teachers reported sharing or discussing what they learned during professional development sessions with those who did not attend.	SEC p. 22
	Two elementary schools and two secondary schools received moderate ratings for administrative focus on professional learning opportunities.	INT p. 45
	84% of the responding new teachers stated that veteran teachers were very or moderately helpful with providing informal support.	AS p. 19
	Respondents stated that the most frequent providers of instructional leadership include teacher's choice of colleagues (46%), principal/other administrator (27%), and lead teachers (18%).	AS p. 19
	All schools except one secondary school received moderate ratings for availability of collaborative opportunities. Content area and lead teachers are viewed as resources, not instructional leaders. They have minimal to a moderate range of influence. Veteran teachers tend to rely on their own experience rather than ask these experts.	INT pp. 51–52

Key Finding 25	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
	Need for training in the use of instructional resources was a common thread: Such training is offered when texts are first adopted but is not given to new hires and is not continual.	INT p. 23
	Elementary administrators in moderately rated schools said that although professional development and collaboration are important to them, they feel limited in their ability to require teacher participation and have little opportunity to follow up on it.	INT p. 45

Positive Key Findings

Positive Key Finding 1	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
Teachers generally were observed to have well-planned lessons delivered in an atmosphere of mutual respect in an established classroom management for routine that provided maximization of instructional time and smooth transitions from one activity to another. (instruction) (27 green votes)	Interactions between teachers and students usually were positive and reflected teachers' respect for student contributions.	SE p. 15 (observation data)
	Teachers observed appeared to have well-planned lessons and were very organized.	SE p. 15 (observation data)
	A majority of the classrooms visited demonstrated the use of classroom management strategies whereby routines were established to maximize instructional time and students transitioned rapidly and smoothly from one activity to another.	SE p. 10 (observation data)
	Teachers used explicit and systematic instruction in ELA with modeling and explanation of ELA skills and strategies.	SE p. 20 (observation data)
	100% of the observations showed high levels of student attention interest and engagement extensively, frequently, or occasionally at the elementary level.	OBS p. 18
	Elementary and secondary teachers reported that working with a large special-needs population in an integrated setting is a top challenge in their schools	INT p. 54

Positive Key Finding 2	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
KCS D offers a formal mentoring program for teachers with fewer than three years of experience. Mentoring includes	Nearly 45% of new teacher respondents (those with three or fewer years of experience) indicated that they were not assigned a mentor.	AS p. 19
	84% of the responding new teachers stated that veteran teachers were very or moderately helpful with providing informal support.	AS p. 19

Positive Key Finding 2	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
peer coaching and conferencing. (staffing) (26 green votes)	Five of seven special education leaders commented on the new teacher mentor program and believe it was very effective (two believe it was somewhat ineffective). One important factor of the program's success is the existence of a good mentor.	SE p. 42 (interview data)
	Mentoring includes peer coaching and conferencing.	DR p. 22
	KCSD offers formal mentoring programs whose purpose is to provide a more productive and satisfying first-year experience to new teachers and to foster ongoing productive professional development. The mentor's role is to provide guidance support and information.	SE p. 42 (document review data)
	Teachers with fewer than three years of experience are included in the mentoring program.	DR p. 22
	The Mentor/Intern program described support available for new teachers.	DR p. 22
	All district personnel spoke highly of the district's mentoring program for new teachers.	INT p. 10
	A summer orientation is provided by the district, and new teachers meet regularly with their mentors (for up to three years if necessary).	INT p. 10

Positive Key Finding 3	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
SWDs, with the exception of IEP diploma students, have access to the general ELA curriculum. Teachers modify their instruction to varying degrees according to the type of setting, severity of the disability, and the IEP plan. (curriculum) (25 green votes)	When planning instruction, special education teachers working in various settings referred to students' IEPs more often than general education teachers in order to provide appropriate instructional accommodations for SWDs. Although a majority of special education teachers review students IEPs on a daily or weekly basis, only a third do so on a weekly basis. Only a third of general education teachers who teach students with disabilities review student IEPs on a weekly basis.	SE p. 19 (interview data)
	According to special education leaders interviewed, a large majority of SWDs have access to the general education ELA curriculum.	SE p. 6 (interview data)
	Students in self-contained classrooms who are taking the alternative assessment do not have full access to the general education curriculum.	SE p. 7 (interview data)
	According to the special education documents, a large majority of SWDs have access to the general education ELA curriculum.	SE p. 6 (document review data)
	Most of the sample IEPs reviewed specified the instructional accommodations that SWDs need to help them access the curriculum.	SE p. 19 (document review)

Positive Key Finding 3	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
		data)
	IEP accommodations included extended time, preferential seating, providing refocusing, redirection, and reteaching.	SE p. 19 (document review data)
	A majority of general education teachers indicated that they do not typically modify the content of the curriculum; rather, they provide instructional accommodations.	SE p. 7 (interview data)
	A majority of general education teachers interviewed indicated that they have access to their students' IEPs through interactions with special education teachers or through a computerized program addressed with a password	SE p. 22 (interview data)

Positive Key Finding 4	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>In the area of special education, the district uses data from a variety of sources to a great extent.</p> <p>(data use)</p> <p>(22 green votes)</p>	Special education leaders use data to monitor progress and support and guide instruction as well as develop and support improvement plans.	SE p. 35 (interview data)
	Related services personnel use data to identify strengths and weaknesses, develop intervention plans, evaluate progress on IEP goals, determine eligibility for intervention services, make decisions about placement, and assist others with strategies to help students.	SE p. 36 (interview data)
	Related services personnel use behavior data, personality data, social history data, report card data, diagnostic testing data, and anecdotal data from parents, teachers, and students.	SE p. 36 (interview data)
	More accommodations occur during classroom ELA assessments than state assessments, 50% of respondents stated the complete opposite.	SE p. 32 (interview data)
	The process for accommodation and modifications is more formalized for state assessments than for classroom-level assessments.	SE p. 33 (interview data)
	Testing accommodations are not applied consistently across state and classroom assessments.	SE p. 32 (interview data)
	Special education leaders reported that they follow IEPs and state modification policy in administering accommodations both in classroom and state assessments.	SE p. 33 (interview data)

Positive Key Finding 5	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>Special education classrooms are provided with additional support from teaching assistants and clinical staff. However, 44% of those interviewed do not believe that the district provides adequate support.</p> <p>56% of special education leaders praised the district for their effort in supporting building-level administrators and teachers with educating SWDs. Special education teachers report building-level administrative support.</p> <p>(staffing)</p> <p>(15 green votes)</p>	Speech and language therapists described helping SWDs work on skills related to NYSED ELA standards. They address all ELA standards in their work: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.	SE p. 38 (interview data)
	The amount of time paraprofessionals spent assisting teachers or students varied across settings. In general education and self-contained classrooms, the majority of teaching assistants were active throughout class period. In cotaught classrooms, teaching assistants were active during approximately half the class period.	SE pp. 37–38 (observation data)
	Psychologists support ELA through counseling behavior management and Instructional Support Team.	SE p. 38 (interview data)
	Paraprofessionals provide individual instructional support, help manage student behavior, check homework, and assist with paperwork.	SE p. 37 (interview data)
	The district helps schools in educating SWDs through staffing, resources, professional development, and instructional and curricular support.	SE p. 40 (interview data)
	Special education leaders perceive the level of district support to be inconsistent.	SE p. 41 (interview data)
	44% of special education leaders do not believe that the district provides adequate support to enable them to effectively educate SWDs.	SE p. 41 (interview data)
	The types of support administrators provide are usually indirectly related to curriculum and instruction.	SE p. 14 (interview data)
	All but one teacher reported that the principal is instrumental in providing direct instructional support.	SE p 41 (interview data)
	Most teachers reported building-level administrative support for schedules, resources, attendance, and discipline.	SE p. 41 (interview data)
56% of special education leaders praised the district for their effort in supporting building-level administrators and teachers with educating SWDs.	SE p. 42 (interview data)	
Teachers perceived that building-level administrators are supportive of their teaching of SWDs.	SE p. 41 (interview data)	

Positive Key Finding 6	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>There is a districtwide policy and plan for the adoption of curriculum resources.</p> <p>(curriculum)</p> <p>(11 green votes)</p>	Curriculum adoption is addressed in board policy.	DR p. 3
	Adoption of curricular materials is guided by board policy.	DR p. 3
	Curriculum revision plan identifies a timeline for textbook adoption for Grades K–3.	DR p. 3
	For a textbook to be approved, a form must be signed by department coordinators, building administrators, and the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.	DR p. 3
	A textbook selection form is used districtwide. This includes criteria for alignment of the textbook to district standards and expected outcomes.	DR p. 3

Positive Key Finding 7	Supporting Findings	Source/Page
<p>Board of education policy, the comprehensive district education plan, and an academic intervention plan exist, but lack clarity.</p> <p>(academic intervention services)</p> <p>(4 green votes)</p>	AIS meeting minutes do not provide detailed information about what is done for students.	DR p. 10
	Many documents addressed only certain grade levels or grade spans.	DR p. 11
	KCSD has developed an AIS plan to help all students achieve NYSED learning standards in ELA Grades K–5, Grades 6–8, and Grades 9–12.	SE p. 21 (document review data)
	With the AIS program, the “big picture” of the program is missing. Instead, documents that outline the program focus on discrete units (grade levels)..	DR p. 11
	AIS policy addresses parent notification at the beginning and end of student participation.	DR p. 9
	AIS documentation refers to implementation.	DR p. 11
	KCSD board policy provides guidelines for AIS.	DR p. 9
	Comprehensive District Education Plan identifies available AIS services.	DR p. 9

Miscellaneous Findings

Miscellaneous Findings	Source/Page
10% of respondents (22 teachers) reported that they are Nationally Board Certified.	AS p. 22
The data used were disaggregated by grade level or student population.	DR pp. 19–20
Data from homework are not as valid as other forms of data due to extraneous interventions (i.e., parent assistance).	SE p. 35

Miscellaneous Findings	Source/Page
	(interview data)
80% to 84% of respondents felt that they were ready to teach ELA to SWDs and students far below proficiency. Also, 50% felt that they were ready to teach ELLs.	AS p. 7
Staffing levels, student levels, or both are identified as a cause for transfer.	DR p. 22
District staff indicated community factors such as poverty, homelessness, and high mobility create barriers to learning.	INT p. 11
Teachers expressed concern about excessive testing distracting from instruction.	INT p. 30
Teachers reported addressing test-taking anxiety and preparation for SWDs.	SE p. 36 (interview data)
The district faces challenges relating to poverty, homelessness, high mobility, and increased Hispanic migrant population.	INT p. 11
Two of six elementary schools perceived ELA resources as being effective for both proficient and nonproficient students.	INT p. 25
Paraprofessionals provide instructional (individual) support, help manage student behaviors, check homework, and assist with paperwork.	SE p. 37 (interview data)
Teachers described using two approaches to support the participation and success of SWDs on the state and district assessments. First, the teachers stated that they address ELA standards in their instruction and help students to learn essential ELA skills to prepare for the state assessment. Second, teachers help SWDs conquer test-taking anxiety.	SE p. 18–19 (interview data)
95% of respondents agreed that they are trusted to make decisions regarding instruction and learning.	AS p. 20
The curriculum revision plan does not address a timeline for textbook adoption for Grades 4–12.	DR p. 3
Superintendent and district professional staff are responsible for developing the curriculum.	DR p. 3
“For many years, they would look at one program and then drop it and then look at another.” Several district personnel said that they look forward to seeing the impact of these pilot studies to inform decisions related to district use.	INT p. 7
89% of respondents said they believe that the schools are a safe place for faculty and staff.	AS p. 21
100% of observations at the elementary level did not show integration of subject areas.	OBS p. 17
In elementary schools, independent seatwork, experiential learning, and student reading were prevalent.	OBS p. 18
A balance of information was submitted for Grades K–12.	DR p. 6
Respondents indicated that AIS teachers, reading specialists, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals provide significantly more support for nonproficient students than classroom teachers do.	AS p. 3