GREATER AMSTERDAM SCHOOL DISTRICT

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA)
CURRICULUM AUDIT

Prepared for

Greater Amsterdam School District
111 Liberty Street
Amsterdam, NY 12010

Prepared by

MEASUREMENT INCORPORATED
Evaluation Services
41 State Street, Suite 403
Albany, NY 12207

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM AUDIT
Greater Amsterdam School District, Amsterdam, New York

Section I: Introduction

The goal for America's educational system is clear: Every student should graduate from high school ready for college and/or a career. Every student should have meaningful opportunities to choose from upon graduation from high school. But while all states have developed and promoted curriculum standards as required under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), not every district and school has implemented these curriculum standards and related content and performance indicators needed for success after high school, either in further education or in a job. Four of every 10 new college students, including half of those at 2-year institutions, take remedial courses, and many employers comment on the inadequate preparation of high school graduates. And while some districts and schools have developed formative assessments aligned with their curriculum units, in many cases these assessments do not adequately measure student growth or the knowledge and skills that students need, nor do they provide timely, useful information to teachers.

Purpose and Scope of the ELA Curriculum Audit

In March 2010, the Greater Amsterdam School District (GASD) School Board contracted with Measurement Incorporated (MI), a national assessment and evaluation firm, to conduct a comprehensive, K-12, English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum audit. The GASD was one of 35 districts identified by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) in 2009 as a district in need of corrective action under the accountability provisions for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. This final report fulfills the requirements of the contract and provides a comprehensive response to New York State's requirements (see **Appendix A**).

The audit encompasses all aspects the GASD's ELA curriculum K-12 with special attention paid to the application of this curriculum at the Tecler Arts and Education Elementary School. MI conducted the audit in four phases:

- Planning Phase (March 2010)
- Data Collection Phase (March-June 2010)
- Analysis Phase (June-July 2010)
- Draft Report Writing Phase (Preliminary *Findings* and *Recommendations*) (July-September 2010)
- Final Report Phase (October-November 2010)

A first step of the audit process was to form a Curriculum Audit Advisory Committee (comprised of designated GASD staff) to oversee all elements of the audit and to advise MI auditors on recommended strategies for completing each phase of the audit. MI extends special thanks to the Advisory Committee Members for all their efforts in facilitating the completion of this comprehensive audit.

Context of the ELA Curriculum Audit

District Overview

The GASD is one of five public school districts in Montgomery County, New York. It is located approximately 30 miles west of Albany, New York on the Mohawk River and covers approximately 6 square miles. The district operates six schools serving more than 3,600 students during the 2009-10 school year. GASD has experienced relatively stable enrollment since 2003-04 with a slight decline beginning in the 2007-2008 school year. **Exhibit 1** provides an overview of the grade organization and enrollment trends in the GASD.

Exhibit 1
Greater Amsterdam School District Grade Organization and Student Enrollment

School	School Year					
	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Amsterdam High School	1,224	1,239	1,219	1,241	1,221	1,201
Wilbur Lynch Literacy Academy	902	878	897	868	803	817
Marie Curie Institute of Engineering and Communication	401	465	439	458	448	446
Raphael J. McNulty Academy	431	420	376	440	438	454
William B. Tecler Elementary School	375	348	360	466	449	421
William Barkley School	214	201	206	281	282	317
Total District Enrollment	**3,782**	**3,780**	**3,771**	**3,754**	**3,641**	**3,656**

Source: New York State School Report Cards

Similar to many districts in New York State, GASD serves a diverse student population exhibiting many risk factors. GASD has experienced modest changes in the ethnic distribution of students, and a slight decrease in the number and percentage of students eligible for the federal free and reduced meal (FRPL) program over the past few years. Conversely, there has been an increase in the percentage of Hispanic/Latino students. **Exhibit 2** provides a six-year history of student enrollment by ethnic group and poverty status (FRPL eligibility).

Exhibit 2
Greater Amsterdam School District Student Enrollment Data by Economic Status, Ethnicity and Special Program Eligibility

Percent of Total Enrollment	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Free Lunch	35%	34%	29%	30%	35%	31%
Reduced Lunch	7%	8%	5%	5%	6%	5%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Black/ African American	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Hispanic/Latino	27%	28%	29%	30%	32%	33%
Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%
White	69%	68%	66%	64%	62%	62%
English Language Learners	5%	5%	6%	5%	4%	4%
Students with Disabilities	15%	16%	15%	16%	15%	15%

Source: New York State School Report Cards

Professional and Instructional Staff Capacity

Exhibit 3 illustrates the number of 2008-2009 district employees by category and location.

Exhibit 3
Professional and Instructional Staff by Category and Location 2008-2009

School	Administrators	Principal	Assistant Principal	Teachers	Other Professional
Central Office	13 (54.2%)				
Amsterdam High School	4 (16.6%)	2 (25%)	2 (66.6%)	87 (30.5%)	15 (50%)
Wilbur Lynch Literacy Academy	3 (12.5%)	2 (25%)	1 (33.3%)	76 (26.6%)	7 (23.3%)
Marie Curie Institute of Engineering and Communication	1 (4.2%)	1 (16.6%)	0	34 (11.9%)	2 (6.6%)
Raphael J. McNulty Academy	1 (4.2%)	1 (16.6%)	0	32 (11.2%)	0
William B. Tecler Elementary School	1 (4.2%)	1 (16.6%)	0	35 (12.3%)	2 (6.6%)
William Barkley School	1 (4.2%)	1 (16.6%)	0	21 (7.4%)	4 (13.3%)
Total District	**24**	**8**	**3**	**285**	**30**

Source: New York State School Report Cards

Financial Resources

Exhibit 4 shows GASD's operating budget for the 2009-2010 school year and the current school year budget, by funding source. For the 2009-2010 school year, the Amsterdam community did not pass the school budget. The challenge has been to provide adequate instructional services to students.

Exhibit 4
Greater Amsterdam School District
Annual Budget by Source

Source	Amount 2009-2010	Amount 2010-2011
State	$32,552,905.00	$30,905,225.00
Federal	$375,000.00	$375,000.00
Local	$20,061,500.00	$28,815,500.00
Grants		
Total	**$55,153,272.00**	**$57,694,354.00**

Source: Greater Amsterdam School District 2010-2011 Proposed Budget.
(**http://www.gasd.org/pdfs/2010-2011%20Propsed%20Budget.pdf**)

Student Academic Performance

Exhibits 5a through 5d display the overall ELA State Assessment and Regents Examination performance of District students, grades 3 through high school.

Exhibit 5a
Percentage of 3rd through 8th Grade Students
Performing at or above Grade Level in ELA: 2006–2007 School Year
Disaggregated by Poverty and At-Risk Sub-Groups

	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
All Students	51%	50%	58%	56%	49%	48%
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	34%	36%	47%	42%	34%	31%
Black/African American	n/a	n/a	n/a	33 %	24 %	n/a
Hispanic or Latino	35%	34%	42%	33%	31%	31%
Asian	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%	n/a	n/a
English Language Learners	13%	0	0	8%	0	0
Students with Disabilities	11%	7%	18%	11 %	7%	9%

Source: New York State School Report Cards

Exhibit 5b
Percentage of 3rd through 8th Grade Students
Performing at or above Grade Level in ELA: 2007–2008 School Year
Disaggregated by Poverty and At-Risk Sub-Groups

	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
All Students	49%	53%	63%	54%	65%	42%
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	38%	38%	49%	40%	55%	26%
Hispanic or Latino	37%	34%	40%	31%	48%	2%
English Language Learners	0%	0%	0%	14%	45%	%
Students with Disabilities	10%	13%	17%	16%	24%	2%

Source: New York State School Report Cards

Exhibit 5c
Percentage of 3rd through 8th Grade Students
Performing at or above Grade Level in ELA: 2008–2009 School Year
Disaggregated by Poverty and At-Risk Sub-Groups

	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
All Students	67%	59%	74%	65%	70%	53%
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	53%	46%	60%	51%	62%	36%
Hispanic or Latino	57%	46%	58%	48%	5 %	26%
English Language Learners	18%	8%	13%	29%	20%	0%
Students with Disabilities	13%	12%	23%	18%	26%	9%

Source: New York State School Report Cards

Exhibit 5d
Percentage of GASD High School Students Performing at or above
Proficiency on the Comprehensive English Regents Exam: 2006-2007 through 2008-2009
Disaggregated by Poverty and At-Risk Sub-Groups

	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
All Students	65%	58%	64%
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	38%	39%	45%
Hispanic or Latino	47%	30%	34%
English Language Learners	11%	0%	0%
Students with Disabilities	18%	4%	15%

Source: New York State School Report Cards

The data show that although the district has made modest improvements in ELA student performance, a substantial percentage of students in poverty and at-risk sub groups are still performing below the minimum New York State Requirements. Indeed, the recent decision by the New York State Commissioner of Education and the Board of Regents to raise the proficiency "cut score" has resulted in an even larger number of GASD students performing below minimum levels.

Report Organization

The Greater Amsterdam School District ELA Curriculum Audit Report is organized into the following sections:

I. Introduction
II. Methodology
III. District-Level Curriculum Governance and Management
IV. School-Level Curriculum Governance and Management
V. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
VI. Professional Development

The sections are supported by documentation in the following appendices:

A. New York State Curriculum Audit Requirements
B. Measurement Incorporated's Curriculum Audit Tools
C. Audit Report References and Resources
D. William B. Tecler Special Study

Section II: Methodology

In January of 2010, the Greater Amsterdam School District received a Title I Audit of Curriculum grant from the New York State Education Department. The grant program targeted districts identified as *in need of improvement* based on State assessment data from the 2008-09 school year. Following discussion with GASD leadership, MI audit staff crafted the following Audit of Curriculum goals:

- to investigate the extent to which there is a comprehensive, clearly articulated, and aligned ELA curriculum guiding instruction across the GASD;
- to determine how instruction provides for the effective delivery of the curriculum (to all students, as well as to student sub-groups);
- to investigate the professional learning opportunities provided to teachers and staff that support instruction and student learning;
- to study the extent to which student achievement data (formative as well as summative) informs academic programming, planning, and instruction;
- to identify those curricular, instructional and assessment practices and strategies that effectively support teaching and learning across the district; and
- to determine the extent to which necessary management structures and procedures are in place to support teaching and learning across the district.

Measurement Incorporated approached the Audit of Curriculum by first developing a *Matrix of Variables for Studying Curriculum Development & Implementation* (see **Appendix A**). This Matrix, informed by the audit goals, specifies the core areas to be audited (District Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, and Professional Development), and the particular variables that research and best practice have shown to be critical to successful curriculum development and implementation. Lastly, the Matrix identifies the data collection methods that are used to gather information relative to each variable.

The curriculum audit required an array of program audit methods (a mixed methods program audit). This enabled the auditors to gather data from multiple sources in multiple ways (a process known as triangulation), and thus to increase the internal validity of the audit. These data sources will also provide baseline information in ongoing monitoring of implementation in the years ahead.

Sources of evidence included the following:

- Curriculum and Supporting Documents Analysis
- Student Performance Data
- Interviews/Focus Groups:
  - ✓ core district administrators,

- ✓ School Board members,
- ✓ parents,
- ✓ building principals
- ✓ teacher union representatives,
- ✓ Directors of Elementary and Secondary Instruction,
- ✓ ELA coordinators/coaches,
- ✓ classroom teachers, and including teachers of special education and ELL, and
- ✓ students

- Teacher Survey (K-12)
- Classroom Observations
- School Walk-throughs

Curriculum and Supporting Documents Analysis. MI auditors conducted a curricular alignment procedure to assess the alignment of GASD curriculum maps and products with NYS Learning Standards. Alignment procedures included a review and analysis of levels of knowledge and cognitive demand expected of students.

Student Performance Data. Auditors retrieved and analyzed New York State Assessment data for grades 3 – 8 English Language Arts performance for school years 2006-2007 through 2008-2009

Teacher Survey (K-12). MI developed and posted an online Teacher Survey of K-12 instructional staff to assess the implementation (i.e., teaching) of the written curriculum to facilitate the comparison with the written curriculum. Additional items assessed the learning environment, student support services, and school safety.

Classroom Observation. MI audit staff developed and implemented a classroom observation instrument/tool to more fully describe and assess the instructional practices used to deliver (teach) the ELA curriculum; to support struggling learners; and to differentiate the learning needs of students with disabilities. Two classroom observations were conducted in each building, with the exception of Tecler where 4 observations were conducted.

School Walk-throughs. Using a MI-developed tool, school walk-throughs were conducted in each GASD school building to assess the learning climate associated with curriculum delivery.

Based on these data collection efforts, MI auditors synthesized the survey, interview, classroom observation, and school walk-through data to provide a rich comprehensive analysis of the written, taught and tested K-12 ELA curriculum in the Greater Amsterdam School District.

Section III: District-Level Curriculum Governance and Management

A primary purpose of the ELA Curriculum Audit Report is to provide a critical analysis of the policies, procedures, plans, and resources that must be in place for an effective curriculum delivery system. The discussion is organized in two parts, **District-Level Curriculum Governance and Management** (Section III) and **School-Level Curriculum Governance and Management** (Section IV). In this section, MI uses a systems approach to assess the relative effectiveness of the key administrative and organizational structures and practices at the district level and provides recommendations for improving the district's curriculum management capacity and student performance outcomes. The table below summarizes the District-Level Curriculum Governance and Management Audit Criteria, the Performance Finding for each Audit Criteria and the corresponding Promising Practices and Action Recommendations.

Audit Criteria	Performance Finding	Promising Practices (PP) and Action Recommendations (AR)
DG1: The district has a clear mission/vision.	DG1: The district mission/vision statement does not provide the needed guidance and direction for ongoing planned reform and renewal.	PPDG1.1: The current superintendent has promoted open and ongoing communication with the community that can facilitate stakeholder input and buy-in of a revised mission/vision. PPDG1.2: The GASD Board of Education (BOE) is appropriately focused on school policy and does not micromanage school and district-level operations. ARDG1.1: The BOE should collaborate with the community and district personnel to update the district's 1992 vision/mission to reflect new directions and community priorities.
DG2: Strategic planning is effectively implemented.	DG2: There are no clear strategic planning documents used in the district to guide management and align resources.	PPDG2.1: The new central office administration recognizes the need for collaborative strategic planning and the more extensive use of data in decision making. PPDG2.2: The superintendent meets monthly with central office administrators and principals to share information and coordinate district activities. PPDG2.3: The district held a retreat for central office administrators and principals in August 2010 to discuss issues facing the district and future directions. ARDG2.1: The district develops comprehensive district and school-level improvement plans that are aligned, strategic and focus on the activities of the district and the schools. ARDG2.2: The superintendent should set aside a block of time at each monthly meeting to engage all central office administrators and principals in discussions about the qualities of effective schools and expectations for the use of research-based best practices. ARDG2.3: Principals should be held accountable for the

Audit Criteria	Performance Finding	Promising Practices (PP) and Action Recommendations (AR)
		development and implementation of their school improvement plans that are aligned with the overall district improvement plan.
Audit Criteria	**Performance Finding**	**Promising Practices (PP) and Action Recommendations (AR)**
DG3: The organizational structure and staffing plan ensures effective curriculum management and instructional delivery systems.	DG3: The district does not have a detailed written staffing plan that is tied to achievement goals and builds the capacity of the workforce.	PPDG3.1: The new administration in the central office has focused on building a district wide administrative paradigm centered on team work and collaboration. PPDG3.2: The Literacy Coach positions at the middle school and elementary schools and the high school ELA Coordinator position provide critical support to the continuous improvement of ELA instruction across the district. PPDG3.3: The district has assigned district wide data management and technology coordination to the Data Analyst/Personnel Coordinator who will direct the district's efforts to improve data collection practices and the use of data in decision making. ARDG3.1: The district should continue to assign oversight responsibility for the development and monitoring of a comprehensive three-year professional development plan to the Directors of Elementary and Secondary Instruction and ensure that this long-range plan is tied to achievement goals and builds the capacity of the teaching and administrative workforce. ARDG3.2: The district and its teacher union should revise and/or amend the Collective Bargaining Agreement by memorandum of agreement to align the contract with New York State requirements to build teacher capacity through curriculum mapping, progress monitoring and data use, and active participation in the school's professional development community. ARDG3.3: Build the capacity of principals to staff their schools to achieve school improvement goals.
DG4: A clear curriculum management framework is in place to monitor curriculum development and ensure the continuous improvement of student achievement.	DG4: There are inadequate district-wide communication and coordinating mechanisms in place to ensure that the many new improvement initiatives have realistic timeframes for implementation and stringent monitoring and evaluation plans.	PPDG4.1: The district administrators overseeing instruction are committed to developing a comprehensive aligned written curriculum that is integrated and actively used to inform teaching practices at all grade levels for all students. ARDG4.1: An effective ELA curriculum in GASD will require a comprehensive redesign of the district-school-teacher communication practices about instructional content, pedagogy and what constitutes high quality teaching and learning environments. ARDG4.2: Increase communication, trust and collaboration between central office administrators and school principals in critical management areas (e.g., staff planning, budgeting,

Audit Criteria	Performance Finding	Promising Practices (PP) and Action Recommendations (AR)
		curriculum development and monitoring). ARDG4.3: Assign principal representatives to all district wide committees related to curriculum and instruction and hold principals accountable for regular participation and contributions to these committees. ARDG4.4: Establish and implement a clear evaluation plan for each new initiative.
Audit Criteria	**Performance Finding**	**Promising Practices (PP) and Action Recommendations (AR)**
DG5: Effective district wide policies and procedures that guide curriculum and instruction practices are in place.	DG5: A number of key policies and their corresponding procedures need to be aligned with current and planned reform efforts (i.e., attendance, discipline, grading and promotion/retention).	ARDG5.1: Review current policies for clarity and effectiveness, particularly as they relate to improving student performance and teacher effectiveness and align the policies with current reform efforts. ARDG5.2: Recast or develop the implementation procedures for all new and existing polices, and updated procedures in collaboration with school principals and teacher leaders.
DG6: Efficient resource allocation and budgeting procedures maximize the use of instructional funds.	DG6: The district lacks effective procedures for resource management and the allocation of instructional resources.	PPDG6.1: The district is actively seeking grant funding to build the district's capacity to improve student performance. ARDG6.1: Establish clear procedures to align ELA resource allocations with the New York State Learning Standards and Performance Indicators and the requirements of the district's ELA curriculum. ARDG6.2: Conduct a process audit of the district's current purchasing practices for curriculum and instruction to increase efficiencies and ensure that classrooms have the resources needed for effective ELA instruction in a timely manner. ARDG6.3: Revise the district's Technology Plan to systematically build the district's technology infrastructure and plan for the purchase of software applications and corresponding training that are aligned with the ELA curriculum and research-based best practices.

For each audit criteria, the text below provides the research base for that audit criteria and the corresponding benchmarks. Next, an overarching performance finding for the audit criterion is followed by a summary chart of the benchmark findings and a rating of GASD's performance. Each benchmark is rated as:

- ***Unmet*:** Implementation of the benchmark is not evident. No clear plans are in place.
- ***Level I Implementation:*** Effective structures and plans have been well established and some early implementation evidence is present.

- ***Level II Implementation*:** Long-range plans are in place, considerable implementation has occurred, but the benchmark has not been fully embraced district-wide.
- ***Met*:** There is evidence that the benchmark has been established and there is a common understanding district-wide of effective practices.

A narrative description of the current audit criteria status follows the summary chart, and a detailed description of promising practices and action recommendations for the audit criteria are provided. Key considerations and suggested implementation strategies conclude the discussion of each audit criteria.

AUDIT CRITERIA DG1: THE DISTRICT HAS A CLEAR MISSION/VISION.

A clear vision statement can be an effective leadership tool. Research has demonstrated that a clear vision statement can improve both organizational performance and individual performance. Vision statements should contain certain key characteristics. According to Kirkpatrick (2008) these characteristics include:

- *Brevity:* A good statement is succinct, which makes it easy for managers and leaders to communicate and the community and employees to remember.
- *Clarity:* A clear statement creates a common understanding among all stakeholders.
- *Abstract and Challenging:* Vision statements present a picture of the desired future.
- *States the organization's purpose:* An effective vision describes what the district intends to achieve, what we strive for in our work.
- *Future focused*: Good vision statements set long-term future directions.
- *Sets a desirable goal:* The statement defines the fundamental values and a collective identity for all stakeholders.
- *Matches the organization's success measures*: The statement aligns school and employee values with those of the district's expectations for success.

GASD Performance Finding DG1: The district mission/vision statement does not provide the needed guidance and direction for ongoing planned reform and renewal.

Audit Criteria DG1 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
DG1.1: The district has collaboratively developed a clear mission/vision statement that reflects the overarching needs of the community.	X				The district has a mission/vision in place that was developed by community stakeholders.
DG1.2: Key community stakeholders are effectively engaged in the development and implementation of the district's mission/vision.		X			The Hispanic community was underrepresented in the visioning process.
DG1.3: The district regularly communicates and updates the mission/vision statement to reflect changes in the community.			X		The district's mission/vision is available to the public and is included in documents published by the district. The mission/vision statement has not been updated since 1992.

The mission of the GASD is:

> *The Greater Amsterdam School District believes that students of all ages can and should learn. We believe that the purpose of schools is the education of the whole child. To this end, we recognize and promote opportunities for increased learning that come from:*
>
> - *Improving one's self-esteem*
> - *Maintaining partnerships with home and the business community*
> - *Celebrating the community's cultural diversity*
> - *Achieving high expectations of excellence in all areas*
>
> *We accept the responsibility to provide quality and equity in teaching each student in an environment conducive to learning.*

The mission/vision document was completed in 1992. The document reflects the district's core beliefs about student learning, staff responsibility and the role of parents and the community at the time it was authored. The mission/vision document has not been regularly reviewed and updated by the school district and community since 1992 to reflect changes in community priorities and needs.

Overall during the audit interviews, GASD administrators expressed appreciation for the support of the current Board of Education (BOE) and its willingness to work constructively around the critical issues facing the district. Board members participating in the audit indicated, and district administrators confirmed that the current board is focused on policy development rather than the micromanagement and the politically oriented agendas that were common in the past. Board members and senior administrators report that the focus of board meetings has moved from "infighting" toward collaborative discussions about policies, issues and student performance.

Although there was community participation in the 1992 visioning process, interviews suggest that the Hispanic community was underrepresented. The Hispanic population has been a long-standing part of the Amsterdam community (more than 30 years), this population, however, reportedly has not been effectively integrated into the governance of the city or the school district. Leaders from the Hispanic community stated that many local boards (including the BOE), councils, advisory groups, community events, and the school district staffing plan do not effectively include or encourage representation from the Hispanic community. Visible signs of this continued dichotomy of the two communities in Amsterdam include separate festivals held in the city with limited cross-cultural participation. It was also reported that vocal talk show hosts regularly "slam" the Hispanic community.

Promising Practice DG1.1: The current superintendent has promoted open and ongoing communication with the community that can facilitate stakeholder input and buy-in of a revised mission/vision.

Significance: The passage of the 2010-2011 budget is a prime example of the superintendent's leadership in improving communication with the community. Newsletters about the budget were distributed to students, the superintendent did radio shows and public service announcements asking the community to participate by voting, free homework passes were used as incentives to engage parents in voting, and a survey was conducted to gather information about voters.

Promising Practice DG1.2: The GASD BOE is appropriately focused on school policy and does not micro manage school and district-level operations.

Significance: A clear policy focus for the BOE is critical to address the district's pressing issues related to student achievement and establish future directions. As reform efforts in the district move forward, the BOE will need to have a comprehensive understanding of the barriers the district faces in improving student performance and be able to determine how to best leverage community support and resources to overcome these barriers.

Action Recommendation DG1.1: The BOE should collaborate with the community and district personnel to update the district's 1992 vision/mission to reflect new directions and community priorities.

Significance: A new administration team, the results from recent state reviews and audit findings and other data, have identified the need for many reform efforts and other opportunities for improving student performance and accountability in GASD. The task of revitalizing the district to focus on student performance is significant and a renewal of community engagement through a visioning process will be critical to stakeholder buy-in and the long-term success of these reform efforts. Many of the documented areas in need of improvement will require a clear vision not only for the school district, but must also engage the Amsterdam community at-large.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Stakeholder Engagement Schools, parents and community stakeholders should be actively involved in the district's overarching purpose in the community.	• Ensure that the vision/mission steering committee represents the demographics of the community. • Actively recruit stakeholders who have historically not been vocal in the district (e.g., Hispanic community, rural residents, business and corporate leaders, community agencies). • Engage PTA , PTO, PTSA and SEPTA representatives in promoting district wide parent involvement in decision-making and planning activities. • Continue the Superintendent's public information campaign to educate and engage the public in support of a clear agenda for improving student learning. • Develop a long-range Public Relations plan in cooperation with the local media and community agencies. • Display information about instructional initiatives on district and school websites.

AUDIT CRITERIA DG2: STRATEGIC PLANNING IS EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED.

Effective district and school leaders have the ability to focus on the broad perspective and overarching priorities and then to transform these long-range goals into reality. One of the best ways to maintain organizational focus is to use an ongoing strategic planning process that allows for continuous improvement. An effective strategic plan clearly describes the school district's priorities and what it will take to make long-term improvements in the performance, processes, or systems of the district and its schools. The activities of a typical school day often involve spending a great deal of valuable time putting out fires and reacting to problems. Crisis management can easily become a replacement for strategic

management in any school. Strategic planning is a proven intervention to crisis management and provides a foundation for effective operation.

GASD Performance Finding DG2: There are no clear strategic planning documents used in the district to guide management and align resources.

Audit Criteria DG2 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
DG2.1: Strategic Plans are in place and regularly updated to reflect district wide priorities in key areas of operation (i.e., curriculum, student services, professional development, special education, technology, parent involvement).				X	The educational delivery structure is fragmented in its implementation and not tied to a clear set of written priorities, goals and actionable objectives and resources.
DG2.2: The Strategic Plan clearly identifies the resources necessary to effectively implement the planning activities.				X	The new administration is trying to move away from a crisis management mode of operation and focus on integrated planning and resource use.
DG2.3: Strategic plans are regularly evaluated, updated and modified using a clear data management plan.				X	The district is pursuing many new initiatives that need more extensive and thoughtful planning, targeted data use and strategies to ensure effective implementation and outcome evaluation.

Historically strategic planning that links data, action plans and resources to the district's goals and objectives has not been emphasized or used consistently at GASD. Central office administrators are now working collaboratively to identify and remediate a broad array of operational issues that have suffered from lack of long-term planning and several contingency budgets. Over time, due at least in part to ineffective planning, the district's educational delivery structure has become fragmented. Key decisions about district programs and resources have not been tied to a clear set of goals and objectives. Strategic directions, budget documents and staffing plans have not been clearly linked.

In recent months, GASD has been required by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to participate in several performance reviews over the past few months including a May 2010 NYSED/NYCDOE Joint Intervention Team (JIT) Review Process of the high school, an April 2010 Quality Improvement Process (QIP) review to develop strategies to improve outcomes for students with disabilities (SWDs), and a June 2010 Special Education Quality Assurance Special Education Programs and Services focused review. Each of these reports provides critical information for developing the district's strategic goals over the next five years.

Additionally, considerable administrative time has been spent in the development of Comprehensive Educational Plans (CEP) documents, preparing for state audits and visitations, submitting grant proposals to enhance resources, and assessing policies and practices that appear to be ineffective or outdated. Many new initiatives that are intended to ultimately improve student performance district-wide are now in the planning or early implementation stages. Although many of the new initiatives show promise, the simultaneous implementation of these initiatives will require extensive and thoughtful planning. Central office administrators and principals will need to develop a set of strategies for

consistent data use and rigorous evaluation methods of the district's strategic goals. Ongoing monitoring of the district's progress will also be an important aspect of the strategic planning process.

Currently, the district does have a Planning and Shared Decision-Making document that has been in place since 1993 but the audit showed that there is little evidence that distributive decision making is a common practice within and across schools. For example, surveys and interviews revealed that teachers are not asked for input in the budget planning process and principals reported that they have little say about the level and type of staffing and resources their schools receive. Parents also indicated during interviews that they have few, if any, opportunities to participate in school or district-level decisions.

More recent participation in the CEP process, however, has raised awareness about the need to plan and has helped building level administrators improve their use of data in the planning process. Some school staff reported active engagement in problem-solving discussions that are focused on student performance. Interviews also suggest the High School and Middle School CEP teams have been particularly successful in creating synergy for school improvement at the building level.

An analysis of onsite interviews and focus groups revealed that the new administration is trying to move away from a top-down crisis management mode of operation and focus on integrated planning and resource use. The new central office administration recognizes the need for a more comprehensive approach to planning and data use and has recently assigned the district's data management and technology oversight functions to a Data Analyst/ Personnel Coordinator at the district level.

Promising Practice DG2.1: The new central office administration recognizes the need for collaborative strategic planning and the more extensive use of data in decision-making.

Significance: GASD must rapidly change the way it has done business in the past and formulate a new model for operation that is centered on effective management practices and accountability. The district has been bombarded by multiple and sometimes competing demands on staff time and resources. The new administration recognizes the need to work closely together to plan how new initiatives can be phased in and effectively implemented.

Promising Practice DG2.2: The superintendent meets monthly with central office administrators and principals to share information and coordinate district activities.

Significance: Regular communication as an administrative team is a critical first step in building a culture that promotes shared and distributive decision-making and strategic planning.

Promising Practice DG2.3: The district held a retreat for central office administrators and principals in August 2010 to discuss issues facing the district and future directions.

Significance: A common understanding of the district's learning goals is a critical foundation for district and school improvement planning. Central office administrators need time to build rapport and reflect on and create collective solutions for the many issues facing the district.

Action Recommendation DG2.1: The district develops comprehensive district and school-level improvement plans that are aligned, strategic and focus on the activities of the district and the schools.

Significance: Although improving student performance is a critical priority for the district, moving too quickly without clear direction and benchmarks for success often leads to the inefficient use of resources and a lack of staff buy-in for the reform efforts.

Action Recommendation DG2.2: The superintendent should set aside a block of time at each monthly meeting to engage all central office administrators and principals in discussions about the qualities of effective schools and expectations for the use of research-based best practices.

Significance: In order to build the capacity of all administrators to impact student achievement as a team, monthly meetings should include *instructional* topics. Reading a professional book together, discussing articles about pedagogy, or time for sharing approaches to address student performance issues might be part of these meetings.

Action Recommendation DG2.3: Principals should be held accountable for the development and implementation of their school improvement plans that are aligned with the overall district improvement plan.

Significance: Clear expectations for school leadership practices and strong communication links between central office administration and principals are critical components of an effective strategic planning process.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
District-Level Improvement Planning Set district wide priorities and benchmarks for success.	• Base strategic goals and objectives on the overarching needs of the district. • Identify district core values as part of goal setting. • Engage stakeholders at all levels in the planning process. • Clearly articulate what new initiatives are needed and communicate how they will be phased in. • Set benchmarks and timeframes for accomplishing all the goals and objectives. • Align resources with the strategic goals and objectives. • Align professional development with the strategic goals and objectives. • Annually evaluate progress and make adjustments to the plan as necessary based on progress.
School-Level Improvement Planning Embrace district wide priorities and focus school decisions on the unique characteristics of the school community and its student performance outcomes.	• Establish active school-based leadership teams that meet regularly to monitor and report on school improvement progress. • Assess school improvement needs and develop clear goals and objectives that are aligned with the district improvement plan. • Identify teacher leaders to spear-head activities related to key school improvement goals. • Offer annual training for school-based teams on working together, running meetings, and building consensus. • Share minutes and agendas of school-based leadership team meetings with staff.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
	• Annually assess and post progress toward all school improvement goals and objectives.

AUDIT CRITERIA DG3: THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND STAFFING PLAN ENSURES EFFECTIVE CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY SYSTEMS.

An effective organizational structure and staffing plan are essential tools used to facilitate efficient decision making and to implement effective curriculum management practices. The organizational structure must allow for efficient communication and critical support systems between central office administrators and the schools.

A district-wide organization chart and staffing plan are important components of the district's planning for improvement and should flow directly from the district's strategic plan, identifying budget allocations and other related costs for all categories of staff over at least a three-year period. The plan should also include known or projected student enrolment and staff recruitment needs for the same time period.

To develop the district's staffing plan, each school's staffing needs should be reviewed to determine the best fit for the student population. As part of the annual strategic plan reporting cycle, the principal should provide input to the school staffing plan and make adjustments to staffing as situations within the school change. Support staff allocations for schools should consider school's need for specific types of services as well as the school's improvement goals and strategies.

The organization and staffing plan must be supported by detailed position descriptions and evaluation systems that set clear expectations for performance and hold personnel accountable for effective teaching and administration.

Additionally, the staffing plan should make certain that the principles of diversity, fairness and equal opportunity are primary considerations in building the district's workforce and future capability. Schools should strive to reflect the diversity of their community in their workforce.

GASD Performance Finding DG3: The district does not have a detailed written staffing plan that is tied to achievement goals and builds the capacity of the workforce.

Audit Criteria DG3 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
DG3.1: There is a clear organization and staffing plan for central office administrators that supports the effective implementation of the ELA curriculum.			X		A major reorganization of the central office has occurred and central office roles are shown in the district's organization chart. There is no formal written staffing plan for schools.
DG3.2: Schools are effectively staffed to implement an integrated, detailed ELA curriculum.		X			An ELA Coordinator at the high school and Literacy Coaches at the middle school and elementary schools provide critical support for the

Audit Criteria DG3 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
					improvement of the ELA curriculum. Principals have limited input into the informal staff plans for their schools.
DG3.3: Position descriptions provide clear descriptions of the role of administrators and staff in implementing curriculum and improving student performance.			X		Position descriptions need to be updated to provide clear descriptions of roles and responsibilities for curriculum management under the new administration.
DG3.4: Personnel evaluations ensure accountability for effective teaching and administrative practices.			X		The teacher performance evaluations are being revised to meet current state requirements.

Central Office Organization and Staffing

A major reorganization of central office has occurred under the new administration. Several organizational structures and positions have been created within the last two years that have the potential to provide critical administrative support to the design, delivery and management of GASD's ELA curriculum. A Director of Secondary Education and Director of Elementary Education now oversee the curriculum design and implementation process at their respective levels. Elementary and secondary principals meet regularly with these directors to discuss the implementation of the reading series and other ELA curriculum and school operation topics. Prior to the employment of these directors, a single Assistant Superintendent had oversight of all schools in the district and the elementary principals received stipends to oversee curriculum writing for K-5 ELA, math, social studies and science. These stipends were eliminated when the new directors were hired.

A Reading Specialist was employed during 2009-2010 to work with the Literacy Coaches at the four elementary schools and the middle school. This position, however, was eliminated for the 2010-2011 school year and the Director of Elementary Instruction will work directly with these coaches. Other key new hires in the central office include a Director of Pupil Personnel, a Coordinator of Response to Intervention (RTI) Programs, and a Data Analyst/Personnel Coordinator.

Several of these new positions were in place for less than a full school year at the time of the audit and most central office administrators had been with the district for less than two years. However, interviewers found that substantial improvements appear to have been made in the balance of responsibilities and workload at the district level. Onsite interviews and work sessions also suggest that the new administration has created an effective team who demonstrate a culture of mutual respect, professionalism and collaboration. The new administration team brings a wide range of experience to the district and is familiar with tested programs, management strategies and resources used by other area school districts.

School-Level Organization and Staffing

The four K-5 elementary schools were restructured as magnet schools in 2005 after a community dispute over the proposed establishment of a charter school. The magnet school model reportedly has had the desired effect of redistributing the low income and minority populations across the elementary schools. A lottery process is used to select new students for each magnet program. The magnet school staff also receives annual training (approximately 30 hours) and additional funding from the New York State Education Department (NYSED) for field trips and materials and supplies related to the implementation of their magnet theme. The magnet schools are evaluated annually by an external firm, Lighthouse Education Associates, Ltd., that also provides training and technical assistance to the district. A summary of the elementary school magnet programs is provided below.

School	Magnet Focus	Year Started	Magnet Staff
Barkley MicroSociety PK-5	MicroSociety Curriculum –Simulated real world community	2008-2009	Half-time Facilitator/Program Resource Teacher
Tecler Arts in Education K-5	Integrate music, visual art, dance, and drama into the curriculum	2008-2009	Half-time Facilitator/Program Resource Teacher
Marie Curie Institute for Engineering and Communications K-5	Integrate technology and communication (TV, radio, newspaper) into the curriculum	2007-2008	Half-time Facilitator/Program Resource Teacher
McNulty Academy for International Studies and Literacy PK-5	Explore and integrate multicultural themes into the curriculum	2005-2006	Half-time Facilitator/Program Resource Teacher, a Spanish Language Instructor, two Aide positions

The elementary school principals have been long standing administrators in the district and in their respective schools. The high school and middle school principals are more recent hires. In addition to the elementary and middle school Literacy Coaches and high school ELA Coordinator and magnet staff, schools are supported by various personnel who provide direct and indirect services to students. Due to the relative small size of the district, part-time or split staff positions are used to cover some of the district's essential services (e.g., school psychologists, guidance counselors, social workers, ESL teachers). The elementary guidance program was eliminated at the end of the 2009-2010 school year in favor of full-time social workers at each elementary school. Academic Intervention Services (AIS) staff are assigned across schools to assist struggling readers and low achievers in reading and ELA. AIS staff support both general education and special education classrooms.

Principals report that they are involved in hiring decisions and typically interview candidates and then recommend their three top choices to central office where the final decision is made. However, they also report that they do not feel they have a strong voice in determining the type or number of support staff who are assigned to their schools. For example, this year elementary principals unanimously requested that the district return the 2008-2009 staffing model that included a full-time school counselor at each elementary school instead of the half-time 2009-2010 shared school counselor

staffing allocations. These positions were instead eliminated in favor of the employment of one social worker per school (an increase of one social worker position over the 2009-2010 budget).

Professional Performance Review

GASD was cited by NYSED in a recent report for compliance issues related to its Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) plan. As a result, a committee guided by central office was formed and is now in the process of revamping the teacher evaluation procedures and the evaluation instrumentation.

The district is using the Charlotte Danielson Frameworks as the basis for revising their APPR plan. These revisions are essential to meet NYSED's recent requirement that 40 percent of the teacher evaluation measure use state and local assessment data to determine the performance level for each teacher. Next year this same requirement will apply to principal evaluations, so this evaluation instrument will also need to be redesigned.

Both the teacher and principal evaluation tools will need to be aligned with the changing expectations for principals and staff as the district renews and reforms past practices and adopts sound researched-based practices for effective teaching and administration.

Promising Practice DG3.1: The new administration in the central office has focused on building a district wide administrative paradigm centered on team work and collaboration.

Significance: Consistent and ongoing communication between the central office and schools is essential for effective planning and monitoring of the ELA curriculum. Strides are being made in developing trust and breaking down the top-down management structure used in the past. Open communication and teamwork will also be essential for the coordination of school improvement work and the shared understanding of goals and the needs of each school community.

Promising Practice DG3.2: The Literacy Coach positions at the middle school and elementary schools and the high school ELA Coordinator position provide critical support to the continuous improvement of ELA instruction across the district.

Significance: These positions provide ongoing embedded professional development and support to teachers on a daily basis. The positions also facilitate a professional learning community at each school that is based on research-based best practices and the use of data to monitor student progress and outcomes.

Promising Practice DG3.3: The district has assigned district-wide data management and technology coordination to the Data Analyst/Personnel Coordinator who will direct the district's efforts to improve data collection practices and the use of data in decision making.

Significance: Data management and the coordination of technology resources are core components of an effective ELA curriculum. This position will help the district set more stringent standards for data collection and the use of technology to support both instructional and administrative tasks.

Action Recommendation DG3.1: The district should continue to assign oversight responsibility for the development and monitoring of a comprehensive three-year professional development plan to the Directors of Elementary and Secondary Instruction and ensure that this long-range plan is tied to achievement goals and builds the capacity of the teaching and administrative workforce

Significance: The district's many new initiatives will need to be supported by a comprehensive and coordinated approach to training and professional development (See Section VI for specific recommendations).

Action Recommendation DG3.2: The district and its teacher union should revise and/or amend the Collective Bargaining Agreement by memorandum of agreement to align the contract with New York State requirements to build teacher capacity through curriculum mapping, progress monitoring and data use, and active participation in professional learning communities.

Significance: Contractual agreements should provide the flexibility to keep pace with new research on best practices and the characteristics of effective teaching that improves student performance.

Action Recommendation DG3.3: Establish an action committee to begin to study effective practices for principal evaluations.

Significance: The research on principal leadership continues to provide new insights and best practices for improving student performance and building teacher capacity. The district will need time to build a research base prior to the redesign on the principal evaluation instrumentation.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Student Achievement Orientation	• Align school improvement goals and staffing plans so that schools have the right combination of staff to achieve their specific learning goals. • Celebrate teamwork that focuses on student's progress—post success stories on the Website or in an e-newsletter.
Professional Practice Standards	• Build consensus on what constitutes effective administrative and teaching practices. • Differentiate support to principals based on school needs and professional competencies.

AUDIT CRITERIA DG4: A CLEAR CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK IS IN PLACE TO MONITOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND ENSURE THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.

Curriculum development is an ongoing process which includes the management, development, and delivery of the curriculum. The process is participatory in nature, and systematically engages various stakeholders (i.e., teachers, principals, curriculum specialists, students, parents, and/or community as appropriate) in curriculum mapping, curriculum assessment and curriculum writing activities.

Effective curriculum is not static. It is accessible, manageable, user-friendly, current, reflects best practice in the field and incorporates strategies that are specific to the district's student population. The impact of the curriculum on student achievement is assessed regularly at all levels: district, school, classroom, and individual student.

District wide adoptions of core sets of instructional resources such as the core reading series, textbooks, software, supplemental materials and instructional programs are aligned with the New York State Learning Standards and the written curriculum. These resources are selected by trained teams using an approved process for program and instructional materials adoption. The criteria for selection of the materials are based upon its alignment with the curriculum.

GASD Performance Finding DG4: There are inadequate district-wide communication and coordinating mechanisms in place to ensure that the many new improvement initiatives have realistic timeframes for implementation and stringent monitoring and evaluation plans.

Audit Criteria DG4 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark
DG4.1: Formal organizing mechanisms are in place to foster curriculum design and development.			X		The roles of the new ELA Committee, the new Teacher Evaluation Committee, and the RTI Committee have not been clearly articulated and communicated district wide.
DG4.2: A clear operational framework is in place to monitor and assess the delivery of the curriculum.				X	A new operational framework for the design and delivery and management of the ELA curriculum is in the early stages of implementation. School staff are still uncertain about the exact nature of the new plans and directions.

At the time of the onsite audit work (March-May 2010), central office administrators were in the process of examining the quality and scope of the ELA curriculum and the related professional development offered to teachers across the district. At the district level, an attempt was made to align the curriculum with New York State ELA Leaning Standards in 2008. These mapping/pacing documents used the Heidi Jacobs model and provided a preliminary framework for some curriculum work done within the schools. The union contracts require that teachers and administrators be paid for curriculum development.

In the spring of 2009, unspent grant funds were used to purchase a new reading series for the elementary schools (Pearson/Scotts Foresman). The series had been piloted at Marie Curie Institute for Engineering and Communications School as part of the Reading First Grant prior to district wide

adoption. Tecler Arts in Education School purchased and began implementation of the series in 2008-2009. One summer training was provided by Pearson in 2009 and most grades had access to the core manuals prior to the beginning of 2009-2010 school year. Two or three additional trainings were provided by Pearson during the 2009-2010 school year.

A district-level ELA Committee was formed in 2009-2010 to begin work on the elementary ELA curriculum. Led by the Director of Elementary Instruction, the ELA Committee is comprised primarily of teacher representatives and literacy coaches from the four elementary schools. Similar committee structures are in place to develop and revise the districts AIS, APPR, and RTI plans. There have been limited funds to improve or advance work on the written curriculum in the past two years.

Interviews revealed that the relationship between central office and schools in GASD has historically been top-down and directive in nature. Some principals indicated that a barrier to effective curriculum and instructional team work was that central office administrators spend little time in the schools and are therefore often unaware of the complexities of ELA administration at the school level and the specific implementation needs of the school culture.

Elementary principals in particular indicated that they have been slow to build trust with the new director due at least in part to his background as a psychologist and not a building administrator (although some improvement was noted by the consultants between the March and May 2010 audit interviews). Elementary principals are reportedly absent from key district-level committee meetings and some only sporadically attend professional development sessions.

Promising Practice DG4.1: The district administrators overseeing instruction are committed to developing a comprehensive aligned written curriculum that is integrated and actively used to inform teaching practices at all grade levels for all students.

Significance: The use of common academic standards improves the quality of instruction for all students by ensuring equity in content instruction and access to consistently high expectations for performance (Sandholtz, Ogawa & Scribner, 2004). Central office administrators have leveraged resources to initiate a curriculum mapping project, purchased a new elementary reading series, library books, technology and supplies, provided more extensive and targeted ELA professional development, and started to revamp the teacher evaluation system during the 2009-2010 school year. These initiatives should help to engage teachers and administrators in meaningful work and develop a common understanding about what is taught and measured at each grade level. This process will sharpen and focus teaching horizontally and vertically.

Action Recommendation DG4.1: An effective ELA curriculum in GASD will require a comprehensive redesign of the district-school-teacher communication practices about instructional content, pedagogy and what constitutes high quality teaching and learning environments.

Significance: The district has made a commitment to developing a meaningful written ELA curriculum horizontally and vertically that can be actively used by teachers and administrators to guide instruction and learning experiences. To support effective curriculum implementation, special attention must be given to building in ways for central office administrators, teachers and specialists to collaborate and engage in professional discussions about teaching and standards. All district and school staff must be

engaged in collaborative discussion and professional development on the qualities of effective teachers and leaders and build the workforce to reflect these qualities.

Mapping offers the foundation for collaboration and embedded professional growth for teachers as they work on skills and student competencies. This collegial dialogue will result in higher levels of teacher competence and student learning. Mapping is a process which will take a number of years. In a district such as Amsterdam with a number of schools, decisions must first occur on where to start and how to proceed.

Action Recommendation DG4.2: Increase communication, trust and collaboration between central office administrators and school principals in critical management areas (e.g., staff planning, budgeting, curriculum development and monitoring).

Significance: To improve the trust level within each of the schools, the Directors of Elementary and Secondary Instruction should meet individually with each principal weekly and spend at least one half day per month in each school. The Director of Pupil Personnel and RTI Coordinator should be regularly visible in the schools and ensure regular communication with each school principal and school-based child study team.

Action Recommendation DG4.3: Assign principal representatives to all district wide committees related to curriculum and instruction and hold principals accountable for regular participation and contributions to these committees

Significance: Improvements to the quality and continuity of instruction in GASD will require significant cross-school communication and collaboration to develop common understandings of the new initiatives. A primary role of principals should be to model leadership by embracing the restructuring and reform initiatives.

Action Recommendation DG4.4: Establish and implement a clear evaluation plan for each new initiative.

Significance: The district and schools must be focused on what works. Effective and ongoing evaluation provides vital information for continuous improvement of each initiative and the elimination of programs or program components that do not have the desired effects.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Define Manageable Tasks and Communicate Progress	• Use the strategic plan and related action planning documents to phase in and map the tasks needed to accomplish each benchmark. • Share work goals and action plans with all schools via the district web site • Regularly report work group progress through the web site and/or e-newsletters.
Efficient Use of Time	• Use an online calendaring system to schedule meetings and track participation. • Provide coverage so that principals can engage in development activities. • Set agendas and stick to the timeframes allotted for the common work. • Create a meeting summary form. • Rotate the responsibility for taking notes and set a deadline for distributing the meeting summaries.

AUDIT CRITERIA DG5: EFFECTIVE DISTRICT WIDE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES THAT GUIDE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION PRACTICES ARE IN PLACE.

Effective district wide policies communicate the goals, philosophies and expectations of a district. Even effective policies and their corresponding procedures require regular revision to reflect on or address new federal and state regulations, local issues, learning goals and the changing needs of the community. Districts should also regularly review and incorporate separate and distinguishable procedures that provide overarching guidelines for the policy's consistent implementation. Districts should also allow schools some freedom to develop additional or targeted procedures that implement district policy in the manner that will best meet the unique needs of each school's culture. Both policies and procedures need to be effectively communicated to all district staff, parents and the community. This communication should include web-based access to policies and procedures via the district's web site.

GASD Performance Finding DG5: A number of key policies and their corresponding procedures need to be aligned with current and planned reform efforts (i.e., attendance, discipline, grading and promotion/retention).

Audit Criteria DG5 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
DG5.1: Policies and procedures comply with state and federal requirements.		X			Not all policies and procedures affecting curriculum and student performance are up-to-date and aligned with the district's current needs.
DG5.2: Clear polices and procedures for core instructional management areas are in place and consistently implemented across the schools.				X	Instructional management procedures in key areas such as assessment, data management, and teacher evaluation need to be developed and aligned with the current curriculum reform efforts.

The BOE has produced many policies that are consistent with state and federal regulations and has been responsive to requests for updates for critical policies (e.g., attendance). The district's policy manual was reviewed and updated in 2006 and revisions were noted over the last four years. Few procedures are written and the district does not have an active procedures manual. Not all policies and procedures that are critical for the delivery of effective instruction and the improvement of student performance are effective or aligned with the district's current needs. To promote effective management, policies and procedures that provide clear operational guidelines must be in place The following policies in GASD need to be examined.

a) The district's revised attendance policy and procedures do not currently ensure that all students regularly attend school and consistently participate in ELA instruction.

A major factor affecting the quality of ELA instruction for some students in GASD is a high number of absences and tardy days. All schools indicated that some students miss more than 30 instructional days beginning in elementary school. Although the district's attendance policy was recently updated to

include a letter from the Montgomery County District Attorney for chronic offenders, this policy is inconsistently enforced and the district appears to have little leverage in getting some students to school. Key considerations include:

- Parents do not send students to school when there are half days. These include parent conference days, staff development and magnet school training days. Some buildings report as many as 40 percent of the students stay home on half days. A comparison of attendance data full days and half days indicated a 50 percent decline in attendance on half days.

- Parents of chronic attendance offenders are often hard to reach due to their jobs, mobility, or lack of phones. GASD social workers attempt to make home visits but need additional assistance with some families who are unable to address the basic care needs of their children (e.g., chronic head lice, lack of clothes and shoes, latchkey childcare).

- Two truancy officers work with chronic attendance cases, but appear to have limited success. School representatives who visit home are not generally trusted by the Hispanic community. Leaders with the Hispanic community suggest that additional engagement of local Hispanic support agencies and faith-based organizations may be helpful. The Hispanic community also needs district support and assistance about the importance of regularly attending school.

- The police are somewhat cooperative, but their response to chronic attendance issues varies by the officer on duty. This resource could be more effectively used.

- Attendance incentives appear to be inconsistently used or not available in schools.

- County social service caseworkers have very large caseloads and many competing demands. Recent budget cuts will eliminate an additional five caseworkers in the County and decrease the already sparse services available through the County.

b) The district's discipline policies and procedures do not currently ensure an effective climate for instruction.

GASD schools are viewed as safe by the vast majority stakeholders interviewed. There has been no documented gang activity, although there are some students who are described as gang-want-to-be's. All schools are expected to distribute the district's Code of Conduct at the beginning of the school year. Interviews suggest, however, that there are great variations in the implementation of the Code of Contact and many discrepancies district wide in the expectations for conduct at individual schools. Concerns expressed during interviews and focus groups include:

- The dress code is effectively implemented in only two of the four elementary schools. In these schools, students who cannot afford the appropriate clothes or do not wear appropriate clothes to school are asked to change into clothes donated by parents and local agencies. Parents in schools where the implementation was inconsistent expressed frustration about this policy and its ineffective implementation procedures.

- Principals vary in their response to discipline issues in elementary classrooms. In some schools, students are regularly removed from instruction and sit idle in the principal's office. In other

schools, teachers take the lead in discipline and follow-up with parents except in extreme cases. Elementary school students are sent home at the principal's discretion for disruptive behavior. An in-school suspension program is offered at the central office for secondary students.

- Teachers, specialists and support staff report a lack of consistency in discipline, and in some cases negative behaviors are viewed as enabled by teachers and administrators. Interviews also suggest some discrepancies in expectations and sanctions may be based on ethnicity and economic disadvantage.

- Specialists and support staff describe the discipline in schools as relying heavily on crisis intervention for behavior rather than on the use of active learning strategies, prevention and skill building techniques. School-based staff and administrators may not have adequate training in establishing clear positive expectations for students and instead rely heavily on providing negative feedback to students.

- The schools are not particularly user-friendly for engaging Hispanic families in effective parenting and social emotional skill building. There are virtually no Hispanic role models or staff in the schools. School entrances are appropriately locked during the day, but the signs "please ring the bell" are in English only.

- Parent involvement even at the elementary level is limited (See Section IV, School Governance, Audit Criteria 4 for a full discussion).

- A behavior specialist for general education students was hired at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year. The role for this position has not been clearly defined and is currently viewed as ineffective.

- Title IV funding for prevention activities provided through Catholic Charities ends this year.

- The school counseling program has been eliminated in the elementary school. National school counseling standards focus schools on effective prevention and social skill building activities and monitor students at-risk.

An analysis of the audit data suggests that students are not adequately engaged in meaningful instructional activities. This lack of engagement, in turn, may lead to more discipline issues in the schools. Observation data also suggests that a heavy reliance on traditional teacher instructional approaches and the use of worksheets may also be a contributing factor. (See Section V Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment for a detailed discussion).

c) The district's grading, promotion/retention policies and procedures may not reflect current best practices.

At the elementary level, staff report that the current grading policies and practices need be revised to reflect the expectations of the new reading series. The current report cards are confusing to parents because the reading series test scores do not align with the letter grading system now in place. Elementary schools have made some temporary modifications to the report cards, however, a comprehensive alignment and updating of the grading policies and report card documents is a

recognized area for improvement. The Joint Intervention Team (JIT) report on the high school, as well as administrative interviews, found that there is limited sharing of student achievement with parents outside the typical interim reports and report cards. The high school and middle school are transitioning to *E-SCHOOL* which will improve data management and grade reporting. Elementary schools will begin this transition in 2009-2010.

The district is also in the process of examining its promotion and retention policies at the elementary level. Elementary schools vary in the number of requests for retentions. One school (Barkley) reports an extremely high number of retention requests, particularly in Kindergarten. In some cases, retention appears to mask underlying issues of poor teacher quality and an inadequate intervention system for struggling students.

Action Recommendation DG5.1: Review current policies for clarity and effectiveness, particularly as they relate to improving student performance and teacher effectiveness and align the policies with current reform efforts.

Significance: At the policy level, the BOE should ensure that the policy statement clearly states what the district expects. Central administration and principals should then work with citizen advisory teams to determine the most effective implementation procedures. In some instances, effective solutions will need to actively engage the Hispanic community as well as existing parent organizations, community based agencies and organizations, and the City of Amsterdam in problem solving activities and ongoing support for implementation of the policy.

Action Recommendation DG5.2: Recast or develop the implementation procedures for all new polices and existing policies in collaboration with school principals and teacher leaders.

Significance: The procedures for implementing any policy need to be perceived as doable at the school level. As procedures are refined at the school level it will be important to regularly gather data from the schools on how well the policies and procedures are working and what adjustments need to be made.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Implementation Effectiveness	• Use data to determine the extent of the problem. • Form policy problem solving groups (citizen's advisory groups) with key school and community representatives. • Develop consistent district wide expectations and procedures for implementing key policies that affect instruction and curriculum development. • Establish supporting procedures at each school that address individualized needs and special circumstances. • Develop a policy review team to annually examine policy data and implementation effectiveness.

AUDIT CRITERIA DG6: EFFICIENT RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND BUDGETING PROCEDURES MAXIMIZE THE USE OF INSTRUCTIONAL FUNDS.

A general purpose of school district restructuring and renewal is to combine and coordinate district resources to achieve the learning goals shared by everyone in the organization (O'Neil, 1990). As a result, restructuring calls for rethinking how districts and schools target and allocate available funding. No longer is it the decision of one administrator. No longer is funding used to leverage acquiescence or involvement. The successful allocation and coordination of funds depends on the alignment of goals, delivery of educational services, and accountability systems.

Specifically, the effective use of educational funds:

- Relies on strategic district *goals to provide focus to expenditure decisions*;
- Uses a *well-articulated plan to integrate services* and coordinate funding;
- Encourages the district and its schools to be resourceful and coordinate and leverage funds to maximize their impact on student achievement;
- Monitors and measures the impact of integrated services on the achievement of students and goals through accountability systems in place.

A learning organization is one that uses data and is constantly seeking to improve its decision-making ability. It does so by examining results and the decisions made to achieve those results. It monitors availability, coordination and impact of resources (Reavis and Griffith, 1992).

> *You can want to do the right thing, And you can even want to do it for the right reasons. But if you don't apply the right principles, You can still hit a wall (Covey, Merrill and Merrill, 1994).*

GASD Performance Finding DG6: The district lacks effective procedures for resource management and the allocation of instructional resources.

Audit Criteria DG6 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
DG6.1: The district's resources are adequate for promoting effective ELA instruction.			X		The lack of strategic planning that clearly links curriculum goals to resources has led to the purchase of materials, supplies, and technology that are not essential to an effective ELA curriculum.
DG6.2: The district's purchasing policies and procedures maximize resource use and instructional time.			X		The purchasing process is cumbersome and inefficient. Principals have virtually no budget. Orders are often delayed or not received at all. Once orders are received there are numerous delays in set up for technology.

Over the past several years the district has struggled with budget cuts, a dwindling tax base, increased poverty and lack of community support for district spending. The GASD budget did not pass in 2008-2009 or 2009-2010. The 2010-2011 budget was approved in May 2010 with a 0% tax levy.

Resource management has been highly centralized and principals indicated that they have little control over the funds allocated for school management. Once the budget decisions are made, principals report that they have historically had oversight of only approximately $800.00 annually.

Budget meetings with principals were held this spring to discuss the school-based resource needs and principals submitted a summary of their spending priorities to their directors. The district has since then received additional revenue from multiple sources to reform its programs and improve student performance. These dollars have been used to improve facilities, infrastructure and replenish and update academic materials and supplies including books and technology. Much of this funding has focused on improving ELA and technology resources. Lack of clear planning strategies for purchasing and disseminating the new resources has led to inconsistencies in the use of materials from school to school. Technology often remains in boxes due to a lack of infrastructure, inadequate and poor quality technical support staffing, and lack of school-based training in the use and maintenance of the hardware and software applications.

Grant funding has provided some additional revenue for professional development workshops and conferences as well as needed advances in the purchase of ELA curriculum supplies and materials. The table below summarizes the key grants and initiatives that must be closely linked to the ongoing development and implementation of the ELA curriculum.

At best, the GASD purchasing policies and procedures can be described as cumbersome. Most purchasing is centralized and although multiple checks and balances are in place, the current system does not ensure that classrooms receive materials and supplies in a timely fashion. Multiple signatures must occur at the central office level before basic supplies can be ordered or distributed. Teachers, particularly special education and ESL teachers, report long waits for basic supplies including paper, textbooks, and technology supplies (projector bulbs, etc.). Psychologists and other support staff have little input into their budget and there is no plan for purchasing more effective screening or diagnostic tools or replacing outdated testing materials.

Promising Practice DG6.1: The district is actively seeking grant funding to build the district's capacity to improve student performance.

Significance: The economic climate in Amsterdam requires that all potential resources be leveraged. Grant funds have already had substantial effects on professional development and have increased access to technology and books for schools.

Action Recommendation DG6.1: Establish clear procedures to align ELA resource allocations with the New York State Learning Standards and Performance Indicators and the requirements of the district's ELA curriculum.

Significance: Materials and supplies that do not have a defined use in implementing the curriculum should not be purchased. Resource mapping will help the district and schools make the best use of funds.

Action Recommendation DG6.2: Conduct a process audit of the district's current purchasing practices for curriculum and instruction to increase efficiencies and ensure that classrooms have the resources needed for effective ELA instruction in a timely manner.

Significance: Although procedural accountability is a critical aspect of the purchasing process, many of the current procedures should be revamped and automated to reduce the burden on administrator's time.

Action Recommendation DG6.3: Revise the district's Technology Plan to systematically build the district's technology infrastructure and plan for the purchase of software applications and corresponding training that are aligned with the ELA curriculum and research-based best practices.

Significance: The district needs to take an aggressive approach getting both instructional and administrative technology in place. Effective ELA instruction will require computers in classrooms to conduct Learning Center and research activities. Similarly, administrative technology needs to be readily available to reduce the inefficiencies that currently exist in budgeting, purchasing, grading, attendance, and other data collection tasks.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Learning Goal Orientation	• Train a cadre of teacher leaders to review materials and supplies for alignment to the curriculum. • Provide principals with more resources that can be used for school-based work on school improvement goals. • Engage principals in leveraging additional resources for school improvement goals through grants and community partnerships.
Efficiency	• Automate all key data management and administrative functions. • Ensure that schools have computers in classrooms and the technology training and support to use them. • Automate all grading, progress monitoring and report card functions.

Section IV: School-Level Curriculum Governance and Management

Section III, District-Level Curriculum Governance and Management, describes key structures, process and practices at the district level that must be in place to ensure effective curriculum development, delivery and accountability. This section addresses school-level curriculum governance and management. Similarly in this section, MI uses a systems approach to assess the relative effectiveness of the key administrative organizational structures and practices at the school level and provides recommendations for improving school-based curriculum management capacity and student performance outcomes. The table below summaries the School-Level Curriculum Governance and Management Audit Criteria, the Performance Finding for each Audit Criteria and the corresponding Promising Practices and Action Recommendations.

Audit Criteria	Performance Finding	Promising Practices (PP) and Action Recommendations (AR)
SG1: Principals are the instructional leaders of their schools	SG1: Principals have varied and somewhat unclear roles/job descriptions as instructional leaders.	PPSG1.1: The district's transition to a magnet school model has provided focus at the elementary level and enhanced learning opportunities for students. PPSG1.2: The New York State required CEP process and corresponding reform efforts have effectively engaged staff, in some schools, in a school improvement planning process. ARSG1.1: District administrators should continue to work collaboratively with principals to create a consistent, dynamic and evolving set of roles and behaviors expected of effective school principals. ARSG1.2: Principals should actively engage teachers in a common understanding of "what learning means at our school". ARSG1.3: Set aside a regular time at each school for principals to meet individually with their central office directors and participate in ongoing discussions about what instructional leadership means at their school. ARSG1.4: Build the capacity of teachers to become teacher leaders.
SG2: Principals create an optimal culture for learning.	SG2: There is inconsistent and confusing communication concerning the expectations for the instructional program and student learning.	ARSG2.1: Establish building level action teams focused on improving school culture, student engagement and a passion for literacy and learning. ARSG2.2: Create a community action plan district wide and at each school and regularly celebrate cultural diversity. ARSG2.3: Enhance academic and cultural competence through adult and peer mentorship programs.

Audit Criteria	Performance Finding	Promising Practices (PP) and Action Recommendations (AR)
SG3: Effective prevention and intervention services are well established and responsive to the needs of struggling students.	SG3: Prevention and intervention services for struggling students are ineffective and need to be redesigned.	PPSG3.1: The district has hired a Response to Intervention (RTI) Coordinator to oversee the implementation of this important initiative. PPSG3.2: The district is in the early stages of implementing an RTI Model, revising the AIS plan and integrating special education students into the general education classrooms demonstrating support for an integrated cross disciplinary approach to instructional planning. ARSG3.1: Create a framework for differentiating instruction that is consistent across schools and builds upon the RTI model to create a continuum of services and supports for struggling students. ARSG3.2: Establish a Prevention and Intervention Action Committee to study and summarize best practices and make recommendations to improve the development and integration of prevention and intervention services in the district (e.g., early childhood programs, language immersion and bilingual programs, inclusion and co-teaching models). ARSG3.3: Seek grant funding to support extended day and extended year programs in all schools.
SG4: Parents and community are members are actively engaged in the work of schools.	SG4: Few parents are active participants in the schools and schools need a new paradigm for parent involvement.	PPSG4.1: The district has hired a translator to enhance bilingual communication across the district. ARSG4.1: Engage community agencies, business and city officials in the district and school-level improvement planning process. ARSG4.2: Establish a district-level Parent Advisory Committee to develop strategies for improved parent involvement. ARSG4.3: Create Parent-to-Parent Outreach Programs at each school. ARSG4.4: Establish parent and community volunteer programs at each school.

For each audit criteria, the text below provides the research base for that criteria and the corresponding benchmarks. Next, an overarching performance finding for the audit criterion is followed by a summary chart of the benchmark findings and a rating of GASD's performance. Each benchmark is rated as:

- ***Met*:** There is evidence that the benchmark has been established and there is a common understanding district wide of effective practices.
- ***Level II Implementation*:** Long-range plans are in place, considerable implementation has occurred, but the benchmark has not been fully embraced district wide.

- ***Level I Implementation:*** Effective structures and plans have been well established and some early implementation evidence is present.
- ***Unmet*:** Implementation of the benchmark is not evident. No clear plans are in place.

A narrative description of the current audit criteria status follows the summary chart, and a detailed description of promising practices and action recommendations for the audit criteria are provided. Key considerations and suggested implementation strategies conclude the discussion of each audit criteria.

AUDIT CRITERIA SG1: PRINCIPALS ARE THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS OF THEIR SCHOOLS.

In a recently published article Grigsby, Schumacher, Decman, and Simieou (June 2010) state:

> *A quality curriculum and effective instruction are key elements to ensure successful teaching and learning on a campus. Due to the current climate of school reform, principals are held more accountable for student success making school leadership even more critical (Levine, 2005). The principal is the individual best positioned within the school to evaluate the curriculum and evaluation process (Parkay, Hass, & Anctil, 2010). This requires that the principal become deeply engaged in the school's instructional program (Hallinger, 2005).Traditionally, principals were expected to set clear goals, allocate resources to instruction, manage the curriculum, monitor lesson plans and evaluate teachers (DiPaola & Hoy, 2008). Today, the principals' responsibilities include a deeper and broader involvement in the mechanics of teaching and learning, the use of data to make decisions, and prescribe and participate in meaningful and innovative professional development (King, 2002). As a result, principals must find a way for managerial and instructional responsibilities to complement and support each other instead of being in constant competition (Shellard, 2003).*

GASD Performance Finding SG1: Principals have varied and somewhat unclear roles as instructional leaders.

Audit Criteria SG1 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
SG1.1: Principals are well informed about state ELA standards and assessment requirements.		X			Principals vary in their knowledge and implementation strategies for the ELA standards. Assessments and progress monitoring strategies are used inconsistently to guide curriculum and instruction in most schools.
SG1.2: Principals have a clear vision for the school that is exemplified in their daily practices.			X		School visions need to be more effectively communicated.
SG1.3: Principals promote a professional learning community in their schools.			X		The use of Literacy Coaches and an ELA Coordinator has improved the professional learning community within the schools.
SG1.4: Principals engage staff in shared decision making and have a comprehensive school improvement plan that is actively used to improve student performance.			X		The high school CEP team seems to be the most successful school decision-making team. The middle school's literacy team must function as a school improvement team.

Audit Criteria SG1 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
SG1.5: Principals regularly monitor classroom instruction.			X		A substantial core of teachers report that principals do not regularly monitor the quality of instruction.
SG1.6: Principals are actively engaged in and monitor the student support services system in their school.			X		The principal's role in the student support services system in their school varies. AIS placement decisions are approved by central office directors rather than the building principal.
SG1.7: Principals actively engage parents and the community in academic initiatives.				X	Principals expressed considerable frustration around their lack of success with community engagement activities.

The heart of a school's culture is its mission and purpose which is the focus of what people do (Deal, 1999). Effective principals use a vision and guiding principles to inspire a culture for learning. Visioning in GASD elementary schools is guided by their magnet themes. Principals reported that the magnet training and external evaluator have been instrumental in the magnet implementation process and have helped them to develop their themes. The high school and middle school principals are more recent hires and report that they are continuing to work with staff around common visions. Interviews with secondary school staff suggest that substantial progress has been made in focusing school-based activities and engaging staff in collaborative efforts to improve student achievement during the relatively short tenure of these principals.

When surveyed, most GASD teachers district wide (76%) reported that the programs and practices in their school were guided by a clear, shared vision and mission to a "moderate" or "great" extent (although the percentage assigning the rating "great" extent was only 15%). A higher percentage (89%) said that they understood the central mission of their school to a "moderate" or "great" extent. And an even higher percentage (91%) stated they supported the mission of their school.

In general the role of principals as instructional leaders in GASD lacks consistency and clarity, probably due at least in part to the top-down directive management structure of past administrations. As a result of rigorous central office control, principal leadership development has not been a district wide priority until recently. Interviews suggest that principals at GASD are, however, actively engaged in their schools and very involved in daily school operations. Interviewers found that although principals vary in the extent to which they are focused, the instructional components of their schools ranging from a high level of participation in decisions around curriculum and instruction to an oversight only approach, all view themselves as working harder than ever to improve student performance.

Despite differences in their approach to curriculum implementation, principals appear to have a broad-based knowledge of the New York State ELA Learning Standards. Some principals stated that they rely heavily on the literacy coach to "lead" ELA improvement efforts, commenting that their intense involvement in instructional matters is sometimes threatening to teachers and has in the past resulted in issues with the teacher's union. Most principals indicated that their rapport with the teacher's union has improved in recent years since school-based representatives have been assigned to each school.

Overall, all ratings of principal's instructional leadership are lower than other districts studied by MI. When asked on the audit survey about the instructional leadership skills of their principal, just under

one-third (32%) of the teachers disagreed that *There is strong instructional leadership from the school principal.* Teachers district wide gave less positive ratings, however, to specific instructional leadership characteristics that are typically seen in highly effective schools. Specifically, a large number of teachers (47% to 79%) reported that their principal *rarely/not at all* did the following:

- demonstrated instructional strategies and/or the use of curricular materials in their class (79%);
- examined/discussed students' assessment data with them (64%);
- observed them teach/provided feedback on their teaching (59%),; and
- shared information/advised them about instructional strategies (47%).

A further analysis of the survey data shows that secondary teachers, in general, were more positive about the instructional leadership in their school.

Principals also seem to vary in the extent to which they regularly monitor the quality of instruction. On the survey, more than one-third of the teachers (35%) disagreed with the following statement: *The principal actively monitors the quality of instruction.* Some principals stated during interviews that they do regular evaluations and walk-throughs while others indicated that they had more limited time to be in the classroom. In a couple of schools, principals said that they are working with the teacher's union to assist in the management of ineffective teachers who are tenured.

Teacher engagement in the governance and work of their schools appears to be very limited in GASD, particularly at the elementary level. Although some schools have implemented a CEP planning process as part of their New York State Corrective Action requirements, there are no comprehensive school improvement planning documents to guide school-based decision making and benchmark progress (see **Section III**, Action Recommendation DG3.3). The high school CEP team is reportedly the most successful school decision-making team, but a review of the CEP documents at all schools suggests that additional rigor in the use of data, action planning, and monitoring progress towards school improvement benchmarks would enhance the implementation of these plans. The middle school CEP team, a Literacy Team, was successful in improving student achievement on ELA tests.

The low level of teacher engagement in the work of schools was confirmed by the audit survey responses. On most school issues, GASD teachers reported in the audit survey that they rarely had input into decision making. In fact, their degree of input was lower than those of similar MI studies of other school districts. Specifically, the percentage of GASD teachers reporting "no" or "some" decision-making input in selected areas averaged 80 percent, with detailed results as follows:

- setting performance standards for students (no input = 29%; some input = 34%)
- establishing/adjusting the curriculum (no input = 20%; some input = 36%),
- determining the content of professional development (no input = 38%; some input = 42%),
- evaluating teacher methods (no input = 76%; some input = 15%),
- hiring teachers (no input = 94%; some input = 5%),
- determining school policies and procedures (no input = 54%; some input = 37%), and
- deciding how the school budget will be spent (no input = 90%; some input = 8%).

Consistent with these finding, nearly 40 percent of the teachers disagreed on the survey with the statement, *Teachers and the principal work collaboratively in making school decisions.* Interviews suggest, however, that to date the high school and middle school principals have been somewhat more

successful in creating a culture that is conducive to shared decision making and active participation in school reform efforts. This may be due in part to the secondary team's extensive efforts to work collaboratively with central office administrators on district reform initiatives.

Overall, principals appeared to have a good rapport with students and were genuinely concerned about the struggling students in their schools. Although not all principals are actively involved with the student support services system in their schools, most had a clear sense of the critical needs of their students and what was being done to support these students. Elementary principals, in particular, expressed concerns about the loss of student support services due to budget cuts and were apprehensive about the potential impact of these cuts during the next school year.

Conversely, the use of Literacy Coaches at the middle school and elementary schools and an ELA Coordinator at the high school was viewed as a tremendous support to their instructional leadership capacity, and principals credited them with improving the professional learning community within the schools. Most principals also reported that they have participated in some literacy circles/book discussion groups and other discussions around professional growth with their staff.

District wide engaging parents and the community in school activities is viewed as a major barrier to student success. Principals expressed considerable frustration around their lack of success with community engagement activities and the number of hours that are dedicated to engaging families. Some schools have seen improved attendance at social events, but not for activities related to instruction. All schools work diligently and use multiple strategies to try to get parents in for conferences, but sometimes with limited success.

Promising Practice SG1.1: The district's transition to a magnet school model has provided focus at the elementary level and enhanced learning opportunities for students.

Significance: The transition to magnet schools has helped bring a renewed focus to the elementary schools. The support of an external consultant provides for ongoing professional exchanges regarding the integration of the magnet themes.

Promising Practice SG1.2: The New York State required CEP process and corresponding reform efforts have effectively engaged staff, in some schools in a school improvement planning process.

Significance: NYSED requirements for CEP has helped schools thoughtfully consider what needs to be done to improve student performance. Although additional training is being planned to add rigor to the process, some staff at all schools who participated in the process are committed to the reform efforts identified in their CEP plans.

Action Recommendation SG1.1: District administrators should continue to work collaboratively with principals to create a consistent, dynamic and evolving set of roles and behaviors expected of effective school principals.

Significance: As the reform and renewal process moves forward, principals will need to develop more dynamic roles and stronger leadership skills around instruction. Interviews suggest that principals are in the early stages of transforming their roles and will require substantial support, training and technical assistance over the next several years to move beyond their historic roles. Principals must be actively engaged in the development of the new ELA curriculum and the revamping of the student support services system to ensure the improvement of student outcomes. As part of the redefinition of the roles between principals and central office administrators, principals should be held accountable for managing more of the instructional components in their building (e.g., oversight over AIS placements).

Action Recommendation SG1.2: Principals should actively engage teachers in a common understanding of "what learning means at our school."

Significance: According to Eaker (2002), key questions associated with a common understanding of learning in schools include:

- What exactly do we expect students to learn?
- How will we know what students are learning?
- How can we assist and support students in their learning?
- Based on a collaborative analysis of our efforts, what can we do to improve student learning?
- How can we recognize and celebrate improvements in student learning?

These questions should be the heart of all school discussions and planning.

Action Recommendation SG1.3: Set aside a regular time at each school for principals to meet individually with their central office directors and participate in ongoing discussions about what instructional leadership means at their school.

Significance: Time to reflect on how instructional leadership works in GASD and what leadership strategies are, and how they can be used effectively in schools will be a critical component of continuous school improvement. District administrators are beginning to facilitate a learning community culture among principals and central office administrators that transcends blaming and examines and implements collective solutions to improve student achievement. This teamwork will be essential to manage the district's many promising new directions that are focused on best practices and high expectations for student performance.

Action Recommendation SG1.4: Build the capacity of teachers to become teacher leaders.

Significance: Distributive decision making within schools will be a critical strategy for managing the school improvement process. Teacher leaders in other districts play pivotal roles in the initiation of and ongoing process monitoring of important school improvement initiatives as well as the daily tasks of school operation. The rewards for building the leadership capacity of teachers are twofold: teachers take ownership in the work of the school beyond the classroom and potential leaders are developed for other district positions.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Focus on learning A paradigm shift to focus on learning, not teaching, must be a major effort in schools.	Principals should: • Attend work on curriculum mapping which allows discussion and collective inquiry. • Daily discuss and promote shared vision and values at the school level. • Use faculty meetings to support collective efforts in improving student learning. • Work with departments, grade levels, Literacy Coaches, support staff and special educators to address key learning questions and strategies.
Administrators are Viewed as Leaders of Teachers Effective principals motivate and support teachers as they make changes in their practice and focus on student learning.	Principals should: • Support teachers daily by managing time and resources. • Acknowledge all efforts to learn and grow. • Be visible in classrooms through visitations, walk-throughs and simple visits to engage students. • Meet with every department/grade level after each benchmark test to discuss results and determine strategies that would improve the areas of concern. • Have teachers note any suggestions for improvement to the curriculum after each grading period. Compile and send to the person in charge of curriculum writing. • Visit curriculum writers during the summer months to become more aware of the curriculum. Your presence speaks volumes. • Attend professional development along with teachers. This is critical. • Attend curriculum mapping training. Allow time for teachers to work together on maps. Do a sample map on your goals for the year. • Provide meaningful professional development based on analyzed data and teacher need. • Model or team-teach lessons for teachers. • Share the vision of curriculum and instruction with the community. Involve parents/grandparents and businesses in helping the vision come to fruition. Update websites with information on teaching and learning. • Structure staff meetings as a forum for sharing best practices and focusing on teaching and learning rather than managerial issues. Use cooperative learning techniques for mixing and grouping staff to allow for better professional communication. • Develop a professional development section in the library for staff.
Build a Sense of Community and RelationalTrust	Principals should: • Discuss and model a shared vision and values at the school level. • Attend department/grade level/Child Study Team meetings regularly. • Work with office staff, custodians, aides to promote a team environment and a user-friendly school. • Develop communication systems within the building to keep everyone informed of instructional efforts. • Keep all promises made. • Take time to listen to teacher concerns and suggestions regarding instruction. • Work on relationships every day.

AUDIT CRITERIA SG2: PRINCIPALS CREATE AN OPTIMAL CULTURE FOR LEARNING.

Roland Barth (2001) wrote that, "The relationship among the adults in the schoolhouse has more impact on the quality and character of the schoolhouse-and on the accomplishments of the youngsters-than any other factor." "Staff must believe that their school can succeed with all students and what they do matters" (Blankenstein, 2004). As Ruby Payne (2005) discusses in her writing on poverty in schools, "The most important part of learning seems to be related to relationship." This must be addressed by all staff. Schools must be the best place in students' lives. They should want to come to school.

Teacher behavior can make a major impact on student engagement and their desire to do well in school. Put downs, sarcasm, insistence on personal views and biases about student-teacher relationships, assigning pejorative character traits to the individual or making judgments on the value and availability of resources have a negative effect on students (Payne, 2005). Schools that teach diverse students must be proactive in understanding and mitigating the effects of poverty and cultural diversity on the school culture.

Michael Fullan writes about the moral purpose of leadership in a school (2003). His research shows that the schools must address core purposes because, "There are cognitive and social needs in all children, with an emphasis on those who have not been well served in the past." Principals as leaders must know that changing academic achievement in their schools is a "simultaneous process"(Fullan, 2003). To create a culture for learning principals must: keep the focus on all students, show enthusiasm and positive energy, address barriers to learning, share leadership, build trust and communication, encourage staff collaboration, use data to show student success and participate in professional development**.**

GASD Performance Finding SG2: There is inconsistent and confusing communication concerning the expectations of the instructional program and student learning.

Audit Criteria SG2 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
SG2.1: Principals, teachers and other school-based staff work collaboratively to ensure a safe environment that is conducive to learning and academic achievement.		X			All schools are safe but chronic discipline and attendance issues detract from school-wide performance.
SG2.2: School facilities and resources are conducive to effective instruction.	X				Facilities were deemed adequate for effective instruction at all schools.
SG2.3: Schools are actively engaged in building cultural competency and promoting respect for cultural and economic diversity.				X	There is little evidence of cross-culture activities in most schools.
SG2.4: School staff set positive expectations for students and actively promote personal responsibility for learning and behavior.				X	Schools tend to be crisis oriented rather than proactively promoting a positive school climate.
SG2.5: Schools have clear and consistent policies for attendance and discipline that maximize time in			X		There are written policies for attendance and discipline but schools vary considerably in their

Audit Criteria SG2 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
the classroom.					implementation consistency and effectiveness.

Overall, walk-throughs of the schools showed that the school facilities were adequate at all schools, although Tecler's open classroom floor plan may limit some types of instructional arrangements (see **Appendix D**, Tecler Arts and Education Extended Study). The district is currently renovating several elementary schools and the high school and is improving the infrastructure for technology as part of these renovation plans. It is clear that the funds for improved facilities have gone to schools. The Central Administration Building (CAB) has less desirable working conditions.

All schools are locked facilities with a buzzer at the front door to request access to the school building. At a couple of the schools, the doors were propped open, particularly during the arrival and dismissal of students. Some of the schools required visitors to sign-in and sign-out but visitors were not asked to present identification.

Many GASD teachers surveyed (75%) agreed that their *school principal works to create a sense of community in the school*. Most teachers (87%) also agreed with the following statement about their school, *The school clearly and centrally focuses on improved teaching and learning.* In contrast, nearly 30% disagreed that *high standards and expectations are communicated consistently to all students.* Of some concern in the overall analysis of the school cultures was that a solid core of teachers disagreed with the following statements on the survey:

- The school environment is conducive to learning (28%), and
- The school has a set of rules and regulations that are actually followed to ensure a safe environment (32%).

Notably, the rate of disagreement in these areas was higher than most other "climate" items on the survey.

As described in Section III, there are written policies for attendance and discipline, however, schools vary considerably in their implementation effectiveness (see **Section** III, Audit Criteria DG5 for a detailed discussion). In general, schools appeared to be crisis oriented rather than proactively promoting a positive competency-building school climate.

There was also little evidence of cross-culture activities in most schools, although some training on awareness building has been conducted over the last year. Data from other state reviews and this audit suggest that the district has had limited success in integrating the Hispanic culture into the instructional priorities of the district. However, when asked about the school's capacity to build cultural competencies for students, nearly all GASD teachers (94%) agreed with the following statement about their school: *The school is inclusive of all cultures.* A great many teachers (ranging from 51% to 95%) also reported that the following supports were available to assist parent/families of English Language Learners (ELL):

- written communication translated into parent's non-English language (95%):
- translators made available for parent-teacher meetings (95%);
- meetings conducted in parent's non-English language (70%); and

- staff members who communicate in the preferred language of parents (51%).

While principals varied greatly in their leadership styles and interactions with staff, developing effective communication with staff around learning appears to be a critical area of need at most GASD schools. Compared with teachers in other school districts, GASD teachers gave lower ratings when asked about the frequency of discussions with the school principal on instructional matters. Specifically, from 50% to 65% said they "rarely or not at all" spoke with their principal about

- ELA teaching strategies (60%),
- Making changes in the existing ELA curriculum (65%),
- Techniques for meeting the ELA needs of specific students (50%),
- Strategies for differentiating instruction (52%),
- Techniques for assessing student achievement in ELA (57%), and
- Using assessment data to improve ELA instruction (57%).

Given the lack of collegial support and communication, it is not surprising that when asked to identify the factors that had a major impact on their reading instruction, only a small percentage of GASD teachers selected *recommendations from the school principal* (3%) or *recommendations from other teachers* (22%).

Funding, lack of time, and scheduling difficulties were cited as the top obstacles to effective delivery of the curriculum (by 66% of GASD teachers). Other obstacles included parent and community resistance (43%), work overload (35%), and inadequate materials, equipment, facilities (45%). *These survey responses for* "parent resistance" and "inadequate materials/equipment," are unusually high percentages when compared to the survey responses of other districts MI has studied.

Action Recommendation SG2.1: Establish building level study teams focused on improving school culture, student engagement and a passion for literacy and learning.

Significance: Successful schools use the history of the district/community and all cultures to build on their mission and core values. The physical environment of the school should show joy and pride in what we do here.

Action Recommendation SG2.2: Create a community action plan district wide at each school and regularly celebrate cultural diversity.

Significance: Staff must believe that their school can succeed with all students and what they do matters (Blankenstein, 2004). School foyers, offices and office personnel should be friendly and welcoming. There should be clear signage in Spanish and English as to sign-in procedures and where certain offices are located. In addition to the routine parent communication letters that are now available in Spanish, newsletters and web site material should provide Spanish text.

Action Recommendation SG2.3: Enhance academic and cultural competence through adult and peer mentorship programs.

Significance: The district needs to come to terms with the discrepancy between historic middle class views of "what school means" and the value of a good education, and the understanding and beliefs of families and students who come from low income and culturally diverse backgrounds. It is only by acknowledging where we are, that we develop the competencies to take the next steps. Mentorship programs that embrace the diversity of the community and provide role models are an important tool in bridging the gap for all high risk students.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Develop a Sense of Community Effective schools develop a welcoming and trusting environment for students, staff, community and parents.	• There must be a focus on retention, recruitment and hiring of effective, positive staff (Deal, 1999). • In diverse schools there is a need to develop traditions to bring people together. Through learning fairs, speakers and celebrations students can learn about one another's history, language and cultures. • Language immersion classes (e.g., co-teaching social studies in English and Spanish once a week in the general education classroom) can spark interest in learning multiple languages for all students.
Create an Understanding of the Needs of Students in Poverty	• There must be a collective commitment from teachers, administrators and the Amsterdam community to address the root causes of attendance and tardiness issues. • Student support should focus on building student and family capacity and skills.

AUDIT CRITERIA SG3: EFFECTIVE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION SERVICES ARE WELL ESTABLISHED AND RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF STRUGGLING STUDENTS.

Recent research conducted by Scanlon (2008) has demonstrated that those children who receive intensive, targeted instruction by qualified reading teachers have more success as readers. This process begins in the general education classroom by eliminating one-size-fits-all methods for instruction and replacing this practice with differentiated instruction strategies. Carol Ann Tomlinson says that differentiated instruction is a way of thinking about teaching rather than an instructional strategy (2000). In the differentiated classroom teachers are constantly assessing student learning. What does it mean to respond to learner's needs? How does one use flexible grouping? How can teachers use tiered lessons, varied homework, varied texts, learning contracts or project-based learning? In addition, teachers need to understand the meaning and use of the assessment data they collect. This fits well with the RTI model.

In her book, *Motivation Matters* (2004), Margery B. Ginsberg writes about school renewal which relates to the work ahead in Amsterdam schools. She speaks of the need to create a motivational framework for culturally responsive teaching which unifies teaching practices for all learners. This framework includes:

- Establishing inclusion through respect and teachers feeling connected
- Developing a positive attitude through learning choice and relevance
- Enhancing meaning-challenging and engaged learning
- Engendering competence and giving students a sense of hope

It is this framework that student support services, inclusion of students with disabilities, work with ELL students and RTI must address.

GASD Performance Finding SG3: Prevention and intervention services for struggling students are ineffective and need to be redesigned.

Audit Criteria SG3 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
SG3.1: Schools have well defined student support services plans that are proactive and focus on effective instruction.				X	There is considerable confusion in schools about the implementation of the AIS plan, the new RTI model, special education services and guidance programs.
SG3.2: Effective procedures are in place for screening, diagnosing and monitoring the progress of struggling students.				X	Assessment and service identification practices are inconsistent across schools.
SG3.3: Adequate school-based staffing is available to ensure a comprehensive approach to student support (prevention, intervention, special services).				X	The student support services staffing plan does not effectively address the needs of schools, resulting in inconsistent service delivery system-wide.
SG3.4: The student support services plan promotes integrated instruction and access to the general education ELA curriculum for all students.				X	There is little evidence of integrated instruction. The district uses a predominately pull-out service delivery model that has limited access to general education ELA curriculum in the past.

The student support service system which encompasses all services for struggling students including special education is under much scrutiny in GASD. There is a new Director of Pupil Personnel. This position has turned over numerous times in the last 10 years**.** The AIS Plan is not reflective of current practice in the schools and is being revised to incorporate recent changes in the assessment program and the adoption of a RTI model for intervention services.

Effective districts provide for a continuum of student support services which typically includes an integrated and seamless plan for delivering prevention, intervention and special education services. The student support services offered at GASD, however, lack continuity and a clear direction due at least in part to the frequent turn-over of administrative oversight for many of these functions. Historically, there has not been effective integration and coordination of these services, with oversight responsibility for AIS, guidance, social workers, school psychologists, reading specialists/literacy coaches, and special education falling under different central office administrators who tended to work in “silos” without cross departmental coordination and collaboration.

The district’s model for service delivery has not kept pace with research-based best practices. At the time of the onsite audit interviews and observations the following implementation concerns were noted:

- Access to extended day and extended year programs was inadequate for the number of students who could benefit from these programs;

- Child Study Teams in the elementary schools did not operate consistently across the district;
- Many student services staff had unclear roles at their schools and some roles (e.g., guidance, social work) were not aligned with performance standards in their field;
- Student support service staff had limited access to automated records and technology resources that could maximize their direct service time with students;
- Screening and diagnostic tools were outdated and did not necessarily correspond with current student needs for assessment;
- Interview participants district wide did not have a consistent understanding of screening, diagnostic and assessment practices;
- The service delivery model was primarily pull-out for both AIS and special education and offered few opportunities for integrated instruction in the general education classroom;
- The AIS plan was not aligned with current district and school practices; AIS approval is done by the central office;
- Staff time was consumed by crisis management instead of planned prevention and skill building activities for students;
- AIS students and special education students, historically, have not had planned access to a rigorous general education ELA curriculum;
- There was limited use of a consultant teacher model and co-teaching in the general education classrooms;
- A high number of special education students were in self-contained 15-1-1 classrooms with few, if any, inclusion opportunities in general education;
- High concentrations of high need students were found in one elementary school;
- The district needs to assess the use of staffing, particularly at elementary schools. All schools receive the same allocation and principals have limited say as to the best combination of staffing to meet student needs in the school.

Interviews confirmed, however, that the district recognizes the need for more integration and access to general education programs and an improved continuum of student support services. This past year the new administration has spent time assessing district wide needs and establishing plans to restructure the services delivery system. The following action steps were in progress during the audit:

- A new AIS plan was under development and a team had been formed to work on the plan.
- The Kindergarten screening procedures and related forms have been revised to better track school readiness data and placement practices.
- The district is in the initial stages of implementing a Response to Intervention (RTI) model for working with struggling students. An RTI Coordinator was hired and the first phase in training had begun at the elementary level. An RTI workgroup will meet over the summer to begin work on the RTI plan.
- The district has been recently reviewed by the NYSED regarding its special education procedures and continues to create systems and forms deal with the aftermath of the ineffective data management and administrative practices of past administrations.
- Special education students previously placed in 15-1-1 self-contained classrooms will be integrated into general education classrooms beginning in the next school year.
- Special education students have access to general education content through the new reading series and teachers are being trained in its use.
- Grant funding has been leveraged to provide professional development about research-based interventions and strategies for differentiating instruction.

Because there is still limited understanding about RTI and how this model integrates with grading, promotion and retention polices and the special education system, school level participants expressed confusion and frustration about this new approach for intervening with students during the audit interviews.

Promising Practice SG3.1: The district has hired a Response to Intervention (RTI) Coordinator to oversee the implementation of this important initiative.

Significance: The transition to the RTI model is an essential step that GASD must take in order to redesign its approach to supporting struggling students. The coordinator position will help focus the implementation process and ensure a common understanding of this model. This coordinator has begun to engage school staff and principals at all levels to become effective leaders of the RTI model in their schools.

Promising Practice SG3.2: The district is in the early stages of implementing an RTI Model, revising the AIS plan and integrating special education students into the general education classrooms demonstrating support for an integrated cross disciplinary approach to instructional planning.

Significance: Although these initiatives are still in the early implementation stages and not clearly understood by all staff at the school level, particularly in secondary schools, these improvements to the service delivery model should, if carefully planned, enhance instructional planning, prevention and intervention for all students. It will be critical that the central office administrators who oversee each component of the continuum of services meet regularly to ensure continuity and integration of the implementation process district wide. In its Position Statement on RTI, the International Reading Association outlines guiding principles for RTI. These principles emphasize the need for, "a dynamic, positive and productive collaboration among professionals with relevant expertise in language and literacy. Success also depends on strong and respectful partnerships between professionals, parents and students."(2009)

Action Recommendation SG3.1: Create a framework for differentiating instruction that is consistent across schools and builds upon the RTI model to create a continuum of services and supports for struggling students.

Significance: A crucial component of the revised ELA curriculum will be a clear and research-based approach for differentiating instruction. Teachers, administrators and student support services personnel will all need to participate in the mapping of strategies for differentiating instruction, so that instructional, assessment and intervention services decisions can be made efficiently and effectively at the school level.

The curriculum mapping plan and professional development planning, workshops and follow-up should focus on differentiating instruction at all levels, and enhancing the rigor and cognitive demand in instruction. In developing an RTI plan, the district must center their attention on developing classroom reading instruction that offers a rich menu of strategies for all students. These strategies should be woven into professional development as well as the maps.

Action Recommendation SG3.2: Establish a Prevention and Intervention Action Committee to study to summarize best practices and make recommendations to improve the development and integration of prevention and intervention services in the district (e.g., early childhood programs, language immersion and bilingual programs, inclusion and co-teaching models).

Significance: Amsterdam should make a concerted effort to focus on prevention and integrating and coordinating services both within the district and within the community.

Action Recommendation SG3.3: Seek grant funding to support extended day and extended year programs in all schools.

Significance: Many struggling students need more time. The Amsterdam community should be proactive in leveraging resources for after school and summer programs. Developing partnerships with community agencies, the library, museums, YMCA, faith-based organizations, private schools and other related programs will help build community capacity for supporting its youth.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Establish a coordinated continuum of support	• The primary goal of a system of prevention and intervention is to identify struggling students as early as possible. • The essential components of support for students must be built on high quality curriculum, targeted support and differentiated instruction in the classroom (Howard, 2009). • Establish a Child Study team based on collaboration and shared decision making to decide on students' needs based on ongoing formal and informal assessments. • Intervention should focus on preventing failure and should enhance reading instruction.
Creating an RTI Framework	• Research has shown that high quality comprehensive classroom instruction should be what Tier 1 of RTI should address. This must be the emphasis of initial support for students. • Struggling readers need larger amounts of more expert, more personalized, and more intensive reading instruction (Allington, 2006). • Allington (2006) also stresses that RTI Levels 2 and 3 should not be fragmented and not be one-size-fits-all instruction. • AIS pull-out, when appropriate, with more intensive reading services in Tier 2, must complement or improve on or extend the classroom reading lesson. There must be coordination and communication with the classroom teacher. • Tier 3 design must be carefully coordinated with the special educator, reading teacher and classroom teacher. • Mary Harwood's book, *RTI from All Sides,* Heinemann (2009) would be a helpful resource for principals and teachers at all levels.

AUDIT CRITERIA SG4: PARENTS AND COMMUNITY ARE MEMBERS ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THE WORK OF SCHOOLS.

Michael Fullan (1997) writes, *The research is abundantly clear: Nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by families/community working together in partnership. . . These forms of involvement do not happen by accident or even invitation. They happen by explicit intervention.* Based on significant research on the power of parents to influence achievement from the 1994 National Educational Goals to the No Child Left Behind legislation, schools have been charged with the responsibility of increasing parental involvement beyond the bake sale. Schools that are learning communities close the school/community gap by using three key principles to positive family relationships:

- Building mutual understanding and empathy
- Effective involvement of family and community
- Reaching out to family and community (Blankstein, 2004)

GASD Performance Finding SG4: Few parents are active participants in the schools and schools need a new paradigm for parent involvement.

Audit Criteria SG4 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
SG4.1: Parents feel welcome and actively participate in school-based activities.			X		Few parents are actively involved in the daily activities in the schools. Not all schools are viewed as welcoming.
SG4.2: Parents receive ongoing and relevant information about school events and their child's ELA performance.			X		Notices and letters to parents regarding key district functions are available in English and Spanish but school newsletters are available in English only.
SG4.3: Parents and community representatives participate in school decision-making activities.				X	Parents have little or any input into the school-based or district-level policies and procedures.
SG4.4: Community relationships with businesses and agencies are well established.				X	A few community partnerships have been established, but businesses and agencies do not appear to be actively engaged in school functions.
SG4.5: The community collaborates with the school to meet the broad-based needs of families.			X		There is a district wide interagency committee and principals report reaching out to the community to assist them with family needs. This outreach has increased in the area of obtaining basic clothing during the economic downturn.

Parents interviewed report that the principals are receptive to suggestions and most teachers are responsive to parents who have concerns at the classroom level. Most parents interviewed also indicated that they felt welcome at the schools. Interviews however, were limited in scope to PTO/PTA

members and other parents who frequently participate in school functions. Parent involvement, according to most teachers, was limited to traditional parent activities such as attending parent-teacher conferences, attending program events, and initiating/responding to informal contact with teachers. Involvement was limited with respect to advising on curriculum design, performing classroom volunteer work, tutoring/mentoring students, participating in parent workshops, being represented on decision-making teams, being involved in program evaluation, or guest-speaking. The perceived extent of parent involvement in GASD was lower than other similar MI studies.

School events are posted on the district web site for those parents who have access to the internet. Over 40 percent of GASD teachers felt that involvement was not consistent across all parent groups (e.g., ELL, minorities, etc.). Most schools have newsletters printed in English that are sent home to parents about school activities and some schools offer sessions for parents about ELA and other academic expectations.

Most teachers (> 75%) reported that their schools had features in place to support parent involvement such as orientation sessions, open-door policies, flexible options, a web site with information specific to parents, and written guidelines for addressing parents' concerns. Far fewer teachers (on average 35%) reported that their schools provided support services to families, such as the following, to meet parent needs: linkages to parent education programs, family-to-family networking, a parent coordinator trained to assist parents, school-parent compacts, and a formal process for assessing parent needs.

Parents have little or any input into the school-based policies and procedures and are not encouraged to volunteer in the schools. In fact, some schools limit the number of parents who may attend classroom parties. Parents also expressed concerns about how schools are viewed by their preschool siblings when they are not allowed on the playground during school dismissals.

A few community relationships are established, but businesses and agencies do not appear to be actively engaged in school functions. There is a district wide interagency committee and principals report reaching out to the community to assist them with family needs. This outreach has increased in the area of basic clothing needs during the economic downturn. The district uses multiple channels of parent communication such as face-to-face meetings, meetings at non school sites, voicemail to take incoming calls, frequent teacher calls/notes/updated websites, or email.

Promising Practices SG4.1: The district has hired a translator to enhance bilingual communication across the district.

Significance: This will allow the district to expand services to ELL families including translation during parent conferences and an increase in the materials available in Spanish.

Action Recommendation SG4.1: Engage community agencies, business and city officials in the district and school-level improvement planning process.

Significance: As noted earlier in this report, there are few role models for Hispanic students in the schools. Interviews suggest, however, that there are a number of Hispanic community members who could be actively engaged in the work of schools. Similarly, enhanced engagement of the community agencies, businesses and city officials in schools should be encouraged so that more Amsterdam citizens

understand the needs of schools and are willing to participate in proactive solutions to improve low performance.

Action Recommendation SG4.2: Establish a district-level Parent Advisory Committee to develop strategies for improved parent involvement.

Significance: A new paradigm for parent involvement will need a comprehensive action agenda. This committee should hold discussion forums with the community and examine research on parent and community involvement to assist the district in determining next steps and priorities for action.

Action Recommendation SG4.3: Create Parent-to-Parent Outreach Programs at each school.

Significance: Although PTO/PTA parents in some schools have tried many outreach strategies, a more formal approach and training may assist schools in bridging the gap.

Action Recommendation SG4.4: Establish parent and community volunteer programs at each school.

Significance: Schools need to be user-friendly and open to parents. Volunteerism is an essential component of effective schools and needs to be embraced by principals and teachers district wide. There were many competent and enthusiastic parents who participated in the audit interviews who could assist with volunteer training and the development of guidelines for volunteers in schools.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Understanding and Empathy	• Replace punitive processes with ones that seek to understand and improve a child's situation. • Offer training for teachers in holding Morning Meetings with children based on the Responsive Classroom model. • Create schedules, policies and programs that take into account students' home-life challenges. • Create versions of important school news in the language of families. • Set up alternatives to phone communication for families who have no phone or who do not respond to calls. • Work with local agencies/libraries to offer quiet areas for home work. • Treat parent concerns with respect and empathetic listening to show genuine interest. • Work on student handbooks so they emphasize the positive, identity-building, supportive part of being a member of this school, not just rules and consequences.
Build Effective Involvement of Families	• Involve parents as members of school-based teams. • Encourage PTA's to be more inclusive and understanding of all parents' needs. • Report student achievement to parents with clearer information than just letter grades. • Establish a Parent-to-Parent Outreach that contacts all parents to see what they can contribute to student learning. • Invite parents to become involved in their child's curriculum by assisting in classroom projects, mentoring students who need help, or attending a morning coffee to discuss school issues.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
	• Invite community members with preschool children to school events, for example the librarian can offer a preschool story hour.
Reaching Out to Families and Community	• Share student publications, art, projects with the community and public library. • Showcase student work in visible places in all schools. • Improve school web sites to visually represent what teaching and learning is happening. • Invite speakers from community, businesses, parents to come to school to speak about literacy, language and culture • Counselors, social workers could hold regular meetings with probation officers to discuss attendance and intervention programs. • Establish a Parent Academy at each level to offer workshops for parents on what is taught in schools and how they can help their children as well as classes to enhance their own personal or work life (Blankstein, 2004). • Encourage students to become involved in community service. • Be sure staff members are informed about community service, public library programs, cultural activities and recreational programs for children and families. • Create a forum for discussion about cultural and ethnic differences involving students, staff, parents and community members.

Section V: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

In this section of the report we provide a critical analysis of the scope and alignment, cognitive adequacy, and content of the GASD's English Language Arts (ELA) Curriculum. We also examine the instructional delivery system that implements these curriculum standards; and the assessment system that ensures accountability for meeting the New York State ELA standards. The table below summarizes the Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Audit Criteria, the Performance Finding for each audit criteria and the corresponding Promising Practices and Action Recommendations.

Audit Criteria	Performance Finding	Promising Practices (PP) and Action Recommendations (AR)
C1: An integrated, detailed written ELA curriculum is used districtwide to ensure the implementation of the New York State ELA Standards.	C1: A written ELA curriculum is in the initial development stage but is currently inadequate to ensure the implementation of the New York State ELA Learning Standards.	PPC1.1: Preliminary work to improve the rigor and relevancy of the ELA written curriculum has included de-tracking and improved access to the general education curriculum for all students. PPC1.2: info is missing, but appears on p. 8 Preliminary work to improve the rigor and relevancy of the ELA written curriculum has included de-tracking and improved access for all students. ARC1.1: The district should carefully develop a long-range plan and process to move forward with curriculum mapping. The plan should provide a detailed timeline and make provisions for cross-coordination with other related initiatives (e.g., RTI, AIS, Teacher Evaluation). ARC1.2: The new curriculum must ensure that the essential components of reading and literacy development are thoroughly addressed and that reading interventions and assessments for all students are aligned and integrated. ARC1.3: It is critical that the new curriculum must be supported by *effective monitoring practices* that engage teachers and administrators in the continuous improvement of the written curriculum based on new knowledge and learner needs.
C2: A consistent and useable framework for curriculum implementation and instructional planning is used in all schools.	C2: The approach to ELA curriculum implementation and instructional planning is fragmented across schools and is not consistent with research-based best practices.	PPC2.1: The use of literacy coaches at the middle school and elementary levels has enhanced instructional planning in literacy development, improved the focus on research-based practices and has begun to assist teachers in the use of data to inform instruction. PPC2.2: The Ninth Grade Academy and de-tracking efforts at the middle and high school have improved teacher collaboration and the use of differentiation in teaching. ARC2.1: All schools should establish a comprehensive and consistent approach to planning for ELA Instruction. ARC2.2: Redesign the instructional delivery models and

Audit Criteria	Performance Finding	Promising Practices (PP) and Action Recommendations (AR)
		scheduling practices used by schools to maximize time for common/collaborative planning, co-teaching and the integration of instruction for students at all levels. ARC2.3: Ensure that teachers and specialists have a comprehensive understanding of how to differentiate instruction for struggling students and that these strategies are regularly applied, assessed and documented in each classroom.
C3: The classroom environment supports the effective implementation of ELA instruction.	C3: Student access to print/literacy rich engaging environments is limited and many displays and student work samples are not tied to clearly-stated instructional objectives.	PPC3.1: Recent grant funds have increased the access and availability of ELA resources, and school libraries are beginning to improve and to level their collections. PPC3.2: The district plans to integrate RTI and PBIS as a framework for improving the learning culture in schools. ARC3.1: Media Specialists and teachers in each school should work collaboratively to develop school and classroom libraries that provide literacy rich, visually stimulating multimedia environments with leveled text that are consistent with the curriculum. ARC3.2: Provide time for teachers and specialists to develop meaningful learning displays, center activities, and materials that focus on differentiated instruction. ARC3.3: Charge literacy coaches and lead teachers with the development and demonstration of student-centered lessons as a primary strategy for enhancing student engagement. ARC3.4: Ensure that behavior and social emotional skill building is an integral part of daily classroom instruction, the RTI model and the culture of each school. See p.24 ARC3.5: see p.25 Enhance academic and cultural competence through adult and peer mentorship programs.
C4: Effective and research-based instructional strategies are used in all classrooms to deliver the aligned curriculum; strategies are differentiated to meet learning needs of all students.	C4: There was a marked absence of focus on the essential components of research-based reading instruction in many classrooms.	ARC4.1: Establish a districtwide work group charge with the development of a school readiness action plan. ARC4.2: Language development should be a major focus of the ELA curriculum beginning in preschool. ARC4.3: Ensure that teachers know how to help students to construct knowledge and to think critically. ARC4.4: Provide time for sustained reading activities for all students on a daily basis. ARC4.5: Integrate opportunities for bilingual literacy exposure

Audit Criteria	Performance Finding	Promising Practices (PP) and Action Recommendations (AR)
		into all classrooms. ARC4.6 : Make writing for authentic purposes a daily practice for all students. ARC4.7: Increase opportunities for student choice, particularly at the secondary level, by expanding access to text that is relevant to student's experiences and interests.
C5: An effective ELA assessment plan for PK-12 is in place.	C5: ELA assessment and accountability practices are not clearly defined.	PPC5.1: The district is committed to improving data use to inform instructional practices, monitor student progress and assess program effectiveness and impact. PPC5.2: The district has revised its Kindergarten screening and registration procedures to provide better information about in-coming students. ARC5.1: Develop a comprehensive plan for assessment and data use that is consistent across schools and grade levels. ARC5.2: Ensure that specialists have access to varied and current screening and diagnostic tools. ARC5.3: In addition to Literacy Coaches, assign teacher leaders at each grade level to assist principals with the implementation of the annual testing program. ARC5.4: Literacy Coaches should help teachers understand the how and why of assessing needs of the students in their classes in order to determine the appropriate amount of time, strategies and content to meet student needs.

For each audit criteria, MI provides the research base for that criteria as well as its corresponding benchmarks. At the conclusion of the research base, we provide the overarching performance finding for the audit criterion followed by a summary chart of the benchmark findings and a rating of GASD's performance. Each benchmark is rated as:

- ***Met*:** There is evidence that the benchmark has been established and there is a common understanding districtwide of effective practices.
- ***Level II Implementation*:** Long-range plans are in place, considerable implementation has occurred, but the benchmark has not been fully embraced districtwide.
- ***Level I Implementation:*** Effective structures and plans have been well established and some early implementation evidence is present.
- ***Unmet***: Implementation of the benchmark is not evident. No clear plans are in place.

A narrative description of the current audit criteria status follows the summary chart, and a detailed description of promising practices and action recommendations for the audit criteria are provided. Key considerations and suggested implementation strategies conclude the discussion of each audit criteria.

AUDIT CRITERIA C1: AN INTEGRATED, DETAILED WRITTEN ELA CURRICULUM IS USED DISTRICTWIDE TO ENSURE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW YORK STATE ELA STANDARDS.

To be effective districts must design curriculum, curriculum policies, alignment procedures, resources and action plans to support an integrated and consistent written, taught and tested curriculum for all students. This curriculum development process can be done through curriculum mapping.

Fenwick English (2000) defines curriculum as "any document or plan that exists in a school or school system that defines the work of teachers, at least to the extent of identifying the content to be taught and the methods to be used in the process." Curriculum, as English sees it, should be a work plan or document that focuses and connects the work of teachers.

Research has documented that a strong curriculum is a contributing factor to student achievement. Marzano (2003) describes curriculum as having three levels: intended curriculum (content specified by the state and district that should be taught); delivered curriculum content that is actually taught and achieved curriculum (content that is actually learned by students). A textbook is not the curriculum, only a guide to assist professionals in the development of curriculum.

Curriculum mapping is a procedure for collecting data about the existing curriculum, New York State Learning Standards and performance indicators, and the specific needs and interests of students in the district. It is a process that assists teachers to systematically develop a plan to articulate the operational curriculum that will guide learning. The process for mapping allows teachers and administrators the opportunity to examine what is taught, how it is taught and ultimately how it is assessed. If this is "a focused, systematic effort in a district, it becomes a hub for connecting all aspects of the system" (Jacobs , 2009). Curriculum mapping is a process that guides the ongoing work of teachers and schools and is essential to the development of a comprehensive written curriculum that meets the needs of GASD students.

Planning for curriculum development must actively engage teachers in documenting what they teach and examining and sharing their practice with one another. Professional development for mapping must offer time, assistance with software, coordination and sharing in and between buildings, and opportunities for teacher reflection.

GASD Performance Finding C1: A written ELA curriculum is in the initial development stage and is currently inadequate to ensure the implementation of the New York State ELA Learning Standards.

Audit Criteria C1 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
C1.1: The written ELA curriculum is aligned with NYS ELA Standards and Performance Indicators.			X		The district's 2008 ELA standards alignment documents need more extensive development.
C 1.2: The scope, alignment and pacing of the written ELA curriculum are appropriate for the effective delivery of instruction PK-12.				X	The scope, alignment and pacing of the written ELA curriculum is inadequate to effectively guide teachers in delivering connected, integrated instruction PK-12. Work in this area was beginning at the time of

Audit Criteria C1 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
					the audit
C1.3: The written ELA curriculum is rigorous and relevant to the PK-12 school community.				X	Enhancements to both the rigor and relevance of the written ELA curriculum are necessary to meet the specific needs of the GASD students.
C1.4: The written ELA curriculum provides adequate strategies and practice of diversifying instruction and meeting the specific needs of the district's struggling students.				X	Instructional strategies and practice opportunities for struggling students vary from school-to school and many of these components are not part of the current written curriculum.
C1.5: The written ELA Curriculum has adequate strategies for enhancing cognitive demand (cognition, linguistic knowledge, critical thinking).				X	Instructional strategies that enhance cognitive demand are not consistently described in the current ELA curriculum documents.
C1.6: There is congruence between the written, taught and assessed curriculum documents.				X	Substantial work is needed at all levels in developing a common understanding of the written curriculum content and corresponding instructional strategies and activities to differentiate instruction and how these are best tested, developed and communicated in a written format.

The Condition of the Written English Language Arts Curriculum Documents

Recent state audit reviews have pointed out that GASD needs to develop a clearly articulated viable curriculum, not just in ELA, but for all content areas. This audit report confirms GASD's critical need for ELA curriculum work at all levels.

In 2008, ELA curriculum alignment documents were developed collaboratively by teams of teachers and administrators. The purpose of the 2008 curriculum mapping process was to align the district's existing curriculum with the New York State ELA Learning Standards. These documents list content units or activities, standards/performance indicators, target skills/essential questions, instructional strategies and resources, and assessments. An analysis of the written ELA curriculum indicates that the documents produced only minimally cover what should be taught and do not address the intent of the essential questions or meaningful assessment of what is taught. Rather, these documents are merely lists or broad guidelines for teachers to use.

In addition to the 2008 ELA standards alignment documents, GASD's central office staff has created a K-5 Guidance Document describing related assessments, English Language Learner (ELL) services, Academic Intervention Services (AIS), and a preliminary Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. There is also a document with suggested activities for the 90 minute literacy block in the primary grades (K-3). MI's inquiries at the school level revealed that there were a variety of other ELA documents that had been created over the years. At the high school, there was a writing curriculum binder used by some teachers. However, none of the documents reviewed provide more than a basic written framework for establishing integrated ELA curriculum operations, and do not meet audit criteria as a comprehensive written curriculum guide that directs classroom instruction. Notably, the horizontal and

vertical alignment of the current written ELA curriculum documents both need significant attention and have become a top priority of the new administration.

Although it was clear from the analysis of the 2008 ELA documents that more extensive written curriculum is considered necessary to improve ELA instruction, nearly all GASD teachers surveyed (98%) felt that their ELA curriculum was aligned with the New York State ELA Learning Standards to a "moderate" or "great" extent. Ratings were similar regarding curriculum alignment *within grades*. However, fewer teachers reported moderate or great curricular alignment *across grades* (84%) or *with instruction* (86%). Interviews with principals and central office administrators were less positive about the scope, alignment and pacing of the existing documents and view the 2008 work as a very first step in the development of a more extensive written ELA curriculum.

The Directors of Secondary and Elementary Instruction ranked curriculum development as their main goal in the 2009-2010 school year, and for the next several years to come. To move the district forward and improve the current state of the written ELA curriculum, central office administrators plan to begin a comprehensive curriculum mapping process in the district as a means of focusing and coordinating what is taught and learned. During the time of MI's evaluation, GASD was in the process of purchasing *Rubicon Atlas* software to assist in documenting this project. Training began during the summer of 2010.

Use of the English Language Arts Written Curriculum

No substantive curriculum work has been done to implement the 2008 curriculum ELA documents. Principals and teachers interviewed reported sporadic use of the existing written curriculum. Both middle and high school teachers indicated that they use the documents as guidance for planning instruction. However, most elementary teachers stated during focus groups that the new reading series, *Reading Street* (Scott Forsman), is their ELA curriculum. The reading series was reportedly developed for New York State and, therefore, was generally viewed as aligned with the New York State ELA Learning Standards. However, after using this series, teachers expressed some concerns during interviews as to the actual alignment of the series and its attendant components with the standards.

Additionally, most classroom teachers and administrators characterized the beginning implementation of the new reading series as "inconsistent" and indicated that there was not enough training or support for using all of the components of the series. Despite obstacles, however, there was a general consensus that the new reading series appropriately raised the expectations for students and was better aligned with the New York State ELA Learning Standards than the previous reading series. Additionally, teachers were optimistic that the new reading series aligned with New York State ELA assessments and that students were better prepared for this year's testing.

The following early implementation issues were also indentified:

- Too many components of the series were available at one time. Teachers were overwhelmed by the number of workbooks, supplemental materials, etc. Schools in their first year of implementation reported that many materials were not touched during the year.

- The *My Sidewalks* program is used as the curriculum for many of the struggling students but AIS and special education teachers indicated that there was considerable confusion about leveling down the reading levels for students who were not reading near their grade level. They also felt that the training provided by Pearson was not in-depth enough to meet their needs.

- There was inconsistent awareness about the use of the Pearson Web site that supports the reading series. Few teachers reported that they knew how it can be used to diversify instruction and some did not know it was available.

- The addition of trade books, especially culturally based books, was not evident in the upper elementary grades. Teachers commented during interviews that they were unsure about any flexibility in supplementing the core reading series with trade books.

Elementary principals reported some initial resistance to the new reading series, particularly from teachers who were more comfortable with a "whole language"/ literature-based approach to instruction. At this early stage of districtwide implementation, principals vary in their expectations for the strict use of the core reading series as the foundation for the school's reading program.

Understanding of the Written New York State ELA Learning Standards

Based on interviews with principals, teachers, literacy coaches and other professional staff, classroom observations and school walk-throughs, it is apparent that a majority of GASD staff do not have a deep or common understanding of the written core curriculum standards and the way these standards frame literacy competencies for each grade and across grades. When asked if their colleagues had a common understanding of the ELA curriculum, however, the majority of GASD teachers surveyed (61%) said "most of them do." About one-fifth said "all of them do," and 17% said "some of them do." In contrast, interviews with principals and literacy coaches suggest that there is a tremendous variation in teacher knowledge and their ability to apply and effectively integrate the core ELA standards as part of their daily practice.

To improve the use, integration and application of the New York State ELA Learning Standards, the District has employed literacy coaches in grades K-8. The middle school literacy coach who was hired as part of the middle school's reform efforts now works closely with teachers to incorporate the ELA standards into their teaching. This successful practice is less consistent but shows promise in the other schools where literacy coaches were only recently employed to improve teacher knowledge and classroom instruction practices. Interviews with literacy coaches suggest that the ELA standards documents are written in an inaccessible and "heady" manner, making them difficult to internalize and integrate into formal and informal instruction.

Access to a Relevant and Rigorous Written ELA Curriculum

This audit confirms the work of the high school CEP committee and other New York State audit teams that recommend enhancements to both the rigor and relevance of the ELA curriculum for all students. Despite the disappointing NYS ELA performance data, nearly all GASD teachers surveyed indicated that the current ELA curriculum was sufficiently meeting the needs of general education students (97%) regardless of gender (boys -91% and girls -92%). However, only 57 percent reported that the same was true about ELL students. Special education students and racial/ethnic minorities were also cited by teachers (29% and 26%, respectively) as being poorly served by the current ELA curriculum.

Historically, students with disabilities (SWDs) and ELL students have had limited or no access to the grade-level ELA content used in the core curriculum. Special education and ELL teachers reported that a

variety of materials and supplies were purchased over the years, in lieu of a written curriculum, but most teachers used what they were comfortable with to instruct students at their own levels. These materials and resources did not necessarily correspond with age and content appropriate ELA standards.

Further analysis suggests that GASD has not historically had a structured and integrated approach to the development and management of the written curriculum for struggling students overtime. As a result the district has not created a continuum of interventions and strategies that are consistently used across grade levels and schools. Prior to the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements, the instructional delivery model at the middle school and high school tracked students at each grade level as the primary means of differentiating instruction. As a result, students in low tracks often had less rigorous ELA curriculum and were not exposed to higher level discussions and integrated learning environments. The middle school and high school are now making de-tracking and access to a rigorous curriculum for all students a high priority. Similarly, elementary students placed in special education and ELL programs now have access to the same grade level content with multiple instructional levels through the new reading series.

Promising Practice C1.1: **The district has purchased software to support the curriculum mapping process.**

Significance: The purchase of *Rubicon Atlas* software and its corresponding training signifies the district's strong commitment to developing a written curriculum that is useable and easy to access. This will enable teachers to work on vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment.

Promising Practice C1.2: **Preliminary work to improve the rigor and relevancy of the ELA written curriculum has included de-tracking and improved access for all students.**

Significance: GASD has recognized the importance of improving access to a rigorous and relevant ELA curriculum for all students. Although de-tracking and the integration of ELL and special education instructional strategies into the curriculum development and management process is in the very early stages of implementation, these practices are fundamental to improvements in the district's ELA performance overtime.

Action Recommendation C1.1**: The district should carefully develop a long-range plan and process to move forward with curriculum mapping. The plan should provide a detailed timeline and make provisions for cross-coordination with other related initiatives (e.g., RTI, AIS, Teacher Evaluation).**

Significance: A detailed three-year plan will be a critical tool for effective implementation. This plan should address professional development, *Rubicon Atlas* training, the development and implementation of annual school and district-level action plans and an evaluation plan to track progress and assess common understandings of the mapping process. This work will allow teachers to expand the 2008 standards documents and examine what *good instruction* should be in GASD. The plan should also clearly define: *What is the big picture of a student's journey through the district?* To accomplish this, GASD should clearly describe what should be taught horizontally (across grades/schools) as well as vertically (PK-12). To ensure a strong curriculum for all students, all teachers must also understand and define how student learning is demonstrated. The resulting curriculum maps must be working documents, not just a static project.

Since curriculum represents all the learning experiences children have PK-12, it is important that teachers and administrators alike understand the essential elements of good teaching and actively participate in the curriculum mapping process. The district's parallel initiative to revise its teacher evaluation tool will be instrumental in helping the district link teacher performance standards to curriculum standards.

***Action Recommendation C1.2*: The new curriculum must ensure that the essential components of reading and literacy development are thoroughly addressed and that reading interventions and assessments for all students are aligned and integrated.**

Significance: AIS, ELL and special educators must be an integral part of this alignment and mapping work. The resulting written documents should create a tiered sequence of instructional strategies, supplemental materials and resources that are aligned with the district's new RTI procedures and guidelines. Low-performing, ELL and students with disabilities (SWDs) should all have access to rigorous core content and literacy skills, and teachers should be able to draw on research-based strategies to assist struggling students.

***Action Recommendation C1.3*: It is critical that the new curriculum must be supported by *effective monitoring practices* that engage teachers and administrators in the continuous improvement of the curriculum based on new knowledge and learner needs.**

Significance: The curriculum development and management process is essential to the district's capacity to focus on the needs of its unique student population and make adjustments to instruction that ensure that the New York State ELA Learning Standards are met. The mapping plan should include detailed and specific provisions for monitoring and revamping the ELA curriculum annually based on student achievement data.

A clear curriculum development and management plan must allow for ongoing reflection, monitoring, and updating ensuring its viability and continued improvement and use (Pearson, Clark and Walpole, 2002). This process is much different from a traditional curriculum writing paradigm. Instead, curriculum development and management is the foundation of teacher's daily work.

The district may benefit from the following key considerations and implementation strategies:

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Teacher Involvement: Teachers at all levels and from all special areas should be engaged in the curriculum mapping process.	• Engage a districtwide ELA Steering Committee that includes administrators and teachers to develop a three-year timeline and detailed plan for the mapping project. The plan should designate the person responsible, resources required and timeframe for completion for each action step. • Train a team of teachers and administrators from each school using a train-the-trainer model for supporting curriculum mapping. These teams in turn should work with teachers in their building or department on the use of diary or consensus maps. • Provide clear ongoing information to teachers about the district's mapping progress so they know what is expected of them in terms of implementation. Teachers trained as ELA curriculum leaders can help with this information sharing.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
	• Solicit feedback from teachers annually through a survey or focus group about their satisfaction with the curriculum development and management process and the products they are developing.
Mapping Professional Development(PD): PD should be differentiated and focus on developing a common language districtwide about the essentials of effective teaching and student-centered learning.	• Provide workshops on mapping for all teachers and administrators and train a cadre of staff on how to use *Rubicon Atlas* software. • Provide workshops that make the New York State ELA Learning Standards and ELA Common Core Standards understandable, relevant, usable, and purpose-driven for teachers. • Offer districtwide book study groups on effective teaching and student-centered learning using the ELA Learning Standards. • Provide ongoing support and feedback to teachers about their performance and corresponding student gains.
Time For curriculum mapping to succeed teachers must also be given time to work on maps and to try strategies in their classrooms.	• Develop a three-year plan outlining how half-days, Superintendent Conference Days, staff meetings, grade level meetings and department meetings should be used to complete the mapping process. • Ensure that administrators are required to attend workshops, use *Rubicon Atlas* and expect all teachers to participate. Principals as instructional leaders must allocate time at staff meetings to curriculum mapping sharing, questions and planning. All staff should be engaged in problem-solving and strategizing about improving student's ELA performance.
Evaluation and Future Planning A structured process for ongoing planning and evaluation will ensure the continuous improvement of the written curriculum.	The ELA Steering Committee should answer the following questions during their planning process: • How will vertical and horizontal alignment of maps be completed? • What resources will be needed annually? • How will the mapping initiative be evaluated? • How will new teachers be trained in mapping each year? • How will the ELA curriculum and mapping be supported for the long-term?

AUDIT CRITERIA C2: A CONSISTENT AND USEABLE FRAMEWORK FOR CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION AND INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING IS USED IN ALL SCHOOLS.

Cawelti (2004) found that effective teachers base their work on foundational academic goals related to benchmarks or standards. At its best curriculum development is a collaborative effort, involving teachers and administrators in defining a clear framework for literacy development in which skills are scaffolded and competencies from the standards are documented (Jacobs, 2009).

Since research has demonstrated that the impact of an actual, taught, aligned curriculum on student achievement is profound, it is critical that district's and schools have clear operational framework for planning and making instructional decisions that are evidence-based. Marzano (2003) points out that closing the gap between the intended curriculum and the implemented curriculum is the key to meeting content and assessment standards. It is this issue that the district and each school need to immediately address through collaboration and a shared understanding of what constitutes good teaching.

The implemented curriculum may come from a number of sources such as textbooks, trade books, teachers' guides, pacing calendars, state core curriculum, scope and sequence charts, district mission statements or goals and various prepackaged materials. These alone, however, are not curriculum. A curriculum plan must document how teacher practices and curriculum resources are used in a consistent, comprehensive manner that is shared among colleagues in meaningful ways. Curriculum must also optimize grade-to-grade, cross-content area learning for students. (Udelhofen, 2005).

Instructional planning must be a focused and collaborative process among general and special area teachers that clearly ties curriculum resources, time and strategies to instructional objectives. Data on student performance is regularly examined and specific instructional interventions are selected to meet unique student learning needs. All daily lessons provide enough depth to engage students in critical thinking, while building skills and practicing new learnings.

GASD Performance Finding C2: The approach to ELA curriculum implementation and instructional planning is fragmented across schools and not consistent as per chart p.1 with research-based best practices.

Audit Criteria C2 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
C2.1: The taught curriculum is aligned with the written curriculum and is applied in the classroom.				X	Since there are only a few written guidelines, applications in the classroom lack rigor, particularly in higher-order thinking skills.
C2.2: There is a comprehensive and consistent approach to planning and pacing ELA instruction.			X		The new reading series and pacing document have offered some common structure for elementary schools.
C2.3: Planning maximizes ELA instructional time.				X	Intervention planning and scheduling need to be examined and new delivery models utilized to maximize instructional time and teacher collaboration.
C2.4: Collaborative planning with support staff and other teachers is adequate and effectively used.				X	Although teachers are eager for more common planning time, scheduling, shared staff and contract pay, requirements have reduced access to collaborative discussions.
C2.5: Instructional plans and materials are adequate to adapt to the needs of diverse learners.				X	Instructional plans, interventions and materials for diversifying instruction are fragmented, use limited data and struggling students do not have adequate access to general education.
C2.6: Instructional materials and technology applications are aligned with lesson objectives.				X	Recent purchases of Smart-boards, books and supplemental materials show promise, however, training and alignment of materials with curricula has not yet occurred. Some software applications are inconsistently used and not necessarily curriculum-based.

Efficacy of Curriculum Implementation and the Instructional Planning Framework

Nearly all teachers indicated in the survey that their classroom instruction in ELA was aligned to a "moderate" or "great" extent with the New York State ELA Learning Standards (97%) and their school's ELA curriculum (93%). Despite this perception, however, the audit found that there is no consistent framework for ELA curriculum implementation and instructional planning used by the schools. Planning documents and curriculum implementation approaches not only vary by school, but also by grade and individual teacher. As noted above, the current curriculum documents are too broad and fragmented to support effective planning and teaching practices. The new reading series and pacing documents, however, have offered some preliminary instructional planning frameworks for the elementary schools.

Despite the current status of the written curriculum documents, survey and interview data from teachers, literacy coaches and principals suggest that there have been some promising changes made to the ELA program over the last few years:

- The Reading First Grant at Curie Institute for Engineering and Communications raised awareness in the district about the essential components of reading instruction and has been a catalyst for the use of a 90-minute reading block, literacy centers and small group instruction in the district.
- The new elementary reading series raises the bar for instruction, and teachers indicated that students were better prepared for New York State ELA testing in the spring of 2009.
- The use of literacy coaches in the middle school and elementary schools appears to have enhanced ELA planning and teacher awareness of effective teaching practices. Interviews suggest that most teachers have spent time with their coach and are engaged in literacy study groups to discuss pedagogy.
- A high school ELA Coordinator is working closely with teachers to engage them in an examination of the literature taught, writing and effective instructional strategies. This position has effectively engaged teachers in active discussions and planning activities.
- At the middle school a highly effective literacy coach works with all content area teachers on addressing literacy across the content areas.
- The majority of GASD teachers surveyed said that they had received some training related to instructional planning issues this past school year (i.e., more than two hours). In fact, one-quarter of the teachers surveyed said they received at least four hours of professional development on standards-based lesson planning and selecting instructional goals and objectives; nearly 40 percent received at least four hours of professional development on selecting and adapting curricular and instructional materials to meet student needs.
- The majority of GASD teachers surveyed also reported "routine" or "fully integrated" use of key instructional planning activities such as selecting goals and objectives for diverse learners (71%), creating standards-based lesson plans (83%), planning instruction that builds on student interests and experiences (75%), and selecting and adapting curricular and instructional materials that meet student needs (85%).

Interviews with district administrators, principals and school-based professional staff suggest that district personnel are not naïve to the challenges that lie ahead in improving the implementation of the GASD curriculum. Almost half of teachers surveyed (48%) believed that the ELA program in their schools needed major improvement. Specifically, teachers viewed coordination across grades as needing closer

alignment with the reading program (by 35%), as was coordination with feeder programs designed to increase reading readiness (by 48%) of the teachers. During interviews the following challenges to ELA curriculum implementation were identified:

- Student reading levels vary considerably at the same grade level, making it hard to group students and find appropriate materials for instruction.
- The reading selections in the new elementary reading series are primarily at the frustration level for many students.
- The pacing of *Reading Street* at the elementary level may not be adequate or appropriate for all students.
- The elementary and middle school reading texts are not aligned.
- Teachers are unsure how to integrate writing into the curriculum.
- The curriculum does not address the engagement of students in lessons with a variety of texts and strategies.
- High school teachers are inexperienced at, and/or unsure how,to, identify high interest and culturally engaging literature for students. More work is needed on techniques such as Literature Circles or Reader/Writer Workshop.

Although the new elementary reading series has improved access to grade level materials for special education, AIS and ELL teachers, students who are in the upper elementary grades and have not had ongoing exposure to a rigorous curriculum are currently viewed by teachers as too far behind to use the new series. Furthermore, special area teachers stated that they will need more extensive training and support in the classroom in order to clearly understand how to adapt the new series to meet the current instructional needs of their students while adhering to the fundamental expectations of the core reading program.

Consistent, Planned Use of the ELA Standards in the Classroom

One purpose of MI's classroom observations was to determine the extent to which comprehensive instructional planning was in place and if this planning was meeting the specific needs of the GASD student population. In classrooms visited, at all levels, the instruction observed was at a very basic level evidencing low-levels of rigor, and requiring little cognitive demand of the students. In many elementary classrooms, for example, teachers did not go beyond I-R-E (Initiate-Response-Evaluation) (Cazden and Meehan, 1988) as an approach to facilitate an engaging classroom discussion and build critical thinking. Without planned and focused curriculum-based strategies to draw upon from a written curriculum, too many of the classrooms observed missed opportunities for sustained discussions and vibrant conversations. Teacher discourse predominated with student talk minimal, often one word or one sentence responses.

Additionally, many observed lessons often did not appear to have a clear learning objective. Where learning objectives were identified, it was uncertain if students understood the purpose of the learning objective. For example, in several classrooms the objective of the lesson related to fact vs. fiction. While the point of the activity was identified, evidence of children constructing an understanding of the purpose of knowing fact from fiction was not apparent, possibly interfering with deeper learning or the capacity to transfer or effectively apply the concept to diverse contexts and problems.

Overall at the elementary level, teachers were focused on the implementation of the new reading series and trying to navigate and learn about its many component parts and resources. Literacy coaches were beginning to assist teachers in the use of data as a basis for making instructional decisions and grouping students, but there were few instances observed where this practice had moved beyond the early implementation stage. Effective instruction requires that teachers are able to internalize the standards. Without this depth of understanding, teachers may feel the need to depend on prescribed lessons, which may or may not engage students in spontaneous sustained discussions and inquiry.

Interview data indicates that the implementation of the 90-minute reading block in the elementary schools has improved teacher access to concentrated blocks for instruction. This time, however, is primarily used for classroom teacher directed activities with rare examples of collaborative instructional plans with special area teachers. As a result, observations suggest that the current use of the 90-minute block is not adequately addressing the needs of diverse learners.

At the middle school, teachers plan reading experiences around trade books as the basis for curriculum. Teaching with whole class texts was observed and students were interested and engaged in topics. A number of teachers are using the research-based teaching strategies provided by trainers from the Center for English Language Arts (CELA) at State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany. In addition, the middle school literacy coach is a catalyst and a significant facilitator in the school, working with teachers and securing materials. The instructional approaches reflect choice in literature, writer's workshop, reader's workshop and direct teaching in vocabulary and grammar. All sixth grade teachers teach reading. Middle school teachers use Smart boards in classrooms to enhance instruction and preview lessons. There was energy and enthusiasm among teachers interviewed and observed.

At the high school, the English Coordinator, a teacher leader, is highly involved with teachers. The Coordinator and English teachers in ninth grade have worked on a research project that is aligned with the standards. He offers professional development at grade level and department meetings sharing exemplars of teaching materials and student work, as well as teaching strategies. Teachers still teach a traditional balance of Shakespeare and the classics along with young adult literature. In the classroom observations students were reading mostly teacher-selected whole class pieces. Some were reading round robin or taking parts in plays such as Oedipus the King. Dr. Sherry Guice, an adjunct professor at the SUNY at Albany, has begun working with teachers on literature choice. Some teachers have had training on *Literature Circles*. They are extremely positive about this practice and the resulting student engagement.

Use of Collaborative Planning

In addition to a strong ELA curriculum foundation for integrated instructional planning, teachers need time to plan and strategize how to improve student performance and lesson presentations. Teachers in the Ninth Grade Academy have common planning time which is making a difference in their practice. At the other schools, principals, teachers and specialists all stated that collaborative planning time was minimal. Survey findings verified that collaboration with other teachers was an area of comparative weakness. Specifically, meetings to share instructional strategies and/or discuss curriculum development, individual students, or assessment data did not occur as frequently in GASD as in similar districts that MI has studied. Similarly, peer observation and/or coaching did not occur as frequently in GASD. In all these areas, about half of GASD teachers "rarely or never" collaborated with their colleagues, or did so a "few times a month" (31%). Communication between teachers and other

instructional staff (e.g., ELL, special education, pupil services) was also an area in need of improvement. Here, 43 percent of the teachers described their communication as “poor” or “fair”.

These findings are not surprising in that, according to teachers, formal mechanisms to enhance teacher collaboration are not in place.

- Only two-thirds of the teachers reported that their school scheduled common planning time for teachers during the week compared to 75 percent in the comparison districts,
- Less than one-third said that their school had a formal process in place that allowed teachers to share learning experiences with their colleagues, and
- Only 43 percent indicated that their school regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers on issues of instruction.

To some extent lack of planning time was attributed to the contractual pay requirements for additional work tasks and the district’s limited resources. Further investigation, however, revealed that collaborative planning opportunities are also routinely missed as a result of the fragmented instructional delivery models used by the schools. For example, although AIS staff try to do parallel planning with the general education classroom’s scope and sequence, they are often out of sync with classroom lessons because of their competing responsibilities for administering tests, and attending meetings and other events that require them to cancel lessons. This problem is magnified by the fact that the instructional delivery model relies heavily on pull-out interventions instead of push-in instruction in the form of consultant or co-teaching models where teachers have greater informal opportunities for collaborative exchanges.

In an effort to enhance research-based instruction and planning in the classroom, elementary teachers are now supported by a literacy coach. The primary role of the literacy coach is to “create literate environment that fosters reading and writing by integrating foundational knowledge, use of instructional practices, approaches and curriculum methods and the appropriate use of assessments”. (International Reading Association Standards for Reading Professionals, 2003). During interviews, literacy coaches showed a high level of commitment and interest in their work and solid knowledge of reading instruction. At the elementary level, coaches are focused on helping teachers with the 90 minute literacy block and with integrating the new reading series. Interviews suggest that coaches have improved teacher awareness of the importance of using data to make instructional decisions. Coaches are currently examining the best way to track and conduct in-depth analysis on student text responses as a foundation for instructional planning.

Depending on the culture of the school, literacy coaches differ in their progress in developing effective relationships with teachers and other staff. Many are working to develop rapport with teachers who are not accustomed to working with a coach and changing their practice to incorporate key strategies like the use of small group instruction and literacy centers. Literacy coaches who have offered book study circles as a venue for advancing pedagogy have found them effective with positive feedback from teachers. Reportedly, teachers who reluctantly came to the book study circles tried different strategies to support their students as a result of their participation.

Instructional Materials and Technology Applications

Meaningful instruction requires the purposeful use of supplemental materials, technology and other learning materials to accomplish lesson objectives. In terms of learning materials, 80 percent or more of the teachers surveyed rated the GASD materials/resources in their school as "good" or "excellent" along the following criteria: age appropriateness, match to the curriculum, and alignment with state standards. But fewer teachers believed that the materials/resources were up-to-date (73%), and only 60 percent said they were appropriate for all students.

Observations and interviews suggest that many literacy materials are indeed outdated and not clearly tied to instructional objectives. When present in the classroom, only a few teachers demonstrated the effective use of technology as an integral part of the learning environment. Further, data systems that support curriculum management, testing and the tracking of student services are just being installed at the middle school and high school level and are in the planning stages for elementary schools.

Although many teachers interviewed were aware that it is critical that students have sustained access to a range of text, they said that budget constraints have limited their access to the books and materials necessary of literacy development in their classrooms. Few classrooms observed had inviting classroom libraries from which children could choose books that correspond with their instructional plans. In at least one school, it was reported that some teachers do not permit children to take library books home to read.

Over the past year the district has reallocated funds and pursued grant funding to assist in alleviating the depleted resources in classroom. There has been a concerted effort to buy books for leveled readers and to improve the collection for ELL students. The district has also recently purchased Smart Boards and is in the process of installing the technology in many classrooms and these are used effectively by some teachers at all levels. Due at least in part to the technology infrastructure of the schools, there was a heavy reliance on computer labs instead of computers in the classrooms. Infrastructure is being addressed and the district has recently received an Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) grant to further improve its technology capacity. Improved access to computers in the classroom, used effectively could provide one form of differentiated, accountable activities during, for example, center time.

In summary, GASD has not constructed an effective framework to guide teacher planning, approaches, or instruction and the alignment of resources. While teachers have varying degrees of familiarity with the ELA Learning Standards and Performance Indicators, they have not internalized these standards and tend to approach their work guided primarily by a day-to-day focus.

Promising Practice C2.1: The use of literacy coaches at the middle school and elementary levels has enhanced instructional planning in literacy development, improved the focus on research-based practices and has begun to assist teachers in the use of data to inform instruction.

Significance: At elementary and middle school levels the coaches have shouldered a tremendous responsibility for offering what Cheryl Dozier calls responsive literacy coaching in her book Responsive Literacy Coaching: Tools for Creating and Sustaining Purposeful Change (2006). Elementary coaches have supported the implementation of a new reading series, overseen assessment, led book groups and

provided modeling and hands-on help for teachers. At the middle school the coach works with teachers from every content area, leading book groups, assisting ELA teachers, and communicating regularly with administrators. Dozier writes that "Teaching is about connections and connectedness." This is what the coaches have tried to do in their work**.**

Promising Practice C2.2: **The Ninth Grade Academy and de-tracking efforts at the middle and high school have improved teacher collaboration and the use of differentiation in teaching.**

Significance: De-tracking is an important first step for improving access to a relevant and rigorous ELA curriculum for all students. To create a more inclusive, creative school culture and curriculum, de-tracking efforts, particularly differentiating instruction, will have a dramatic effect on student learning.

Action Recommendation C2.1**: All schools should establish a comprehensive and consistent approach to planning for ELA Instruction.**

Significance: The district's commitment to the RTI model and a revised AIS plan should assist in the development of a comprehensive framework for instructional planning that can be consistently applied across schools. The model should provide consistent opportunities for cross-disciplinary and grade-level planning as well as a more detailed understanding of how ELA interventions work. The district will need to conquer the current cultural belief that teacher longevity and time spent in out-of-classroom work are primary indicators of teacher quality and instead reward teachers who are actively involved as professionals in the school's learning community.

Action Recommendation C2.2**: Redesign the instructional delivery models and scheduling practices used by schools to maximize time for common/collaborative planning, co-teaching and the integration of instruction for students at all levels.**

Significance: As the teacher survey and interviews indicated, teachers and specialists need more time to meet and to design ELA instructional strategies. These meetings need to also occur across and between grades and schools to enhance the continuity of what is taught. Special attention should also be paid to how the scheduling affects the use and effectiveness of literacy centers. Technical assistance should be provided to maximize adult resources in the classroom. In addition to specialists already assigned to the schools, students from the community/local colleges and parent volunteers during center time can be to provide optimum learning support for students.

Action Recommendation C2.3**: Ensure that teachers and specialists have a comprehensive understanding of how to differentiate instruction for struggling students and that these strategies are regularly applied, assessed and documented in each classroom.**

Significance: The elementary reading curriculum, in particular, appears to be a "one size fits all" approach. Differentiation is done sporadically across schools, with inconsistent understanding of how teachers can optimize instruction through effective teaching methods. It is unclear how differentiation is used for ELL and special education classes. Teachers and administrators at all levels need more discussion time and professional development to internalize the use of ELA standards, identify effective teaching practices and differentiation of instruction.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Team building	• Provide training for principals and school teams on the fundamentals of team-building. • Establish meeting criteria for classroom teams, department meetings, grade level meetings and building child study teams and hold participants accountable for effective planning and outcomes. • Develop guidelines for meeting participation and collaborative attitudes. • Develop agendas and minutes and routinely share with staff. • Plan time for professional development and sharing.
Time	• Establish department or building teams to examine scheduling practices so there is time during the day for teachers and specialists to meet and share. • Prioritize the planning needs at each school based on a data-based assessment of critical student needs at that school.
Instructional Delivery Models	• As curriculum mapping begins examine the delivery of instruction to meet the standards and proficiencies for each grade level. • Determine which supports and services will be most effective as a push-in vs. a pull-out service. • Look for opportunities to decrease direct service enhanced general education instruction through consultant and co-teaching models. • Use a cooperative learning model to support effective group learning, where appropriate. • Observe classrooms in other districts using multi-level and multi-age models, particularly models that focus on project-based instruction.
Differentiated Instruction	• Engage teachers in a book study using the work of either Gayle Gregory or Carol Ann Tomlinson on differentiation. Have teacher read articles about differentiation at staff meetings and discussion. • Utilize multimedia to provide teachers with visual, concrete modeling of differentiated instruction. • Set annual school-based goals for cross-disciplinary sharing and professional development.

AUDIT CRITERIA C3: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF ELA INSTRUCTION.

Research on safe schools has shown the dramatic impact environment has on student learning. In classrooms where students feel comfortable and safe, learning increases (Twemlow, 2002). Students also need to feel supported and competent in order to learn to their full potential. When students work together with teacher facilitation to develop classroom ground rules or collaborative goals, they get to know and trust each other. All district and school staff needs to recognize that it is their collective role and responsibility to create the optimum conditions for learning that is meaningful and challenging for students. This happens best when students have some autonomy and control over their learning and are regularly provided social support and skill training as part of their academic experience. Everyone associated with schools must be focused on building a positive community with “can do” attitudes helping all students see that their efforts lead to competence and success.

Robert Marzano (2003) found that effective teachers create focused and nurturing classrooms. In these classrooms students and teachers work together to develop rules and procedures that are consistent with the code of conduct. Teachers model acceptable classroom dispositions and frequently acknowledge students who are engaged in productive learning behaviors. Classroom routines are

reasonable, specific and explained to students often and in positive terms. Every day effective teachers work to build a culture of competence, they decorate the room with student work; they arrange the furniture to promote interaction and have comfortable areas for working and learning (Kohn, 1996).

Effective classroom environments also embrace variations in learning styles, cultural orientations and economic status. Teachers in effective classrooms actively engage students in their learning process and differentiating instruction so that each student feels connected to the classroom culture and experiences success. In her book, Differentiated Instruction Strategies in Practice (2008), Gayle Gregory writes that, "Differentiation is not just a set of instructional tools but a philosophy that a teacher and professional learning community embrace to reach the unique needs of every learner."

It is not surprising that the most effective classrooms use the principles of constructiveness teaching as their primary foundation for teaching and learning. Constructivist teaching recognizes that learning builds upon prior knowledge, or existing schema. Constructivist teaching facilitates student's active engagement in the learning process rather than making this passive receiver of information with prescribed "work" tasks (Lyons, Pinnell, 2001). Using this student-centered approach the teacher works to guide students in their discovery of knowledge through inquiry and experiences and activities that tap their prior knowledge and promotes discussion and thinking as the primary mode for new learning and understanding. Constructivist theory suggests that children (and adults) learn most effectively through instructional activities, experiences, and environments that allow them to actively build personal meanings or understandings and to express and reflect on their new understandings.

GASD Performance Finding C3: Student access to print/literacy rich engaging environments is limited and many displays and student work samples are not tied to clearly-stated as per p.2 instructional objectives.

Audit Criteria C3 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
C3.1: Schools and classrooms are efficiently organized to accommodate diverse learners and varied groupings. Delete this line			X		Classroom organization primarily supported teacher-centered vs. student-centered learning environments.
C3.2: Schools, ELA learning centers and classrooms facilities are print *and* literacy rich.			X		Limited literacy resources were visible for differentiating instruction for diverse students, particularly ELL students in general education classrooms.
C3.3: Classroom environments promote respect through effective management procedures and routines.			X		Classroom management techniques were focused more on sanctions, rather than building positive interaction skills and success-oriented behaviors.
C3.4: Students are effectively engaged in the learning process.				X	Students were well disciplined and busy in most classrooms, but many were not actively engaged in the learning process.
C3.5: Lessons are rigorous, relevant and build cultural competence.				X	Literature and displays that integrate Hispanic culture are lacking in most classrooms.

A Rich Literacy and Learning Environment

Although several schools were under construction, all GASD school facilities observed are adequate to support the effective delivery of instruction with ample exhibit space and comfortable surroundings. Some schools displayed materials about their magnet themes and related events but literacy themes and school values for learning were not always predominate upon entering the buildings. All schools had media centers and computer labs and some displays of study topics and authors were visible.

Most classrooms also appeared to have sufficient space to support a variety of instructional arrangements in the classroom including large and small groupings, learning centers, word walls, and student work displays. However, few classrooms had classroom libraries or reading areas and quality children's literature was in plain view in only a small number of classrooms.

At the middle school, most classrooms were spacious enough and arranged to facilitate student discussion. Classroom libraries were available to promote independent reading and research activities. Most classrooms had posters or charts, which in a small number of instances, were connected to the ELA standards. Notably, there were few other meaningful displays of student work. At the high school, there was ample space, but also a similar void of visually enticing literacy exhibits and project-based student displays.

In general, teachers at all levels reported on the audit survey that they organized classroom space to promote learning (94%). Nevertheless, the large majority of classrooms observed displayed no student work, especially writing samples. Student writing, when it was visible, centered on whole class topics and was quite formulaic. Word walls, charts and displays related to literacy were also missing in many elementary classrooms, as well as schoolwide. Little if any attention was paid to displays for ELL students in the general education classroom.

Classroom Management and Student Engagement

In general, students appeared to be well disciplined and complied with school and classroom expectations. There were few if any instances of disruptive behaviors observed in the elementary classrooms. The middle schools and high schools also appeared orderly with no apparent interruptions to instruction as a result of disruptive behavior. Student tardiness and socializing, particularly at the high school, occasionally interfered with the start of some lessons.

Almost all of the teachers observed appeared generally interested and engaged in their instruction. When asked on the audit survey about their use of effective classroom environment practices, nearly all teachers reported "routine" or "fully integrated" use of the following:

- Creating an environment that promotes respect and rapport (95%),
- Managing classroom procedures and routines to maximize instructional time (92%), and
- Handling a range of classroom behavior or discipline problems (96%).

Research has shown that student engagement and the development of autonomous learning begins with effective instructional strategies and assessment practices where students are personally invested

in an active learning process where they routinely experience success. MI's walk-throughs and observations in GASD schools revealed the following:

- Most of the instruction observed K-12 in GASD was traditional and teacher-centered.
- Most teachers have good rapport with students.
- Student engagement was limited at all levels and students in some classes seemed unaware of their active role as a learner.
- Teachers, not students, tended to own responsibility for learning and off-task and disruptive behaviors.
- Many observed activities such as completing worksheets or copying the glossary definition of vocabulary words are indicative of a passive, transmission of information rather than constructivist approach to teaching.
- Some teachers have started to use new approaches to engaging students. For example, at the middle and high school teachers who used project-based learning instructional strategy reported that they are beginning to more actively engage students as a result.
- Of all levels, the middle school was most on target with student needs and interests.
- Most high school instruction observed was very traditional and teacher-directed, but in several high school classrooms they showed promise by focusing on student interests to foster student engagement.

There were also some glimpses of activities in a few classrooms that could serve as a model for student engagement.

> *In one elementary classroom, children worked in groups with a scale and balance to determine the number of particular kind of seeds that would balance with an object on the other scale. The teacher made a point of acknowledging and commending children who were proactive in getting up from their seats to check their equipment to ensure accuracy rather than passively remain seated.*
>
> *In another elementary classroom, students sat on the carpet in rapt attention as their teacher conducted a shared reading (as a transition activity) of a chapter from a young adult piece of literature–an activity they appear to do regularly. Students were deeply engaged and responsive, asking and answering questions, predicting, interpreting, inferring, with vibrant and on-topic discussions.*
>
> *In a third elementary classroom, children were actively engrossed in documenting their observations of new born chicks during center time.*

Although students were quiet and appeared to be busy "working" at all levels observed, their passivity in completing tasks like filling in worksheets was a concern. In most classes observed, students did not seem to be engaged intellectually in their lessons, but merely doing the tasks they were "told" to do. Interview data suggest that there is a "stay in your seat and speak when you are spoken to" culture that still exists in many classrooms, particularly at the elementary school level. Middle school teachers reported that the students coming from the elementary schools are often most comfortable with worksheets and are difficult to engage in active learning discussions.

Despite survey results reporting the use of some constructivist teaching philosophies, teachers did not show evidence of this in their classroom environments or practices. Without an in-depth understanding of how knowledge is constructed and student learning evolves, teachers may feel the need to depend on prescribed lessons. Heavy reliance on prescribed lessons makes teaching the ELA standards more difficult since effective instruction requires that teachers are able to internalize the standards and adjust lessons on the spot to move all students from their current knowledge to new understandings.

Exploring and reconciling teachers' underlying philosophies of pedagogy and developing a comprehensive approach to teaching and learning that all staff buy-in to are districtwide challenges. Specialists commented during interviews that some teachers viewed student compliance as engagement and motivation for learning and non-compliant behaviors often resulted in discipline, AIS, and special education referrals. The teachers who participated in observations and interviews appeared, with one or two exceptions, to be caring and to have a genuine interest in helping struggling students. In practice, however, many teachers did not seem to have the skill sets necessary to be successful at diversifying instruction to the degree necessary to best serve GASD's student population. It was clear that all teachers and administrators would benefit from a broadened understanding of effective classroom-based instructional strategies for economically, linguistically and cognitively challenged students.

Further analysis suggests that this apparent pedagogical deficit may be part of the instructional culture at GASD schools that has evolved over many years as a result of multiple contributing factors such as:

- Substantial changes in the diversity of the student population without corresponding changes to the instructional delivery model;
- Insufficient community support for embracing a diverse population and developing constructive solutions;
- Lack of funds for or lack of focused professional development to support diverse students; and
- Inconsistent implementation of the teacher evaluation system where performance standards for high quality teaching have not been used or measured.
- Lack of involvement of administrators in attending professional development and modeling professional practices.

In several interviews, GASD was described as a district "lost in time", continuing to "do it the way we have in the past" despite the reality that the needs of the student population it serves have drastically changed over time.

Teacher's ongoing skill development with diverse students is also hampered by the predominantly pull-out intervention model used by schools. This model limits general education teacher exposure to intervention strategies that are best learned through embedded applications and co-teaching experiences in the classroom. As described earlier, GASD plans to use a RTI model as a framework for improving teacher's knowledge and skills in instructional, behavioral and social/emotional decision-making, skill-building and intervention. The district is also in the early planning stages for implementing the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program as a proactive method of improving student engagement and instructional time.

In terms of student engagement, a solid group of the teachers disagreed with the following statement, *Most students in the school are engaged and excited about learning*—this despite the fact that nearly 90

percent of the teachers reported routine or integrated use of strategies that motivate and engage students in learning.

Clearly, what teachers may understand as effective strategies for motivating/engaging students, may not mesh with what the research says about effective practice. To explain, research considers use of constructivist pedagogy[1] as being highly beneficial both to students' acquisition of knowledge and their motivation and engagement in learning. Constructivist pedagogy such as frequent use of (a) project-based learning and demonstrations, (b) practices requiring heavier student responsibility (e.g., working on problems that have several solutions, evaluating and improving the work of other students), and strategies to promote students reflection on learning rarely occurred in GASD classrooms. While GASD teachers verbalize and acknowledge constructivist pedagogy and agree with constructivist methodology it does not appear to translate into classroom practice.

Cultural Competence

Rare incidences of culturally sensitive instruction were observed in the classrooms. Two middle school teachers engaged students in reading books on the holocaust and handled the topic with great sensitivity. Students were interested and participated in discussion. One elementary school teacher used a book on holiday celebrations in guided reading that led to a brief discussion of holidays practiced by different religions. The discussion was conducted with respect by the teacher. The conversation reflected a lack of exposure and familiarity by children as well as the teacher to diverse holiday traditions. The teacher indicated she would follow-up to get additional information. Except for the posting of children's birthdays in one or two classrooms, elementary classroom environments did not reflect students' lives and backgrounds.

Teachers indicated during interviews they would like more help with curriculum that would better meet the needs of Hispanic students. Work has begun through CEP Plans and professional development to address the needs of student subgroups.

Promising Practices C3.1: Recent grant funds have increased the access and availability of ELA resource, and school libraries are beginning to improve and to level their collections.

Significance: Overtime limited funding for materials, supplies, technology, and books has had a tremendous impact on the resources available to teachers for effective instruction and the development of literacy rich environments in the schools. In fact the audit survey showed that more teachers in GASD rated this area as an obstacle to curriculum implementation to a greater extent than teachers in other districts. Recent grant funding, if appropriately tied to instructional objectives and the implementation of ELA standards, should help to bridge the resource deficit. Administrators and teachers were enthusiastic about the recent purchase of library collections, ELL texts, technology infrastructure and applications and other critical tools for effective teaching.

Promising Practices C3.2: The district plans to integrate RTI and PBIS as a framework for improving the learning culture in schools.

[1] Practices that help students make deeper, more meaningful knowledge constructions than those derived from traditional classroom practices.

Significance: The use of PBIS and RTI as collective framework for addressing critical issues of student engagement in GASD is the key to improve the culture of schools. These proactive systems, if effectively implemented, create a planned system that supports administrators and staff in determining how and when to intervene with students who struggle not only academically, but also socially and emotionally. Like any prescribed curriculum or intervention, however, the fundamental aspects of instructional decision making must be data-driven, routinely assessed and internalized by all administrators and staff. Substantial professional development and technical support will be needed to support the implementation process.

Action Recommendation C3.1: Media Specialists and teachers in each school should work collaboratively to develop school and classroom libraries that provide literacy rich, visually stimulating multimedia environments with leveled text that are consistent with the curriculum.

Significance: Having books readily available for students at a level that they can successfully decode and comprehend is an important foundation of a literacy rich environment. Teachers need assistance in organizing books and supporting media that integrates with the scope and sequence of the core curriculum and provides an additional venue for meeting the ELA standards. Displays, posters, and resources should be relevant, visually enticing and aligned with the ELA curriculum standards.

Action Recommendation C3.2: Provide time for teachers and specialists to develop meaningful learning displays, center activities and materials that focus on differentiated instruction.

Significance: If literacy is indeed a primary focus in schools, it should be noticeable when one enters the building and in standards focused displays in the classroom that are actively used for instruction. The effective use of centers requires more detailed planning and thinking about instruction. Teachers interviewed stated that time to create centers that correspond to the new reading series was an important next step. Professional development plans should consider using hands-on workshops such as make-and-takes to encourage center development and motivate teachers to move beyond worksheets.

Action Recommendation C3.3: Charge literacy coaches and lead teachers with the development and demonstration of student-centered lessons as a primary strategy for enhancing student engagement.

Significance: At all levels time and training need to be invested in developing classroom routines and practices that give students some independence and autonomy in reading and writing activities. Students need to see themselves as readers and writers not just as students doing the work they are given to do. Time needs to be devoted to engaging students in meaningful discussions about what it means to be a reader and writer. Summaries of these discussions should be recorded and posted in the classroom as a visual reference for the students.

Action Recommendation C3.4: Ensure that behavior and social emotional skill building is an integral part of daily classroom instruction, the RTI model and the culture of each school. Doesn't appear in chart on p.2

Significance: Teachers, administrators and specialists should work in teams to analyze lesson designs and classroom routines and determine what strategies will build safe and respectful environments, honor diversity and increase cultural competence, and engage students as active and responsible members of the learning community.

Action Recommendation C3.5: Enhance academic and cultural competence through adult and peer mentorship programs.

The issues of student engagement and motivation can be addressed, at least in part by adult and peer mentorship programs. Hispanic students, in particular, have few role models PK-12.
With attendance and lack of parental engagement reported as ongoing challenges to student attitudes and achievement, older children may serve as motivational and academic models for the importance of attendance and perseverance. Student mentor programs have been found to benefit both the mentee and mentor in positive youth development; improved confidence, sense of belonging, connections, skills, civic engagement, and self-efficacy.

The district may also benefit from implementing student mentor programs whereby students from a diversity of backgrounds and abilities mentor younger students; High school students may mentor students in middle and elementary school and students in middle school may mentor Pre-K and elementary students. Targeted mentoring or tutoring would allow students who, for example may struggle to read middle or high school text to read aloud or guide younger children in their reading. Students who have mastered addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division but who might struggle with higher mathematics can tutor in areas in which they have gained proficiency.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Learner Autonomy Learning is individual and students need to understand how they learn and what makes them successful so they can become self-reliant learners.	• Provide training and technical assistance in the classroom about how we learn. • Establish individual learning goals for each student. • Celebrate learning successes as a classroom, a school, a district and a community. • Promote team work and peer encouragement and support. • Recognize creativity, individual differences and diversity.
Active Learning Research has shown that active learning where students are engaged as workers with a creative intellectual focus, achievement has increased.	• Use play, role-playing, music, hands-on activities, inquiry, creative learning centers and writing daily in the classroom. • Provide time for small group work on projects where students work with each other to solve problems or create products. • Encourage peer collaboration and discussion where students read as partners and participate in peer editing. • Maximize choice in reading or writing topics. • Conduct research and inquiry on topics of interest. • Use journals to promote daily writing and reflection.
Engaging Environments Classroom space and materials are arranged for action, discussion, hands-	• Starting with the elementary level, arrange classrooms to accommodate the developmental needs of learners. • Create print rich environments and display student work in many forms PK-12. • Use multiple materials including books and hands-on literacy woven

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
on applications and aligned with lesson objectives. Students are actively engaged in using classroom resources to enhance their daily learning.	through centers and all content areas. • Conduct team building activities to promote social connection and communication in each classroom. • Create classroom environments that reflect children's lives and backgrounds.

AUDIT CRITERIA C.4: EFFECTIVE AND RESEARCH-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES ARE USED IN ALL CLASSROOMS TO DELIVER THE ALIGNED CURRICULUM; STRATEGIES ARE DIFFERENTIATED TO MEET LEARNING NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS.

For the last decade, a national focus on reading and ELA instruction has emphasized of the use of data research-based practices as the primary foundation for the instructional decisions made in the classroom. Beginning with the work of the National Reading Panel (NRP 2000) that identified phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension as the five essential components of reading instruction, states and districts have restructured their content standards and curricula to better align instruction with research-based best practices.

Most children, particularly if they attend preschool, enter Kindergarten with some phonemic awareness skills. In the early grades phonological awareness instruction needs to

- include varied strategies reflecting a mix of phonological/ phonemic awareness activities; and
- understand that small homogenous group instruction as such grouping is more effective than individual or whole group instruction with students more likely to receive targeted feedback from the teacher and benefit by listening to the responses of their classmates (NICHD, 2000).

In addition, the entire phonemic awareness program for most children should be about 16-18 hours during the school year, or roughly 10 to 15 minutes daily, depending on student needs, "until children can fully segment and blend" (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, Phonemic Awareness, p.9).

The goal of phonics or decoding instruction is to teach children that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (the sounds in spoken words) and graphemes (the letters and spellings that represent those sounds in written language). Teachers should use a variety of strategies to help students learn and use these systematic and predictable relationships, or the alphabetic principle, to read and write words and connected text. Instruction needs to include a variety of skills important in helping students blend sounds letter by letter when reading one syllable words, blend onset and rime, decode by analogy to common word families, or form new words.

Research from the NRP has found that instruction that promotes letter-sound knowledge and alphabetic principles is critical to children's success in learning to read and in becoming good readers. In addition, children who acquire and learn to apply decoding early in their reading experience benefit long term in word recognition, reading comprehension, and spelling (NICHD, 2000). Findings of the NRP (NICHD, 2000) indicate that explicit, systematic phonics instruction is significantly more effective than programs

providing unsystematic or no phonics instruction. The panel further found that explicit, systematic phonics instruction is significantly more effective than non-systematic phonics instruction with children of different ages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Guidance on phonics instruction from the NRP (NICHD, 2000) suggests that two years of phonics instruction, beginning in early kindergarten, is sufficient for most children. Moats (1998) found that comprehensive phonics instruction should be part of reading instruction through at least sixth grade, while research by Adams (1995) found that too much phonics instruction may be as unhelpful as too little phonics instruction. Purposefully addressing the specific needs of students and monitoring their progress can help teachers find the right balance for phonics instruction. Embedded instruction as a decoding strategy in a high interest story, can be an effective approach.

Vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in learning to read, in text comprehension, and in overall academic achievement. According to the NRP (NICHD, 2000), vocabulary is developed both indirectly and directly when children hear and see words used in many different contexts and through direct learning when children are explicitly taught both individual words and word learning strategies. According to the NRP (NICHD, 2000), reliance on a single vocabulary instructional method will not result in optimal learning.

The objective of fluency is to develop readers who are able to read aloud with expression, changing tone and emphasis and pausing appropriately within and at the end of sentences. Fluency involves the ability to read words automatically (automaticity) and accurately, and with no apparent cognitive effort. When children are able to recognize words automatically, they are able to give their attention to comprehending, or understanding the text. Students should be fluent at reading any texts appropriate to their grade levels (Armbruster, Lehe, & Osborn, 2001). “Truly fluent reading conveys the readers’ understanding of content through expressive, interpretive reading of text” (Prescott-Griffin & Witherell, 2004, p. 3).

The goal of text or reading comprehension is to help students understand and remember what they read; along with being able to communicate with others what they read (NICHD, 2000). Studies indicate that good readers use a number of cognitive strategies when they read and that it is possible to provide students with explicit instruction in these strategies in order to help them understand, remember, and communicate what they read. A variety of strategies are recommended to improve reading comprehension (e.g., reciprocal teaching to gain meaning from text, instruction in self-monitoring reading comprehension) (NICHD, 2000). Research indicates that even in the early grades instruction can help students become better at monitoring their comprehension (NICHD, 2001).

Curriculum and instruction need to ensure that beginning in the early grades a number of cognitive strategies are taught using explicit instruction in order to help students understand, remember, and communicate what they read. Teachers, coaches, and administrators need to become proficient in research-based best practices to improve reading comprehension (e.g., reciprocal teaching to gain meaning from text, instruction in self-monitoring reading comprehension) (NICHD, 2000).

The curriculum needs to appropriately map the alignment, pacing, and integration of these essential components of reading, combined with best practices of instruction. In addition, ongoing determinations of the adequacy of emphasis of the essential components of reading instruction needs to be tied to ongoing and purposeful assessment that identifies the differentiated needs of students, classrooms, and grades. Ongoing monitoring is essential to ensure that students do not fall behind, along with methods for providing additional instruction to any student who may continue to struggle.

GASD Performance Finding C4: There was a marked absence of the use of the essential components of research-based reading instruction in many classrooms.

Audit Criteria C4 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
C4.1: A variety of research-based instructional strategies and presentation formats are used.				X	A teacher-center model was the primary mode of instruction.
C4.2: The essential elements of reading instruction are research-based and fully integrated into daily instructional practices.			X		Many teachers have limited understanding and training in research-based approaches to reading instruction.
C4.3: Instructional decisions, interventions strategies and the use of RTI tiers are planned using data and monitored through assessment to meet the needs of diverse learners.				X	There is limited understanding beyond the literacy coaches at the school level about how the RTI model and progress monitoring can be effectively used.

Instructional Management

Research-based instructional strategies can be organized into four categories: organizing and remembering information, learning together, investigating a problem, reading approaches and writing and reflecting on a topic (Stronge, 2004). To ensure that students have access to a wide variety of instructional strategies as part of their daily school experiences, time for and the arrangement and format of instructional activities must be carefully planned. Teachers must make sure that students have adequate and concentrated time for practice, discourse, skill building, investigation and inquiry, and peer collaboration every day.

When asked about the top obstacles to effective delivery of the curriculum, 66 percent of GASD teachers surveyed reported that funding, lack of time, and scheduling difficulties were the top obstacles. Other obstacles included parent and community resistance (43%), work overload (35%), and inadequate materials, equipment, facilities (45%). Interviews and observations, suggest however, that effective delivery of the GASD curriculum is hampered most by a lag in the knowledge and skill development of teachers and administrators about what constitutes effective reading/ELA instruction, how students are best engaged, how progress is monitored and when data should be used to make instructional decisions.

Time for Concentrated ELA Instruction: As a result of Federal Reading First funding at Curie Institute for Engineering and Communication, the lessons learned about concentrated reading time have been adopted for all elementary schools. Beginning in the fall of 2009, all elementary teachers now have longer literacy blocks (90 minutes). Observations indicated that the majority of the elementary teachers had a definite script for reading lessons in the 90-minute block and stayed on a set time framework. There was relatively little time spent in discipline and teachers put effort into calling on a range of children. For 70 percent of the teachers surveyed, ELA class time was generally uninterrupted.

GASD teachers reported on the survey devoted an average of 16 hours per week to ELA instruction, which is lower than reports of time spent in other districts. When asked about how they used their instructional time, teachers said that much time was spent on "activities" rather than sustained reading or writing. Teachers typically spent the largest percentage of ELA class time per week in whole class activities (36%), followed by group instruction (31%), and self-directed activities (17%). Paired and 1:1 instruction each averaged 10 percent of ELA time per week. When compared with the responses of other districts, the time spent in whole class activities is somewhat higher in GASD.

Teachers at the secondary level have classes of the typical length to cover the ELA curriculum. Students rotate classes and spend an average of 45 minutes of instruction daily in ELA. Overall in the middle school and high school teachers used time effectively. Lessons were paced well and students generally came to class and participated right from the start. At the high school some students were late or talkative which took away valuable time at the start of lessons. In other classes, notably an elective or classes geared for higher ability students, topics were engaging and students were focused and on-task throughout the lesson.

Literacy and Learning Centers: As teacher competence in the use of the 90-minute block at the elementary level increases, substantial time will be spent by students in learning centers suggesting the extreme importance of using this time effectively. Learning centers should be used for active practice and skill building using a wide range of instructional strategies.

Still in the early stages of implementation, the work in learning centers observed in most elementary classrooms was characterized by a lack of literacy stimulating and differentiated activities. Students spent little time in conversation or in meaningful writing activities. Except for guided reading, children often worked in heterogeneous groups during center time. While such groupings are a possible solution to a lack of adult supervision, in several instances the higher level students ran the group and provided answers leaving some children simply following and copying answers. Practice activities were limited in many classrooms to rote learning, coping, and worksheet completion. In short, there was a marked absence of a plan for the effective use of instructional time that addressed the specific skill building and literacy development needs of individual students.

Differentiated small group, center activities are a means to appropriately emphasize certain components, levels of difficulty of components, and integration of components in ways that allow children to practice areas in need of strengthening. Center work, however, except guided reading, appeared to be the same of all children. Small group work was often done ineffectively in heterogeneous groupings, with the more able peer often doing the work and giving the answer.

Optimizing and differentiating instruction using the new RTI model during center time should help to improve the effectiveness of the time spent. Hands-on opportunities, not just filling in worksheets, with a chance to share and create would result in a higher level of planned learning and student engagement.

Children observed also were in need of modeling to ensure they understand expectations during literacy center time.

At the secondary level, particularly at the middle school, there were a few examples of learning centers being used to support classroom instruction. As stated above, some secondary teachers are beginning to successfully use project-based instruction, *Literature Circles*, more young adult literature, technology and topic-based research as alternatives to teacher-centered instruction. Smartboards will be added in the next school year.

Coaching/Consultant Teaching/Co-teaching

For the most part, literacy coaches and the use of literacy centers are new to the elementary schools. While in the early stages, literacy coaches in the elementary schools have begun working with teachers in introducing them to the concept and implementation of centers. Coaches reportedly recognize the need for professional development that includes content, modeling, follow-up, and feedback on the development and implementation of differentiated center activities along with understanding student data to guide the development and relevance of those activities.

As described in Section IV, GASD relies heavily on a pull-out model for providing AIS and special education services. As a result, only one adult, namely the classroom teacher, was present in any of the classrooms during center and project time. This arrangement made it challenging for the classroom teacher to provide management and effective scaffolding of students, especially for teachers who are so new to the center model or project-based teaching.

Small Groups and Cooperative Learning

Research-based strategies, like cooperative learning and small group leveled skill building appeared to be used in a few classrooms in GASD. Classroom walk-throughs and observations revealed that there were no consistent instructional approaches for grouping employed across schools. MI's team observed a small number of teachers at the elementary and a few more teachers at the middle level that used varied instructional strategies and groupings beyond lecture or teacher-directed lessons. Notably absent were other research-based strategies observed included discussion, think-pair-share, visualization and graphic organizers. Project based instruction was viewed in some classrooms.

In contrast, most teachers surveyed reported the "routine" or "fully integrated" use and management of flexible classroom grouping structures. Since the approach to instruction in GASD has remained relatively static in many classrooms for some years and the RTI model has yet to be implemented, it is understandable that the effective practices for grouping students to differentiate instruction is not understood. Further training will be needed to help teachers fully understand data-driven grouping practices that differentiate the use of instructional strategies as opposed to moving students into small groups settings to do the same tasks.

The Home-School Connection

There are several critical challenges facing GASD that impact time spent on instruction. As described in the District Governance (Section III) of this report, attendance is an area of considerable concern at all schools and detracts on the effective use of instructional time. Similarly, time spent out of the classroom due to chronic behavior and health issues are concerns for a number of students. These issues will require aggressive community action to build effective home-school relationships. The

implementation of PBIS should help to establish a systematic approach to addressing these challenges overtime.

Section IV, School Governance, also describes critical lack of parent involvement in the schools. This lack of involvement, particularly around academic issues, limits the use of homework as a reliable form of extended instructional practice. Research suggests about 10 minutes of homework a night beginning in the first grade with an additional 10 minutes each year (i.e., the 10-minute rule). So for grades K-2, homework is most effective if it does not exceed 10-20 minutes each day. Older children in grades 3-6 can handle 30-60 minutes a day. At the high school level, 75-120 minute assignments are recommended four to five times a week. Given these rules of thumb, GASD teachers may not be assigning a sufficient amount of homework to their students.

When interviewed, however, parents and principals report that teachers consistently give homework assignments and that these assignments are generally reasonable in their view in terms of length and type of assignments. In contrast teachers reported that homework completion is an issue at all levels, particular for disadvantaged students. Often the most disadvantaged students have no quiet place at home to study or do homework and have no parental support to complete the tasks. Forty percent of GASD teachers said that they “never” assigned homework (13%) or did so less than once a week (27%). For those who did assign homework, the typical assignment was about a half hour (56%) or less than 15 minutes (40%).

Extend Time

There is some evidence that time for instruction in ELA is extended beyond the school day/year in GASD, but not to the degree proposed in the AIS Plan. Currently, extended day programs are not funded by the district and are not necessarily operated by the schools. Therefore, these programs are described as being not a viable option for extending instruction in the ELA curriculum but instead provide general homework support and recreational activities. Interview participants stated that there is a series of more extensive extended day/year programs for students that focus on their learning needs and truly extends student instruction beyond the school day.

The district plans to operate one summer program for struggling students in 2010. The location of the summer program was limited due to the extensive renovations planned for schools over the summer. Principals were apprehensive attendance would be poor as a result of limited venues for summer programs.

Research-based Instructional Strategies

In addition to a curriculum that maps the alignment, pacing, and integration of essential components of reading, ongoing determinations need to be made about the adequacy of emphasis of the essential components of reading instruction. This is best accomplished through the analysis of assessment results to determine where students have gaps in knowledge and skills. Once identified, research-based grouping and practice activities are selected to address the gaps between instruction and individual student performance. Based on data, teachers should systematically decide how much and what type of practice should be emphasized.

Despite national efforts over the past decade to raise teachers’ and administrators’ awareness of the importance of applying research-based practices, many of the GASD teachers surveyed (38%) said they

were only "somewhat" or "not at all familiar" with the K-12 reading research. Instead the influences on GASD teachers' reading instruction were reported to be the following, with current research having an influence on very few teachers:

- school ELA curriculum (selected by 60%),
- NYS ELA standards (52%),
- materials, books, resources (52%)
- professional development (35%),
- recommendations from other teachers (21%),
- current reading research (12%), and
- recommendations from the school principal (3%).

In general, the analysis of the survey data showed a discrepancy between what teachers report they are doing and what is actually being applied in practice. For example, when GASD teachers were asked about their use of several specific research-based instructional strategies including differentiated instruction, questioning and discovery strategies, explicit/direct instruction, and facilitation/coaching as instructional methods, with the exception of facilitation/coaching (where 40% reported inconsistent use), the large majority of teachers (> 75%) said they used all of these practices routinely. In contrast, observations suggest that these essential ELA/ reading strategies did not receive adequate emphasis across the classrooms observed. Overall much time in the elementary classroom is spent "preparing to read" rather than actual reading. With the exception of guided reading, most students appeared to be doing the same work.

Language and Vocabulary Development

Learning vocabulary and advancing language development in general are important curriculum development goals for any district. Many GASD students come to school without access to language rich environments and role models. Nearly 36 percent on average live in poverty, about a third of the students come from bilingual homes and others live in isolated rural areas during their early language development years. GASD reports that many of the students entering Kindergarten have some preschool experience, but the quality and rigor of preschools in the County vary. Additionally, it was reported that information on school readiness tests about student readiness is not effectively used to target instruction in Kindergarten classrooms. In fact, some schools have historically placed the least effective teachers in Kindergarten, where the foundation of literacy development in school is constructed and early intervention for underprepared children should occur.

Most teachers stated on the audit survey that teaching skills was "major focus" of their teaching (80%). However, observations suggest that vocabulary instruction was predominately a passive activity in a number of classrooms observed. For example, in several classrooms the students quietly made vocabulary guides by copying definitions from the glossary. Robust vocabulary instruction was rarely observed.

As noted in previous discussions, considerable time, particularly in elementary ELA lessons, was devoted to completing worksheets. This practice is particularly ineffective for vocabulary instruction where social interaction and the listening and speaking (ELA Standards 1-4) are critical elements of the learning process. It is apparent that many GASD teachers do not realize that students become more engaged in and benefit more from a lesson when they are actively speaking and listening to each other. Purposeful

speaking and listening help students develop deeper understanding of information, become more comfortable and confident in expressing and formulating critical analysis and literary response, giving and receiving constructive feedback that strengthens learning, and effective communication skills that build the classroom and school community.

Vocabulary instruction also needs to include a carefully designed plan of instructional steps that highlight modeling and explaining concepts and skills using many examples. A variety of strategies need to be used to teach vocabulary—in all grades—in ways that broaden and promote a deep knowledge of words. Much vocabulary instruction was observed. However vocabulary instruction that included these components was often absent from teacher practice.

Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

Over one-third of the teachers surveyed said that they placed major focus on phonemic awareness and phonics in their classroom lessons. Conversely, the classrooms observed showed little use of integrated phonemic awareness and phonics practice. Here again worksheets were the preferred form of practice in these areas rather than embedded instruction. Given the district's former emphasis of "whole language" approaches to reading instruction, teachers appear to need skill development around using this essential component of reading instruction as a tool decoding. To help students develop the ability to distinguish sounds and the phonemic ability to notice, think about, and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words, teachers need to utilize a variety of oral language instructional activities that include rhyming, segmenting oral language into sentences and words, segmenting, blending, and manipulating syllables and sounds as well as providing opportunities to use wooden or magnetic letters to manipulate phonemes.

Sustained and Fluent Reading

Of considerable concern was that only half of the teachers surveyed indicated that they placed a major emphasis on fluency as part of their reading instruction. Not surprisingly, in the classrooms observed there was a marked absence of self-monitoring of reading and time for sustained reading as evidenced by students struggling to read connected text even while they are able to read sight words.

Research indicates that fluency requires structured practice, with ample opportunity for feedback (NICHD, 2000). GASD teachers did model fluent reading in some whole group lessons but there were few observations of students actually practicing oral reading of connected text with teacher feedback. Fluency instruction may be more effectively delivered through small homogenous groupings, which provides opportunity for more individual feedback.

Elementary teachers seemed conflicted over strictly using the reading series or employing their own teaching creativity. Beyond the core reading series, read alouds using children's literature might add to ELA instruction. Similarly, trade books might offer children choice and add relevance to their reading. Teachers interviewed commented that they were not to venture outside of the core program and that they were still too unfamiliar with the new reading series to go beyond the recommended activities. This uncertainty may contribute, in part, to the limited time spent on sustained reading in the classrooms.

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

Teachers reported on the survey that comprehension was central to most teachers' lesson plans and they placed a "major focus" on teaching comprehension (95%). However, literacy coaches said that monitoring comprehension is a critical gap in instruction in all elementary grades.

Similarly, teaching critical thinking is an area that needs extensive development. Overall the level of work in classes observed was largely at the recall or remembering level of Bloom's taxonomy. In some elementary classrooms instruction involved both remembering and understanding, most often in relation to comparing and contrasting, classifying, and to a lesser extent, interpreting and explaining. The middle school offered some analysis and evaluation questions in lessons observed. There is a difference in the intellectual stimulation in activities, questions and instruction in the College Prep higher classes than the Regents lower level classes at the high school. As the high school de-tracks, this will become an issue to address through professional development as well as curriculum development. At the secondary level more understanding and analysis were evident. Students were engaged in discussion, blogging, and writing research papers.

Writing, Research and Study Skills

The majority of teachers surveyed said they placed major focus on writing (60%) and text/print concepts. In general, however writing did not appear to be a strong emphasis of the ELA curriculum observed. In the elementary school, walk-throughs and observations found writing consisted of responding to prompts and filling in worksheets. In the middle school teachers were using a writing process or workshop approach. In the high school one teacher shared a writing curriculum binder but it was unclear how it was used. Secondary teachers commented that writing is particularly difficult for ELL students.

Missing from the taught curriculum were several major instructional components including organization in writing and reading/writing across the content areas. Skills needed to succeed in ELA such as note taking, in-depth and critical thinking for problem solving, and comprehension, and skills to navigate and achieve on Unit tests need to be integrated into the curriculum mapping process.

Differentiated Instruction

Overall, differentiation of instruction in ELA is done sporadically across the district. There is evidence that many teachers recognize their need to build skills in this area and some teachers are attuned to the need for a more effective cross-disciplinary planning process. Fewer teachers understand how progress monitoring, item analysis and other assessments and data should be used to group students and provide student centered instruction. The written curriculum does not provide a continuum of strategies and possible instructional grouping arrangements for struggling students, so teachers work within their current understanding of how to "get struggling students the help they need".

Interviews suggest that historically tracking and removing students from the general education classroom have been the primary methods for differentiation of instruction. Over time students with disabilities and ELL have been fairly isolated from general education instructional opportunities in separate self-contained classrooms.

As noted earlier, a framework for differentiation of instruction was missing in many of the classrooms visited. During interviews teachers expressed the need for more consistent direction from central office and school administrators and more training in differentiated instruction. Ineffective curriculum planning for diverse student needs in the classroom was also observed in the lack of a stimulating, print rich classroom environment, adjustable assignments, alternative instructional strategies, cooperative learning and varied curriculum. Similarly, few examples of materials and activities for engaging ELL students were seen at all levels K-12. These elements of instruction must all be attended to through comprehensive curriculum development and instructional planning to ensure that true differentiation occurs for all students.

Beginning in the 2010-11 school year, the district plans to restructure the former 15-1-1 special education settings and assign these students to general education classrooms to increase their access to the general education curriculum and their interaction with age-appropriate peers. This plan in conjunction with the RTI model and intensive work in curriculum mapping should help schools develop a consistent framework for differentiating instruction and monitoring individual student progress toward ELA skill development.

Action Recommendation C4.1: Establish a districtwide work group charge with the development of a school readiness action plan.

Significance: Children who come to school ready-to-learn are ultimately more successful in their school journey and future careers. For several decades research has clearly documented that the preschool years are critical and a sound investment in our children's future. The Amsterdam community needs to understand the challenges facing preschool children and establish high quality services that prepare students to meet ELA standards prior to Kindergarten.

Action Recommendation C4.2: Language development should be a major focus on the ELA curriculum beginning in preschool.

Significance: Language rich environments are as critical as print rich environments in an effective ELA curriculum. There is anecdotal evidence that many children in GASD come to school without adequate language skills resulting from not only the limited language proficiency of their caregivers but also their inadequate exposure. Therefore, teachers, administrators, and parents need to be proficient in both language and literacy development. This includes creating a positive discourse climate that promotes opportunities for extended conversations between children and adults, and between students. Those who interact with students need to become comfortable and proficient with generating questions and helping children generate questions that probe and extend oral and written expression, and encourage multiple turn taking in formal and informal conversations. It is important that teachers have the opportunity to reflect on their attitude–actual and perceived–towards "talk" in their classroom in light of its significance in developing language and constructing understanding across content areas and grades.

The importance of building listening, speaking, reading, and writing vocabulary and background knowledge beginning in pre-K cannot be overestimated. Vocabulary, as the words needed to understand texts and to communicate, contributes considerably to language and literacy development and to overall achievement across the curriculum through its value in comprehension. Workshops, book studies, or brief excerpts in multi-language newsletters to families on the role of vocabulary, effective

strategies, and diverse ways of evaluating vocabulary acquisition would be beneficial to staff and families.

The middle and high school staff would benefit by reading Heidi Hayes Jacob's book Active Literacy Across the Curriculum (Eye on Education Press) which has an excellent approach to teaching vocabulary.

Action Recommendation C4.3: Ensure that teachers know how to help students to construct knowledge and to think critically.

Significance: Teachers need extensive training and technical assistance in this area at all levels. To ensure that these principles are applied in daily lessons, coaches and principals alike will need to diligently monitor progress. Demonstration lessons and media presentations of effective lessons could be useful presentation venues for modeling the effective instruction of questioning and critical thinking.

Action Recommendation C4.4: Provide time for sustained reading activities for all students on a daily basis.

Significance: To become efficient and fluent readers students should have constant exposure to a wide variety of texts that meet a wide variety of interests. Replacing worksheets with independent and paired reading activities, for example, would improve the quality of instruction in many GASD classrooms.

Action Recommendation C4.5: Integrate opportunities for bilingual literacy exposure into all classrooms.

Significance: GASD has a unique opportunity to capitalize on the dual language skills of its students and community members. Schools should strive to offer some lessons in two languages each week using a co-teaching model. As GASD builds the capacity of its workforce, teachers with dual certification in ELL and general education should be a target of their recruitment and hiring practices.

Action Recommendation C4.6: Make writing for authentic purposes a daily practice for all students.

Significance: Writing is a critical life skill and needs to start in schools as a daily practice in Kindergarten where students daily add words then sentences and often elaborate illustrations to daily journals. Writing needs to be displayed everywhere, published in books, read to peers and other classrooms. As an extension of oral language it should make learning come alive. Writing should be taught using a process approach, not just as a response to prompts. Teachers should model their own writing for students.

Action Recommendation C4.7: Increase opportunities for student choice, particularly at the secondary level, by expanding access to text that is relevant to student's experiences and interests.

Significance: Student engagement is critical and provides access to relevant and student directed literature choices, and will optimize student wilingness to engage in text.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Instructional Arrangements	• Use data to decide on instructional groups. • Group for different purpose varying groups of same level and multilevel students based on specific instructional objectives. • Model appropriate group behavior and interaction with children. • Use Book Clubs, Partnerships or Literature Circles. • Offer cooperative learning workshops for all teachers in order to use small group instruction effectively.
Vocabulary and Language Development	• Use school readiness data to provide early instruction that targets language delays and gaps due to lack of exposure to language rich environments. • Make speaking and conversation critical components of most lessons. • Build word walls and focus on colorful words in literature at all levels. • Offer regular word study lessons.
Phonemic Awareness and Phonics	• Use mini-lessons for targeting phonics skill. • Engage students in games, rhymes, chants and poems for learning phonics. • Use environmental print and writing for teaching phonics.
Fluency and Sustained Reading Activities	• Ensure that more emphasis and time be provided for sustained reading and practicing reading of connected text with teacher feedback. • Plan effective guided reading instruction that support fluency and phrasing. • Give children daily time for independent reading. • Offer students opportunities for reading as performance.
Comprehension and Critical Thinking	• Engage children in interactive writing and interactive read-alouds. • Give children the opportunity to study writer's craft in literature. • Have children use what they know from reading texts in their own writing. • Use literature to engage students in thinking within, beyond and about the text. • Offer students opportunities to use functional writing, narrative writing informational and poetic writing (Pinnell, Fountas, 2007).

AUDIT CRITERIA C.5: AN EFFECTIVE ELA ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR PK-12 IS IN PLACE.

The main purpose of assessment as a means of accountability is to improve teaching and learning. Accountability relies in teaching, leadership, curriculum and parent involvement (Reeves, 2004). In the introduction to her book, Data Wise, Kathryn Parker Boudett writes, "What effective schools look like is not a mystery. They have a coherent instructional program well-aligned with strong standards. They have a community of adults committed to working together to develop the skills and knowledge of all children. They have figured out how to find the time to do this work and are acquiring the skills to do it well." This is the work that Amsterdam is beginning and needs to address in order to move forward.

GASD Performance Finding C5: ELA assessment and accountability practices are not clearly defined.

Audit Criteria C5 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
C5.1: The assessment plan is aligned with NYS ELA standards and performance indicators.				X	The district does not have a comprehensive ELA assessment plan. The AIS plan is being revised to implement a RTI model.

Audit Criteria C5 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
C5.2: The assessment plan provides a variety of assessment options.				X	A variety of assessment options are used, however, there are assessments that appear to be duplicating the information needed for planning and progress monitoring.
C5.3: The assessment plan optimizes instructional time.				X	Concerns were expressed, particularly at the elementary level about the over use of assessment. AIS and other specialists spend a high percentage of their time in testing.
C5.4: Assessment data is used to monitor student progress and inform classroom practices and instruction.				X	The addition of literacy coaches and CEP planning has improved the use of data. Extensive training is needed to improve use.
C5.5: Assessment and grading practices are congruent.				X	Administrators and teachers at the elementary level acknowledge that grading practices need to be better aligned with the new reading series.
C5.6: Students have a clear sense of their skills and progress.				X	Few examples of student knowledge of the assessment process were noted.
C5.7: Parents are regularly informed about student progress. `				X	Parents receive report cards and are strongly encouraged to attend parent conferences. Teachers indicate that some parents are difficult to engage in discussions about progress. A translator was recently hired to assist with ELL home communication.
C5.8: School performance data are available to the public.				X	School Report Card data is available on the district web site, however, much of the information needs updating.
C5.9: Assessments and data are used to monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of instructional programs and promote continuous improvement.				X	The district is beginning to make strides in the use of data for programming and planning. A new data manager was hired to improve systems. Training and technical assistance are needed in data management and use.

Assessment Planning

There is an ELA Committee overseeing literacy and assessment. At the time of the audit there was no up-to-date clearly articulated document plan describing in-depth PK-12 assessment practices in GASD. The AIS plan is currently being rewritten. In interviews and classroom observations there were few indications of consistently used ELA formative assessments at any level. One literacy coach described the use of Fresh Reads from *Reading Street* as a formative assessment of a student's decoding, fluency, and comprehension level. Multiple assessments, some rubrics and student work are used to monitor curriculum and instruction by teachers and administrators; however, there is not a consistent planned approach.

A RTI plan is also being developed by the newly hired RTI Coordinator. RTI is in beginning stages at the elementary school and more rudimentary at the middle and high school. The RTI coordinator, in collaboration with the literacy coaches, will be able to help teachers to advance their use of progress monitoring. The district has purchased the Fountas and Pinnell assessments and plans to invest considerable time in the fall of 2010 to have elementary reading teachers assess the instructional levels for all students in each building.

During interviews, teachers and specialists expressed concerns about the amount of time spent in assessment and the potential overlap of information obtained from multiple test administrations. According to teachers interviewed, the unit tests for the new elementary reading series take nearly a week to administer.

Assessment Tools

The Kindergarten screening process was revamped this year. Improvements were made to both the content of the instruments and the Kindergarten registration process. Interview participants reported only scattered use of Kindergarten assessment data and that there is no apparent process in place to track student access to preschool programs and services.

Specialists reported that many of the diagnostic testing materials used by the district are outdated and not aligned with the needs of the current student population. Updating these tools and aligning them with the ELA curriculum will be an important charge of the ELA committee.

At the middle school all students are annually given the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), which measures reading comprehension and provides a lexile score. This serves as a screening tool for students who will receive AIS services through the Read 180 computer program. This supplements the services provided by the reading teachers. In addition teachers reported that they used previously administered ELA tests as practice tests before the ELA. Teachers also use portfolios and rubrics but there is no uniform assessment used. Teachers develop their own tests and final examinations.

Progress Monitoring

Nearly 75% of teachers surveyed reported that they track student progress routinely using multiple assessment methods, both formal and informal. However, little work has been done on developing a comprehensive and consistent approach to formative assessment or setting benchmarks.

In the past two years, there has been an increased emphasis on data analysis at most school levels. Collaboration among literacy coaches, principals and the high school ELA coordinator and teachers has improved over the last year and schools are beginning to engage teachers in item analysis to improve instruction. Literacy coaches noted that teachers vary in the attention and understanding of data and item analysis, with the majority still paying limited attention. Coaches indicated that they would like clearer guidance around their role in assessment.

The district plans to advance the discussion about data and its use in guiding instruction over the next several years. One project was begun this year by the literacy coaches and some district staff to translate and disaggregate the Reading Street Unit tests item by item to correspond to the ELA performance standards. Such data would be available on each student to make the unit tests more useful in providing formative data to identify and differentiate student needs and instruction. Literacy coaches, while enthusiastic, have expressed concern that as the plan stands now, it will take a great deal of teacher time.

Teachers and administrators at all levels need more discussion and professional development on the standards, effective teaching practices and differentiation of instruction. As the teacher survey and interviews indicated, teachers need more time to meet to compare ELA instructional strategies across and between grades and schools.

Communication

Assessment and grading practices are not congruent. This is an area of need, particularly at the elementary level where the new reading series and grading practices are not clearly aligned. There is a formula for grading reading on the report card which weights basal unit tests as 40 percent of the grade, selection tests as 45-50 percent and 5-10 percent other. Teachers expressed concern about grading and report cards. There are no data boards.

An overall observation from literacy coach interviews is the question of whether the grading system is based on a demonstration of learning and specifically the kinds of learning that may result from actual instruction. They noted that grades are heavily dependent on the unit tests, although many staff questioned the validity and level of these unit tests in demonstrating student learning. They mentioned that students need to be proficient at deep thinking in order to do well on the unit tests, but deep thinking instruction is not the norm. One coach reported that the unit tests were described (perhaps by publisher reps) as trying to separate the level “3s” from the level “4s” – and move the 3s to 4s – when many teachers are working to get students to level 3. At all levels PK-12 there is a need to communicate more effectively with parents regarding their children’s progress. At the secondary level grading and reporting practices are quite traditional. At the elementary level there are report cards and parent conferences. Parents describe the elementary report cards as being difficult to interpret. Work needs to be done to improve the assessment key and match the curriculum areas to standards as well as programs used.

Students at the high school and middle school were aware of grading practices and asked questions regarding grades during classes observed. At the elementary school it was not clear what children understood regarding their progress.

School Report Card data is available on the district web site. Much of the information needs updating. There is curricular information for parents on the web site. It would help parents and community

members to get clear and meaningful information about student assessment from the web site or district newsletters. Teachers have web sites for parents and community but some are not well maintained.

Program Evaluation

To determine program effectiveness and areas in need of improvement, assessments and data are used to monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of instructional programs and promote continuous improvement. The district and individual schools have developed Comprehensive Education Plans which effectively use data for making decisions about programs. The district also created a Data Manager position to assist schools with data analysis. This work needs to be expanded and connected to classroom level instruction. Teachers need to see a clear connection between the district's overall plan for data and their involvement with instructional decision making.

Promising Practice C5.1: The district is committed to improving data use to inform instructional practices, monitor student progress and assess program effectiveness and impact.

Significance: A data coordinator has been hired to assist with this initiative. Literacy coaches are doing important work in helping to use test data to better determine students' needs.

Promising Practice C5.2: The district has revised its Kindergarten screening and registration procedures to provide better information about in-coming students.

Significance: A more comprehensive understanding of school readiness and a structured approach to early intervention in Kindergarten should improve student access to concentrated instruction in areas where skills and knowledge lag behind the norm.

Action Recommendation C5.1: Develop a comprehensive plan for assessment and data use that is consistent across schools and grade levels.

Significance: The district needs a plan which addresses what needs to be measured, what tools will be used, how teachers are involved and how parents and the community are notified of student progress. Any curriculum work undertaken must be developed with assessment embedded so that the district can measure and report the relationship between these curriculum efforts and what is implemented in the classroom. This plan must allow for measuring student progress quantitatively and qualitatively, align with the standards, make assessments and data meaningful and engage teachers in reflection on practice.

Action Recommendation C5.2: Ensure that specialists have access to varied and current screening and diagnostic tools.

Significance: As the AIS plan is revitalized and the RTI model takes shape in the district, a clear set of screening and diagnostic tools need to be identified and included in the written curriculum. Time should be spent on the alignment of these instruments with the written curriculum, so that the skills measured are the skills taught.

Action Recommendation C5.3: In addition to Literacy Coaches, assign teacher leaders at each grade level to assist principals with the implementation of the annual testing program.

Significance: It is critical that the responsibility for administrating the annual state testing program is shared. The benefits are two-fold: teachers who participate in the test administration process learn about testing practices and related issues, developing leadership skills by mentoring peers. Second, by distributing the administrative responsibility, key positions such as the literacy coach do not become overwhelmed with administrative duties instead of critical classroom responsibilities.

Action Recommendation C5.4: Literacy Coaches should help teachers understand the how and why of assessing needs of the students in their classes in order to determine the appropriate amount of time, strategies and content to meet student needs.

Significance: Learning to use assessment and data as a basis of instructional decisions is often learned incrementally by specific application in the classroom. Coaches should play an incremental role in providing technical assistance and ongoing feedback to teachers about data use.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Assessment planning	• Develop a plan for literacy assessment PK-12 that is ongoing, embedded and varied. This plan should enable teachers and administrators to determine where students are as they journey as learners through the district. • Clearly articulate the role of assessment through the RTI Plan. Choose progress monitoring tools that are aligned to actual instruction. • Provide guidance and professional development so that teachers understand and use summative and formative assessment. • Encourage teachers to use alternative assessments as well as standardized measures.
Reporting to parents	• Provide time for teachers to collaborate and develop varied forms of assessment that measure as well as improve learning. • Revise reports cards so that they align with standards and instructional practices. • Develop report cards that are meaningful pictures of a student's progress written in clear language for parents. • Revise the reporting system for AIS services to help parents understand their child's needs and the support system working with him or her. • Provide parents with guidance on how to help their child at home.

Section VI: Professional Development

In this section of the report we provide an analysis of the professional development provided to GASD instructional staff in order to effectively deliver the English Language Arts (ELA) Curriculum. The table below summaries the Professional Development Audit Criteria, the Performance Finding for each Audit Criteria and the corresponding Promising Practices and Action Recommendations.

Audit Criteria	Performance Finding	Promising Practices (PP) and Action Recommendations (AR)
P1: The district has a comprehensive professional development plan for ELA and related areas.	P1: Historically, the district has not effectively linked professional development planning with district wide needs to build professional capacity of effective teachers and administrators, leaving considerable gaps in teacher knowledge and leadership skills that need to be systematically addressed.	PPP1.1: The new administration is committed to a planned and integrated approach to professional development and to providing collaborative opportunities for teachers to improve instructional practice. PPP1.2: The Mentor Program is dedicated to improving new teachers' instructional skills ARP1.1: GASD needs to continue to develop a careful long-range K-12 plan that uses a variety of venues for training, implementing, and sustaining curriculum development as a major initiative at all levels. ARP1.2: The plan should maximize the use of teacher and administrator time. ARP1.3: The plan should ensure relevant training for specialists, support staff and administrators. ARP1.4: The plan should provide for observations (internal and external to GASD) of model classrooms, media centers, and other key practices that exemplify student engagement and literacy rich environments. ARP1.5: The plan and district web site should display a matrix that provides an overview of all professional development initiatives, the goals for training, the expectations for teachers, specialists and administrations and the anticipated timeframe for implementation.
P2: An effective teacher/administrator evaluation system is used regularly to build professional capacity.	P2: The teacher evaluation system is under review and some initial steps have been taken to develop a new system.	PPP2.1: The district is using the Charlotte Danielson Frameworks as a basis for their Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) plan. ARP2.1: The revised teacher evaluation system should be aligned with research and designed to improve teacher quality. ARP2.2: Teachers and administrators must be engaged in ongoing collaborative discussion and professional development on the qualities of effective teachers at all levels. ARP2.3: The administrator evaluation system should be

Audit Criteria	Performance Finding	Promising Practices (PP) and Action Recommendations (AR)
		revised to meet new state requirements.
P3: Personnel effectively collaborate in professional learning communities.	P3: The district is beginning to use a professional learning community model as a tool for improving teaching and learning.	PPP3.1: The use of literacy coaches and CEP planning has facilitated the development of professional learning communities in GASD schools. ARP3.1: Engage all teachers, administrators and specialists in collaborative discussion and professional development on the qualities of effective teachers and effective schools. ARP3.2: Organize professional development activities so that school-based work groups are able to attend workshops and trainings as teams and provide opportunities for turn-key training with peers. These groups should include administrators. ARP3.3: The plan should provide time for study groups so that teachers and administrators become proficient in language and literacy development and build a common understanding and vocabulary about research-based instructional practices. ARP3.4: The plan should provide administrators training in the use of walk-throughs and other techniques to monitor the continuous improvement of instruction in classrooms.

For each audit criteria, the text below provides the research base for that audit criteria and the corresponding benchmarks. Next an overarching performance finding for the audit criterion is followed by a summary chart of the benchmark findings and a rating of GASD's performance. Each benchmark is rated as:

- ***Met*:** There is evidence that the benchmark has been established and there is a common understanding district wide of effective practices.
- ***Level II Implementation*:** Long-range plans are in place, considerable implementation has occurred, but the benchmark has not been fully embraced district-wide
- ***Level I Implementation:*** Effective structures and plans have been well established and some early implementation evidence is present.
- ***Unmet*:** Implementation of the benchmark is not evident. No clear plans are in place.

A narrative description of the current audit criteria status follows the summary chart, and a detailed description of promising practices and action recommendations for the audit criteria are provided. Key considerations and suggested implementation strategies conclude the discussion of each audit criteria.

AUDIT CRITERIA P1: THE DISTRICT HAS A COMPREHENSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR ELA AND RELATED AREAS.

To be effective and successful, teacher professional development (PD) must be of high quality and relevant to teachers' needs. Workshops alone do not improve teacher practice in the classroom;

effective professional development requires sustained activities with embedded support across the academic year. These activities include time for follow-up, study, reflections, practice, observations and the assessment of learning outcomes. High quality professional development recognizes the long-term nature of learning, and uses methods that are likely to lead teachers and administrators to improve their practice as professionals.

Effective professional development programs are based on long-range plans that build the capacity of the school system. A professional development plan should:

- Be long-term, ongoing, sequenced, and cumulative, providing teachers with opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills, reflect on changes in their teaching practice, and increase their abilities over time.
- Address teacher and student needs using approaches that are specific to the school's student population.
- Focus on student learning outcomes in ways that enable teachers to readily use their new knowledge and skills.
- Be a model for learner-centered instruction so that teachers experience and reflect on the learning activities that they will lead.
- Use formative and summative evaluation for continuous program improvement.

Research has found that as teachers grow professionally, their instructional repertoire expands, and they become more skilled. Meaningful student learning experiences come from teacher's repertoire of management, instructional and assessment knowledge (Stronge, 2004).

The National Staff Development Council (2001) recommends standards for professional development that are organized into Context, Process and Content Standards. These standards delineate development activities that improve learning for all students by organizing adults into learning communities. Learning community goals are aligned with those of the district, deepen educators' content knowledge, provide them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepare them to use various types of classrooms assessments appropriately.

Effective sustained professional development requires thoughtful long-range planning and diligent implementation strategies. Decisions to provide professional development should be based on a comprehensive needs assessment that links professional learning to targeted student performance outcomes. The plan should include benchmarks for assessing professional gains in content knowledge and pedagogy.

GASD Performance Finding P1: Historically, the district has not effectively linked professional development planning with district-wide needs to build professional capacity of effective teachers and administrators, leaving considerable gaps in teacher knowledge and leadership skills that need to be systematically addressed.

Audit Criteria P1 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
P1.1: All personnel have consistent access to high quality ELA professional development activities.		X			Access to professional development that is aligned with teacher needs has improved over the past several years.
P1.2: ELA professional development activities are high quality and research-based.			X		Integrated professional development is now a district priority. Starting activities planned for the summer 2010 that were selected to impact teacher understanding and student learning, teacher knowledge and leadership skill gaps are beginning to be addressed.
P1.3: New teachers and uncertified teachers are effectively supported by the professional development model.		X			There is a commitment to revamping the mentoring program which supports novice teachers. Training for mentors was done in spring 2010.
P1.4: Professional development activities employ an adult learning framework.				X	This is still a work in progress and must be part of the professional development plan. Administrators must develop an understanding of adult learning needs and all staff must invest in their own personal growth.
P1.5: The professional development plan and activities are regularly evaluated and modifications to the plan are made based on personnel needs.				X	The district is just beginning to use a systematic approach to planning professional development activities.

At the time of the on-site audit work there was no comprehensive professional development plan that aligns training needs, activities and resources. However, over the past several years GASD has strived to improve access to high quality professional development. This goal has been enhanced by several grants and resources received by NYSED as part of the CEP reform requirements. MI's survey of GASD teachers indicates that:

- Overall, teachers received approximately 33 hours of professional development during the 2009-2010 school year; about one-half of this training was devoted to English Language Arts (ELA).
- ELA professional development focused primarily on research-based instructional practices and differentiating instruction that teachers reported, "led me to try new things in my classroom", and "shifted my emphasis on how to teach".
- Nevertheless, 50 percent of teachers indicated that the professional development in ELA prepared them "somewhat" or "not at all" well.

The district's Mentor Plan was revised in February, 2010. During this review Mentor Training was being offered by an area consultant with excellent experience. The purpose of the mentoring program is "to

provide support for new teachers in order to ease the transition from teacher preparation to practice, thereby increasing the retention of teachers in public schools, and to increase the skills of new teachers in order to improve student achievement in accordance with the State Learning Standards." A Mentor Steering Committee is responsible for oversight of the program. It works in collaboration with the District's Professional Development Planning Team. The Mentor Steering Committee has created a timeline describing activities including a workshop for mentors during the first days of school. The training for mentors and external consultant work should continue over the next several years.

During interviews, teachers, specialists and administrators indicated that there had been substantial improvements in professional development in the past couple of school years and that ELA was an emphasis of their development activities. They also expressed concerns that there were many new initiatives and although some professional development had been provided they were somewhat uncertain about the district's and/or school's expectations for implementation of these initiatives. Specifically, teachers were interested in more training in the new reading series, differentiating instruction, using learning centers, RTI, and strategies for ELL students.

Potential Promising Practice P1.1: The new administration is committed to a planned and integrated approach to professional development and to providing collaborative opportunities for teachers to improve instructional practice.

Significance: The new administration has actively pursued grant resources to advance professional development in the district. Expanded professional development activities have allowed teachers and administrators to explore best practices in ELA instruction and discuss pedagogy with teachers from other districts. The Professional Development Planning Team is working to improve the alignment of professional development offerings with teacher and school-based needs.

Promising Practice P1.2: The Mentor Program is dedicated to improving new teachers' teaching ability.

Significance: District administrators and seasoned teachers recognize the potential benefits of a sound mentoring and induction program for new teachers. Principals indicated that in the past decisions about tenure lacked rigor resulting in the retention of some ineffective teachers. Principals, union representatives and teachers alike appear committed to improving teacher quality beginning with the Mentor Program.

Action Recommendation P1.1: GASD needs to continue to develop a careful long-range K-12 plan that uses a variety of venues for training, implementing, and sustaining curriculum development as a major initiative at all levels.

Significance: The plan should:

- be based on a conceptual model linking theory to practice and clearly indentifying how participation will lead to improved teacher quality and student outcomes;
- have clearly defined goals and objectives;
- be grounded in current scientifically based research;
- provide for content instruction and materials that are grade-level appropriate, hands-on and classroom centered;

- provide opportunities to actively engage teachers in effective teaching methods;
- provide opportunities for teachers to share their experiences and exchange their successes and challenges with other teachers, learn how others resolve problems in their classrooms;
- be hands-on and show how materials or exercises can be successfully adapted based on student needs; and
- make effective use of the of the evaluation activities to continuously improve instruction.

The plan should also include specific recommendations for the use of curriculum mapping, a critical goal for improving the ELA Curriculum and aligning the New York State ELA Learning Standards with what is taught and tested in GASD classrooms. To ensure successful implementation administrators must attend training and be involved in this initiative. The plan should incorporate the following provisions to ensure an effective and operational curriculum:

- a cadre of teacher leaders who will assist with teacher training in the curriculum mapping initiative;
- hands-on training on the use of Rubicon Atlas software for all teachers and administrators;
- time for curriculum mapping and sharing at staff meetings, department meetings and Superintendent Conference Days; and
- a three year schedule for training in mapping as well as software use, implementation action plans and evaluation.

Mapping is a process which will take a number of years. In a district such as Amsterdam with a number of schools, decisions must be made on where to start and how to proceed through careful planning. Mapping offers the foundation for collaboration and unique professional growth for teachers as they work on skills and student competencies. This collegial dialogue will result in higher levels of student learning.

Curriculum maps must be working documents not just a static project such as the 2008 alignment project. Since curriculum represents all the learning experiences children have K-12, it is essential that teachers thoroughly understand the elements of good teaching. The district's parallel initiative of revising the teacher evaluation tool will be instrumental in helping inform this understanding.

Action Recommendation P1.2: The plan should maximize the use of teacher and administrator time.

Significance: Professional development activities need to use a combination of delivery models including conferences, workshops, coaching, peer mentoring, best practice demonstration, study circles and team collaboration to actively engage the professional community. Professional development activities should be relevant and provide ongoing support to improving classroom instruction.

Action Recommendation P1.3: The plan should ensure relevant training for specialists, support staff and administrators.

Significance: To create an active literacy environment, all members on the learning community need to be effectively engaged in ongoing professional development activities. These activities should include opportunities for cross-disciplinary discussions as well as opportunities for administrators, specialists and support staff to meet as peers to discuss pedagogy related to their specific areas of expertise.

Action Recommendation P1.4: The plan should provide for observations (internal and external to GASD) of model classrooms, media centers, and other key practices that exemplify student engagement and literacy rich environments.

Significance: A renewed emphasis on student engagement and active literacy environments will require teachers and administers to explore new methods and instructional arrangements. Observations of literacy rich environments will help teachers and administrators visualize how these best practices work. There are numerous area schools teachers could visit to learn more about enriching their classrooms with literacy.

Action Recommendation P1.5: The plan and district web site should display a matrix that provides an overview of all professional development initiatives, the goals for training, the expectations for teachers, specialists and administrations and the anticipated timeframe for implementation.

Significance: GASD has taken on a broad range of key initiatives that have the potential to significantly improve instruction in the district. To achieve full implementation of these many important initiatives, stakeholders will need a framework for understanding what is expected from them when. Creating a matrix of the initiatives and periodically reviewing progress at district, school and committee meetings will help staff and administrators take charge of their role in the reform efforts and celebrate accomplishments.

Key Consideration	Potential Implementation Strategies
Capacity Building	• Focus on building a supportive professional culture in each school where creativity, risk-taking and student-centered teaching are honored and actively promoted on a daily basis. • Understand that change brings resistance and tailor support to address the concerns of staff. • Provide training to administrators in the change process and team-building techniques.
Resource Alignment	• Allocate time at staff meetings, department meetings and Superintendent Conference Days to promote district professional development goals. • Develop a three-year Professional Development Plan at each school that is aligned with district goals and focus on specific school improvement needs. • Collaboratively map what successive steps are needed to achieve the desired results and be specific about who is responsible for follow-up and the evaluation of results. • Communicate frequently with staff about how professional development initiatives are going through email newsletters and website information. • Examine ways that time during the school day can be allocated for teacher collaboration. • Arrange teachers schedules to coincide for common planning time.
Delivery Model	• Each professional development session and location must be carefully planned to offer teachers a comfortable environment that respects their learning. This will enhance teacher learning and the effectiveness of staff developers. • Teacher training should focus on content knowledge through collaborative participation, active learning strategies, curriculum coherence and enough

Key Consideration	Potential Implementation Strategies
	time to allow implementation and follow-up. • Pedagogy discussions should be a regular part of the school culture.
Ongoing Evaluation of Activities	• Keep track of teacher participation, evaluations written, student work samples, assessments, teacher observations, agendas for meetings and trainings, professional conferences attended. • Encourage principals to engage staff in discussions of what is or is not going well in the change effort. Overall the school culture should be enhanced with a positive and supportive principal.
Accountability	• Celebrate any positive results related to the professional development activities (e.g., student performance, new teaching techniques, building activities, outside recognition, grants, community involvement). • Communicate with the community on the value and benefit to children of professional development. • Evaluate the district and school plans annually to determine the impact on the classroom. • Revise plans annually based on ongoing needs assessment and evaluation results.

AUDIT CRITERIA P2: AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER/ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION SYSTEM IS USED REGULARLY TO BUILD PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY.

Over the past decade many educational reform efforts have focused on enhanced accountability for student achievement. States across the nation are developing accountability and data systems capable of tracking the learning gains of individual students. As a result, some states, including New York, are beginning to link teacher evaluation performance standards to student performance on academic standards. In this manner educators and policymakers hope to transform teacher evaluation into a more effective tool for improving instructional practice and raising student achievement.

To improve teacher evaluation, the National Governors Association (NGA, 2010) recommends the following policy strategies:

- ***Define teaching quality*** *- a clear definition what a highly qualified teacher needs to know and be able to do is needed to construct a teacher evaluation policy.*
- ***Focus evaluation policy on improving teaching practice –*** *evaluation should be viewed as an informational tool to help administrators identify teachers who need additional or specialized assistance and to help individual teachers improve their instructional practices.*
- ***Incorporate student learning into teacher evaluation -*** *teacher evaluation should be transformed from a traditionally input-based process into an outcome-driven one where measurable student achievement is a principal outcome on which teachers are evaluated.*
- ***Create professional accountability*** *– performance-based teaching standards should be used to measure and compensate teacher success.*
- ***Train evaluators*** *- evaluators should receive training to conduct more accurate and effective teacher assessments. Training might focus on skills such as analyzing effective teaching practice, determining a teacher's impact on student learning, and providing leadership for professional development and remedial assistance.*

New York State will be implementing changes in the current Annual Professional Performance Review for teachers as well as administrators in the 2011-2012 school year. The new regulations require the establishment of four ratings for teachers -- highly effective, effective, developing and ineffective. Student growth will also be included as a factor.

GASD Performance Finding P2: The teacher evaluation system is under review and some initial steps have been taken to develop a new system.

Audit Criteria P2 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark
P2.1:Teachers and administrators are regularly evaluated and use evaluation feedback to improve performance.			X		The teacher evaluation format is currently being revised. Use of the current evaluation system has been inconsistent.
P2.2: Unions support high quality teaching and administration standards and ongoing expectations for professional growth.		X			Administration- teacher union discourse has improved over the last two years. Administrators report more collaboration around high expectations for teacher performance.
P2.3: Personnel evaluation data is used to develop the professional development plan.				X	Professional development planning is primarily based on anecdotal evidence.

GASD is currently in the process of revamping their Annual Professional Performance Plan (APPR) to reflect changes in New York State requirements. The district is using the Charlotte Danielson Frameworks as a basis for improving their teacher evaluation tool and process for evaluation.

During interviews, teachers reported that, in general, the current teacher evaluation system was inconsistently used to assess their performance in the classroom. When surveyed:

- Nearly one-half of GASD teachers (49%) reported that teacher evaluation results are not linked to opportunities to improve performance.
- Thirty-eight percent of teachers indicated that teacher evaluation results are not used to further develop teachers' knowledge and skills.

Principals indicated that although a teacher evaluation system has historically been used in the district, its application has not led to rigorous efforts to improve teacher performance or the termination of chronically ineffective teachers. Several principals expressed frustration about past practices in granting tenure to lower quality teachers and felt they were trying to be more stringent in evaluating the skills of new hires.

Promising Practice P2.1: The district is using the Charlotte Danielson Frameworks as a basis for their Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) plan.

Significance: The new APPR regulations require evaluations which support continued growth for teachers. Meaningful and timely feedback must be provided. The Danielson Frameworks is based on the elements of effective teaching. Teacher standards must form the basis for evaluation. The domains in the teacher evaluation system should form a basis for the teacher hiring protocols.

Action Recommendation P2.1: The revised teacher evaluation system should be aligned with research and designed to improve teacher quality.

Significance: The new system should be designed to support and increase teacher quality. On the teacher survey few teachers report talking with principals about teaching strategies. The new assessment system would help develop a common language and establish a process for dialogue regarding teaching and learning.

Action Recommendation P2.2: Teachers and administrators must be engaged in ongoing collaborative discussion and professional development on the qualities of effective teachers at all levels.

Significance: As the teachers and administrators address curriculum mapping as a means of curriculum development, they will find that mapping is a powerful context for sharing and discussion of effective teaching strategies. After many years of working with textbooks as curriculum, they will be able to use data gathered on instruction to look for gaps in content, skills and assessment. They will develop a common language regarding teaching. The indicators of effective teaching should be transparent so that teachers are aware of and understand the indicators on which their evaluations are based.

Action Recommendation P2.3: The administrator evaluation system should be revised to meet new state requirements.

Significance: Similar changes to the administrative evaluation system will be needed to meet new state requirements. In anticipation of this 2011-2012 requirement, the district should begin to explore best practices in school leadership evaluation.

Key Consideration	Potential Implementation Strategies
Teacher Collaboration Professional growth requires teachers and administrators to actively seek new knowledge and skills.	• Participation in book clubs on children's literature. • Observe another teacher. • Share samples of student work. • Share teaching ideas. • Read a professional book or journal. • Participate in blogs.
Teacher professional development Effective professional development requires many venues.	• Attend workshops and training. • Work with literacy coaches and administrators on using data to improve instruction. • Engage in action research on topics relevant to school improvement. • Visit schools in other districts to observe lessons. • Share best practices as part of a Faculty Meeting. • Allow time for mapping and mapping review on a regular basis. • Take an online professional development course.

Key Consideration	Potential Implementation Strategies
Administrator Professional Development and Evaluation Instructional leaders must model professional standards and lead the community of learners.	• Determine administrator professional development based on the school improvement needs of each school. • Encourage administrators to map their building professional development such as topics at staff meetings. • Ensure joint training opportunities for administrators and their staff. • Tie administrator evaluations to school performance and the effective implementation of school improvement plans.

AUDIT CRITERIA P3: PERSONNEL EFFECTIVELY COLLABORATE IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES. Hord, S. M. (1997) defines *professional learning community* as a collegial group who are united in their commitment to an outcome. In such a community administrators, teachers and other school-based staff engage in a variety of activities including sharing a vision, working and learning collaboratively, visiting and observing other classrooms, and participating in shared decision making. Hord states that "as an organizational arrangement, the professional learning community is seen as a powerful staff-development approach and a potent strategy for school change and improvement."

Kleine-Kracht (1993) suggests that administrators must be an integral part of the learning community and actively seek solutions for school improvement in conjunction with teachers. In a true professional learning community there is no longer a hierarchy of knowledge, but a shared commitment that everyone will learn, grow and continuously improve the condition of the school.

Student learning priorities must drive teacher learning content (Tallerico, 2005). Best practices in teaching, assessment and student work should be a primary focus of professional development. There must be an emphasis on teachers collaborating to decrease students' struggles with the curriculum. Studies of teacher learning done by Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (2002) show that there are five key practices that must be part of teacher training: 1) presentation of theory, 2) demonstration, 3) practice, 4) feedback and 5) follow-up coaching in the classroom.

GASD Performance Finding P3: The district is beginning to use a professional learning committee model as a tool for improving teaching and learning.

Audit Criteria P3 Benchmarks	Met	Level II	Level I	Unmet	Benchmark Performance
P3.1: Central office administrators and principals are fully engaged in collaborative learning initiatives.			X		Administrators have many competing demands and appear to inconsistently attend training with staff.
P3.2: Schools ensure that professional development is used to promote effective classroom instruction.			X		Although most principals report that they expect to see changes in instructional practice in the classroom, not all use a systematic approach for follow-up and monitoring.

The audit survey confirmed that professional development for GASD teachers has incorporated a variety of events (workshops, study groups, self-reflection, etc.) and methods of presentation. These opportunities have been further enhanced by the use of literacy coaches and the CEP planning processes adopted by schools. Many teachers interviewed expressed enthusiasm about new opportunities for professional growth.

An effective professional learning community model ensures that administrators, teachers and staff are actively engaged in a joint learning experience. In GASD, however, 70 percent of teachers surveyed indicated that their schools did not have a formal process in place for sharing practice and instructional ideas with one another. Interview participants said that professional development opportunities are often designed in as separate activities where teachers, support staff and other key personnel work within their discipline, but not in cross disciplinary teams. In particular, social workers, school psychologists and guidance counselors expressed a high level of dissatisfaction regarding involvement in professional development activities.

Interviews with central office administrators and principals also suggested inconsistent participation in professional development activities. Most notable is the low level of attendance by principals and their school teams at key curriculum and RTI professional development activities.

Promising Practice P3.1: The use of literacy coaches and CEP planning has improved, and facilitated the development of professional learning communities in GASD schools.

Significance: The audit shows that GASD teachers participate in less collaboration around instruction with their peers and administrators than teachers in other districts. The use of literacy coaches and CEP planning teams have increased teacher awareness of the benefits of collaboration and its capacity for enhancing job satisfaction and professionalism.

Research has found that as teachers grow professionally, their instructional repertoire expands, and they become more skilled. Meaningful student learning experiences come from teacher's repertoire of management, instructional and assessment knowledge (Stronge, 2004). Coaches as well as outside consultants should engage teachers in book groups and "share sessions" as part of the district's professional development. Time should be given at faculty meetings for presentations by librarians about books and sharing of best practices. ELA teachers at the middle school and high school need time together for sharing and discussing best practices.

Action Recommendation P3.1: Engage all teachers, administrators and specialists in collaborative discussion and professional development on the qualities of effective teachers and effective schools.

Significance: The audit findings suggest that the primary focus of the district's professional development activities has been teachers. Although teachers are key to reform, all school personal need to be actively engaged in creating effective learning environments. For example, media specialists must be equally versed in student engagement and create spaces that are literacy rich and support the schools ELA goals. Similarly, administrators and content area specialists must understand how to promote literacy in the content areas and facilitate the choice on culturally relevant texts.

Action Recommendation P3.2: Organize professional development activities so that school-based work groups are able to attend workshops and trainings as teams and provide opportunities for turn-key training with peers. These groups should include administrators.

Significance: To fulfill their role as instructional leaders, administrators must take an active role in professional development along with teachers. The research on successfully bringing about change in schools underscores the importance of the principal's involvement in professional development such as mapping and differentiation (Tallerico, 2005). In addition, principals must support teacher development and sustain it through allocation of time for collaboration and resources.

Action Recommendation P3.3: The plan should provide time for study groups so that teachers and administrators become proficient in language and literacy development and build a common understanding and vocabulary about research-based instructional practices.

Significance: Reflection is key to building a working understanding of best practices and how they are applied in the classroom. Through ongoing conversations and problem solving, teachers and administrators convert theory into effective practices.

Action Recommendation P3.4: The plan should provide administrators training in the use of walk-throughs and other techniques to monitor the continuous improvement of instruction in classrooms.

Significance: Walk-throughs and subsequent discussions with teachers will allow administrators to send the message that effective classroom instruction is expected. The evaluation system must shift from only evaluating teachers to evaluating learning.

Key Consideration	Potential Implementation Strategies
Instructional Leadership and Team-building	• Create school leadership teams and provide training for schools in team-building including how to hold effective meetings, consensus building and shared decision making. • Require administrators to attend training on using the DuFour Professional Learning Communities model. • Instructional leadership discussions should focus on how to set priorities and develop a common set of instructional skills and strategies. • Ensure that administrators as well as teachers fully understand the role of standards, indicators, understanding how kids learn including brain-based learning; fundamentals of learning; and student-centered learning. • Time at staff meetings should be devoted to questions and sharing as a follow-up to training on learning initiatives.
Standards Implementation	• Ensure that teachers have an in-depth of understanding of the core curriculum standards and the way these standards frame the literacy competencies for each grade and across grades. • Create activities that get teachers thinking about what they are doing within a larger framework than day-to-day activities and lessons.
Use of a Core Reading Series	• In addition to a core reading series teachers should be trained using high quality children's literature for read alouds, discussions, books clubs or literature circles. • Ensure classrooms have libraries and books for free reading and teachers know how to incorporate the use of sustained reading time into daily

Key Consideration	Potential Implementation Strategies
	routines. • Engage school media specialists in book talks and literacy activities within the classroom.
Differentiated Instruction	• Provide technical assistance to administrators in scheduling center time so that school support staff (including library staff, speech pathologist, reading teacher, community members, pre-service teachers, etc.) are available on a rolling or regular basis to support and differentiate instruction during center time. • *Use Literacy Work Stations: Making Centers Work* by Debbie Diller to provide all elementary school staff with greater understanding of the purpose of centers. • Train teachers in using "fish bowl" and other kinds of modeling to ensure children understand expectations during literacy center time. • Develop a clear continuum of assessment strategies at each grade level as part of the curriculum mapping process. • Create a data overview through NERIC reports, Data Mentor or NYS Report Card data. Encourage teachers to examine data as evidence as well as instruction.
Instructional Strategies	• Provide demonstration lessons on the use of cooperative learning strategies that involve learners in an active, collaborative, student centered learning process that develops problem-solving, social skills, individual accountability and positive interdependence. • Demonstrate and assist teachers in the use of Project-based Learning that allows students to engage in inquiry-based activities as they pursue solutions to problems by asking questions, debating ideas, making predictions, designing plans or experiments, drawing conclusions, communicating ideas to others and making artifacts or projects. • Increase the time that students actually read. Hold Book Clubs and open discussions on how to increase sustained reading activities • Provide training on how to increase conversation in the classroom. *Lively Discussions: Fostering Engaged Readers*. Gambrell and Almasi (Eds.); *From Communication to Curriculum* by D. Barnes; *Classroom Discourse* by Courtney Cazden, 1988. • Provide technical assistance on how to go beyond compare-contrast. Why is meta-cognition important? Ensure that teachers understand synthesizing vs. analyzing. • Build the vocabulary and language enrichment skills of teachers at all levels. • Assist teachers in finding and selecting resources that correspond to and can supplement the content of the core reading program or content area reading during, for example, center-time activities, independent reading time, etc. • Assist teachers in developing instructional skills such as: question formation to elicit higher levels of thinking; use of wait/think time, use of pre-instructional set, providing feedback of results to students. • Develop a focused approach to writing daily beginning in Kindergarten.
Student Development	Professional development and coaching should include: • Strategies for building in student choice and opportunities for expression coming from their own experiences. • Writers' Workshop approach in elementary classrooms instead of the reliance on worksheets and writing prompts.

Key Consideration	Potential Implementation Strategies
	• Allowing student choice in the selection of reading materials. At the secondary level allowing a balance of young adult literature in varied genres with classical titles. Classroom libraries in all classrooms should offer a variety of literature genres and informational texts. • Celebrating writing in classrooms and schools PK-12. Publish student work and display it. • Developing consistent writing expectations at each grade level matched to rubrics. • Using a writing portfolio to collect student work from grade to grade. • A consistent approach to behavior management.
Cultural Competence	• Develop outreach strategies to attract and train diverse school volunteers, including key stakeholders in the Hispanic community and faith-based community. • Include quality Latino literature at each grade level which is essential to develop cultural acceptance and proficiency.
Use of Materials and Technology Applications	• Provide training in how to develop and enhance literacy skills using instructional technology (e.g., how to use SmartBoards and/or Web 2.0 tools with the core reading program). • Expand school and teacher websites by publishing student writing and including photos of writing activities.

APPENDIX A
New York State Curriculum Audit Requirements

NYSED.gov

EMSC

Elementary, Middle, Secondary & Continuing Education

2010 Title I Audit of Curriculum (AOC) Grant Application for Districts in Need of Improvement (DINIs) – Corrective Action Year 1

Application (114 KB)

Description:	This grant is for Title I DINIs newly identified for Corrective Action in August 2009 to undertake and implement an AOC. The AOC must target the identified accountability measure(s) and subgroup(s) not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and assess: • the alignment of the district's curriculum with the NY State Learning Standards; • the implementation of that curriculum; and • the alignment of the curriculum to instruction.
Grant Period:	January 25, 2010 to August 31, 2010
Eligible Applicants:	NYC District #17 --- $1,691,900 Amsterdam City School District --- $206,500 Grant amounts are equal to $305 times the number of non-proficient students in the identified subject area.
Due Date:	Postmarked by January 20, 2010 Grants will begin 1/25/10 and end 8/31/10. Submit one original and three (3) copies of completed application to: Grants Management Room 674 EBA New York State Education Department Albany, NY 12234 Attn: Title I Audit of Curriculum (AOC) Grant Application for DINI Corrective Action Year 1
Questions:	For additional information or assistance, please contact: **Schools in New York City (NYC)**: Nydia Mennuti at (718) 722-2743 or nmenutti@mail.nysed.gov **Schools in the Rest of State (ROS)**: Meg McNiff at (518) 473-0295 or mmcniff@mail.nysed.gov
Date Posted:	December 30, 2009

Purpose of Grant

The purpose of this grant is to support districts (DINIs) newly identified for Corrective Action (year 1), to undertake an Audit of Curriculum (AOC). The AOC must target the identified accountability measure(s) and subgroup(s) not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and assesses:

- the alignment of the school's curriculum with the NY State Learning Standards;
- the implementation of that curriculum; and
- the alignment of the curriculum to instruction.

The AOC must result in a report by August 31, 2010 . The recommendations in the report must be incorporated into the district's Corrective Action Plan (CAP). The district must implement the recommendations during the 2010-11 school year. The district must provide any supports required to implement the recommendations in the audit report.

Grant funds must be used for any activities related to conducting the audit.

If the district has a school that has had an Audit of Curriculum (AOC), the school's audit report must be considered when developing recommendations for the district's audit report.

Eligibility

Each Title I DINI newly identified in August 2009 as Corrective Action (year 1) is eligible for a grant to conduct the AOC. Grant amounts are equal to $305 per the number of non-proficient students in the identified subject area.

The following are newly identified Corrective Action (year 1) DINIs and their grant amounts:

NYC District # 17 --- $1,691,600

Amsterdam City School District --- $206,500

Grant Period

January 25, 2010 to August 31, 2010. No extension or carryover of funds is allowed.

Requirements of the District Curriculum Audit Report

The District Curriculum Audit Report must:

- address the accountability measure(s), grade level(s) and subgroup(s) for which the district has failed to make AYP;
- analyze the learning environment and culture including the district policies to provide a safe, equitable and orderly learning environment, the social emotional atmosphere of the learning environment, and the supports for students;
- make recommendations for improvement that:
    - meet all applicable State Education Department (SED) regulations and requirements, including addressing mastery of all learning standards in the identified area(s);
    - are actionable in light of district fiscal constraints; and
    - are both long and short-term.

The District Curriculum Audit Report must include the following elements:

1. Introduction
    a. profile of the community including socio-economic data and a profile of the district's student population;
    b. philosophical statement of approach to the audit
2. Critical Analysis of the Curriculum

   a. written curriculum;
   b. taught curriculum;
   c. tested curriculum;
   d. effect of policy, planning and organizational control on curriculum delivery;
   e. vertical (across grades) and horizontal (across subject areas and classrooms within a grade) alignment with State standards;
   f. consistency of written and taught curriculum;
   g. alignment of the curriculum with NYS Learning Standards;
   h. alignment of textbooks and resources with the NYS Learning Standards;
   i. equity of access and opportunity for all students in the building;
   j. availability and use of instructional technology; and
   k. adequacy of the school building and facilities.
3. Instruction - the degree to which:
   a. written curriculum is taught and tested by highly qualified teachers;
   b. pedagogical strategies are implemented based on student needs;
   c. pedagogical strategies meet research-based standards;
   d. lesson plan objectives are aligned with NYS Learning Standards;
   e. grading is based the use of rubrics and other objective criteria;
   f. strategies are implemented consistently for all students;
   g. culture and the learning environment, including safety, equity, etc., affect and support the physical, cultural, socio-economic, and intellectual needs of the students;
   h. instruction and support services are available during school, before/after school, weekends and summers;
   i. teachers identify and provide appropriate additional instruction for students who are not at proficient levels;
   j. district policies ensure that all students attend the entire school day regularly;
   k. policies ensure that time out of class is minimized;
   l. school strategies ensure that teachers and teacher assistants' attendance is optimal;
   m. strategies actively engage students in learning; and
   n. learning activities are relevant and rigorous.
4. Professional Development
   a. strategies for ensuring consistent, continuous, research-based professional development across all classrooms;
   b. strategies for ensuring that professional development translates into effective classroom strategies;
   c. strategies for supporting new teachers, uncertified teachers and any other teachers needing additional support/mentoring;
   d. strategies for building both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge;
   e. presenters who are knowledgeable in research-based instructional strategies and are expert in their use;
   f. consistency of administration in supporting and evaluating professional development;
   g. the degree to which staff participate in professional development and show evidence of implementation of new strategies;
   h. focus on curriculum alignment with State and district standards and sound educational research and practice; and
   i. the degree to which professional development reflects a commitment to both equity and diverse needs of the students and families of the community.
5. Assessment/Data Analysis
   a. use of assessments and other student work for monitoring of curriculum and instruction;

   b. use of classroom, school, district, State and other assessments and data to determine program/curriculum effectiveness and efficiency;
   c. use of item analysis to inform instruction on proficiency levels on NYS Learning Standards;
   d. use of multiple assessments for diagnostic and re-teaching purposes; and
   e. frequency of data analysis conducted by teachers, grade levels, subject area specialists.
6. Management/Administrative Staff Support
   a. leadership practices that promote student achievement and support and evaluate teachers' instructional practices such as regularly scheduled teacher evaluations, informal walk-through visits to classes, timely feedback to teachers; and monitoring the implementation of a curriculum aligned with NYS Learning Standards.
   b. communication and collaboration between teachers of the content area identified for improvement and:
      - other content area teachers;
      - other teachers;
      - pupil personnel services staff;
      - special education and/or English as a second language (ESL) staff;
      - department chairperson, principal and other administrators;
      - school and district administration; and
      - parents, critical stakeholders and community members
   c. accountability policies;
   d. curriculum-centered budget;
   e. resources targeted to most at-risk students;
   f. staff assignments based on student needs;
   g. resource allocation focused on curriculum priorities and areas of greatest need; and
   h. support for positive climate and environment.
7. Compliance
   a. State and federal mandated requirements; and
   b. District goals/objectives.

Submission Instructions

A complete application consists of:

- Cover page (completed and signed);
- Audit of Curriculum Plan;
- Assurances and Certification Regarding Lobbying, etc.
- FS-10 Budget Form

Application (114 KB)

Submit one original and three copies postmarked by **January 20, 2010** to:

Grants Management
Room 674 EBA
New York State Education Department
Albany, NY 12234
Attn: Title I Audit of Curriculum (AOC) Grant Application for DINI Corrective Action Year 1

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APPENDIX B

Measurement Incorporated's Curriculum Audit Tools

GREATER AMSTERDAM SCHOOL DISTRICT

TEACHER SURVEY

This survey is being administered by Measurement Incorporated as part of a comprehensive audit of the English Language Arts curriculum. Your responses will be an important part of the curriculum audit so please answer all questions as candidly as possible.

The survey is divided into four sections:

A. Background Information
B. Professional Development
C. Curriculum and Instruction
D. Parent Involvement

Based on surveys of similar length, it should take approximately 35 minutes to complete, including time to review your responses.

Please be assured that your responses will remain entirely confidential; no one other than the audit team will have access to completed surveys. In addition, no identifying information will be included in the final report. Should you have any questions about this survey, please contact

Thomas Kelsh at (518) 427-9840, ext. 206 or **TKelsh@measinc.com**

Once you have completed the survey, enclose and seal it in the attached envelope. Please return the survey to [FILL IN] no later than **Wednesday, May 5th, 2010.** Thank you.

Section A. Background

ABOUT YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS

A1. In what school do you currently teach?

- ❑ (1) William H. Barkley MicroSociety Magnet School
- ❑ (2) Marie Curie Institute of Engineering & Communications
- ❑ (3) Raphael J. McNulty Academy for International Studies and Literacy
- ❑ (4) William B. Tecler Arts in Education Magnet School
- ❑ (5) Wilbur Lynch Literacy Academy
- ❑ (6) Amsterdam High School

A2. How many years of experience do you have in each of the following positions?
Write in the number of years for each.

	Number of years
a. Total years as a teacher	
b. Total years as a teacher in this school	

A3. What grade level(s) do you currently teach? Circle the predominant grade level(s).

K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

A4. Which best describes your main teaching assignment? Check ONE.

- ❑ (1) Self-contained classroom teacher (i.e., you teach all core subjects)
- ❑ (2) Core subject area teacher (please specify subject) _____
- ❑ (3) Special education teacher
- ❑ (4) English as a second language (ESL) teacher
- ❑ (5) Other (please specify) _____

A5. What is the highest level of education you have completed? Check ONE.

- ❑ (1) Bachelor's degree
- ❑ (2) Master's degree
- ❑ (3) Master's degree plus graduate work
- ❑ (4) Doctoral degree

A6. Do you have a New York State teaching certificate?

❑ (1) Yes ❑ (2) No *If you checked "No" skip to item **A7**.*

A6(a) If *Yes*, please specify the type of certificate you have. Check ONE.

- ❑ (1) Initial Certificate
- ❑ (2) Provisional Certificate
- ❑ (3) Professional Certificate
- ❑ (4) Permanent Certificate

A6(b) If *Yes*, please specify your field of certification. Check ALL that apply.

- ❑ (a) Common Branch (K-6)
- ❑ (b) Subject area (7-12); (specify subject) _____
- ❑ (c) Special Education (Pre-K-12)
- ❑ (d) Early childhood education
- ❑ (e) Pupil Personnel Services (school counselor, etc.)
- ❑ (f) Other (please specify) _____

A7. How often do you read the professional literature including journals and periodicals?

❑ (1) Rarely or not at all ❑ (2) Sometimes ❑ (3) Frequently ❑ (4) Very frequently

A8. Have you received any award or formal recognition as an educator in the past five years?

❑ (1) Yes ❑ (2) No If *Yes*, specify _____

A9. Are you a member of any professional associations?

❑ (1) Yes ❑ (2) No If *Yes*, specify _____

A10. Do you enjoy your work as a teacher?

❑ (1) Hardly at all ❑ (2) Sometimes ❑ (3) Most of the time ❑ (4) Always

A11. How well do you understand the New York State English Language Arts Learning Standards?

❑ (1) Not at all ❑ (2) Somewhat ❑ (3) Moderately well ❑ (4) Very well

A12. How many students are in your class? If you teach multiple classes, provide the average class size.

_____ Number/Class size

A13. What percentage of your students are <u>not</u> Caucasian/white?

_____ %

A14. What percentage of your students are students with disabilities (SWD)?

_____ %

A15. What percentage of your students are English language learners (ELL)?

_____ %

A16. Are you planning to return to your school next year?

❑ (4) Yes, definitely ❑ (3) Yes, probably ❑ (2) Not sure ❑ (1) No

A16(a) If *No*, are you planning to… Check ONE.

- ❑ (1) Teach/work in another school in your district
- ❑ (2) Teach/work in a different New York State school district
- ❑ (3) Teach/work at a private school
- ❑ (4) Teach in another state
- ❑ (5) Take a temporary leave
- ❑ (6) Leave the profession permanently
- ❑ (7) Other (please specify) _____

A17. To what extent would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about teaching and learning? Check ONE box for each.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly agree (4)
a. A quiet classroom is generally needed for effective learning.				
b. Teachers should not let students grope for answers when they can just explain the answers directly.				
c. Students are not ready for "meaningful" learning until they have acquired basic reading and math skills.				
d. It's better when teachers—not students—decide what activities are to be done in class.				
e. Student projects often result in students learning all sorts of wrong "knowledge".				
f. Homework is a good setting for having students answer questions posed in their textbooks.				
g. Students will take more initiative to learn when they feel free to move around during class.				
h. Students should help establish criteria on which their work will be assessed.				
i. Instruction should be built around problems with clear, correct answers, and around ideas that most students can grasp quickly.				
j. How much students learn depends on how much background knowledge they have; that is why teaching facts is so necessary.				
k. It's better for students to master a few complex ideas and skills well, even if the breadth of their knowledge is limited.				
l. The most important part of instruction is that it encourages "sense-making" or thinking among students. The content of the curriculum is secondary.				
m. It's better to have all sorts of activities going on in class, rather than giving the whole class the same assignment.				
n. Teachers should mainly be facilitators of knowledge. They should provide opportunities for students to discover and construct concepts for themselves.				

ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

A18. To what extent are the programs and practices in your school guided by a clear, shared vision and mission?

❑ (1) Not at all ❑ (2) Small extent ❑ (3) Moderate extent ❑ (4) Great extent

A19. To what extent do you know about and understand the central mission of your school?

❑ (1) Not at all ❑ (2) Small extent ❑ (3) Moderate extent ❑ (4) Great extent

A20. To what extent do you support the central mission of your school?

❑ (1) Not at all ❑ (2) Small extent ❑ (3) Moderate extent ❑ (4) Great extent

A21. How much input do you have in each of the following areas? Check ONE box for each.

	No input (1)	Some input (2)	Moderate input (3)	Great deal of input (4)
a. Setting performance standards for students				
b. Establishing/adjusting the curriculum				
c. Determining the content of professional development				
d. Teacher evaluation methods				
e. Hiring new teachers				
f. Determining school policies and procedures				
g. Deciding how the school budget will be spent				

A22. About how often do you meet with other teachers in your school to do the following? Check ONE box for each.

	Rarely or never (1)	A few times a month (2)	A few times a week (3)	Every day (4)
a. Share instructional strategies				
b. Discuss curriculum development				
c. Discuss individual students				
d. Observe or be observed teaching				
e. Coach or mentor				
f. Discuss assessment data				
g. Model instruction				

A23. To what extent would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your teaching colleagues? Check ONE box for each.

Teachers in my school…	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly agree (4)
a. feel responsible to help each other do their best.				
b. expect students to complete every assignment.				
c. seem more competitive than cooperative.				
d. expect high academic achievement from all our students.				
e. really trust each other.				
f. can be counted on to help out anywhere/anytime, even though it may not be part of their official assignment.				
g. think it is important for all students to do well in their classes.				
h. openly express their views at faculty meetings.				

A24. In the past three months, how often have you talked with your school principal about the following? Check ONE box for each.

	Rarely or not at all (1)	Sometimes (2)	Frequently (3)	Very frequently (4)
a. Teaching strategies				
b. Selecting a new curriculum or making changes in the current curriculum				
c. Techniques for meeting the learning needs of specific students				
d. Strategies for differentiating instruction based on the needs of students				
e. Techniques for assessing student achievement				
f. Using assessment data to improve instruction				
g. Teacher evaluation and/or self-assessment				

A25. In the past three months, how often did your school principal do the following? Check ONE box for each.

	Rarely or not at all (1)	Sometimes (2)	Frequently (3)	Very frequently (4)
a. Demonstrate instructional strategies and/or the use of curricular materials in your class(es)				
b. Observe you teach and provide feedback on your teaching				
c. Share information or advise you about instructional strategies or curriculum materials				
d. Examine and discuss students' assessment data with you				

A26. How would you rate communication between the following groups in your school? Check ONE box for each.

	Poor (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)
a. Principal-teacher				
b. Teacher-teacher, within grades				
c. Teacher-teacher, across grades				
d. Teacher-other instructional staff (ESL, special education, pupil personnel)				
e. Teacher-parent				

A27. To what extent would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your school? Check ONE box for each.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly agree (4)
a. Teachers and the principal work collaboratively in making school decisions.				
b. Teachers have autonomy in carrying out instructional decisions.				
c. The principal communicates openly and frankly with teachers and students.				
d. The principal works to create a sense of community.				
e. Parents feel comfortable contacting school personnel.				
f. Teachers are viewed as instructional leaders.				
g. The school environment is conducive to learning.				
h. The school has a manual of rules and regulations that are actually followed to ensure a safe environment.				
i. Teachers are encouraged to try out new teaching strategies.				
j. Compared with other schools, this school is a good place for teachers to work.				
k. The principal actively monitors the quality of instruction in the school.				
l. High standards and expectations are communicated consistently to all students.				
m. Instructional goals for students are clearly defined.				
n. The school communicates regularly with parents/families.				
o. The school is inclusive of all cultures.				
p. Most students in the school are engaged in and excited about learning.				
q. The school clearly and centrally focuses on improved teaching and learning.				
r. There is clear and strong instructional leadership from the school principal.				
s. The principal effectively manages the day-to-day affairs of the school.				

A28. Are there schoolwide procedures in place for identifying and referring struggling learners to prevention and/or intervention services?

❑ (1) Yes ❑ (2) No

A29. Are there schoolwide procedures in place for monitoring the progress of struggling learners who receive prevention and/or intervention services?

❑ (1) Yes ❑ (2) No

A30. Are there schoolwide procedures in place for determining when prevention and/or intervention services are no longer needed?

❑ (1) Yes ❑ (2) No

A31. What intervention services are available in your school for struggling learners?
Check ALL that apply.

- ❑ a. A separate tutorial program that is part of an intervention
- ❑ b. Instructional interventions for English language learners
- ❑ c. Instructional programs for students with special needs/disabilities
- ❑ d. Before- and after-school programs for students needing help with basic skills
- ❑ e. A certified reading and/or math specialist who provides intensive intervention
- ❑ f. Trained volunteers who tutor students within the core classroom program
- ❑ g. Push-in/pull-out programs
- ❑ h. Other (please specify) _____
- ❑ i. *Intervention services are not available for struggling learners*

Section B. Professional Development

B1. This school year, about how many hours of professional development did you receive?

_____ Hours

B2. This school year, about how many hours of professional development did you receive in English, reading, or language arts?

_____ Hours

B3. This school year, how many hours of professional development did you receive that focused on the following topics? Check ONE box for each.

	No time (0)	Less than 1 hour (1)	1 to 2 hours (2)	3 to 5 hours (3)	More than 5 hours (4)
a. Standards-based lesson planning					
b. Selecting instructional goals/objectives					
c. Selecting and adapting curricular and instructional material to meet student needs					
d. Using best-practice instructional strategies					
e. Administering classroom assessments					
f. Reviewing student performance data to inform instruction					
g. Improving classroom management skills					
h. Aligning curriculum to state standards					
i. Aligning curriculum vertically across grades					
j. Aligning instruction to curriculum					
k. Motivating/engaging students in learning					
l. Differentiating instruction in response to differences in student readiness and need					
m. Using technology to support instruction					
n. Improving practice through self-reflection					
o. Meeting the needs of special populations of students (e.g., ELL, SWD)					

B4. What type of professional development did you receive this school year? Check ALL that apply.

- ❑ a. Stand alone training workshops/conferences
- ❑ b. Ongoing series of training activities in a content area (e.g., math, ELA)
- ❑ c. Direct classroom assistance from outside consultants
- ❑ d. Regularly scheduled staff meetings
- ❑ e. Visits to, or observations of, other programs
- ❑ f. Teacher study groups, networks, or collaboratives
- ❑ g. Inquiry-based projects/action research
- ❑ h. Self-directed learning
- ❑ i. Mentoring/peer observation and coaching
- ❑ j. Internet-based or long distance learning
- ❑ k. Enrollment in college or university courses

B5. To what extent would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about professional development you received this school year? Check ONE box for each.

Professional development...	**Strongly disagree (1)**	**Disagree (2)**	**Agree (3)**	**Strongly agree (4)**
a. gave me many opportunities to work on aspects of my teaching that I am trying to develop and/or change.				
b. filled a big gap in my knowledge of teaching methods.				
c. provided me with new techniques for teaching.				
d. allowed me to focus on a problem over an extended period of time.				
e. shifted my emphasis on what to teach (i.e., content).				
f. shifted my emphasis on how to teach (i.e., instructional strategies).				
g. provided me with useful feedback about my teaching.				
h. made me pay closer attention to particular things I was doing in the classroom.				
i. led me to try new things in the classroom.				
j. introduced me to new materials and resources.				

B6. How would you rate the quality of professional development you received this school year?

❑ (1) Poor ❑ (2) Fair ❑ (3) Good ❑ (4) Excellent

B7. How well did the professional development you received this school year prepare you for teaching your students?

❑ (1) Not at all ❑ (2) Somewhat ❑ (3) Moderately well ❑ (4) Very well

B8. How well did the professional development you received this school year prepare you for teaching English, reading, or language arts to your students?

❑ (1) Not at all ❑ (2) Somewhat ❑ (3) Moderately well ❑ (4) Very well

B9. Does your school schedule include paid planning time for teachers during the week?

❑ (1) Yes ❑ (2) No

B10. Does your school have a formal process in place that allows teachers to share learning experiences and activities with colleagues?

❑ (1) Yes ❑ (2) No

B11. Which of the following types of collective supports are also available in your school? Check ALL that apply.

❑ a. Seminars or classes for beginning teachers
❑ b. Regular or supportive communication with the principal
❑ c. Regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers on issues of instruction
❑ d. Coaching
❑ e. Mentoring

B12. Who provides you with feedback about your teaching? Check ALL that apply.

❑ a. No one
❑ b. Principal or assistant principal
❑ c. Other teachers
❑ d. Students
❑ e. Coach, mentor, or master teacher
❑ f. Professional developers
❑ g. External consultants
❑ h. Other (specify) _____

B13. During the current school year, how many times were you… Check ONE box for each.

	Never (1)	Once (2)	2-3 times (3)	4 times or more (4)
a. observed teaching your class by your principal or assistant principal?				
b. observed teaching your class by a mentor, coach, or master teacher?				
c. given feedback on your teaching as part of a formal evaluation process?				
d. given feedback on your teaching (not as part of a formal evaluation process)?				
e. given feedback on your lesson plans?				

B14. To what extent would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your school's current system of teacher evaluation? Check ONE box for each.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly agree (4)
a. Teacher evaluation is related to important instructional skills.				
b. Teacher evaluation is based on clearly communicated standards.				
c. Teacher evaluation is handled in a reasonable and appropriate manner.				
d. Procedures used for teacher evaluation are consistent and objective.				
e. Teachers have little input into the evaluation criteria.				
f. Teacher evaluation is linked to professional development opportunities/activities.				
g. Those conducting the evaluations have been trained to implement the system, appropriately.				
h. Results of the evaluation system are used to further develop teachers' skills and knowledge.				
i. Most teachers believe in the importance of evaluating teacher practice.				

B15. How would you rate the fairness of your school's system of teacher evaluation?

❑ (1) Not at all fair ❑ (2) Somewhat fair ❑ (3) Moderately fair ❑ (4) Very fair

Section C. Curriculum and Instruction

C1. To what extent is your school's English, reading, and language arts curriculum aligned…
Check ONE box for each.

	Not at all (1)	Small extent (2)	Moderate extent (3)	Great extent (4)
a. with the New York State learning standards?				
b. within grades?				
c. across grades?				
d. with instruction?				

C2. Do teachers have a common understanding of the English/reading/language arts curriculum?

❑ (1) None of them do ❑ (2) Some of them do ❑ (3) Most of them do ❑ (4) All of them do

C3. How much control do teachers have in determining or adjusting the English/reading/language arts curriculum?

❑ (1) No control ❑ (2) Some control ❑ (3) Moderate control ❑ (4) Great deal of control

C4. To what extent does the English/reading/language arts curriculum meet the needs of the following groups of students? Check ONE box for each.

	Not at all (1)	Small extent (2)	Moderate extent (3)	Great extent (4)
a. General education students				
b. Students with disabilities				
c. Students receiving remedial education				
d. English language learners				
e. Students in advanced, honors, or AP courses				
f. Racial/ethnic minorities				
g. Boys				
h. Girls				

C5. To what extent does the English/reading/language arts curriculum reflect and respect diversity in culture, language, religion, and gender?

❑ (1) Not at all ❑ (2) Small extent ❑ (3) Moderate extent ❑ (4) Great extent

C6. How would you rate the learning materials/resources in your school on the following indicators?
Check ONE box for each.

	Poor (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)
a. Up-to-date				
b. Age appropriateness				
c. Congruence with state learning standards				
d. Match to the curriculum				
e. Appropriateness for all students				

C7. For each teaching practice listed below, place a check in the column that best describes your experiences. Use the following rubric in making your decision:

1 = I am *not using* this practice.

2 = I am *planning to* use this practice in my teaching.

3 = I am using this practice in my teaching, but *not consistently*.

4 = I am using this practice *routinely*, it is a part of my everyday teaching.

5 = I have fully *integrated* this practice into my teaching, it is a fundamental part of my work.

	Not using (1)	Planning to use (2)	Using, not consistent (3)	Routine use (4)	Integrated use (5)
INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING					
a. Selecting instructional goals and objectives suitable for diverse students					
b. Creating standards-based lesson plans					
c. Planning instruction that builds on student interests and experiences					
d. Selecting and adapting curricular and instructional material that meet student needs					
CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT					
e. Creating a classroom environment that promotes respect and rapport					
f. Managing classroom procedures and routines to maximize instructional time					
g. Handling a range of classroom behavior or discipline situations					
h. Organizing classroom space to promote learning					
INSTRUCTION					
i. Adapting instruction to meet the needs of students with limited English proficiency or diverse cultural backgrounds					
j. Adapting instruction to meet needs of students with disabilities					
k. Targeting/supporting a range of learning styles					
l. Providing differentiated instruction					
m. Using teaching strategies that encourage higher levels of thinking: questioning strategies, discovery learning, discussion techniques, active inquiry					
n. Using facilitation and/or coaching as instructional methods					
o. Providing explicit and direct instruction					
p. Using and managing flexible classroom grouping structures					
q. Integrating technology into classroom instruction					
r. Using strategies that motivate and engage all students in learning					
ASSESSMENT AND DATA					
s. Tracking student progress using multiple assessment methods (both formal and informal)					

	Not using (1)	Planning to use (2)	Using, not consistent (3)	Routine use (4)	Integrated use (5)
t. Analyzing local and state achievement data					
u. Providing students with systematic and constructive feedback on their learning					
v. Using data and assessments to inform classroom practice and instruction					
PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES					
w. Assessing and improving practice through self-reflection and self-assessment					
x. Working effectively with parents and families					
y. Collaborating with other school staff to improve school and instructional effectiveness					
z. Drawing on research and scholarship to improve practice					

C8. How frequently do your students engage in each of the following activities during class instruction? Check ONE box for each.

	Rarely or not at all (1)	Sometimes (2)	Frequently (3)	Very frequently (4)
a. Maintain and reflect on a portfolio of their own work				
b. Work on assignments involving experiential, hands-on learning				
c. Evaluate and improve their own work				
d. Evaluate and improve the work of other students				
e. Work on assignments involving cooperative/team-based learning				
f. Listen to outside speakers in class				
g. Work on projects that take a week or more to complete				
h. Work on problems for which there are several appropriate answers or solutions				
i. Work on assignments that require an explanation of thinking or reasoning				
j. Work on assignments that require “higher order” thinking skills				
k. Write in a journal				
l. Plan classroom activities or topics				
m. Use computers or other technologies to learn content				
n. Take quizzes or tests				

C9. How would you describe the number of topics (e.g., themes or units) you cover during a typical English/reading/language arts classroom period?

- ❑ (1) A very large number
- ❑ (2) A large number, but covered in some depth
- ❑ (3) A moderate number covered in depth
- ❑ (4) A small number covered in great depth

C10. What obstacles, if any, are restricting the effective implementation of quality instructional programs in your school? Check ALL that apply.

- ❑ a. Insufficient funding
- ❑ b. Lack of time to conduct the necessary work
- ❑ c. Lack of interest/support from teachers and instructional staff
- ❑ d. Lack of building-level leadership
- ❑ e. Lack of district-level leadership
- ❑ f. Staff turnover/new staff
- ❑ g. Parent/community resistance
- ❑ h. Insufficient or inadequate professional development
- ❑ i. Work overload
- ❑ j. Scheduling difficulties
- ❑ k. Student mobility
- ❑ l. Lack of a quality school improvement plan
- ❑ m. Competing initiatives
- ❑ n. Restrictive mandates
- ❑ o. Inadequate materials, equipment, facilities, or other resources
- ❑ p. *There have not been any obstacles*

Reading/Language Arts Instruction

This section asks a number of questions about your teaching of reading/language arts. It should be completed ONLY by teachers who teach reading/language arts. If you do not teach reading/language arts, check the box below and skip to the Technology Availability and Use section on page 19.

❑ **I do not teach reading/language arts**

C11. On average, how many hours a week do you devote to reading/language arts instruction?

_____ Hours per week

C12. Is the time you devote to reading/language arts instruction uninterrupted instructional time?

❑ (4) Yes, always ❑ (3) Yes, most of the time ❑ (2) Yes, some of the time ❑ (1) No

C13. During reading/language arts instruction, about what percentage of time <u>per week</u> do your students spend in each of the following activities? Write in the percentage for each.

	Percentage of time per week
a. Participating in whole class activities	%
b. Participating in small homogeneous group activities	%
c. Participating in small heterogeneous group activities	%
d. Working in pairs	%
e. Working individually with you (one-to-one instruction)	%
f. Engaging in self-directed activities	%
TOTAL	**100 %**

C14. To what extent is your classroom instruction in reading/language arts aligned with…
Check ONE box for each.

	Not at all (1)	Small extent (2)	Moderate extent (3)	Great extent (4)
a. the New York State learning standards?				
b. your school's reading/language arts curriculum?				

C15. Thinking about reading instruction this school year, how would you describe the focus you placed on each of the following reading skills? Check ONE box for each.

	Not taught (1)	Touched on briefly (2)	Minor focus (3)	Major focus (4)
a. Phonological/Phonemic Awareness				
b. Phonics				
c. Fluency				
d. Vocabulary				
e. Text and Print Concepts				
f. Comprehension				
g. Writing				

C16. Thinking about reading instruction this school year, how would you describe your use of the following instructional activities. Check ONE box for each.

	Not part of my reading instruction (1)	Small part of my reading instruction (2)	Central to my reading instruction (3)
PHONOLOGICAL/PHONEMIC AWARENESS			
a. Engaging students in oral rhyming, songs, and choral recitation			
b. Teaching sound patterns			
c. Segmenting and blending syllables in words			
d. Isolating sounds within spoken words			
e. Segmenting spoken words into sounds and blending sounds to form words			
PHONICS			
f. Teaching letter-sound correspondence and decoding rules			
g. Helping students to blend onset (/s/) and rime (/at/, /it/) to read common word families			
h. Focusing on syllabication activities to help students read unfamiliar words			
i. Teaching word structure (e.g., roots, prefixes, suffixes)			
j. Using oral reading to help students practice decoding			
FLUENCY			
k. Using guided oral reading with feedback on accuracy, speed, or expression			
l. Using repeated oral reading of texts			
m. Recording students' reading accuracy and rate			

	Not part of my reading instruction (1)	Small part of my reading instruction (2)	Central to my reading instruction (3)
n. Modeling fluent reading for students			
o. Having students practice reading fluency using a variety of materials and supportive techniques			
VOCABULARY			
p. Pre-teaching vocabulary words that students would encounter in instruction			
q. Building vocabulary knowledge through direct teaching (e.g., by introducing new words and providing meaningful context)			
r. Building vocabulary indirectly by exposing students to increased reading where they could learn new words incidentally			
s. Building spoken vocabulary through oral language activities			
t. Teaching word study (e.g., categories of related words, antonyms, synonyms, word structure)			
TEXT AND PRINT CONCEPTS			
u. Building awareness of the format of written text (letters, words, sentences)			
v. Recognizing parts of a book (e.g., cover, title, author)			
w. Teaching directionality and sequencing of text (e.g., follow left-to-right and top-to-bottom)			
x. Teaching awareness of environmental print (e.g., traffic signs)			
y. Teaching graphical and technical elements of text (e.g., charts, bullets, sidebars)			
COMPREHENSION			
z. Conducting pre-reading activities (preview, predict, and set purpose of the text)			
aa. Teaching students to monitor their comprehension and identify what they do or do not understand			
bb. Using graphic or semantic organizers			
cc. Helping students to gain meaning from text by question generating, question answering, summarizing, and other strategies			
dd. Providing opportunities for students to practice comprehension strategies and receive feedback			
WRITING			
ee. Teaching early writing skills (e.g., language experience stories, invented spelling)			
ff. Teaching printing, cursive writing, and penmanship			
gg. Teaching pre-writing skills (e.g., topic selection)			
hh. Teaching elements of presentation (e.g., main ideas, word choice, style)			
ii. Teaching different writing applications (e.g., narrative, poetry, expository, expressive, persuasive)			

C17. This school year, which three of the following have had the most impact on your reading instruction? Check the THREE most influential items.

- ❑ a. New York State ELA learning standards
- ❑ b. School reading/language arts curriculum
- ❑ c. Materials, books, resources (specify *primary* influence) _____
- ❑ d. Current reading research
- ❑ e. Recommendations from the school principal
- ❑ f. Recommendations from other teachers
- ❑ g. Formal coursework in reading
- ❑ h. Professional development/inservice training in reading
- ❑ i. Classroom-based assistance from reading experts/professional developers
- ❑ j. Student assessment data

C18. In the past three months, how often have you talked with your school principal about the following? Check ONE box for each.

	Rarely or not at all (1)	Sometimes (2)	Frequently (3)	Very frequently (4)
a. Techniques for teaching reading/language arts				
b. Selecting a new reading/language arts curriculum or making changes in the existing curriculum				
c. Techniques for meeting the reading/language arts needs of specific students				
d. Techniques for assessing student achievement in reading/language arts				
e. Using assessment data to improve reading/language arts instruction				

C19. To what extent would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your reading/language arts program? Check ONE box for each.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly agree (4)
a. The reading/language arts program in our school needs major improvement.				
b. The reading/language arts program in our school is closely coordinated within grade levels.				
c. The reading/language arts program in our school is closely coordinated across grade levels.				
d. There is a set of common assessments in reading/language arts that all teachers use.				
e. The reading/language arts program in our school is closely coordinated with feeder programs designed to increase reading readiness				
f. Most teachers support the direction of the reading/language arts program.				

C20. How familiar are you with current K-12 reading research?

❑ (1) Not at all familiar ❑ (2) Somewhat familiar ❑ (3) Moderately familiar ❑ (4) Very familiar

C21. How often do you assign reading/language arts homework to your students?

❑ (1) Never
❑ (2) Less than once a week
❑ (3) Several times a week
❑ (4) Every day

C21(a) If you assign reading/language arts homework, how much time do you expect a typical student to spend on a homework assignment?

❑ (1) Less than 15 minutes
❑ (2) About a half hour
❑ (3) About an hour
❑ (4) About an hour and a half or more

C22. How would you characterize the way you use student assessments for each of the following purposes relative to reading/language arts? Check ONE box for each.

	Rarely or not at all (1)	Sometimes, but not regularly (2)	Getting more common (3)	Normal part of work (4)
a. To assess students' strengths and weaknesses				
b. To group students for instruction based upon assessment results				
c. To plan instructional activities				
d. To monitor student progress				

C23. Do you provide your students with regular feedback on their reading progress?

❑ (1) Yes ❑ (2) No

Technology Availability and Use

C24. How would you rate your access to the following technology resources in your school? Check ONE box for each.

	Poor (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)
a. New computers (less than four years old)				
b. Internet				
c. High speed Internet				
d. Software appropriate for reading/language arts instruction				
e. Technology tools for your own productivity (e.g., word processing, presentation software)				
f. Digital tools and peripheral devices such as digital cameras, mobile devices, scanners				
g. Drill and practice or tutorial software				

C25. How would you rate your students' access to the following technology resources in your school? Check ONE box for each.

	Poor (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)
a. New computers (less than four years old)				
b. Internet				
c. High speed Internet				
d. Drill and practice or tutorial software				
e. Digital tools and peripheral devices such as digital cameras, mobile devices, scanners				

C26. About how often do your students use technology for the following purposes? Check ONE box for each.

	Never (1)	Once a month or less (2)	Several times a month (3)	Several times a week (4)	Daily (5)
a. Communicate—via email or discussion boards—with experts, peers, and others					
b. Solve real world problems (i.e., those involving situations, issues, and tasks that people tackle in the world outside of school)					
c. Produce print products					
d. Produce media, web, or presentation products					
e. Conduct online research					
f. Use the Internet to collaborate with students in or beyond your school					
g. Visually represent or investigate concepts (e.g., though concept mapping, graphing, reading charts)					
h. Use digital tools and peripheral devices (e.g., digital cameras, mobile devices, scanners) to enhance their learning					
i. Use drill and practice programs/tutorials					

Section D. Parent Involvement

D1. To what extent are parents/ involved in the following school activities? Check ONE box for each.

	Not at all (1)	Small extent (2)	Moderate extent (3)	Great extent (4)	Not offered (0)
a. Attending parent-teacher conferences					
b. Participating on school committees and/or decision-making teams					
c. Advising on curriculum design					
d. Performing volunteer work in classrooms or another part of the program					
e. Tutoring/mentoring students					
f. Attending program events such as assemblies, open house, etc.					
g. Participating in parent workshops or special training sessions provided or arranged by the school					
h. Are represented on program-based decision-making/management committees					
i. Are involved in program evaluation/quality improvement activities					
j. Guest speaking/demonstrating					
k. Initiating/responding to informal contact with teachers					

D2. To what extent is parent/family involvement consistent across all parent/family groups (e.g., parents of ELL, single parents, minorities, etc.)?

❑ (1) Not at all ❑ (2) Small extent ❑ (3) Moderate extent ❑ (4) Great extent

D3. Does your school have any of the following features in place to encourage and support parent/family involvement in school activities? Check ONE box for each.

	Yes (1)	No (2)
a. Orientation sessions for introducing new parents to the school		
b. An open-door policy that allows parents to feel welcome while maintaining student safety		
c. Flexible options for parent participation (e.g., flexible times; opportunities for those with limited time)		
d. Meals, transportation, child care, and respite care if needed		
e. Materials in the primary language of parents		
f. Parent resource center		
g. A website with information specific to parents		
h. Specific written procedures for addressing parents' concerns about the school (which are distributed to all parents)		
i. Homework hotlines		

D4. Does your program provide any of the following support services to meet parents'/families' needs and build their skills and capacities? Check ONE box for each.

	Yes (1)	No (2)
a. Linkages to accessible support programs and resources within the community (e.g., child care, health, counseling, social services, continuing education, job training, legal assistance, etc.)		
b. Linkages to parent education programs		
c. Opportunities for informal conversation about parenting and other issues		
d. Family-to-family networking and support groups		
e. A coordinator specifically trained to assist parents in activities that promote and extend their child's learning at home and in school		
f. Program-parent compacts or home learning contracts		
g. A formal process for assessing parent/family needs		

D5. Does your school provide any of the following supports to assist the parents/families of English language learners? Check ONE box for each.

	Yes (1)	No (2)
a. Written communications are translated into parents' non-English language		
b. Translators are made available to parents for parent-teacher meetings		
c. Meetings are conducted in parents' non-English language		
d. Staff members communicate in the preferred language of parents		

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY.

GREATER AMSTERDAM SCHOOL DISTRICT CURRICULUM AUDIT

ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction: The Greater Amsterdam School District has contracted with Measurement Incorporated (MI) to conduct an independent audit of its written, taught and tested English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. An important activity in this audit is collecting information from school administrators about their experiences with the curriculum and its implementation. This interview should take no more than 60 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation. ***Please be assured that the information you provide in this interview will be confidential, and neither you nor your school will be identified.***

District Level Administration

1. How has the district supported the development of the ELA curriculum over the last three years? What additional activities are needed for a comprehensive, usable K-12 ELA curriculum? What barriers, if any, do you anticipate in enhancing the current curriculum? How should the district involve principals in the implementation of New York States new Common Core Standards (now on-line)?

2. Did you have a say in the recent textbook adoption decision(s)? Did teachers have a say in the decision? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the new reading series? To what extent do teachers support the new reading series? How have you handled any problems?

3. Do you receive adequate resources to implement an effective ELA curriculum? (e.g., staff, technology, materials and supplies, access to professional development). What role do principals play in budget development?

School Level Administration

4. Please describe the key elements (infrastructure) that guide your school's reading/language arts program? *Probe:*
   - NYS ELA standards, policies, legislation/mandates
   - textbooks, supplemental materials, software programs
   - grants, other related school initiatives (e.g., Reading Recovery, Success for All, CSR models, magnet program philosophy)
   - types and frequency of assessment
   - professional development initiatives
   - professional support and/or technical assistance systems (e.g., central office and school-based staff, coaches, reading specialists, guidance counselors, behavior specialists)

5. It is important to make sure that curriculum development efforts are aligned with school initiatives and programs and focused to meet the specific needs of your students. What are the current strengths of your ELA program? What challenges do you face meeting NYS performance standards?

6. To what extent have you changed the way your school approaches reading instruction over the past three years? *Probe for changes in...*
   - assessment
   - reading content (content, scope, pacing, and use of scientifically based reading practices)
   - instructional activities/strategies
   - instructional materials/resources

– school-based professional development

7. To what extent have you changed <u>your role</u> with respect to reading instruction? *Probe for changes in...*
   – classroom monitoring and data use
   – feedback to teachers
   – classroom "visibility"
   --use of the library to create a literate environment in the school

8. Please describe the supports and services that are available to teachers to help them improve the achievement of struggling readers, ESL students, and students with disabilities? In your opinion, how effective are the current support services?

9. Are there classroom libraries available with adequate choices for independent reading for all students? Have teachers been trained in the use of classroom libraries?

10. Talk about your relationship with your reading coach, teachers and support staff. *Probes:*
    – How often do you communicate with the reading coach? Other support staff?
    – What is the reading coach's role in your school? How do you participate?
    – What is the role of the Child Study Team? How often do they meet?
    – What opportunities do teachers and support staff to plan and work collaboratively?

<u>Building Professional Capacity</u>

11. What types of ELA professional development have been most beneficial for teachers? How are they applying what they've learned from professional development in the classroom? What types of professional development do you attend?

12. What type of additional training and support do you think is needed to help your teachers (and you) implemented a comprehensive integrated curriculum in reading/language arts for all students? *Probe...*
    – data use and progress monitoring
    – diversifying instruction and use of Response to Intervention (RTI)
    – written language instruction
    – access for special populations (ESL, students with disabilities)
    – classroom management

13. Describe your teacher evaluation and monitoring process? (e.g., format, frequency, formal/walk throughs, review of lesson plans, timely feedback) Does the current process allow you to efficiently monitor the alignment of the written, taught and assessed curriculum with NY ELA standards?

<u>Problem Solving</u>

14. How will you evaluate the implementation and efficacy of the new reading series?

15. We understand that GASD has several challenges that may impact reading performance? Please describe your most successful strategies and needs for support in the following areas:

    – Attendance (students, teachers)
    – Parent Involvement
    – Preschool –Kindergarten transition programs
    – Community-based services for poor and Hispanic families
    – After-school/summer programs
    – Student discipline

16. What are the most important recommendations that this audit can make to? *Probe:*
   - improve curriculum alignment with NYS ELA standards
   - improve curriculum access and equity
   - improve teacher quality
   - improve student performance

17 Finally please rate how much input do you have in each of the following areas? Check ONE box for each.

	No input (1)	**Some input (2)**	**Moderate input (3)**	**Great deal of input (4)**
a. Setting performance standards for students				
b. Establishing/adjusting the curriculum				
c. Determining the content of professional development				
d. Teacher evaluation methods				
e. Hiring new teachers				
f. Determining school policies and procedures				
g. Deciding how the school budget will be spent				

18 Do you have any other thoughts?

GREATER AMSTERDAM SCHOOL DISTRICT CURRICULUM AUDIT

ELEMENTARY TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction: The Greater Amsterdam School District has contracted with Measurement Incorporated (MI) to conduct an independent audit of its written, taught and tested English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. An important activity in this audit is collecting information from teachers about their experiences with the curriculum and its implementation. This interview should take no more than 45 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation. ***Please be assured that the information you provide in this interview will be confidential, and neither you nor your school will be identified.***

District Level Administration

1. How has the district supported the development of the ELA curriculum over the last three years? How have teachers participated? How should the district involve teachers in the implementation of New York State's new Common Core Standards (now on-line)?

2. Did you have a say in the recent textbook adoption decision(s)? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the new reading series? To what extent do you support the new reading series? How have you handled any problems with implementing the new reading series?

3. Do you receive adequate resources in your classroom to implement an effective ELA curriculum? (e.g., technology, materials and supplies, access to professional development). What role do teachers play in budget development?

School Level Administration

4. Please describe the key elements (infrastructure) that guide your classrooms reading/language arts program? *Probe:*
   - NYS ELA standards, policies, legislation/mandates
   - textbooks, supplemental materials, software programs
   - grants, other related school initiatives (e.g., Reading Recovery, Success for All, CSR models, magnet program philosophy)
   - types and frequency of assessment
   - professional development initiatives
   - professional support and/or technical assistance systems (e.g., central office and school-based staff, coaches, reading specialists)

5. It is important to make sure that classroom curriculum development efforts are aligned with school initiatives and programs and focused to meet the specific needs of your students. What are the current strengths of your ELA program? What challenges do you face meeting NYS performance standards for all students in your classroom?

6. To what extent do all students including ESL and students with disabilities have access to grade level ELA instruction and content? How do you vary your instruction to accommodate various levels of proficiency in your classroom?

7. To what extent have you changed the way you approach reading instruction over the past three years? *Probe for changes in...*

– assessment and data use (formal, informal, diagnostic)

– reading content (content, scope, pacing, and use of scientifically based reading practices)
– instructional activities/strategies
– instructional materials/resources
–use of feedback from the reading coach, remedial reading staff, special education staff, ESL staff
–use of other specialists: guidance counselor, school psychologist, behavior specialist, Child Study Team
--use of the library media specialist
--use of the computer lab
--use of the classroom Smart board and other technology

What opportunities do teachers and support staff to plan and work collaboratively?

8. In your opinion, how effective are the current support services for struggling readers and writers?

Building Professional Capacity

9. What types of ELA professional development have been most beneficial for teachers? How are you applying what you've learned from professional development in the classroom?

10. What type of additional training and support do you think is needed implemented a comprehensive integrated curriculum in reading/language arts for all students? *Probe...*
    – data use and progress monitoring
    – diversifying instruction and use of Response to Intervention (RTI)
    – written language instruction
    – access for special populations (ESL, students with disabilities)
    – classroom management

Problem Solving

11. How will you evaluate the implementation and efficacy of the new reading series in your classroom?

12. We understand that GASD has several challenges that may impact reading performance? Please describe your most successful strategies and needs for support in the following areas:

    – Attendance (students, frequency of the use of substitute teachers)
    – Parent Involvement
    – Preschool –Kindergarten transition programs
    – Community-based services for poor and Hispanic families
    – After-school/summer programs
    – Student discipline

13. What are the most important recommendations that this audit can make to? *Probe:*
    – improve curriculum alignment with NYS ELA standards
    – improve curriculum access and equity
    – improve teacher quality
    – improve student performance

14. Do you have any other thoughts?

GREATER AMSTERDAM SCHOOL DISTRICT CURRICULUM AUDIT

MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction: The Greater Amsterdam School District has contracted with Measurement Incorporated (MI) to conduct an independent audit of its written, taught and tested English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. An important activity in this audit is collecting information from school administrators about their experiences with the curriculum and its implementation. This interview should take no more than 60 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation. ***Please be assured that the information you provide in this interview will be confidential, and neither you nor your school will be identified.***

District Level Support

1. How has the district supported the development of the ELA curriculum over the last three years? What additional activities are needed for a comprehensive, usable K-12 ELA curriculum? What barriers, if any, do you anticipate in enhancing the current curriculum? How should the district involve principals in the implementation of New York States new Common Core Standards (now on-line)?

2. Do you have a say in textbook adoption decision(s)? Did teachers have a say in these decision? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current adoptions (rigor/relevancy)? To what extent do teachers support new adoptions? How have you handled any problems?

3. Do you receive adequate resources to implement an effective ELA curriculum? (e.g., staff, technology, materials and supplies, access to professional development). What role do principals play in budget development?

School Level Administration

4. Please describe the key elements (infrastructure) that guide your school's English Language Arts program? *Probe:*
   - NYS ELA standards, policies, legislation/mandates
   - textbooks, supplemental materials, software programs
   - grants, other related school initiatives (e.g., Reading Recovery, Success for All, CSR models, magnet program philosophy)
   - types and frequency of assessment
   - professional development initiatives
   - professional support and/or technical assistance systems (e.g., central office and school-based staff, coaches, content specialists, guidance counselors, behavior specialists)

5. It is important to make sure that curriculum development efforts are aligned with school initiatives and programs and focused to meet the specific needs of your students. What are the current strengths of your ELA program? What challenges do you face meeting NYS performance standards?

6. To what extent have you changed the way your school approaches to ELA instruction over the past three years? *Probe for changes in...*
   - assessment
   - content (sequence, scope, pacing, horizontal and vertical alignment with standards)
   - instructional activities/strategies
   - instructional materials/resources

– school-based professional development

7. To what extent have you changed your role (or the role of the HS ELA Coordinator) with respect to ELA instruction? *Probe for changes in...*
   – classroom monitoring and data use
   – feedback to teachers
   – classroom "visibility"
   – use of the library to create a literate environment across the content area
   – -use of student publications which encourage literacy (e.g., media publications, school newspaper or a literary magazine

8. Please describe the supports and services that are available to teachers to help them improve the achievement of struggling readers, ESL students, and students with disabilities? In your opinion, how effective are the current support services?

9. Talk about your relationship with your reading coach*, teachers and support staff. *Probes:*
   – How often do you communicate with the reading coach? Other support staff?
   – What is the reading coach's role in your school? How do you participate?
   – What is the role of the Child Study Team? How often do they meet?
   – What opportunities do teachers and support staff to plan and work collaboratively?

HS replace reading coach with ELA Coordinator

Building Professional Capacity

10. What types of ELA professional development have been most beneficial for teachers? How are they applying what they've learned from professional development in the classroom? What types of professional development do you attend?

11. What type of additional training and support do you think is needed to help your teachers (and you) implemented a comprehensive integrated ELA curriculum for all students? *Probe...*
   – data use and progress monitoring
   – diversifying instruction and use of Response to Intervention (RTI)
   – written language instruction
   – access for special populations (ESL, students with disabilities)
   – classroom management

12. Describe your teacher evaluation and monitoring process? (e.g., format, frequency, formal/walk throughs, review of lesson plans, timely feedback) Does the current process allow you to efficiently monitor the alignment of the written, taught and assessed curriculum with NY ELA standards?

Problem Solving

13. We understand that GASD has several challenges that may impact ELA performance? Please describe your most successful strategies and needs for support in the following areas:

   – Attendance (students, teachers)
   – Parent Involvement
   – Student drop-out and graduation rates
   – Community-based services for poor and Hispanic families
   – After-school/summer programs/career development opportunities
   – Student discipline

14. What are the most important recommendations that this audit can make to? *Probe:*
   – improve written, taught and tested curriculum alignment with NYS ELA standards
   – improve curriculum access and equity

– improve teacher quality
– improve student performance

15. Finally please rate how much input do you have in each of the following areas? Check ONE box for each.

	No input (1)	Some input (2)	Moderate input (3)	Great deal of input (4)
a. Setting performance standards for students				
b. Establishing/adjusting the curriculum				
c. Determining the content of professional development				
d. Teacher evaluation methods				
e. Hiring new teachers				
f. Determining school policies and procedures				
g. Deciding how the school budget will be spent				

16. Do you have any other thoughts?

GREATER AMSTERDAM SCHOOL DISTRICT CURRICULUM AUDIT

MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER/SPECIALIST FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Introduction: The Greater Amsterdam School District has contracted with Measurement Incorporated (MI) to conduct an independent audit of its written, taught and tested English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. An important activity in this audit is collecting information from teachers about their experiences with the curriculum and its implementation. This interview should take no more than 45 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation. ***Please be assured that the information you provide in this interview will be confidential, and neither you nor your school will be identified.***

District Level Support

1. How has the district supported the development of the ELA curriculum over the last three years? How have teachers participated? How should the district involve teachers in the implementation of New York State's new Common Core Standards (now on-line)?

2. Do you have a say in textbook adoption decision(s)? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current ELA adoptions (rigor/relevancy)? How have you handled any problems?

3. Do you receive adequate resources to implement an effective ELA curriculum? (e.g., technology, materials and supplies, access to professional development). What role do teachers play in budget development?

School Level Administration

4. Please describe the key elements (infrastructure) that guide your department's English Language Arts program? *Probe:*
   - NYS ELA standards, policies, legislation/mandates
   - textbooks, supplemental materials, software programs
   - grants, other related school initiatives (e.g., Reading Recovery, Success for All, CSR models, magnet program philosophy)
   - types and frequency of assessment
   - professional development initiatives
   - professional support and/or technical assistance systems (e.g., central office and school-based staff, coaches, content specialists, guidance counselors)

5. It is important to make sure that curriculum development efforts are aligned with other school initiatives and programs and focused to meet the specific needs of your students. What are the current strengths of your ELA program? What challenges do you face meeting NYS performance standards for all the students in your classroom?

6. To what extent do all students including ESL and students with disabilities have access to grade level instruction and content? How do you vary your instruction to accommodate various levels of proficiency? What additional supports do you need to help struggling students?

7. To what extent have you changed the way your approach to ELA instruction over the past three years? *Probe for changes in…*
   – assessment and data use (formal, informal, diagnostic)
   – content (sequence, scope, pacing, horizontal and vertical alignment standards)
   – instructional activities/strategies
   – instructional materials/resources

- use of feedback from the ELA coordinator, reading coach/specialist, special educations staff, ESL staff
- use of other specialists: guidance counselors, school psychologist, behavior specialists, Child Study Team
- use of the library media specialist
- use of technology to conduct and support instruction

8. In your opinion, how effective are the current support services for struggling readers, ESL students and students with disabilities?

Building Professional Capacity

9. What types of ELA professional development have been most beneficial for teachers? How are you applying what you've learned from professional development in the classroom?

10. What type of additional training and support do you think is needed to implement a comprehensive integrated ELA curriculum for all students? *Probe…*
    - data use and progress monitoring
    - diversifying instruction and use of Response to Intervention (RTI)
    - written language instruction
    - access for special populations (ESL, students with disabilities)
    - classroom management

Problem Solving

11. We understand that GASD has several challenges that may impact ELA performance? Please describe your most successful strategies and needs for support in the following areas:
    - Attendance (students, frequency of substitute teachers in classrooms)
    - Parent Involvement
    - Student drop-out and graduation rates
    - Community-based services for poor and Hispanic families
    - After-school/summer programs/career development opportunities
    - Student discipline

12. What are the most important recommendations that this audit can make to? *Probe:*
    - improve written, taught and tested curriculum alignment with NYS ELA standards
    - improve curriculum access and equity
    - improve teacher quality
    - improve student performance

13. Do you have any other thoughts?

GREATER AMSTERDAM SCHOOL DISTRICT CURRICULUM AUDIT

PARENT FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Introduction: The Greater Amsterdam School District has contracted with Measurement Incorporated (MI) to conduct an independent audit of its written, taught and tested English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. An important activity in this audit is collecting information from parents about their child's experiences in reading, writing and English classes. This focus should take no more than 45 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation. ***Please be assured that the information you provide in this interview will be confidential, and neither you nor your school will be identified.***

School _____

Date _____ **Interviewer**_____

Number of Parents in Focus Group _____**Grades of Students**_____

1. How often do you visit this school? *Probe (# show of hands and brief description of role):*
   - Volunteer in classroom
   - Volunteer for other school activities (e.g., field trips, PTA, Book Fair)
   - Attend school events (e.g., open house, assemblies)
   - Attend parent conferences
   - Participate on a committee or work group to help the school improve (Please explain)
   - Other_____
   - Do not participate (Why not?)_____

2. In what ways do the principal and staff make you feel welcome at this school? How could the school get more parents to participate in school activities?

3. Does the school provide you with any training on how you can help your child do well in school? If so, what kinds of trainings? How often do you attend?

4. What types of information do you receive about your child's reading, writing and/or English progress? If so, what information do you receive and is it in a language you can understand? If not, in which language would you like the information?

5. If your child needed additional assistance to bring up his/her grades in reading, writing and/or English, what assistance is available from the school? Have you met with other staff about your child's progress besides your child's teacher and the principal? (Who? and what do they do to help your child do better in school?)

6. To what extent do you think staff at this school have high expectations for all students to do well in reading, writing and English, regardless of their background? Please explain

7. How often does your child bring home books to read from the classroom or school library? How often does your child bring home homework that requires reading or writing? Does your child feel successful doing reading, writing and/or English assignments?

8. Does your child have access to a home computer? Internet? Does your child regularly use the computer/internet to do homework or find information for school projects?

9. Does the school have tutoring, before/after school programs or summer programs in reading, writing and or English? If so, is it easy for children to participate? Please explain your answer.

10. What rules does your child's school have about student behavior/conduct? Is this school a safe place to learn? (Why or why not?)

11. Are there any programs at this school to help students with discipline problems? Please explain.

12. What is the school's attendance policy? On average how many days of school does your child miss each year? How often is your child late for school? Please explain why? What does the school do to make sure your child comes to school and is on time?

13. What community resources or agencies are available for children

    - Who are struggling with reading or their English language arts grades?
    - With disabilities?
    - With limited English proficiency or from non-English speaking homes?
    - From low-income families?

14. Are there other activities, training or help that you need as a parent to help your child be more successful at school and get better grades in reading, writing and English? Please explain?

15. What would you like to see your child do as an adult? *Probe*: College, Career Training

16. Other thoughts you would like to share?

Elementary
ELA Curriculum Audit Classroom Form

Directions: Prior to the observation, introduce yourself. Also, arrange to speak with the teacher for a few minutes after the observation to clarify items not clearly understood during the observation.

Section I

Classroom Observation

Classroom Observer: _____ **Date**: _____ **Grade Level:** _____

School: _____ **Observation Start/End Time:** _____/_____

Teacher:_____ **Maximum number of students observed in the classroom** _____

Provide a breakdown of the adults observed *besides* the classroom teacher (ENTER NUMBER of adults in each category below. Also, specify kind of teacher, volunteer, etc.)

_____ 1. Other teachers, e.g., reading teacher/specialist, special education teacher, ESL teacher (specify): _____

_____ 2. Teacher Assistants/Paraprofessionals (specify):_____

_____ 3. Volunteers, e.g., parents, college students (specify):_____

_____ 4. Other (specify): _____

Section II

School and Classroom Literacy Environment Checklist

School Literacy Environment

- ❑ a. Student work, projects, or awards displayed in hall or cases
- ❑ b. Student work displayed in hall and organized by standards/goals
- ❑ c. Posting of Assessment Results and/or Standards
- ❑ d. Evidence of school-wide literacy projects (e.g., author study, graphs of # of books read)
- ❑ e. Motivational sayings (specify): _____
- ❑ f. News or articles about school or community displayed (specify): _____
- ❑ g. Other (specify): _____

Classroom Literacy Environment

- ❑ a. Reading area
- ❑ b. Writing area
- ❑ c. Computer area
- ❑ d. Literacy stations
- ❑ e. Classroom library
- ❑ f. Displays of student work in reading/language arts
- ❑ g. Classroom arranged to accommodate flexible student groupings
- ❑ h. Classroom environment reflects students' lives and backgrounds
- ❑ i. Classroom displays related to reading/language arts (e.g., posters, charts, word walls, word cards, environmental print)
- ❑ j. Classroom rules and behavioral expectations are posted and clear
- ❑ k. Rules and expectations appear to have been developed by teacher and students

Activities Log

Begin/ End	Activity Description	Standards and/or Activity Codes Note Integration of components using plus (+) sign between components	Groupings	Participation Rating (1-5)	Student On-Task Level (1-5)	Cognitive Demand	Resources Used

Coding for Section III

For A, B, & C use the 1-5 Rating Scale in the box below.

A. Emphasis on Standard Rating Scale

B. Participation Patterns Rating Scale

C. On Task Level Rating Scale

1 = Not at all: not observed at all

2 = Rarely: observed less than 20% of the time

3 = Sometimes: observed less than half the time, about 20% to 49% of the time

4 = Often: observed at least half the time, or between 50% to 74% of the time

5 = Almost always: observed 75% or more of the time during instruction

D. Cognitive Demand Coding

1 = **Remembering**: retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory. *Provide facts, terms, definitions, conventions. Locate literal answers in text. Identify relevant information. Reproduce sounds or words.*

2 = **Understanding**: constructing meaning from oral, written, or graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining.

3 = **Applying**: carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing.

4 = **Analyzing**: breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing.

5 = **Evaluating**: making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing.

6 = **Creating**: putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganizing elements into a new pattern of structure through generating, planning, or producing.

E. Resources Used Coding

a. Basals
b. Workbooks/worksheets
c. Language experience stories
d. <u>Trade book level</u>
   1. Children's
   2. Young adult
   3. Adult texts
e. <u>Type of trade book</u>
   1. Fiction
   2. Informational text
   3. Decodable, patterned, or leveled books
   4. Books available in multiple languages
f. Poems, odes, etc.
g. Fables, myths, legends
h. Songs
i. Plays and media productions
j. Reference books
k. Magazines and newspapers (articles, editorials, movie/book reviews, etc.)
l. Textbooks (other than basals)
m. Oral interviews/oral presentations
n. Charts, graphs, maps, diagrams
o. Primary sources/public documents
p. Technical manuals
q. Professional journals
r. Student work (journals, reports, poems, power point, etc.)
s. Classroom displays (e.g., posters, charts, walls, photos, environmental print)
t. Games, puzzles, manipulatives (e.g., letter tiles)
u. Paper and pencil/other writing materials
v. Blackboard/whiteboard, felt board, or easel pad
w. <u>Computer resources</u>
   1. Software
   2. Internet access/electronic bulletin boards
   3. Smartboard
x. Audio/video (audio and media presentations)
y. Other (specify):_____

Section III

Rating of Overall Instruction

Elementary Standard 1

Language for Information and Understanding

LISTENING & READING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
1. Listening and reading to acquire information and understanding involves collecting data, facts, and ideas; discovering relationships, concepts and generalizations; and using knowledge from oral, written and electronic sources				
❑ a. Gather and interpret information from children's reference books, magazines, textbooks, electronic bulleting boards, audio and media presentations, oral interviews, and from such forms as charts, graphs, maps and diagrams				
❑ b. Select information appropriate to the purpose of their investigation and relate ideas from one text to another				
❑ c. Select and use strategies they have been taught for note taking, organizing and categorizing information				
❑ d. Ask specific questions to clarify and extend meaning				
❑ e. Use of strategies to construct meaning from print, such as prior knowledge about a subject, structural and context clues, and an understanding of letter-sound relationships to decode difficult words				
❑ f. Support inference about information and ideas with reference to text features such as vocabulary and organizational patterns				

Examples:

- Accurately paraphrase what they have heard or read
- Follow directions that involve a few steps
- Ask for clarification of classmate's ideas in a group discussion
- Use concept maps, semantic webs, or outlines to organize information they have collected

SPEAKING & WRITING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
2. Speaking and writing to acquire and transmit information requires asking probing and clarifying questions, interpreting information in one's own words, applying information from one context to another, and presenting the information and interpretation clearly, concisely, and comprehensibly				
❑ a. Present information clearly in a variety of oral and written forms such as summaries, paraphrases, brief reports, stories, posters, and charts				
❑ b. Select a focus, organization, and point of view for oral and written presentations				
❑ c. Use a few traditional structures for conveying information such as chronological order, cause and effect, and similarity and difference				
❑ d. Use details, examples, anecdotes, or personal experiences to explain or clarify information				
❑ e. Include relevant information and exclude extraneous material				
❑ f. Use the process of pre-writing, drafting, revising, and proofreading (the "writing process") to produce well constructed informational texts				
❑ g. Observe basic writing conventions, such as correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, as well as sentence and paragraph structures appropriate to written forms				

Examples:

- Write a short report on a topic in social studies using information from at least two different sources
- Demonstrate the procedures for caring for a classroom pet using props or other visual aids as well as oral explanation
- Revise early drafts of a report to make the information clearer to the audience
- Use the vocabulary from their content area reading appropriately and with correct spelling
- Produce brief summaries of chapters from text books, clearly indicating the most significant information and the reason for its importance

Elementary Standard 2

Language for Literacy Response and Expression

LISTENING & READING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
1. Listening and reading for literacy response involves comprehending, interpreting, and critiquing imaginative texts in every medium, drawing on personal experiences and knowledge to understand the text, and recognizing the social, historical and cultural features of the text.				
❑ a. Read a variety of different genres: picture books; poems; articles and stories from children's magazines; fables, myths and legends; songs, plays and media productions; and works of fiction and nonfiction intended for young readers				
❑ b. Recognize some features that distinguish the genres and use those features to aid comprehension				
❑ c. Understand the literary elements of setting, character, plot, theme, and point of view and compare those features to other works and to their own lives				
❑ d. Use inference and deduction to understand the text				
❑ e. Read aloud accurately and fluently, using phonics and context cues to determine pronunciation and meaning				
❑ f. Evaluate literary merit				

Examples:

- Read a picture book to the class and point out how the pictures add meaning to the story
- Recite a favorite poem from a class anthology and tell why they chose that poem
- Keep a reading inventory to show all the types of literature they are reading
- Retell a familiar fairy tale or fable to the class
- Choose books to read individually or with others

SPEAKING & WRITING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
2. Speaking and writing for literary response involves presenting interpretations, analyses, and reactions to the content and language of a text. Speaking and writing for literary expression involves producing imaginative texts that use language and text structures that are inventive and often multilayered.				
❑ a. Present personal responses to literature that make reference to the plot, characters, ideas, vocabulary, and text structure				
❑ b. Explain the meaning of literary works with some attention to meanings beyond the literal level				
❑ c. Create their own stories, poems, and songs using the elements of the literature they have read and appropriate vocabulary				
❑ d. Observe the convention of grammar and usage, spelling, and punctuation				

Examples:

- Perform dramatic readings or recitations of stories, poems or plays
- Write a review of a book to recommend it to their classmates
- Create their own picture books or fables to keep in the classroom library
- Write new endings or sequels to familiar stories
- Pretend to be a character in a historical story and write letters to their classmates about the character's life

Elementary Standard 3

Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

LISTENING & READING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
1. Listening and reading to analyze and evaluate experiences, ideas, information, and issues requires using evaluative criteria from a variety of perspectives and recognizing the difference in evaluations based on different sets of criteria				
❑ a. Read and form opinions about a variety of literary and informational text and presentations as well as persuasive texts such as advertisements, commercials and letters to the editor				
❑ b. Make decisions about the quality and dependability of texts and experiences based on some criteria, such as the attractiveness of the illustrations and appeal of the characters in a picture book, or the logic and believability of the claims made in an advertisement				
❑ c. Recognize that the criteria that one uses to analyze and evaluate anything depends on one's point of view and purpose for the analysis				
❑ d. Evaluate their own strategies for reading and listening critically (such as recognizing bias or false claims, and understanding the difference between face and opinion) and adjust those strategies to understand the experience more fully				

Examples:

- Listen to a book talk in class and express an opinion of the book with specific reference to the text and some criteria for a good book
- Read several versions of a familiar fairy tale and recognize the differences in the versions
- Point out examples of false advertising in television ads for toys
- Identify the facts and opinions in a feature article in a children's magazine

SPEAKING & WRITING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
2. Speaking and writing for critical analysis and evaluation requires presenting opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information, and issues clearly, logically, and persuasively with reference to specific criteria on which the opinion or judgment is based				
❑ a. Express opinions (in such forms as oral and written reviews, letters to the editor, essays, or persuasive speeches) about events, books, issues and experiences				
❑ b. Present arguments for certain views or actions with reference to specific criteria that support the argument (e.g., an argument to purchase a particular piece of playground equipment might be based on the criteria of safety, appeal to children, durability, and low cost)				
❑ c. Monitor and adjust their own oral and written presentations to meet criteria for competent performance (e.g., in writing, the criteria might include development of position, organization, appropriate vocabulary, mechanics, and neatness. In speaking, the criteria might include good content, effective delivery, diction, posture, poise, and eye contact)				
❑ d. Use effective vocabulary and follow the rules of grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation in persuasive writing				

Examples:

- Write a letter to the principal recommending that the school cafeteria serve pizza for lunch based on the criteria that it is nutritious and appealing to students
- Give an oral report comparing several versions of the Cinderella story, pointing out similarities and differences in the versions
- In group discussion, select the most important word of a poem or story and explain its significance
- Write an analysis of the effect of a major snow storm from the perspectives of a school student, a working parent, and a mail carrier
- In writing group, critique each other's writing with reference to specific criteria and revise their writing based on the group's suggestions

Elementary Standard 4

Language for Social Interaction

LISTENING & READING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
1. Oral communication in formal and informal settings requires the ability to talk with people of different ages, genders, and cultures to adapt presentations to different audiences, and to reflect on how talk varies in different situations				
❑ a. Listen attentively and recognize when it is appropriate for them to speak				
❑ b. Take turns speaking and respond to others' ideas in conversations on familiar topics				
❑ c. Recognize the kind of interaction appropriate for different circumstances such as story hour, group discussions, and one-on-one conversations				

Examples:

- Take part in "show and tell" sessions
- Participate in group discussions during "circle time"
- Greet visitors to their school or classroom and respond to their questions
- Bring messages to the principal's office or to another teacher

SPEAKING & WRITING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
2. Written communication for social interaction requires using written messages to establish, maintain, and enhance personal relationships with others				
❑ a. Exchange friendly notes, cards, and letters with friends, relatives, and pen pals to keep in touch and to commemorate special occasions				
❑ b. Adjust their vocabulary and style to take into account the nature of the relationship and the knowledge and interests of the person receiving the message				
❑ c. Read and discuss published letters, diaries, and journals to learn the conventions of social writing				

Examples:

- Write thank you notes and invitations to friends
- Exchange letters with pen pals in another country
- Write letters to relatives who live in another city

Section IV

Summary of Overall Grouping, Strategy, and Climate

1. Check instructional groupings observed and indicate percent of time spent in each grouping during observation

Grouping Codes *Teacher works with:*	**Summary of groupings Percent of observation**
❑ a. Whole group	%
❑ b. Small, homogeneous group	%
❑ c. Small, heterogeneous group	%
❑ d. Individual student/independent practice	%
❑ e. Student pairs	%
❑ f. Teacher has organized activity, but is not working with students on the activity	%
TOTAL:	100 %

2. Check all instructional strategies observed

- ❑ a. Teacher-led instruction: teacher models, demonstrates skills, explains
- ❑ b. Teacher provides explicit skills instruction using a systematic scope and sequence with instructional texts (e.g., basals, worksheets)
- ❑ c. Teacher embeds the teaching of skills in a literature-based approach
- ❑ d. Teacher uses higher level questioning strategies (inferential, evaluative, differing perspectives, etc. vs. literal questions)
- ❑ e. Teacher drills students in activities requiring memorization or repetition, individually or in unison
- ❑ f. Teacher engages students in interactive discussion (e.g., teacher/students, students/students)
- ❑ g. Teacher encourages students to listen to peers and respect their insights and opinions
- ❑ h. Project-based work
- ❑ i. Teacher acts as coach or facilitator; may coach individual students within teacher-led group instruction or provides targeted, brief, instruction for individuals/groups who are working without explicit teacher guidance
- ❑ j. Students work independently (i.e., individuals, peer pairs, or groups) without teacher guidance on self-paced assignments
- ❑ k. Teacher modifies instruction based upon assessment information (e.g., "teachable moment"). Uses student "error" to deepen concept understanding.
- ❑ l. Teacher makes connections to previous lessons/stories
- ❑ m. Teacher integrates writing and reading components
- ❑ n, Technology as instructional tool
- ❑ o. Independent inquiry/research by students
- ❑ p. Other (specify): _____

3. Integration of Subjects and/or Reading Components

a. Interdisciplinary/Thematic Teaching and Activities observed? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Please specify_____

b. Integration of Reading Components Observed ❑Yes ❑ No

Please specify _____

4. Classroom climate feedback

Directions: Put a check in the box that shows the extent to which the kinds of feedback and climate listed were observed during the **FULL observation (Whole Class and Literacy Center/ Small Group time)** using the 1-5 rating.

1 Not at all	2 Rarely	3 Some-times	4 Often	5 Almost Always	**Feedback and Climate**
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	a. Teacher acknowledges correct responses (e.g., "that's right!")
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	b. Teacher provides instructional feedback to correct, clarify, or expand student response (vs. only saying no or yes)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	c. Teacher conferences with individuals or groups of students
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	d. Students provide feedback to one another, offer support and assistance to each other; positive relationships among and between students evident
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	e. Teacher feedback provides students with opportunities to respond, clarify, revise, rethink, and improve their performance and understanding
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	f. Teacher provides tools (e.g., rubrics) or directions whereby students can evaluate themselves (student self-assessment)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	g. Teacher shows warmth and respect to all students; provides reassurance, encouragement, and/or comfort
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	h. Student "talk" (whole group, small group, pairs) is vibrant and on topic/on-task (accountable talk, cross-talk)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	i. Teacher is accessible; easy to approach, minimizes barriers to students (vs. maximizes barriers, inaccessible), shows interest in students and responds to their questions
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	j. A variety of texts and information resources/genres are easily accessible and used by students and teacher (vs. text selections and availability limited/teacher permission required to access)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	k. Teacher uses discussion and inquiry to promote critical thinking, analysis and reasoning (sequencing, compare/contrast, problem solving, prediction, experimentation)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	l. Teacher is able to anticipate behavior management issues; able to reframe or redirect conflicts and behavior issues
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	m. Students have opportunity to reflect on their learning and thinking; also, adequate "wait time" is provided
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	n. Teacher shows deep understanding of important concepts; able to clearly explain, give illustrative examples, respond accurately to questions, identify and address student misconceptions
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	o. Instructional staff uses appropriate spoken and written language.
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	p. Other (specify): _____

5. Resources used

Directions: For items 1-3, identify the predominant core, supplemental, and/or instructional materials that you observed in use for reading and language arts instruction during the FULL Observation by title, page number, grade level, intervention and (if published) publisher and year of publication.

1. Core:
2. Supplemental:
3. Intervention:

Section V

Rating of Literacy/Project Center

1. Time spent in Literacy Center or Project-based Activities (including Teacher-led small group instruction)_____ (minutes)

2. a. Observed Literacy Center/Small Project-based Groupings are based on pre-assessment of student needs (verify with teacher) ❑ Yes ❑ No

   b. Assessment instruments used to determine groupings: _____

   c. Identify how often assessments are done and small groupings changed _____

3. Literacy Center or Project–based Activities and Participation

Directions: Complete the Literacy/Project-based Centers table below. Where a rating is required write the NUMBER that describes the level you observed using the following scale:

1 = Not at all: not observed at all
2 = Rarely: observed less than 20% of the time
3 = Sometimes: observed less than half the time, about 20% to 49% of the time
4 = Often: observed at least half the time, or between 50% to 74% of the time
5 = Almost always: observed 75% or more of the time during instruction

For each Literacy or Project-based Center observed:

1. List the Standard observed in each of the Literacy/Project Center in which students worked, using the Standards Codes on pages 4-7

2. a. Indicate if an adult or student peer provided instruction by identifying the adult or peer, (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Speech teacher, volunteer, student)
b. Indicate if adult or peer remained in center All the time (A) or Floated (F).

3. Rate the extent to which the person providing instruction engaged all students in on-task activities using the rating scale above for each student group that rotates through the center.

4. Indicate if the activity at the center is or is not differentiated based on the skill level needs of each rotating group.

5. For each center indicate the kind of accountability/work sample provided to each student to complete (e.g., worksheet, saved online-game, hands-on project) and/*or* the form of assessment conducted for each student.

6. Rate the level of student on-task activity during time at literacy center using the 5-point scale above for each student group that rotates through the center.

	1. Reading content and subcontent area(s) <u>and/or</u> standard (s)	2a. Specify person providing instruction, *if any* 2b. Specify if person is present *(All the time= A or Floated = F)*			3. Extent person scaffolded and engaged all students *(Rate 1-5)*					4. Differentiated activity at each center for each group? *(Yes or No)*		5. Accountability/ assessment activity *(specify)*	6. Level of on-task engagement by students in group *(Rate 1-5)*				
		2a	A	F	1	2	3	4	5	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
Center 1																	
Center 2																	
Center 3																	
Center 4																	
Center 5																	
Center 6																	
Center 7																	
Center 8																	
Center 9																	

Notes:

Middle School
ELA Curriculum Audit Classroom Form

Directions: Prior to the observation, introduce yourself. Also, arrange to speak with the teacher for a few minutes after the observation to clarify items not clearly understood during the observation.

Section I

Classroom Observation

Classroom Observer: _____ **Date**: _____ **Grade Level:** _____

School: _____ **Observation Start/End Time:** _____/_____

Teacher:_____ **Maximum number of students observed in the classroom** _____

Provide a breakdown of the adults observed *besides* the classroom teacher (ENTER NUMBER of adults in each category below. Also, specify kind of teacher, volunteer, etc.)

_____ 1. Other teachers, e.g., reading teacher/specialist, special education teacher, ESL teacher (specify): _____

_____ 2. Teacher Assistants/Paraprofessionals (specify):_____

_____ 3. Volunteers, e.g., parents, college students (specify):_____

_____ 4. Other (specify): _____

Section II

School and Classroom Literacy Environment Checklist

School Literacy Environment

- ❑ a. Student work, projects, or awards displayed in hall or cases
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- ❑ d. Evidence of school-wide literacy projects (e.g., author study, graphs of # of books read)
- ❑ e. Motivational sayings (specify): _____
- ❑ f. News or articles about school or community displayed (specify): _____
- ❑ g. Other (specify): _____

Classroom Literacy Environment

- ❑ a. Reading area
- ❑ b. Writing area
- ❑ c. Computer area
- ❑ d. Literacy stations
- ❑ e. Classroom library
- ❑ f. Displays of student work in reading/language arts
- ❑ g. Classroom arranged to accommodate flexible student groupings
- ❑ h. Classroom environment reflects students' lives and backgrounds
- ❑ i. Classroom displays related to reading/language arts (e.g., posters, charts, word walls, word cards, environmental print)
- ❑ j. Classroom rules and behavioral expectations are posted and clear
- ❑ k. Rules and expectations appear to have been developed by teacher and students

Activities Log

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5 = **Evaluating**: making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing.

6 = **Creating**: putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganizing elements into a new pattern of structure through generating, planning, or producing.

E. Resources Used Coding

a. Basals
b. Workbooks/worksheets
c. Language experience stories
d. Trade book level
   1. Children's
   2. Young adult
   3. Adult texts
e. Type of trade book
   1. Fiction
   2. Informational text
   3. Decodable, patterned, or leveled books
   4. Books available in multiple languages
f. Poems, odes, etc.
g. Fables, myths, legends
h. Songs
i. Plays and media productions
j. Reference books
k. Magazines and newspapers (articles, editorials, movie/book reviews, etc.)
l. Textbooks (other than basals)
m. Oral interviews/oral presentations
n. Charts, graphs, maps, diagrams
o. Primary sources/public documents
p. Technical manuals
q. Professional journals
r. Student work (journals, reports, poems, power point, etc.)
s. Classroom displays (e.g., posters, charts, walls, photos, environmental print)
t. Games, puzzles, manipulatives (e.g., letter tiles)
u. Paper and pencil/other writing materials
v. Blackboard/whiteboard, felt board, or easel pad
w. Computer resources
   1. Software
   2. Internet access/electronic bulletin boards
   3. Smartboard
x. Audio/video (audio and media presentations)
y. Other (specify):_____

Section III

Rating of Overall Instruction

Middle School Standard 1

Language for Information and Understanding

LISTENING & READING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
1. Listening and reading to acquire information and understanding involves collecting data, facts, and ideas; discovering relationships, concepts and generalizations; and using knowledge from oral, written and electronic sources				
❑ a. Interpret and analyze information from textbooks and nonfiction books for young adults, as well as reference materials, audio and media presentations, oral interviews, graphs, charts, diagrams, and electronic data bases intended for a general audience				
❑ b. Compare and synthesize information from different sources				
❑ c. Use a wide variety of strategies for selecting, organizing, and categorizing information				
❑ d. Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information and between fact and opinion				
❑ e. Relate new information to prior knowledge and experience				
❑ f. Understand and use the text features that make information accessible and usable, such as format, sequence, level of diction, and relevance of details				

Examples:

- Provides a summary of the information about a famous person found in a biography, encyclopedia, and textbook
- Use facts and data from news articles and television reports in an oral report on a current event
- Compile a bibliography of sources that are used in a research project
- Take notes that record the main ideas and most significant supporting details of a lecture or speech

SPEAKING & WRITING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
2. Speaking and writing to acquire and transmit information requires asking probing and clarifying questions, interpreting information in one's own words, applying information from one context to another, and presenting the information and interpretation clearly, concisely, and comprehensibly				
❑ a. Produce oral and written reports on topics related to all school subjects				
❑ b. Establish an authoritative stance on the subject and provide references to establish the validity and verifiability of the information presented				
❑ c. Organize information according to an identifiable structure, such as compare/contrast or general to specific				
❑ d. Develop information with appropriate supporting material, such as facts, details, illustrative examples or anecdotes and exclude extraneous material				
❑ e. Use the process of pre-writing, drafting, revising, and proofreading (the "writing process" to produce well-constructed informational texts				
❑ f. Use standard English for format presentation of for formal presentation of information, selecting appropriate grammatical constructions and vocabulary using a variety of sentence structures, and observing the rules of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling				

Examples:

- Write an essay for science class that contains information from interviews, data bases, magazines, and science texts
- Participate in a panel discussion on population trends in the United States in recent years, using graphics, and citing source of the data
- Use technical terms correctly in subject area reports
- Survey student views on a school issue and report findings to the class

Middle School Standard 2

Language for Literacy Response and Expression

LISTENING & READING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
1. Listening and reading for literacy response involves comprehending, interpreting, and critiquing imaginative texts in every medium, drawing on personal experiences and knowledge to understand the text, and recognizing the social, historical and cultural features of the text.				
❑ a. Read and view texts and performances from a wide range of authors, subjects, and genres				
❑ b. Understand and identify the distinguishing features of the major genres and use them to aid their interpretation and decision of literature				
❑ c. Identify significant literary elements (including metaphor, symbolism, foreshadowing, dialect, rhyme, meter, irony, climax) and use those elements to interpret the work				
❑ d. Recognize different levels of meaning				
❑ e. Read aloud with expression, conveying the meaning and mood of a work				
❑ f. Evaluate literary merit based on an understanding of the genre of the genre and the literary elements				

Examples:

- Read or recite poems of their own selection to the class, clearly conveying the meaning of the poem and the effect of the rhythm and rhyme patterns
- Produce lists of recommended readings for their peers, grouping the works according to some common elements (e.g., theme, setting, type of character)
- Use references to literature they have read to support their position in class discussion

SPEAKING & WRITING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
2. Speaking and writing for literary response involves presenting interpretations, analyses, and reactions to the content and language of a text. Speaking and writing for literary expression involves producing imaginative texts that use language and text structures that are inventive and often multilayered.				
❑ a. Present responses to and interpretations of literature, making reference to the literary elements found in the text and connections with their personnel knowledge and experience				
❑ b. Produce interpretations of literary works that identify different levels of meaning and comment on their significance and effect				
❑ c. Write stories, poems, literary essays, and plays that observe the conventions of the genre and contain interesting and effective language and voice				
❑ d. Use standard English effectively				

Examples:

- Take part in class productions of short plays
- Write a sequel for a story continuing the development of the characters, plot and themes
- Write reviews of literature from different cultural settings and pint out similarities and differences in that literature
- Write stories or poems for their peers or younger children

Middle School Standard 3

Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

LISTENING & READING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
1. Listening and reading to analyze and evaluate experiences, ideas, information, and issues requires using evaluative criteria from a variety of perspectives and recognizing the difference in evaluations based on different sets of criteria				
❑ a. Analyze, interpret, and evaluate information, ideas, organizations and language from academic and nonacademic texts, such as textbooks, public documents, book and movie reviews, and editorials				
❑ b. Assess the quality of texts and presentations, using criteria related to the genre, the subject area, and purpose (e.g., using the criteria of accuracy, objectivity comprehensiveness, and understanding of the game to evaluate a sports editorial.)				
❑ c. Understand that within any group there are many different points of view depending on the particular interests and values of the individual, and recognize interests and values of the individual, and recognize those differences in perspective in texts and presentations (e.g., in considering whether to let a new industry come into a community, some community members might be enthusiastic about the additional jobs that will be created while others are concerned about the air and noise pollution that could result)				
❑ d. Evaluate their own and others' work based on a variety of criteria (e.g., logic, clarity, comprehensiveness conciseness, originality, conventionality) and recognize the varying effectiveness of different approaches				

Examples:

- Compare a magazine article on a historical event with the entries in an encyclopedia and history book to determine the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the article
- Use the criteria of scientific investigation to evaluate the significance of a lab experiment
- Read two conflicting reviews of a popular movie and recognize the different criteria the critics were using to evaluate the film
- Point out examples of propaganda techniques (such as "bandwagon", "plain folks" language and "sweeping generalities") in public documents and speeches

SPEAKING & WRITING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
2. Speaking and writing for critical analysis and evaluation requires presenting opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information, and issues clearly, logically, and persuasively with reference to specific criteria on which the opinion or judgment is based				
❑ a. Present (in essays, position papers, speeches, and debates) clear analyses of issues, ideas, texts and experiences supporting their positions with well-developed arguments				
❑ b. Develop arguments with effective use of details and evidence that reflect a coherent set of criteria (e.g., reporting results of lab experiments to support a hypothesis)				
❑ c. Monitor and adjust their own oral and written presentations according to the standards for a particular genre (e.g., defining key terms used in a formal debate)				
❑ d. Use standard English, precise vocabulary, and presentational strategies effectively to influence an audience				

Examples:

- Write a position paper on a current event, clearly indicating their position and the criteria on which it is based
- Present an oral review of a film supporting their evaluation with reference to particular elements such as character development, plot, pacing and cinematography
- Participate in a class debate on a social issue following the rules for formal debate
- Produce their own advertising for a product tailoring the text and visuals to a particular audience In writing group, critique each other's writing with reference to specific criteria and revise their writing based on the group's suggestions

Middle School Standard 4

Language for Social Interaction

LISTENING & READING *Minutes* ☐ *A. Emphasis/extent* ☐	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
1. Oral communication in formal and informal settings requires the ability to talk with people of different ages, genders, and cultures to adapt presentations to different audiences, and to reflect on how talk varies in different situations				
❑ a. Listen attentively to others and build on others' ideas in conversations with peers and adults				
❑ b. Express ideas and concerns clearly and respectfully in conversations and group discussions				
c. Learn some works and expressions in another language to communicate with a peer or adult who speaks that language				
❑ d. Use verbal and nonverbal skills to improve communications with others				

Examples:

- Act as hosts for open house oat school
- Participate in small group discussion in class
- Give morning announcements over the public address system
- Participate in school assemblies and club meetings

SPEAKING & WRITING *Minutes* ☐ *A. Emphasis/extent* ☐	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
2. Written communication for social interaction requires using written messages to establish, maintain, and enhance personal relationships with others				
❑ a. Write social letters, cards, and electronic messages to friends, relatives, community acquaintances and other electronic network users				
❑ b. Use appropriate language and style for the situation and the audience and take into account he ideas and interests expressed by the persons receiving the message				
❑ c. Read and discuss social communications and electronic communications of other writers and use some of the techniques of these writers in their own writing				

Examples:

- Write letters to friends who are away
- Send e-mail messages on a computer network
- Send formal invitations for receptions or open house

Section IV

Summary of Overall Grouping, Strategy, and Climate

1. Check instructional groupings observed and indicate percent of time spent in each grouping during observation

Grouping Codes *Teacher works with:*	**Summary of groupings Percent of observation**
❑ a. Whole group	%
❑ b. Small, homogeneous group	%
❑ c. Small, heterogeneous group	%
❑ d. Individual student/independent practice	%
❑ e. Student pairs	%
❑ f. Teacher has organized activity, but is not working with students on the activity	%
TOTAL:	100 %

2. Check all instructional strategies observed

- ❑ a. Teacher-led instruction: teacher models, demonstrates skills, explains
- ❑ b. Teacher provides explicit skills instruction using a systematic scope and sequence with instructional texts (e.g., basals, worksheets)
- ❑ c. Teacher embeds the teaching of skills in a literature-based approach
- ❑ d. Teacher uses higher level questioning strategies (inferential, evaluative, differing perspectives, etc. vs. literal questions)
- ❑ e. Teacher drills students in activities requiring memorization or repetition, individually or in unison
- ❑ f. Teacher engages students in interactive discussion (e.g., teacher/students, students/students)
- ❑ g. Teacher encourages students to listen to peers and respect their insights and opinions
- ❑ h. Project-based work
- ❑ i. Teacher acts as coach or facilitator; may coach individual students within teacher-led group instruction or provides targeted, brief, instruction for individuals/groups who are working without explicit teacher guidance
- ❑ j. Students work independently (i.e., individuals, peer pairs, or groups) without teacher guidance on self-paced assignments
- ❑ k. Teacher modifies instruction based upon assessment information (e.g., "teachable moment"). Uses student "error" to deepen concept understanding.
- ❑ l. Teacher makes connections to previous lessons/stories
- ❑ m. Teacher integrates writing and reading components
- ❑ n, Technology as instructional tool
- ❑ o. Independent inquiry/research by students
- ❑ p. Other (specify): _____

3. Integration of Subjects and/or Reading Components

a. Interdisciplinary/Thematic Teaching and Activities observed? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Please specify_____

b. Integration of Reading Components Observed ❑Yes ❑ No

Please specify _____

4. Classroom climate feedback

Directions: Put a check in the box that shows the extent to which the kinds of feedback and climate listed were observed during the **FULL observation (Whole Class and Literacy Center/ Small Group time)** using the 1-5 rating.

1 Not at all	2 Rarely	3 Some-times	4 Often	5 Almost Always	**Feedback and Climate**
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	a. Teacher acknowledges correct responses (e.g., "that's right!")
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	b. Teacher provides instructional feedback to correct, clarify, or expand student response (vs. only saying no or yes)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	c. Teacher conferences with individuals or groups of students
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	d. Students provide feedback to one another, offer support and assistance to each other; positive relationships among and between students evident
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	e. Teacher feedback provides students with opportunities to respond, clarify, revise, rethink, and improve their performance and understanding
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	f. Teacher provides tools (e.g., rubrics) or directions whereby students can evaluate themselves (student self-assessment)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	g. Teacher shows warmth and respect to all students; provides reassurance, encouragement, and/or comfort
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	h. Student "talk" (whole group, small group, pairs) is vibrant and on topic/on-task (accountable talk, cross-talk)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	i. Teacher is accessible; easy to approach, minimizes barriers to students (vs. maximizes barriers, inaccessible), shows interest in students and responds to their questions
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	j. A variety of texts and information resources/genres are easily accessible and used by students and teacher (vs. text selections and availability limited/teacher permission required to access)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	k. Teacher uses discussion and inquiry to promote critical thinking, analysis and reasoning (sequencing, compare/contrast, problem solving, prediction, experimentation)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	l. Teacher is able to anticipate behavior management issues; able to reframe or redirect conflicts and behavior issues
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	m. Students have opportunity to reflect on their learning and thinking; also, adequate "wait time" is provided
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	n. Teacher shows deep understanding of important concepts; able to clearly explain, give illustrative examples, respond accurately to questions, identify and address student misconceptions
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	o. Instructional staff uses appropriate spoken and written language.
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	p. Other (specify): _____

5. Resources used

Directions: For items 1-3, identify the predominant core, supplemental, and/or instructional materials that you observed in use for reading and language arts instruction during the FULL Observation by title, page number, grade level, intervention and (if published) publisher and year of publication.

1. Core:
2. Supplemental:
3. Intervention:

Section V

Rating of Literacy/Project Center

1. Time spent in Literacy Center or Project-based Activities (including Teacher-led small group instruction)_____ (minutes)

2. a. Observed Literacy Center/Small Project-based Groupings are based on pre-assessment of student needs (verify with teacher) ❑ Yes ❑ No

   b. Assessment instruments used to determine groupings: _____

   c. Identify how often assessments are done and small groupings changed _____

3. Literacy Center or Project–based Activities and Participation

Directions: Complete the Literacy/Project-based Centers table below. Where a rating is required write the NUMBER that describes the level you observed using the following scale:

1 = Not at all: not observed at all
2 = Rarely: observed less than 20% of the time
3 = Sometimes: observed less than half the time, about 20% to 49% of the time
4 = Often: observed at least half the time, or between 50% to 74% of the time
5 = Almost always: observed 75% or more of the time during instruction

For each Literacy or Project-based Center observed:

1. List the Standard observed in each of the Literacy/Project Center in which students worked, using the Standards Codes on pages 4-7

2. a. Indicate if an adult or student peer provided instruction by identifying the adult or peer, (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Speech teacher, volunteer, student)
b. Indicate if adult or peer remained in center All the time (A) or Floated (F).

3. Rate the extent to which the person providing instruction engaged all students in on-task activities using the rating scale above for each student group that rotates through the center.

4. Indicate if the activity at the center is or is not differentiated based on the skill level needs of each rotating group.

5. For each center indicate the kind of accountability/work sample provided to each student to complete (e.g., worksheet, saved online-game, hands-on project) and/*or* the form of assessment conducted for each student.

6. Rate the level of student on-task activity during time at literacy center using the 5-point scale above for each student group that rotates through the center.

	1. Reading content and subcontent area(s) <u>and/or</u> standard (s)	2a. Specify person providing instruction, *if any* 2b. Specify if person is present *(All the time= A or Floated = F)*			3. Extent person scaffolded and engaged all students *(Rate 1-5)*					4. Differentiated activity at each center for each group? *(Yes or No)*		5. Accountability/ assessment activity *(specify)*	6. Level of on-task engagement by students in group *(Rate 1-5)*				
		2a	A	F	1	2	3	4	5	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
Center 1																	
Center 2																	
Center 3																	
Center 4																	
Center 5																	
Center 6																	
Center 7																	
Center 8																	
Center 9																	

Notes:

High School
ELA Curriculum Audit Classroom Form

Directions: Prior to the observation, introduce yourself. Also, arrange to speak with the teacher for a few minutes after the observation to clarify items not clearly understood during the observation.

Section I

Classroom Observation

Classroom Observer: _____ **Date**: _____ **Grade Level:** _____

School: _____ **Observation Start/End Time:** _____/_____

Teacher:_____ **Maximum number of students observed in the classroom** _____

Provide a breakdown of the adults observed *besides* the classroom teacher (ENTER NUMBER of adults in each category below. Also, specify kind of teacher, volunteer, etc.)

_____ 1. Other teachers, e.g., reading teacher/specialist, special education teacher, ESL teacher (specify): _____

_____ 2. Teacher Assistants/Paraprofessionals (specify):_____

_____ 3. Volunteers, e.g., parents, college students (specify):_____

_____ 4. Other (specify): _____

Section II

School and Classroom Literacy Environment Checklist

School Literacy Environment

- ❑ a. Student work, projects, or awards displayed in hall or cases
- ❑ b. Student work displayed in hall and organized by standards/goals
- ❑ c. Posting of Assessment Results and/or Standards
- ❑ d. Evidence of school-wide literacy projects (e.g., author study, graphs of # of books read)
- ❑ e. Motivational sayings (specify): _____
- ❑ f. News or articles about school or community displayed (specify): _____
- ❑ g. Other (specify): _____

Classroom Literacy Environment

- ❑ a. Reading area
- ❑ b. Writing area
- ❑ c. Computer area
- ❑ d. Literacy stations
- ❑ e. Classroom library
- ❑ f. Displays of student work in reading/language arts
- ❑ g. Classroom arranged to accommodate flexible student groupings
- ❑ h. Classroom environment reflects students' lives and backgrounds
- ❑ i. Classroom displays related to reading/language arts (e.g., posters, charts, word walls, word cards, environmental print)
- ❑ j. Classroom rules and behavioral expectations are posted and clear
- ❑ k. Rules and expectations appear to have been developed by teacher and students

Activities Log

Begin/ End	Activity Description	Standards and/or Activity Codes Note Integration of components using plus (+) sign between components	Groupings	Participation Rating (1-5)	Student On-Task Level (1-5)	Cognitive Demand	Resources Used

Coding for Section III

For A, B, & C use the 1-5 Rating Scale in the box below.

A. Emphasis on Standard Rating Scale

B. Participation Patterns Rating Scale

C. On Task Level Rating Scale

1 = Not at all: not observed at all

2 = Rarely: observed less than 20% of the time

3 = Sometimes: observed less than half the time, about 20% to 49% of the time

4 = Often: observed at least half the time, or between 50% to 74% of the time

5 = Almost always: observed 75% or more of the time during instruction

D. Cognitive Demand Coding

1 = **Remembering**: retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory. *Provide facts, terms, definitions, conventions. Locate literal answers in text. Identify relevant information. Reproduce sounds or words.*

2 = **Understanding**: constructing meaning from oral, written, or graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining.

3 = **Applying**: carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing.

4 = **Analyzing**: breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing.

5 = **Evaluating**: making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing.

6 = **Creating**: putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganizing elements into a new pattern of structure through generating, planning, or producing.

E. Resources Used Coding

a. Basals
b. Workbooks/worksheets
c. Language experience stories
d. <u>Trade book level</u>
   1. Children's
   2. Young adult
   3. Adult texts
e. <u>Type of trade book</u>
   1. Fiction
   2. Informational text
   3. Decodable, patterned, or leveled books
   4. Books available in multiple languages
f. Poems, odes, etc.
g. Fables, myths, legends
h. Songs
i. Plays and media productions
j. Reference books
k. Magazines and newspapers (articles, editorials, movie/book reviews, etc.)
l. Textbooks (other than basals)
m. Oral interviews/oral presentations
n. Charts, graphs, maps, diagrams
o. Primary sources/public documents
p. Technical manuals
q. Professional journals
r. Student work (journals, reports, poems, power point, etc.)
s. Classroom displays (e.g., posters, charts, walls, photos, environmental print)
t. Games, puzzles, manipulatives (e.g., letter tiles)
u. Paper and pencil/other writing materials
v. Blackboard/whiteboard, felt board, or easel pad
w. <u>Computer resources</u>
   1. Software
   2. Internet access/electronic bulletin boards
   3. Smartboard
x. Audio/video (audio and media presentations)
y. Other (specify):_____

Section III

Rating of Overall Instruction

High School Standard 1

Language for Information and Understanding

LISTENING & READING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
1. Listening and reading to acquire information and understanding involves collecting data, facts, and ideas; discovering relationships, concepts and generalizations; and using knowledge from oral, written and electronic sources				
❑ a. Interpret and analyze complex informational texts and presentations, including technical manuals, professional journals, newspaper and broadcast editorials, electronic networks, political speeches and debates, and primary source material in their subject area courses				
❑ b. Synthesize information from diverse sources and identify complexities and discrepancies in the information				
❑ c. Use a wide variety of strategies for selecting, organizing, and categorizing information				
❑ d. Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information and between fact and opinion				
❑ e. Relate new information to prior knowledge and experience				
❑ f. Understand and use the text features that make information accessible and usable, such as format, sequence, level of diction, and relevance of details				

Examples:

- Incorporate information from several noted experts to support a thesis in a research paper
- Assemble notes for historical and artistic exhibits
- Use an electronic data base other graphic presentations to find evidence of trends for a sociological study
- Produce flow charts and diagrams to show the relationships among information from different sources
- Determine the relative value of different reference materials for a particular research question

SPEAKING & WRITING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
2. Speaking and writing to acquire and transmit information requires asking probing and clarifying questions, interpreting information in one's own words, applying information from one context to another, and presenting the information and interpretation clearly, concisely, and comprehensibly				
❑ a. Write and present research reports, feature articles, and thesis/support papers on a variety of topics related to all school subjects				
❑ b. Present a controlling idea that conveys an individual perspective and insight into the topic				
❑ c. Use a wide range of organizational patterns such as chronological, logical (both deductive an inductive), cause and effect, and comparison/contrast				
❑ d. Support interpretations and decisions about relative significance of information with explicit statement, evidence and appropriate argument				
❑ e. Revise and improve early drafts by restructuring, correcting errors, and revisiting for clarity and effect				
❑ f. Use standard English skillfully, applying established roles and conventions for presenting information and making use of a wide range of grammatical constructions and vocabulary to archive an individual style that communicates effectively				

Examples:

- Demonstrate how to perform an intricate task such as how to operate a computer program or conduct a laboratory experiment
- Write an extended research report on a complex issue or topic that documents sources of information and is well organized to convey overreaching ideas and supporting evidence and details
- Write a report of a scientific inquiry that observes the conventions of scientific writing, the rules of evidence, and the correct usage of technical terms
- Produce program notes for an art exhibit or concert with background information on the works and artisits

High School Standard 2

Language for Literacy Response and Expression

LISTENING & READING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
1. Listening and reading for literacy response involves comprehending, interpreting, and critiquing imaginative texts in every medium, drawing on personal experiences and knowledge to understand the text, and recognizing the social, historical and cultural features of the text.				
❑ a. Read and view independently and fluently across many genres of literature from many cultures and historical periods				
❑ b. identify the distinguishing features of different literary genres, periods and traditions and use those features to interpret the work				
❑ c. Recognize and understand the significance of a wide-range of literary elements and techniques, (including figurative language, imagery, allegory, irony, blank verse, symbolism, stream of consciousness) and use those elements to interpret the work				
❑ d. Understand how multiple levels of meaning are conveyed in a text				
❑ e. Read aloud expressively to convey a clear interpretation of the work				
❑ f. Evaluate literary merit based on an understanding of the genre, the literary elements, and the literary period and tradition				

Examples:

- Read a selection of poems of different forms, including sonnets, lyrics, elegies, narrative poems, and odes, and recognize the effect of the structure and form on the meaning
- Act out scenes from a full length play in class
- Read literary pieces on a common theme from several literary periods (such as Renaissance, Neo-classical, Romantic, Realistic, Naturalistic, and Contemporary) and compare the treatments of the theme in those periods
- Read and interpret works of recognized literary merit from several world cultures and recognize the distinguishing features of those cultural traditions
- View stage or film productions of a major play or novel and discuss the interpretation of the work that is evident in the production

SPEAKING & WRITING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
2. Speaking and writing for literary response involves presenting interpretations, analyses, and reactions to the content and language of a text. Speaking and writing for literary expression involves producing imaginative texts that use language and text structures that are inventive and often multilayered.				
❑ a. Present responses to and interpretation of works of recognized literary merit with references to the principal features of the genre, the period, and literary tradition, and drawing on their personal experiences and knowledge				
❑ b. Produce literary interpretations that explicate the multiple layers of meaning				
❑ c. Write original pieces in a variety of literary forms correctly using the conventions of the genre and using structure and vocabulary to achieve an effect				
❑ d. Use standard English skillfully and with an individual style				

Examples:

- Write stories or poems using such literary structures and devices as stanzas and chapters, metaphosrs, foreshadowing, symbolism and different forms of dialogue and narration
- Take part in productions of full length plays
- Put together a collection of literature from different cultures around a common theme and write the introduction to the collection explaining the similarities and differences
- Write an interpretation of a major nineteenth-century novel discussing the features of the novel that reflect the conventions of the genre in that time period
- Write interpretations of works of recognized literary merit including a discussion of the principal features of the genre, the period, and the tradition

High School Standard 3

Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

LISTENING & READING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
1. Listening and reading to analyze and evaluate experiences, ideas, information, and issues requires using evaluative criteria from a variety of perspectives and recognizing the difference in evaluations based on different sets of criteria				
❑ a. Analyze, interpret, and evaluate ideas, information, organization, and language of a wide range of general and technical texts and presentations across subject areas, including technical manuals, professional journals, political speeches, and literary criticism				
❑ b. Evaluate the quality of the texts and presentations from a variety of critical perspectives within the field of study (e.g., using both Poe's elements of a short story and the elements of "naturalist fiction" to evaluate a modern story)				
❑ c. Make precise determinations about the perspective of a particular writer or speaker by recognizing the relative weight they place on particular arguments and criteria (e.g., one critic condemns a biography as too long and rambling; another praises it for its accuracy and never mentions its length)				
❑ d. Evaluate and compare their own and others' work with regard to difference criteria and recognize the change in evaluations when different criteria are considered to the more important				

Examples:

- Compare the majority decision and the dissenting opinions on a Supreme Court case
- Listen to speeches of two political candidates and compare their stands on several major issues
- Read the writing of several critics on the same author and determine what literary criteria each used in evaluating the author and how that accounts for different judgments
- Read a current article on a scientific issue such as the greenhouse effect and compare it to an earlier explanation of the same issue

SPEAKING & WRITING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
2. Speaking and writing for critical analysis and evaluation requires presenting opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information, and issues clearly, logically, and persuasively with reference to specific criteria on which the opinion or judgment is based				
❑ a. Present orally and in writing well developed analyses of issues, ideas, and texts, explaining the rationale for their positions and analyzing their positions from a variety of perspectives in such forms as formal speeches, debates, thesis/support papers, literary critiques, and issues analyses				
❑ b. Make effective use of details, evidence, and arguments and of presentational strategies to influence an audience to adopt their position				
❑ c. Monitor and adjust their own oral and written presentations to have the greatest influence on a particular audience				
❑ d. Use standard English, a broad and precise vocabulary and the conventions of formal oratory and debate				

Examples:

- Write two different analyses of a Supreme Court decisions from the perspective of a "strict constructionist" and a judicial activist
- Write a review of a technical manual from the perspective of current industry standards
- Deliver a "campaign" speech using a variety of persuasive strategies to influence an audience
- Write an essay comparing critiques from two different countries of a Shakespearean play

High School Standard 4

Language for Social Interaction

LISTENING & READING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
1. Oral communication in formal and informal settings requires the ability to talk with people of different ages, genders, and cultures to adapt presentations to different audiences, and to reflect on how talk varies in different situations				
❑ a. Engage in conversations and discussions on academic, technical, and community subjects, anticipating listeners' needs and skillfully addressing them				
❑ b. Express their thoughts and views clearly with attention to the perspectives and voiced concerns of the others in the conversation				
c. Use appropriately the language conventions for a wide variety of social situations, such as informal conversations, first meetings with peers or adults, and more formal situations such as job interviews or customer service				

Examples:

- Take part in and conduct meetings of student organizations
- Interact with community members through community service experience or part time jobs
- Interview for a job or college acceptance
- Greet visitors at school performances or sports banquets

SPEAKING & WRITING *Minutes* ____ *A. Emphasis/extent* ____	B. Participa-tion Rating	C. On-Task Level	D. Cognitive Demand	E. Resources Used
2. Written communication for social interaction requires using written messages to establish, maintain, and enhance personal relationships with others				
❑ a. Use a variety of print and electronic forms for social communication with peers and adults				
❑ b. Make effective use of language and style to connect the message with the audience and context				
❑ c. Study the social conventions and language conventions of writers from other groups and cultures and use those conventions to communicate with members of those groups				

Examples:

- Participate in electronic discussion groups (e.g., listserv)
- Write letters and personal essays as part of college application
- Write personal notes and letters that entertain and interest the recipient

Section IV

Summary of Overall Grouping, Strategy, and Climate

1. Check instructional groupings observed and indicate percent of time spent in each grouping during observation

Grouping Codes *Teacher works with:*	**Summary of groupings Percent of observation**
❑ a. Whole group	%
❑ b. Small, homogeneous group	%
❑ c. Small, heterogeneous group	%
❑ d. Individual student/independent practice	%
❑ e. Student pairs	%
❑ f. Teacher has organized activity, but is not working with students on the activity	%
TOTAL:	100 %

2. Check all instructional strategies observed

- ❑ a. Teacher-led instruction: teacher models, demonstrates skills, explains
- ❑ b. Teacher provides explicit skills instruction using a systematic scope and sequence with instructional texts (e.g., basals, worksheets)
- ❑ c. Teacher embeds the teaching of skills in a literature-based approach
- ❑ d. Teacher uses higher level questioning strategies (inferential, evaluative, differing perspectives, etc. vs. literal questions)
- ❑ e. Teacher drills students in activities requiring memorization or repetition, individually or in unison
- ❑ f. Teacher engages students in interactive discussion (e.g., teacher/students, students/students)
- ❑ g. Teacher encourages students to listen to peers and respect their insights and opinions
- ❑ h. Project-based work
- ❑ i. Teacher acts as coach or facilitator; may coach individual students within teacher-led group instruction or provides targeted, brief, instruction for individuals/groups who are working without explicit teacher guidance
- ❑ j. Students work independently (i.e., individuals, peer pairs, or groups) without teacher guidance on self-paced assignments
- ❑ k. Teacher modifies instruction based upon assessment information (e.g., "teachable moment"). Uses student "error" to deepen concept understanding.
- ❑ l. Teacher makes connections to previous lessons/stories
- ❑ m. Teacher integrates writing and reading components
- ❑ n, Technology as instructional tool
- ❑ o. Independent inquiry/research by students
- ❑ p. Other (specify): _____

3. Integration of Subjects and/or Reading Components

a. Interdisciplinary/Thematic Teaching and Activities observed? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Please specify_____

b. Integration of Reading Components Observed ❑Yes ❑ No

Please specify _____

4. Classroom climate feedback

Directions: Put a check in the box that shows the extent to which the kinds of feedback and climate listed were observed during the **FULL observation (Whole Class and Literacy Center/ Small Group time)** using the 1-5 rating.

1 Not at all	2 Rarely	3 Some-times	4 Often	5 Almost Always	**Feedback and Climate**
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	a. Teacher acknowledges correct responses (e.g., "that's right!")
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	b. Teacher provides instructional feedback to correct, clarify, or expand student response (vs. only saying no or yes)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	c. Teacher conferences with individuals or groups of students
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	d. Students provide feedback to one another, offer support and assistance to each other; positive relationships among and between students evident
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	e. Teacher feedback provides students with opportunities to respond, clarify, revise, rethink, and improve their performance and understanding
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	f. Teacher provides tools (e.g., rubrics) or directions whereby students can evaluate themselves (student self-assessment)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	g. Teacher shows warmth and respect to all students; provides reassurance, encouragement, and/or comfort
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	h. Student "talk" (whole group, small group, pairs) is vibrant and on topic/on-task (accountable talk, cross-talk)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	i. Teacher is accessible; easy to approach, minimizes barriers to students (vs. maximizes barriers, inaccessible), shows interest in students and responds to their questions
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	j. A variety of texts and information resources/genres are easily accessible and used by students and teacher (vs. text selections and availability limited/teacher permission required to access)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	k. Teacher uses discussion and inquiry to promote critical thinking, analysis and reasoning (sequencing, compare/contrast, problem solving, prediction, experimentation)
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	l. Teacher is able to anticipate behavior management issues; able to reframe or redirect conflicts and behavior issues
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	m. Students have opportunity to reflect on their learning and thinking; also, adequate "wait time" is provided
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	n. Teacher shows deep understanding of important concepts; able to clearly explain, give illustrative examples, respond accurately to questions, identify and address student misconceptions
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	o. Instructional staff uses appropriate spoken and written language.
❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	p. Other (specify): _____

5. Resources used

Directions: For items 1-3, identify the predominant core, supplemental, and/or instructional materials that you observed in use for reading and language arts instruction during the FULL Observation by title, page number, grade level, intervention and (if published) publisher and year of publication.

1. Core:
2. Supplemental:
3. Intervention:

Section V

Rating of Literacy/Project Center

1. Time spent in Literacy Center or Project-based Activities (including Teacher-led small group instruction)_____ (minutes)

2. a. Observed Literacy Center/Small Project-based Groupings are based on pre-assessment of student needs (verify with teacher) ❑ Yes ❑ No

   b. Assessment instruments used to determine groupings: _____

   c. Identify how often assessments are done and small groupings changed _____

3. Literacy Center or Project–based Activities and Participation

Directions: Complete the Literacy/Project-based Centers table below. Where a rating is required write the NUMBER that describes the level you observed using the following scale:

1 = Not at all: not observed at all
2 = Rarely: observed less than 20% of the time
3 = Sometimes: observed less than half the time, about 20% to 49% of the time
4 = Often: observed at least half the time, or between 50% to 74% of the time
5 = Almost always: observed 75% or more of the time during instruction

For each Literacy or Project-based Center observed:

1. List the Standard observed in each of the Literacy/Project Center in which students worked, using the Standards Codes on pages 4-7

2. a. Indicate if an adult or student peer provided instruction by identifying the adult or peer, (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Speech teacher, volunteer, student)
b. Indicate if adult or peer remained in center All the time (A) or Floated (F).

3. Rate the extent to which the person providing instruction engaged all students in on-task activities using the rating scale above for each student group that rotates through the center.

4. Indicate if the activity at the center is or is not differentiated based on the skill level needs of each rotating group.

5. For each center indicate the kind of accountability/work sample provided to each student to complete (e.g., worksheet, saved online-game, hands-on project) and/*or* the form of assessment conducted for each student.

6. Rate the level of student on-task activity during time at literacy center using the 5-point scale above for each student group that rotates through the center.

	1. Reading content and subcontent area(s) <u>and/or</u> standard (s)	2a. Specify person providing instruction, *if any* 2b. Specify if person is present *(All the time= A or Floated = F)*			3. Extent person scaffolded and engaged all students *(Rate 1-5)*					4. Differentiated activity at each center for each group? *(Yes or No)*		5. Accountability/ assessment activity *(specify)*	6. Level of on-task engagement by students in group *(Rate 1-5)*				
		2a	A	F	1	2	3	4	5	Yes	No		1	2	3	4	5
Center 1																	
Center 2																	
Center 3																	
Center 4																	
Center 5																	
Center 6																	
Center 7																	
Center 8																	
Center 9																	

Notes:

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APPENDIX C

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Appendix D

William B. Tecler Special Study

APPENDIX D: TECLER EXTENDED STUDY

Purpose of the Extended Study

One requirement of the GASD English Language Arts (ELA) Curriculum Audit was to examine issues specific to the low ELA performance at Tecler. To complete this requirement, MI conducted additional data collection activities at this school site and disaggregated survey data to provide insight into the root causes of the school's history of low performance. The recommendations provided in this section supplement the overarching findings and recommendations for the district as a whole.

In this section of the report we provide a critical analysis of Tecler's specific needs related to the ELA curriculum; the instructional delivery system that implements these curriculum standards; and the assessment system that ensures accountability for meeting the New York State ELA standards. The analysis builds on the audit criteria used in the district report.

The table below summarizes Tecler's Promising Practices and Action Recommendations.

Promising Practices (PP) and Action Recommendations (AR)
PPT1: Tecler has reached out to community agencies to collectively assist families who are struggling with poverty and social emotional challenges. PPT2: Tecler's principal has been actively involved in the implementation of the district's Response to Intervention (RTI) initiative. ART1: Develop a three-year plan to redistribute a portion of the special education classrooms at Tecler to other elementary schools in the district. ART2: Increase membership of the CEP School Leadership Team to include representatives from all grade levels and meet quarterly to discuss school improvement results. ART3: Hold all staff accountable for promoting and monitoring the goals of the CEP plan. ART4: Conduct a day-long school retreat focused on team-building, collaboration and teacher leadership. ART5: Conduct a detailed assessment of the professional development needs of Tecler teachers and provide monthly pedagogy mini-sessions at grade level and/or staff meetings to address knowledge gaps. ART6: Assign specialists, and AIS and special education staff to grade level teams for professional development activities. ART7: Emphasize student engagement as a primary goal for professional development and monitor progress through regular principal walk-throughs. ART8: Ensure ongoing coordination of the curriculum and student progress goals with extended day/year programs. ART9: Provide an external mentor for the building principal.

School Profile

Tecler, a magnet school drawing from students districtwide, serves approximately 421 students from a broad range of backgrounds. Most notably the school reports the following changes in student demographics over the past three years:

- An increase in the number of students with disabilities (SWDs) with more intense needs (i.e., severe heath, mental health and anger management issues) who have been assigned to the building;
- A decrease in the English Language Learner (ELL) population in grades 3-5 (from 30 to 21 students);
- An increase from 39 percent to 45 percent of the students living in poverty; and
- An increase in student tardiness.

In general, the economic decline of the community has reduced the capacity of parents of students attending Tecler to pay for basic needs such as transportation to school, school supplies, and clothing.

Tecler remains on New York State's low-performing school list; however, the 2009 state tests showed some ELA performance gains by student, grade level and scaled scores as well as some progress for all subgroups. Although many students improved their scaled scores in 2009, gains were not necessarily enough to raise students' performance levels and improve the school's ranking.

As required by New York State, Tecler developed a Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) for 2009-2010 school year. The CEP planning process was completed by an eight member School Leadership Team comprised of one Grade 4 teacher, one Grade 2 teacher, one teacher from AIS, one teacher from ESL programs, two Special Education teachers representing a 12:1:4 classroom and a Resource Room, and the PTO President.

The CEP Team concluded that some of the school's recent initiatives may have contributed to student gains. The following findings of the CEP School Leadership Team were validated by interviews and data review during the audit:

- The addition of full-time staff for AIS reading and Speech and Language provides additional support to struggling SWDs;

- There are an increased number of SWDs in general education with direct teacher and aide support;

- Monthly meetings with a Mental Health professional, and County social worker housed in building facilitates family support and service coordination;

- The addition of a Literacy Coach and regularly scheduled professional development opportunities have improved faculty discussions about ELA best practices and pedagogy;

- The adoption of a new reading series that improved access to more rigorous content for general education;
- The new reading series has increased access to general education ELA curriculum for SWDs, ELL and AIS students;
- A School Improvement Grant has provided funding for extended day/year programs for students;
- The use of a 90-minute reading block has increased the time spent in reading focused instruction; and
- Grade level meetings and professional development sessions have been used to develop literacy centers, support teachers and create lesson plans using a Rigor/Relevance Framework and Quadrant D Gold Seal Lesson models from the International Center for Leadership in Education.

The CEP plan also provides an assessment of the school's current performance and identifies some of the following areas that Tecler believes continue to impact the school's ELA performance rating. Tecler and audit findings are described below:

- The new core Reading Series is at a *frustration level* for many students. Specifically, unit tests do not show improvements and teachers must rework assessments to show gains.
- Teachers are still learning to create centers at differentiated instructional levels and to use the supplemental materials provided by the new reading series.
- AIS and Special Education intervention strategies are not implemented as a first step in general education classrooms.
- There is a heavy reliance on pull-out and special education referrals to serve students who are struggling.
- There is little coordination between the general education and special education programs.
- There is limited Parent involvement in the school's activities. Magnet school and academic focused meetings are poorly attended, but ELL and family social nights are well attended.
- Teachers believe that the attention span of students appears to be decreasing and fewer students are motivated to read, however, audit observations show limited use of instructional techniques that promote student engagement.
- Class size has increased and school-based support services have decreased.

- There are limited types and use of technology, although Smart boards were in the process of being installed in the classrooms.

- The school and classrooms are not literacy rich. There are few displays in the classroom that engage active learners and classrooms are not well-supplied with books other than the reading series materials.

- Student work was not displayed in many classrooms.

- Few classrooms showed evidence of daily writing and journal entries.

- Test taking strategies are not adequately reinforced during the school year.

- Social studies and science are not integrated into the ELA curriculum.

- Active learning and true student engagement in developmentally appropriate ways are lacking.

- Effective small group instruction and differentiation are needed.

Curriculum Governance and Management

Curriculum governance and management at Tecler is confounded by the school's high concentration of special education students. Formerly a special education school, the building has retained a higher proportion of the self-contained classrooms operated by the district. Not surprisingly, interviews suggest that Tecler staff is more oriented toward the use of "special" services as the primary mode of intervention, than other schools in the district.

Compared with other elementary schools in Amsterdam, there was *less* teacher collaboration evident at Tecler. Internal communications (e.g., between principals and teachers, teacher to teacher, teachers and other instructional staff) also was *far lower* at Tecler than the communications reported by the other elementary schools on the survey. Conversely, Tecler teachers reported *far more* frequent discussions with their school principal on instructional matters.

In general, Tecler teachers also reported *more obstacles* to effective instruction than their colleagues in other elementary schools. By far the biggest differences concerned the following:

- parent resistance (selected by 62% of Tecler teachers vs. 39% of other elementary teachers)
- inadequate professional development (39% of Tecler vs. 9% of other elementary teachers),
- lack of district-level leadership (31% of Tecler vs. 13% of other elementary teachers).

Rules/manuals to secure a safe environment were also *not as evident* in Tecler. Interviews with Tecler staff suggest that there is an overarching concern about the quality and the consistency of the discipline practices used in the building. However, when asked about their use of effective classroom management practices, all or nearly all Tecler and other elementary school teachers reported

"routine" or "fully integrated" use. Although some students were observed sitting in the office after removal from the classroom, there were no behavioral outbursts or disruptive events during the audit observations or walk-throughs. In fact, students appeared to be sitting quietly in response to teacher directed lessons and work tasks.

In terms of student engagement, slightly fewer Tecler teachers agreed with the following statement, *Most students in the school are engaged and excited about learning* (69% vs. 74%). Still all (100%) Tecler and other elementary teachers reported routine or integrated use of strategies that motivate and engage students in learning. Conversely, observations and walk-throughs suggest that there is limited student engagement in the learning process and few opportunities for active learning in many Tecler classrooms.

As noted in the overall findings for the district, what teachers may define as effective strategies for motivating/engaging students, may not mesh with what the research says about effective practice in this area. Constructivist pedagogy—which more likely engages students than traditional pedagogy—rarely occurred in GASD classrooms, elementary or otherwise. Although slightly *more* Tecler teachers reported that they involved their students in constructivist activities, the percentage doing so was quite low.

Written ELA Curriculum

Overall, teachers at Tecler were less positive about the ELA curriculum than teachers in the other elementary schools in Amsterdam. *Many more* Tecler teachers (50%) believed that their ELA/reading program needed major improvement compared to 24 percent of the teachers in other GASD elementary schools. During interviews, Tecler teachers and specialists also expressed considerable frustration about understanding how to use the new reading series and if they were allowed to diverge from the core program to incorporate their own strategies and materials. When compared to other elementary teachers, fewer Tecler teachers reported that they had sufficient control in determining or adjusting the ELA curriculum (15% vs. 23%).

Nearly all Tecler and other GASD elementary teachers (>90%) surveyed indicated that their classroom instruction in ELA was aligned with the New York State Learning Standards and with their school's ELA curriculum to a "moderate" or "great" extent. However, *fewer Tecler* teachers assigned the rating "great" extent. For example, 50 percent of Tecler teachers versus 91 percent of other elementary teachers believed that their classroom instruction was aligned with the New York State Learning Standards to a "great" extent. And 64 percent of Tecler teachers versus 86 percent of their elementary colleagues felt that their classroom instruction was aligned with their school's ELA curriculum to a "great" extent.

Specifically, Tecler teachers assigned *lower ratings* than their elementary school colleagues on all curricular alignment items including:

- alignment with the NYS standards,
- within grades,
- across grades, and
- with instruction.

The average difference in the percentage of Tecler versus other teachers reporting a "moderate" or "great" extent of curricular alignment was 8 points (88% vs. 96%).

Additionally, Tecler teachers were *not as positive* about the ability of the ELA curriculum to meet the needs of all students, particularly SWDs, ELL, and racial/ethnic minorities. For example, 58 percent of Tecler teachers versus 71 percent of other elementary teachers believed that the ELA curriculum was adequately meeting the needs of special education students.

Interviews with Tecler teachers, specialists and administrators indicated that there was considerably more resistance to the new reading series adoption than in other schools in the district, particularly in the earliest stages of implementation. Several teachers did express that despite the rough start, they were hopeful that the higher expectations of the new reading series would eventually have a positive effect on student performance.

ELA Instruction

Tecler teachers assigned *lower ratings* to the quality of learning resources in their school. The largest differences centered on the criteria "up-to-date" and "alignment with state standards." In the former case, 77 percent of Tecler teachers assigned a "good" or "excellent" rating compared with 96 percent of other elementary teachers.

Tecler teachers did report *more* hours per week of ELA instruction (14.6 vs. 13.5) than other elementary school teachers, and more uninterrupted instructional time. Tecler teachers also spent the largest percentage of ELA class time per week in whole class activities (37%), while their elementary school colleagues spent the largest percentage of ELA class time in small group activities (41%). However, Tecler teachers assigned homework less often than their elementary colleagues, and the typical assignment required less time.

Compared with their colleagues, Tecler teachers were also not as facile in using and managing flexible classroom grouping structures. Specifically, only 62 percent of Tecler teachers reported "routine" or "fully integrated" use/management of flexible grouping structures, compared with 96 percent of other elementary teachers.

Across all areas assessed—including instructional planning— Tecler teachers were *not as consistent* in their use of effective practice. The differences relative to instructional planning issues were as follows:

- selecting instructional goals and objectives suitable for diverse students (17% of Tecler teachers reported inconsistent use—as opposed to routine or integrated use—vs. 12% of other elementary teachers);
- creating standards-based lesson plans (23% of Tecler teachers reported inconsistent use vs. 4% of other elementary teachers);
- planning instruction that builds on student interests and experiences (31% of Tecler teachers reported inconsistent use vs. 12% of other elementary teachers), and selecting and adapting curricular and instructional material to meet student needs (23% of Tecler teachers reported inconsistent use vs. 4% of other elementary teachers); and

- Tecler teachers *received less training related to instructional planning issues* than teachers in other elementary schools. For example, 17 percent received at least 4 hours of professional development on standards-based lesson planning compared with 39 percent of other elementary teachers; and 36 percent received at least 4 hours of professional development on selecting and adapting curricular and instructional materials to meet student needs versus 42 percent of their elementary school colleagues.

To assess reading practices, GASD teachers were asked a series of questions on the survey about the **focus they placed on reading skills and instructional strategies** within the skill areas. Findings were as follows:

- At the elementary level, Tecler teachers tended to place *more emphasis on phonemic and phonics instruction* than their elementary school colleagues, and less emphasis on fluency and writing instruction. Both groups placed about the same emphasis on vocabulary, comprehension, and text/print concepts.

- These differences played out in the ratings concerning specific instructional strategies. Namely, a *higher percentage* of Tecler teachers reported that phonemic strategies were central to their lesson plans than teachers in other GASD elementary schools. Conversely, *fewer* Tecler teachers reported that text/print concepts and comprehension strategies were central to their lesson plans.

Tecler teachers and their colleagues reported similar levels of technology access and use.

In contrast, Tecler teachers reported *more intervention services* for struggling learners than other elementary school teachers. Major differences were found in the following areas:

- separate tutorial programs as part of an intervention (checked by 69% of Tecler teachers vs. 35% of other elementary teachers);
- before and after-school programs (checked by 69% of Tecler teachers vs. 27% of other elementary teachers); and
- intervention programs for ELL (checked by 100% of Tecler teachers vs. 85% of other elementary teachers).

The large majority of Tecler teachers and their colleagues reported that they "routinely" adapted instruction to meet the needs of ELL students and those with diverse cultural backgrounds. *Although more intervention services appear to be available, fewer* Tecler teachers reported that procedures were in place to monitor struggling learners who received prevention and/or intervention services.

ELA Assessment

Consistent and persistent use of assessment data is vital to improving students' performance and understanding how to target the specific learning needs of students. A significant weakness at Tecler is that there appears to be limited teacher knowledge and use of effective assessment strategies. Additionally, all teachers are not consistently monitoring of student progress and using these data to differentiate instruction. Compared with their colleagues, *far fewer* Tecler teachers surveyed considered the following uses of assessment as a "normal part of work":

- assess students' strengths and weaknesses (42% vs. 75%),
- group students for instruction (42% vs. 70%),
- plan instructional activities (50% vs. 75%), and
- monitor student progress (67% vs. 85%).

Professional Development

Fewer Tecler teachers than teachers in other elementary schools also reported that their colleagues had a *good understanding of the ELA curriculum* (77% vs. 96%). Tecler teachers, compared with their colleagues, also received *fewer hours of professional development* on curricular alignment this past school year. For example, 17 percent of Tecler teachers vs. 24 percent of other elementary teachers received 3 or more hours of re: aligning curriculum to the NYS standards.

Additionally, MI's audit survey asked GASD teachers about their use of several research-based instructional strategies including: differentiated instruction, questioning and discovery strategies, explicit/direct instruction, and facilitation/coaching as instructional methods. Results at the elementary school-level suggest that with the exception of facilitation/coaching (where 54% of Tecler and 36% of other elementary school teachers reported inconsistent use), the large majority of elementary school teachers (> 85%) used all practices routinely.

Tecler teachers were *less familiar* with the K-12 reading research than their elementary school colleagues. The top three influences on all elementary school teachers' reading instruction were the following: (1) school ELA curriculum (selected by 60%), (2) NYS ELA standards (52%), and (3) materials, books, resources (52%).

Promising Practice T1: Tecler has reached out to community agencies to collectively assist families who are struggling with poverty and social emotional challenges.

Significance: The school-home connection is a critical component of a school's success. Teaming with agencies that also support families with their basic needs is a critical piece of the complex puzzle of student success.

Promising Practice T2: Tecler's principal has been actively involved in the implementation of the district's Response to Intervention (RTI) initiative.

Significance: The effective implementation of RTI and PBIS are critical components of the school reform needed at Tecler. Stronger, research-based instruction and student intervention techniques will enhance student engagement in general education. A clear and systematic approach to presenting schoolwide expectations and providing differentiated instruction and support services should reduce the pull-out and fragmented services that were in place during the audit. The principal must take a strong leadership role in this implementation process and ensure that active learning is in place in all classrooms.

Action Recommendation T1: Develop a three-year plan to redistribute a portion of the special education classrooms at Tecler to other elementary schools in the district.

Significance: Decreasing high concentration of special education classrooms at Tecler will provide a more manageable school environment. The plan should involve all elementary principals in discussions about space utilization and how each elementary school can best integrate students into their school culture. Training for administrators and teachers in the buildings receiving students will be a critical bridge to effective administration.

Action Recommendation T2: Increase membership of the CEP School Leadership Team to include representatives from all grade levels and meet quarterly to assess school improvement results.

Significance: Each grade level needs to be actively involved in the school reform efforts. The goals set forth in the CEP plan must be part of grade level conversations and at the core of the school's daily efforts to improve instruction.

Action Recommendation T3: Hold all staff accountable for promoting and monitoring the goals of the CEP plan.

Significance: Staff meeting time and grade level meeting time should be set aside to examine school/grade level progress toward meeting the goals of the CEP plan.

Action Recommendation T4: Conduct a day-long school retreat focused on team building, collaboration and teacher leadership.

Significance: Creating a positive, proactive school climate at Tecler is essential for success in achieving its school improvement goals. Staff evaluations should include a discussion about each individual's efforts to work collaboratively to improve the school as a whole.

Action Recommendation T5: Conduct a detailed assessment of the professional development needs of Tecler teachers and provide monthly pedagogy mini-sessions at grade level and/or staff meetings to address knowledge gaps.

Significance: Comparative weaknesses in knowledge about effective ELA instructional practices and the use of data and assessment warrant an immediate plan to build the capacity of Tecler teachers. Assessment strategies and the use of data to group students and differentiate instruction will be critical aspects of the professional development efforts at Tecler.

Action Recommendation T6: Assign specialists, and AIS and special education staff to grade level teams for professional development activities.

Significance: General education staff and support staff at all levels need to have a common understanding of learning. All staff as well as the principal should be included in the retreat and school-wide professional development offerings

Action Recommendation T7: Emphasize student engagement as a primary goal for professional development and monitor progress through regular principal walk-throughs.

Significance: Active learning is key to student engagement. This will require intense professional development in the areas of differentiated instruction and research-based practices. Tecler teachers will need opportunities to learn from peers both within the district and outside the district who can model active learning environments. Student engagement needs to be redefined. Teachers need to see that true engagement is more than just being on task to complete worksheets.

Action Recommendation T8: Ensure ongoing coordination of the curriculum and student progress goals with extended day/year programs.

Significance: To be effective, extended day/year programs must be closely coordinated with the curriculum and share common curriculum standards.

Action Recommendation T9: Provide an external mentor for the building principal.

Significance: Mentorship from an external source will help build the capacity of Tecler's school leadership. Connecting with a local organization, such as SAANYS, who provide principal mentors at a reasonable cost, is an effective way to promote reflection and skill development for principals facing multiple challenges. Since successful implementation of these recommendations depends upon skilled leaders, individualized support and professional development for the current principal should be a priority.

Key Consideration	Implementation Strategies
Shared Decision-making and team building	• Offer ongoing training for the entire school on shared decision-making, teacher leadership and team building. • Focus staff meetings and grade level meetings on the goals of the CEP plan.
Effective ELA Instruction	• Engage regular and special education teachers in professional development and study groups to enhance literacy though read-alouds, author study, books clubs and literature circles as an addition to the core reading program. • Enlist the librarian to share high quality literature with teachers and offer more programs for students. • Rework assessments of the core reading series to offer a better picture of student progress. • Provide teachers with help in creating centers which offer differentiated learning. The literacy coach can assist with this. • Coordinate the AIS and special education services in more in-class interventions and co-teaching. • Use grade level meetings to allow classroom teachers to meet and plan with AIS and special education teachers. • Improve classroom libraries for more opportunities for students to read. Encourage teachers to include sustained silent reading time daily where students have a choice of literature and informational texts. • Develop a more focused approach to writing as a process beginning in kindergarten. Implement journals or writers' notebook. • Celebrate literacy in classroom displays and throughout the school. Publish student writing. • Consider sending teachers on visitations to schools with successful co-

	teaching and literacy programs. • Provide teachers with time to analyze the new ELA Common Core Standards and include them in their curriculum mapping work. • Make student engagement the central focus of professional development through topics such as differentiation, curriculum mapping and small group work/cooperative learning. • Assist teachers in developing instructional skills such as question formation to build higher level thinking. • Build student engagement through small learning groups as cooperative learning activities. • Help teachers use project-based learning to allow students to engage in inquiry-based activities as the pursuer problems. This will involve students in debating ideas, making predictions, designing plans or experiments, communicating ideas and making artifacts or projects. • Allow student choice in topics of study and reading/writing which correspond to their own interests and backgrounds. • Use *Literacy Stations at Work* by Debbie Diller to help teachers develop centers which better engage students.
Parent Involvement	• Involve parents in the building's shared decision-making team and CEP planning team. • Develop a Parent University with mini-courses for parents on literacy, parenting strategies, child development, language development. • Improve parent information on school and teacher websites. • Invite parents to celebrations of reading and writing. • Develop a parent library within the school library. • Reach out to community organizations to help plan parent/family events.
Leadership development	• Provide a mentor for the principal to help her guide improvement efforts and build her capacity as an instructional leader. SAANYS can provide this mentor. • Offer training to the principal on effective use of the walk-through approach. • Encourage visibility and communication in principal interactions with staff.

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