

New York City Community School District 3: Final Report

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**Submitted to
District 31**

**Submitted by
Professional Services Group
Learning Point Associates**



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Introduction

This interim report is the result of an audit of the written, taught, and tested curricula of New York City Community School District 3 by Learning Point Associates. In mid-2005, eight school districts and the New York State Education Department (NYSED) commissioned this audit to fulfill an accountability requirement of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act for local education agencies (LEAs) identified as districts in need of corrective action. These LEAs agreed, with the consent of NYSED, to collaborate on the implementation of this audit, which was intended to identify areas of concern and make recommendations to assist districts in their improvement efforts.

The focus of the audit was on English language arts and mathematics curricula for all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs). The audit examined curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, management, and compliance through multiple lenses of data collection and analysis. These findings acted as a starting point to facilitate conversations in the district in order to identify areas for improvement, probable causes, and ways to generate plans for improvement.

This report contains an outline of the process, data, and methods used as well as the key findings from the data collection and the associated problem statements generated through the cointerpretation process for New York City Community School District 3.

Finally, a Recommendations for Action Planning section provides recommendations, as well as more specific advice, to consider in the action-planning process. While the recommendations may be considered binding, the specific advice under each area should not be considered binding. Through the remaining action-planning steps, the specific steps for action will be outlined with the district and, upon completion, can be considered a binding plan.

District Background

Overview

Community District 3 serves the West Side of Manhattan from West 59th Street to West 122nd Street and includes the communities of, Manhattan Valley, the Upper West Side, and Lincoln Center.

Data from 2004 indicate that District 3 served a total of 15,367 students, with 542 PK students, 14,289 K–12 students, and 536 “ungraded” students. Of those students enrolled, 42 percent were black; 19 percent were white; 35 percent were Hispanic; and 5 percent were Asian, Pacific Islanders, Alaskan Natives, and Native Americans. School year data from 2001 to 2004 indicate a slight decline in the number of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. In the 2001–02 school year, 63 percent were eligible; for 2002–03, that number was 64 percent; and for the 2003–04 school year, 56 percent were eligible. District data also indicate a low but consistent percentage of limited-English-proficient students (9 percent in 2001–02, 8 percent in 2002–03, and 9 percent in 2003–04). Special education enrollment was 14 percent, 13 percent, and 13 percent, respectively.¹

In 2001–02, the district’s average spending per student (direct services only) was \$9,956 while in 2002–03, this amount per student rose to \$10,995.

Student Academic Performance

The state of New York designated the accountability status of New York City District 3 as a district “In Need of Improvement, Year 3” for English language arts and mathematics.

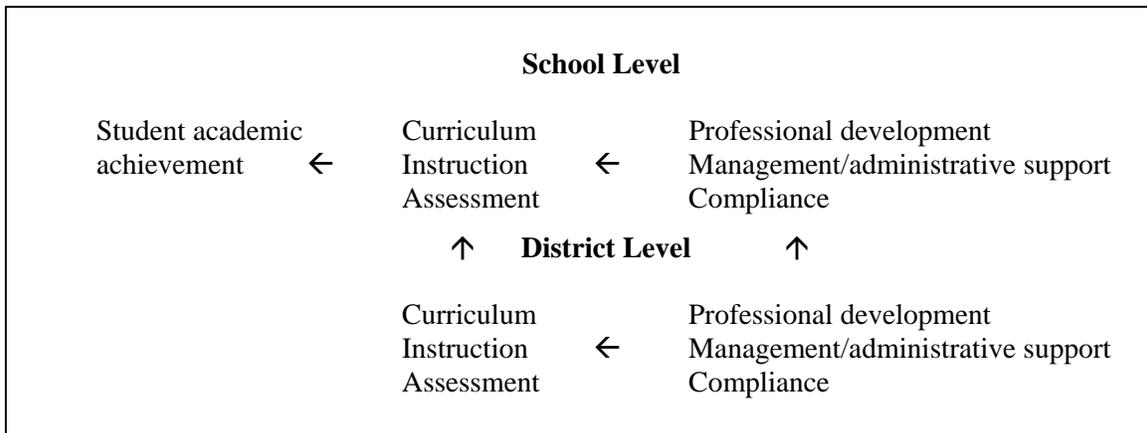
¹ The school district data came from *New York City 2003-2004 Annual School Reports, District 3 Report*, retrieved November 15, 2005, from http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/SchoolReports/results_PDF.asp?Region=10&Submit=Submit&RegDist=1003 and from *New York City Public Schools 2003-2004 Annual District Report, District 3*, retrieved November 15, 2005 from <http://www.nycenet.edu/daa/SchoolReports/04asr/903999.PDF?>.

Theory of Action

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

The theory of action reviewed in the cointerpretation meeting identified that change (i.e., actions needed to improve student achievement) occurs at both the school and the district levels. Therefore, the audit gathered information at both levels. A graphic representation of the Theory of Action dynamic is shown in Figure 1. A more detailed explanation is provided in the Preliminary Report in the Addendum.

Figure 1. Theory of Action



Guiding Questions for the Audit

To address both the needs of individual districts and the requirements of the audit, Learning Point Associates identified seven essential questions for the focus of the audit.

1. Are the written, taught, and tested curricula aligned with one another and with state standards?
2. What supports exist for struggling students, and what evidence is there of the success of these opportunities?
3. Are assessment data used to determine program effectiveness and drive instruction?
4. Does classroom instruction maximize the use of research-based strategies?
5. Is the district professional development focused on the appropriate content areas, and are there strategies in place to translate it into effective classroom practice?
6. Do management and administrative structures and processes support student achievement?
7. Is the district in compliance with local, state, and federal mandates and requirements?

Audit Process Overview

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

Phase 1: Covisioning

The purpose of covisioning is to develop a shared understanding of the theory of action and guiding questions for the audit. Outcomes included agreement on the theory of action and guiding questions, which were included in the Preliminary Report to the district. This phase also included the planning and delivering of communications about the audit to the district's key stakeholders.

Phase 2: Data Collection and Analysis

To conduct this audit, Learning Point Associates examined district issues from multiple angles, gathering a wide range of data and using the guiding questions to focus on factors that affect curriculum, instruction, assessment, management, and compliance. Like the lens of a microscope clicking into place, all of these data sources work together to bring focus and clarity to the main factors contributing to the district's corrective-action status. Broadly categorized, information sources include student achievement data, the *Surveys of Enacted Curriculum* (SEC), observations of instruction, semistructured individual interviews and focus groups, and analysis of key district documents.

Student Achievement Data

To provide a broad overview of district performance, student achievement data from the New York State Testing Program assessments for the past three years were analyzed for Grades 4 and 8. Scores labeled "Grade 12" reflect the scores of a student cohort that are reported every four years. This analysis shows aggregate trends in performance and with NCLB subgroups.

SEC

To examine whether instruction was aligned to the New York state standards and assessments, teachers in the district completed the SEC. Based on two decades of research funded by the National Science Foundation, the SEC are designed to facilitate the comparison of enacted (taught) curriculum to standards (intended) and assessed curriculum (state tests), using teachers' self-assessments. Teachers who participate in the survey respond by indicating the amount of instructional time they spend on each topic at each cognitive level. The disciplinary topic by cognitive-level matrix is presented in graphic form, which creates a common language for comparison and a common metric to maintain comparison objectivity.

Observations of Instruction

A sample of classrooms in the district was observed using a structured observation system. This observation system was not designed to serve as an evaluation of instruction in the classroom or a comparison of instruction within and across classrooms, but to record exactly what occurs in the classroom. Observations lasted approximately 45–60 minutes in each classroom during which the observer collected data in 10-minute segments. Observations focused on both student and teacher behaviors as well as particular instructional components.

The data then were analyzed using descriptive statistics in several areas, including classroom demographics, environment, instructional materials, lesson content, purpose, and activities conducted.

Semistructured Individual Interviews and Focus Groups

People who are involved integrally in a district (e.g., students, teachers, district staff) have unique insights into a school system, including its strengths and operational challenges. While data of this type are necessarily subjective—representing the views of the speakers—they are nonetheless highly informative. Rigorously analyzed, these data provide various viewpoints. When this information aligns with more objective information, it can provide rich insights into issues and possible solutions. When this information does not align with more objective information, it can lead to fruitful discussions to identify the cause of the discrepancy.

To tap into stakeholders' perceptions of issues concerning curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, management, and compliance, the views of teachers, students, principals, district administrators, service providers, and community leaders were gathered through semistructured interviews and focus groups.

In the data interpretation and reporting process, the emphasis is on common themes and divergent cases to exemplify commonly reported characteristics and challenges occurring in the sampled schools. This process encourages sensitivity to emergent patterns, along with irregularities within and across school sites (Delamont, 1992). This process also supports a report that included descriptions rich in context and interpretations, which connected with and extended the district's contextual knowledge about what it perceives as working and not working across its schools.

Analysis of Key District Documents

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

A document review scoring rubric was developed and used to synthesize document information within each of the six strands of the audit (i.e., curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, management, compliance). The rubric was designed to measure whether each district document contained sufficient information across each strand. The degree to which each

respective document addressed the strand was evaluated by two to three content experts to ensure multiple perspectives during the process. Components of each strand were given a 0–3 rating based on the level of coverage within the document. Once ratings were completed, a consensus meeting was held, and a report was generated by all reviewers.

Table 1 lists the key data sources and how they were used by Community School District 3 to review the district during the cointerpretation process.

Table 1. Alignment of Data Sources With Key Questions

Guiding Questions	Student Achievement Data	<i>Surveys of Enacted Curriculum</i>	Observations of Instruction	Semistructured Individual Interviews and Focus Groups	Analysis of Key District Documents
1. Are the written, taught, and tested curriculum aligned with one another and with state standards?	X	X	X	X	X
2. What supports exist for struggling students, and what evidence is there of the success of these opportunities?	X		X	X	X
3. Are assessment data used to determine program effectiveness and drive instruction?	X	X		X	X
4. Does classroom instruction maximize the use of research-based strategies?		X	X	X	X
5. Is the district professional development focused on the appropriate content areas, and are there strategies in place to translate it into effective classroom practice?	X	X	X	X	X
6. Do management and administrative structures and processes support student achievement?	X			X	X
7. Is the district in compliance with local, state, and federal mandates and requirements?	X			X	X

Phase 3: Cointerpretation of Findings

The purpose of cointerpretation is to interpret the data collected, which were grouped into three priority areas: professional development; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and management and compliance. This phase guided the action-planning process for the system.

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

Interpret Data

The cointerpretation process began with the study of the individual data reports (i.e., school analysis report, documentation report, achievement report, district interview data, SEC data, compliance and management report [interview, focus groups, and document], and classroom observation report) in order to:

- Identify data and information related to the assigned team priority area (i.e., professional development; curriculum, instruction, assessment; management and compliance).
- Select key data points or messages.
- Categorize or cluster and agree upon the critical data points or messages.
- Identify patterns and trends across reports.
- Present and defend critical data points or messages.
- Respond to clarifying questions.
- Refine and reach consensus on key findings.

In the cointerpretation meeting in Community School District 3, as the three investigative groups (i.e., professional development; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; management and compliance) presented their findings to the whole group, some natural combining and winnowing of results occurred. From various data sources, the participants utilized the method of triangulation to provide support for combining and subsuming some of the findings. The following set of three criteria enabled the participants to examine the prioritized list of findings:

- Does the list respond to the essential questions?
- Does the list respond to the subgroup and content areas identified as not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP)?
- Does the list capture the most important findings?

From this process, which required considerable thought and discussion, key findings emerged.

Develop Problem Statements

The cointerpretation process continued with the development of problem statements. Teams reviewed the key findings to accomplish the following:

- Generate problem statements by taking the critical data points or messages and identifying problems supported by evidence.
- Prioritize problems using specific criteria, such as those that have the greatest likelihood of increasing student achievement if resolved.
- Reach consensus on the top problems facing the district.

Identify Hypotheses

Identification of hypotheses occurred next. In this stage, participants performed the following steps:

- Identified a set of hypotheses supported by evidence in the three priority areas for each identified problem.
- Reached consensus on a set of hypotheses for each problem statement.

Phase 4: Action Planning

The last step in the audit process is action planning. This process will result in an action plan focused on the areas identified in the audit. The key actions in the plan will be considered binding recommendations.

The process entails initial goal and strategy setting by a core district team, followed by planning meetings with groups or departments in the district to determine action steps and associated financial implications and timelines for implementation. Once this process is complete, the audit action plan should be aligned with other district plans.

Reference

Delamont, S. (1992). *Fieldwork in educational settings: Methods, pitfalls, and perspectives*. London: Falmer Press.

Key Findings and Problem Statements

As illustrated in the Phase 3 Process Description, each problem statement was generated through the cointerpretation process. In a facilitated process, groups of regional and district administrators, staff and parents identified key findings across multiple data sets to develop the district problem statements. The key supporting findings and hypotheses for each problem, which can also be mapped back to the original data sets, are included in the data maps in the Appendix.

It is important to note that these problem statements and hypotheses may continue to be refined, because this is an iterative process. Those included here are the outcomes of the March 10, 2006, cointerpretation meeting.

After a review of multiple data documents, participants in the cointerpretation meetings in District 3 generated a list of key findings, which then led to seven problem statements. In an effort to further understand the reasons behind these problems, participants proposed several hypotheses.

Problem Statement 1

General education teachers have not had enough professional development or opportunities to collaborate with peers in order to meet specific needs of ELL students and students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Numerous sets of data presented at the cointerpretation meeting indicated the need for more professional development as well as development that pertains more closely to classroom instruction. Other data amplified the problem. The review of the Key District Documents Data Report noted that the district did not demonstrate how it evaluates the effectiveness of professional development and that there is no evidence that professional development translates into effective instructional practices.

A review of the Teacher and Principal Data Report notes a disconnect between administration and teachers: Principals noted an abundance of professional development opportunities, but teachers felt the professional development did not meet their needs. Most teachers interviewed felt that the weekly required one hour of site-based professional development did not help their instruction, and they wanted more “hands-on” offerings that are geared to real classrooms. General education teachers report needing more professional development to help them meet the needs of the English language learners in their classrooms. District-level interviews confirmed that professional development activities specific to schools in District 3 are ultimately the principal’s responsibility.

Of particular mention was professional development related to students with disabilities and English language learners. Apparently, professional development occurred regularly when it was the district/regional office’s responsibility (District Administrator Report). With the change to professional development being the responsibility of the school, this has changed.

The 2004–05 District Comprehensive Educational Plan (DCEP) highlights the need to focus on professional development for *all* teachers and include a list of specific topics for teaching English language learners. The Students With Disabilities Data Report notes that a review of the Region 10 Professional Development Calendar for 2005–06 did not clarify whether special educators are included, or can access, the offerings listed. It is also unclear if classroom teachers are receiving the training and support needed to understand and provide appropriate instruction and assessment for students with disabilities.

Participants in the cointerpretation of data meeting suggested several possible causes for this problem. They reiterated that the professional development at the school level does not always include special education teachers. Teacher collaboration is sometimes disjointed, with inadequate preparation time for teachers to meet across departments, and no mandated articulation period for teachers of English language learners. Others noted that teacher meetings lacked focused topics. These problems were compounded, participants said, by the attitude of some school staff that some (special-needs) students should be served in different settings.

Problem Statement 2

Although only five of the forty-two schools in District 3 are identified under NCLB because of their subgroup population, many of the other thirty-eight schools have subgroup populations that are too small to be counted in calculating the school’s accountability status. The scores of these schools “roll up” to the district level and impact its accountability status. Schools with these small subgroup populations often seem unaware that the achievement of all students at all schools in the district impacts the district’s accountability status.

This problem statement reflects one of the lesser known aspects of the accountability provisions of the NCLB Act. Student scores on state assessments must be disaggregated at the school level by identified subgroups, including (among others) ELL students and students with disabilities. However, if an individual school has a small population of tested students (as defined by the state) in any one of these subgroups, the scores of these students do not impact the determination of whether or not the school has made AYP. Instead, those scores become the responsibility of the district. At the district level, the scores are aggregated by subgroup from all schools with small subgroup populations. Thus, the identification of District 3 for corrective action is due, in part, to the performance of students in identified subgroups from throughout the district.

The Students With Disabilities Data Report provides important information that helps to explain this problem statement. In District 3, student placements in less restrictive environments have increased, with a 32-percent rate of movement in 2001–02 and a 17-percent rate in 2003–04. Both rates are higher than the city average. In addition, the percentage of full-time participants in special education has declined from 6.5 percent of all students in 2000 to 3.6 percent of all students in 2004. Finally, the percentage of students with individualized education plans (IEPs) who are in general education classrooms for more than 80 percent of the school day has increased from 67.6 percent in 2001–02 to 72.9 percent in 2003–04. Thus, the district is making steady progress in multiple areas related to serving students with disabilities. However, student achievement reports for 2001–02 and 2003–04 show that students with disabilities performed less well on state assessments than did students without disabilities in both English language arts

and mathematics at the elementary and the middle school levels. These scores indicate that throughout the district, schools are not successfully reaching all of their special-needs students.

Participants at the cointerpretation meeting speculated that school staffs did not know that their school's performance affected the district accountability status. Therefore, they felt, schools were less inclined to think that they were part of the "problem" of corrective action and more inclined to think that their school is doing well because it has not been identified. Another hypothesis offered was that support services are located mostly in schools with a large number of students in subgroup populations.

Problem Statement 3

Within schools, there is inconsistent collaboration among teachers and between school leaders and school staff.

Interviews with teachers revealed that some have a strong collaborative relationships with the teachers of English language learners and students with disabilities in their buildings. Others reported that they do not have enough time during the day for collaborating and that they use informal means such as notes in teacher mailboxes or talking in the hallway. Some teachers interviewed felt that collaboration is limited because special services are largely provided to students by pulling them out of their regular classroom. Data from principal interviews support the notion of inconsistent collaboration between schools: Principals in schools not making AYP were more likely than schools in good standing to have an open-door policy, to review lesson plans, and to monitor curriculum.

At the cointerpretation meeting, one hypothesis concerning the lack of consistent collaboration was that scheduling difficulties prevent it; another was that there may be competing agendas at the school level. A third hypothesis pointed to the possibility that principal leadership style may not be conducive to collaboration.

Problem Statement 4

Resources and academic programs (within school buildings) are not equitably distributed. As a result, students do not have equal access to all resources, instructional programs, and supplemental services.

Data reviewed at the cointerpretation meeting highlighted some issues related to the equitable distribution of resources. Some parents with children in schools not making AYP perceived a lack of adequate resources, a lack of communication, and inconsistent implementation of the curriculum. Parents interviewed noted that one of four programs at the school was well supported with materials, but the other three did not have sufficient books or lab materials. Although the Regional District Comprehensive Educational Plan describes an array of Academic Intervention Services, reviewers were unable to determine if these services and supports are available to students with identified disabilities.

Additional review of data reports revealed that community leaders reported that district fragmentation hinders community programming efforts from being more systematically

implemented through the district. As a result, these community organizations tend to work with individual schools in which the principal has shown interest in the services they offer.

Participants hypothesized that the lack of equitable distribution of resources is related to historical inequities. They also stated that there is the possibility of inequity in the distribution of funds and services within the school. The schools have purchasing power, and there might be differences in how a school decides to purchase materials and programs. Finally, participants suggested that some parents speak up more than others and know how to demand more for their children and their schools.

Problem Statement 5

Formal and informal assessment data are not being used to differentiate instruction to ensure meeting the needs of the diverse student population. Assessment data are not being used to identify at-risk students for appropriate intervention services.

Data cited during cointerpretation indicated that assessment results are not driving classroom instruction. These data were drawn from the results of the SEC and the English Language Learners Data Report. The citations indicated that teachers do not always know how to meet the needs of diverse students in their classrooms.

Other data confirm and further explain this problem. The key district document review found moderate evidence regarding the use of assessment data, but little evidence illustrating how the district uses data at the school and classroom level to monitor and adjust curriculum and instruction. The principal and teacher report concludes that some schools use data to make decisions, but these efforts are inconsistent. Few teachers interviewed mentioned using state or city assessment data to make decisions in the classroom. Most referred to the use of informal assessments in making decisions about reteaching.

Several hypotheses were generated as to why assessments are not being used to inform instruction. Participants felt that teachers have little time to study data and lack tools to assess the implications of data for instruction. Some, they thought, were unable to match data to appropriate strategies. They also felt that teachers do not know how to differentiate instruction in a classroom setting.

Problem Statement 6

The delivery of math and English language arts curricula to all students, including ELL students and students with disabilities, does not consistently reflect best practices regarding lesson content, design, and implementation, which may affect student performance.

Data from several reports (SEC, classroom observation, parent/community, students with disabilities) were noted in the creation of this problem statement. Participants noted that middle school reading and writing are weak and poorly correlated, and that there is a lack of rigor in teaching mathematics. There appears to be a disproportionate focus on some strands in mathematics at the expense of others. Classroom observations noted that early-grades writing instruction is not aligned to the standards, and that only 25 percent of teachers used modeling in

teaching the writing process. Fluency and word study instruction is rarely seen in Grades 4–12, while at all grade levels, vocabulary is mostly taught using recall and demonstration. In 50 percent of elementary classrooms observed, the lesson implementation was only minimally reflective of best practices in mathematics. The classroom observation data report further indicates that district high school teachers are not following (or do not know of) the mandated curriculum.

The Teacher and Principal Data Report lends support to this statement with the finding that teachers state they have difficulty differentiating instruction, and as a result, some students' needs are not being well met. Some mentioned that the pace of instruction allowed little time to reteach material. Others reported that they do not have the training to interpret student test results. Teachers expressed concern about the prescriptive approach to instruction that they are required to use in elementary and middle grades mathematics. Middle and high school teachers reported a lack of professional development opportunities in English language arts, aside from Ramp-Up, and noted a lack of authentic assessments for English language arts in the higher grades.

Cointerpretation participants formulated a number of hypotheses in response to this problem. They cited the problem of teachers not using assessment data. They also suggested that there may be a lack of understanding that the New York state assessment is a high-stakes examination, while others said that there might be too much focus on the tests. Although participants hypothesized that there might be some teacher and some leadership incompetence, they made several statements that noted possibilities in other areas, such as a lack of preservice preparation, lack of ongoing professional development, lack of curriculum knowledge, lack of materials, lack of planning time, and a lack of knowledge of strategies for teaching ELL students and students with disabilities.

Problem Statement 7

The district is not taking advantage of the potential that technology has to support teaching and learning (in both math and English language arts) for all students.

The SEC Data Report noted a low use of technology in instruction. In other reports, such as the Teacher and Principal Data Report or the District Leader Data Report, respondents did not reference technology. An additional review of key district documents found no data that explain or elaborate on how technology is used across the New York City Department of Education or District 3 in particular.

Participants suggested possible hypotheses as to why this problem exists. They said that even when technology is available, hardware often is inadequate or nonfunctional. In addition, they suggested that there was unequal access to technology. They also said there was not enough professional development, which teachers need because they are not in fact familiar with how technology can work within the curriculum, rather than as an add-on. Finally, they hypothesized that technology leaders and trainers are not familiar with content areas and thus ineffective in training teachers on the use of technology.

Recommendations for Action Planning

In this section, we use the problem statements and key findings—along with research and best practice in literacy and mathematics and teaching students with disabilities and teaching ELL students—to make recommendations for the district’s efforts over the next three years.

The problem statements that arose out of cointerpretation with District 3 led Learning Point Associates to focus recommendations toward professional development intended to support and improve classroom teaching districtwide. The recommendations spotlight the need to address inconsistencies in delivery of the district curriculum at the classroom level, better support the needs of diverse learners, utilize assessment data to improve instruction, create systems to govern the placement of students in intervention programs, and work collaboratively toward common goals.

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

Recommendation 1

Increase professional development opportunities to help teachers in District 3 meet the needs of diverse learners by:

- **Providing general education teachers with materials and strategies to help meet the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners in their classrooms.**
- **Including teachers of special populations in professional development at all levels to increase their familiarity with district curriculum and state standards.**
- **Increasing and encouraging opportunities for teacher collaboration in support of student achievement.**

Classroom teachers are the central figure in a child’s education and have ongoing knowledge and access to information regarding the student’s achievement in relation to standards, needed accommodations, and specific curricular implications for achievement and instruction (DeStefano, Shriner, & Lloyd, 2001). With increases in the numbers of ELL students and students with disabilities being included in regular classrooms, professional development related to these topics is imperative for *all* teachers, and the administrators who support them as well. Teachers, administrators, and staff cannot be expected to do what they have not been trained to do (Whitworth, 1999).

During cointerpretation, a number of participants in the professional development group described a train-the-trainer approach used in districtwide professional development, whereby representatives from individual schools receive training at the district level and then turnkey that training to their fellow teachers at the school level. These individuals questioned whether in fact the district-level professional development content was effectively transmitted to school-based personnel. Teachers also work directly with professional development providers, including consultants from Accelerated Literacy Learning, Marilyn Burns Educational Associates and the Teacher's College Reading and Writing project. Given the importance of professional development in this context, District 3 should begin by investigating the contradiction between district documents that outline appropriate topics for professional development related to ELL students and students with disabilities, and teacher reports of inadequate and insufficient development in these areas at the school level.

Research tells us that the most successful professional development efforts are those that provide regular opportunities for participants to share perspectives and seek solutions to common problems in an atmosphere of collegiality and professional respect (Little, 1982). Collaboration in professional development is especially useful for increasing the capacity to meet the needs of special populations, given that a history of sorting and separating both diverse students and classroom teachers has resulted in very little common ground (Ferguson, n.d.). Classroom teachers are specialists in curriculum; special education and ELL teachers are specialists in the unique learning and behavior needs of students. Each specialist learns skills from the others, with all students being the ultimate beneficiaries (Beckman, 2001).

General education teachers learning to support the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms report that the most useful professional development provides them with specific skills they can immediately use and implement in the classroom. In addition to hands-on skills training, classroom observations and/or videotapes of successfully inclusive classes, and situation-specific problem-solving sessions over the course of the school year were key to providing a frame of reference for these teachers (Whitworth, 1999).

Teaching students who are learning English as an additional language is an especially complex task requiring knowledge of linguistics, culture, and curriculum. Classroom teachers need to understand the basic constructs of bilingualism and second-language development, the nature of language proficiency, the role of the first language and culture in learning, and the demands that mainstream education places on culturally diverse students (Claire, 1993). Further, classroom teachers need a “vision of students as capable individuals for whom limited English proficiency does not signify deficiency, and for whom limited academic skills do not represent an incurable situation” (Walqui, 1999).

Finally, professional development needs to be sustained over time (Steiner, 2004). Learning new ways of working together and tackling the complexities of teaching in culturally diverse schools takes sustained time, focus, and resources (Clair & Adger, 1999). Short-term professional development has been shown to be an ineffective approach to helping teachers meet the needs of diverse learners (Claire, 1998; Penfield, 1987).

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Recommendation 2

Improve the quantity and quality of collaborative work between and among principals, coaches, and teachers. Focus on increasing/improving the:

- **Consistency, focus, and quality of teacher collaboration.**
- **Consistent support of principals for collaboration and shared decision making.**
- **Effectiveness of building-level instructional coaches.**

Key findings that emerged from the District 3 cointerpretation meeting indicate that collaboration among teachers is limited, communication between faculty and administration is inconsistent, and instructional support for teachers is often perceived as inadequate at the school level.

Principal leadership is central to all actions that the district can take to assist schools in developing more productive professional cultures focused on student achievement. Principals need guidance to ensure that the direction they set in schools supports district and regional priorities. Clear measures should be taken to ensure that teachers are properly supported and that they are held accountable for working toward productive goals. For this to happen, training for principals and coaches must focus on clearly identified standards to which they themselves will be held accountable.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) identifies six core areas of instructional leadership that could serve as the basis for a collaborative model. They include the following:

- Focusing on student and adult learning
- Focusing on standards
- Setting high expectations
- Ensuring continuous learning for adults
- Utilizing data to drive instruction and program planning
- Utilizing community support to make learning effective

The association frames the issue of instructional leadership in terms of professional learning communities, and it views collaboration among teachers as a natural outgrowth of strong instructional leadership at the building level. These are starting points for where the district can focus on enhancing the instructional leadership of its principals and coaches. Staff from the district and region also participate in the Instructional Leadership Program of the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning which focuses on these areas.

A cornerstone of this recommendation is developing a collaborative structure in which principals and school coaches come together to provide extensive assistance to teachers, with support from district/regional leadership. As discussed in Recommendation 1, this type of approach has been shown to reduce teacher isolation, as well as to foster community and professional respect (Guskey, 1995). Some data considered during the cointerpretation indicated that support from coaches has not been as effective as possible. Two possible causes of this emerge in research: one, middle-level employees—in this case, coaches—are less likely to do their jobs effectively if higher level managers—in this case, principals—are not effectively doing their jobs (Bolman & Deal, 1997). It is also possible that coaches have not been effectively trained to do their jobs (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2004). A collaborative model, with supportive training for both members of the team, would go far to alleviate these problems.

One possibility for addressing the issue of limited teacher collaboration and creating a more collaborative culture with greater shared decision making is the establishment of (1) a building learning team within each school to monitor student achievement at the school level and (2) content-area and/or grade-level teams within each school to plan instruction, develop assessments, and analyze data. Because the most effective professional development is based on teacher-identified needs (Joyce & Showers, 2002), it would also be effective to bring members of these teams together at the district/regional level to help establish priorities for professional development.

Within this structure, teacher collaboration could be encouraged by offering teachers time, space, support, and feedback. Teachers need to know from school-site and district and regional leaders that collaboration time is essential to completing specific tasks. Specific school-site plans that address collaboration should be developed on an annual basis to encourage productive outcomes from this activity. Collaboration is maximized in school sites when teachers have significant goals to work toward, as well as a sense of control over the way they do their work (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). However, Hargreaves (2003) suggests that schools often create cultures that reinforce norms of restrictive community; that is, teachers become less likely to make changes to their instruction if they believe either that their changes will make no difference in the larger context of the school or that their work will never be noticed.

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Recommendation 3

Implement an assessment system at the district level that includes the following components:

- **A framework to guide schools in ensuring the consistent use of formative assessments that align with the written curriculum.**
- **Specific information and explicit directions on the use of screening and diagnostic assessments including testing recommendations.**
- **Formal processes for gathering progress monitoring and outcome assessments.**

District administrators stated that there is significant latitude in the delivery of curriculum and instruction and overall programming within the schools, which results in inconsistent use of curricular materials and assessments. The district needs to ensure that while teachers have needed flexibility in their delivery of instruction, there is consistency in the use of formative assessments at the building and classroom level. Therefore, an established and institutionalized framework is needed to define expectations for how and when assessment data are used at the building level, and how they must be used to differentiate instruction.

The following actions are recommended:

- **Establish an assessment system fully aligned to the curriculum.** Multiple pathways are possible to achieve this outcome, including the backward design approach, which includes steps to identify desired results, determine acceptable evidence, and plan learning experiences (Wiggins & McTighe 2005). Teachers in the district indicated that they assume the instructional programs that are mandated are aligned with the state standards. However, data from the cointerpretation indicate that this alignment can break down at the classroom level when what is taught does not align with the standards. This process could be used to ensure alignment and reinforce the use of existing materials such as pacing guides. We recommend that the district leaders investigate other pathways to achieve the desired outcome and select one with which they feel confident.
- **Ensure a balance between formative and summative assessments.** No matter what model is selected by the district, it is essential that the need for integrated formative and summative assessments be emphasized. Research recommends a balance between formative and summative assessments. Typically, summative assessments are used at the district level. The use of formative assessments at the building level has great impact on

teachers instructionally, and on students, academically and motivationally. A balance between the two assists in providing a clear picture of student achievement levels and progress throughout the year. “High-stakes data gives us only one piece of evidence about student learning. Well-designed classroom data collection and analysis, the everyday information a teacher collects, form the backbone of student growth” (Gregory & Kuzmich, 2004, p. 10).

- **Incorporate formative assessment methodologies at the classroom level to help teachers within the district use data to inform their instruction.** A clear framework for the use of formative assessment data is imperative to tailoring instruction for students. Using student assessment data is a critical starting point to differentiating instruction and meeting the needs of diverse learners. Getting frequent and specific feedback on performance benefits the teachers’ instruction, but it is also cited as necessary to student’s intrinsic motivation (Gregory & Kuzmich, 2004). Assessment data helps inform teachers’ instruction with regard to what is working and what is not working in the classroom; and it helps students learn the necessary adjustments that need to be made to meet specific goals. A consistent approach to formative assessment will translate into more consistent modifications and differentiated instruction for all students to meet desired achievement benchmarks.

This portion of the recommendation also encapsulates the need for an explicit system for screening and diagnostic testing for students in need of academic assistance. These assessments need strong validity and reliability, and require coordinated use. Assessments play a key role in ensuring this process is effective. Choosing a range of assessments that identify, diagnose, and monitor progress provides important information for teachers of at-risk students (Johnston & Rogers, 2002). We recommend that the district create an explicit plan, including test selection, to assist schools in ensuring that students who are struggling are identified, and that they receive the appropriate intervention services to allow them to reach their full potential.

Another aspect of this recommendation speaks to the need for systematic collection and analysis of both formative and summative data at the district level. Once all schools have consistent and adequate testing in place, a district system is essential for monitoring the results, implementation, and problems.

- **Ensure that high-quality professional development is provided that supports teachers’ use of data in the classroom.** In order to implement an assessment system that teachers understand, buy into, and implement, professional development is needed. This professional development can be incorporated into the district professional development plan. One way to support teachers in using data is to designate a data analyst(s) who would be available to support schools in formative assessment and data interpretation processes through workshops and collaborative support. Teachers can also be trained in how to develop ongoing informal and anecdotal assessments. While having assessment data in the classroom is imperative to tailoring instruction to student needs, having the support needed to interpret and utilize the assessment data also is essential.

References

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Recommendation 4

Create, implement, and monitor a system for identifying, placing, and exiting students in intervention programs.

Although the Key District Document Data Report notes that there is moderate evidence regarding the use of assessment data, it also states that there is little evidence to demonstrate how the district ensures that students in need of assistance receive intervention services. Moreover, there is little evidence to show how the district uses data at the school and classroom level to monitor and adjust the intervention services. The Teacher and Principal Data Report states that some schools use data to make decisions, although these efforts are inconsistent.

Children are identified at risk for many reasons. Causes may include living in poverty, parents' lack of education, the child's gender, or a child being labeled as immature. In the past, many approaches have been tried to help these students. They include waiting another year for a student to grow, repeating a grade in which academic growth has not occurred, and being placed in a special program (Allington & Cunningham, 2003). Research into these initiatives finds that none of these solutions has worked, and that there is no quick answer (Allington & Cunningham, 2003). At-risk students need to be identified as early as possible, taught by a qualified teacher, and have their learning accelerated. A match between the chosen intervention and classroom instruction also needs to be ensured (Allington & Cunningham, 1996).

In order to ensure that all students are being educated effectively, we recommend that the district take the following steps:

- Review current intervention programs including an analysis of their research base.
- Review how students are currently identified for intervention.
- Establish a process to determine the alignment between the goals and methods of the intervention program and regular classroom instruction.
- Establish and implement a process to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs.

One model used by districts and schools across the nation as a reading intervention is the three-tiered model of instruction, which uses ongoing data collection and immediate intervention for students. The first or primary tier is the core reading program, which provides instruction for all

students including assessments that monitor progress. Any student not making progress is identified for the second tier. The second tier, or intervention model, uses small-group instruction for 30 minutes a day. Instruction is designed based on the progress-monitoring data. Once students are at level, they are exited; however, their progress continues to be monitored. Any student still having difficulty is placed in a third tier of intervention. This level is more intensive, specifically focusing on the needs of struggling readers. The duration of instruction is longer and still based on progress-monitoring data. This and other models provide the structure needed to improve intervention identification. Regardless of the model chosen, we recommend that District 3 incorporate explicit directions for use.

Assessments play a key role in ensuring this process is effective. Therefore, this recommendation is tied with Recommendation 3. Once individuals are identified as at risk, additional information is needed to pinpoint their specific area(s) of need. The diagnosis provides a way to match the intervention program and student need. Placement into the intervention program is a step in the intervention process. During delivery, a student's progress needs to be monitored at specific periods. Specific alignment of the intervention program and progress-monitoring assessments is an essential component. A teacher reviewing this information can then make decisions about the effectiveness of the intervention program, allowing adjustments to be made in a timely manner (Clay, 1998). Monitoring student progress in the intervention program and determining specific cut points is yet another step in creating a strong intervention model.

Professional development on the intervention system is essential for effective implementation.

References

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Recommendation 5

Address inconsistencies in the quality of mathematics and English language arts instruction for all students, including ELL students and students with disabilities by:

- **Developing or revising existing professional standards that outline criteria and quality indicators for effective English language arts and math lessons.**
- **Creating materials and professional development focused specifically on the application of differentiated instruction, including those for ELL students and students with disabilities.**
- **Strengthening the instructional monitoring system currently being implemented, ensuring that effective lesson planning and implementation are occurring in the classroom.**

- **Designing a systemic, long-term approach to delivering and evaluating professional development for differentiated instruction that builds upon research-based and best practice strategies, including teacher collaboration.**

Lesson Content, Design, and Delivery

Marzano (2003) notes that a guaranteed and viable curriculum, one that provides opportunities to learn and time for adequate engagement, is critical for impacting student achievement. Standards-based curricula offer teachers a guide for their instructional practices by pointing to what knowledge or skills students must demonstrate (Darling-Hammond, 1997). This focus is believed to lead to improved and equalized student achievement.

The District 3 cointerpretation process revealed that teacher practice does not always reflect best practices regarding lesson content, design, and delivery. Classroom-level curriculum decisions such as these impact whether or not a curriculum is guaranteed and viable (Porter, 2002). Marzano (2003) notes that teachers frequently do not make decisions about how to sequence and pace content within lessons and units, but they rely heavily on textbooks and other instructional materials. (Professional development personnel participating in the cointerpretation indicated that this practice is common among District 3 teachers as well.) If such materials are used, they must be evaluated to determine if they are organized in ways that are consistent with known principles of learning.

Marzano (2003) further asserts that effective lessons that promote academic achievement (1) identify the specific types of knowledge that are the focus of the lesson, (2) structure task and activities in similar ways to allow for transfer of knowledge, and (3) allow multiple exposures and complex interactions with knowledge.

In addition to the criteria outlined above, lessons should include suggestions for modified and differentiated instruction to address the needs of special-needs and culturally diverse learners.

Finally, because effective lessons plans are useful only when implemented successfully, teachers and administrators also need to ensure that these lessons are carried out in classrooms (see Strengthening Instructional Monitoring below).

Differentiated Instruction

Students represent a variety of achievement levels in every teacher's classroom. Within a standards-based instructional program, differentiated instruction can assist in serving the needs of all learners. According to Tomlinson (1996), research has shown that regular classroom teachers who integrate differentiated instruction into everyday teaching have the opportunity to positively influence their students with differing needs. Differentiated instruction allows teachers to vary the instructional approaches in relation to the learning style of the student (Hall, 2002).

Using student assessment data is a critical starting point to differentiating instruction and meeting the needs of diverse learners (see Recommendation 3). Getting frequent and specific feedback on performance benefits the teacher's instruction, but it is also cited as necessary to the intrinsic motivation of each student (Gregory & Kuzmich, 2004). Assessment data help inform

teachers' instruction with regards to what is working and what is not working in the classroom, and help students see the necessary adjustments that need to be made to meet specific goals.

Strengthening Instructional Monitoring

Accountability of professional development is a significant part of a new plan's success. An effective system of instructional monitoring can collect and provide data that informs professional development.

While teachers are building their knowledge base and learning and trying different strategies, they need support from building- and district-level leaders. Continuous and consistent curriculum implementation requires knowledgeable, skilled, committed, and supportive building- and district-level leaders (Fullan, 2003). This leadership consist of leaders working together to motivate others and to monitor curriculum implementation.

In many ways, monitoring practices and accountability measures assist in providing duration to learning as the topics of professional development are held alive by conversations and work that utilize the new knowledge. Principals are key in this process, supporting teachers as they begin to implement new ideas.

Delivering Professional Development

During cointerpretation, a number of participants in the professional development group described districtwide professional development as being provided via a train-the-trainer approach, whereby representatives from individual schools receive training at the district level and then turnkey that training to their fellow teachers at the school level. These individuals questioned whether in fact the district-level professional development content was effectively transmitted to school-based personnel.

Joyce and Showers (2002) have demonstrated that “virtually all teachers can learn the most powerful and complex teaching strategies, provided that staff development is designed properly” (p. 10). These researchers go on to describe a program whereby teachers acquire theoretical knowledge, conduct micro-teaching with their peers, and practice teaching small groups of students in their classrooms. They argue that teachers require many repetitions of a teaching strategy before they can effectively incorporate it into their teaching repertoire. This incorporation will not happen if there is not specific follow-up at the classroom level, with observation and feedback.

Research has further defined a number of best practices in delivering professional development:

- High-value content to ensure staff buy-in
- “Just-in-time” information
- Collaboration in development and implementation
- Sustained implementation rather than a short-term approach

When staff development is designed, content is critical in terms of staff buy-in (Richardson, 1994). If teachers perceive little value in the information presented, little change will occur. The

concept of just-in-time information for teachers can be helpful for changing practice (Schunk, 2004). Just-in-time content in professional development comes from the specific needs teachers themselves identify.

The most successful professional development efforts are those that provide regular opportunities for participants to share perspectives and seek solutions to common problems in an atmosphere of collegiality and professional respect (Little, 1982). Research has also shown that teaming, study groups, and other forms of collaboration among teachers reduce the isolation that teachers feel and foster community and professional respect (Guskey, 1995). Planning, implementation, and follow-up activities should all be seen as joint efforts, providing opportunities for those with diverse interests and responsibilities to offer their input and advice (Massarella, 1980). Although teachers may not be able to plan professional development, they should be influential during the development process to be supportive of the initiative (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

Further, the history of sorting and separating both diverse students and classroom teachers has resulted in very little common ground (Ferguson, n.d.). Thus, collaboration in professional development is especially useful for increasing the capacity to meet the needs of special populations.

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Appendix Data Maps

NYC Community School District 3 Cointerpretation Key Findings, Problem Statements, and Hypotheses

During the cointerpretation process, participants analyzed 12 individual reports (data sets). Participants identified findings from across the data sets under each of the six strands examined through the audit: curriculum, instruction, professional development, assessment, management, and compliance. Participants worked together to identify which findings were most significant. The key findings were then translated into problem statements. The participants articulated hypotheses on what the root cause of each problem was. The following tables document the results of this cointerpretation process.

Table A1 lists each of the problem statements identified by cointerpretation participants. The numbers in the right-hand column indicate the key findings associated with each problem statement.

Table A1. Problem Statements

Problem Statements	Key Findings
1. General education teachers have not had enough professional development or opportunities to collaborate with peers in order to meet specific needs of English language learners and students with disabilities in their classrooms.	12, 13, 23
2. Only 4 of the 42 schools in District 3 did not make AYP because of the performance of their subgroup population; the other 38 schools have subgroup populations that are too small to be counted in calculating their school’s accountability status. The scores of these schools “roll up” to the district level and impact its accountability status.	17, 21
3. Within schools, there is inconsistent collaboration among teachers and between school leaders and school staff.	12
4. Resources and academic programs (within school buildings) are not equitably distributed. As a result, students do not have equal access to all resources, instructional programs, and supplemental services.	7, 9, 15, 24
5. Formal and informal assessment data is not being used to differentiate instruction to ensure meeting the needs of the diverse student population. Assessment data is not being used to identify at-risk students for appropriate intervention services.	3, 12

Problem Statements	Key Findings
6. The delivery of mathematics and English language arts curricula to all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, does not consistently reflect best practices regarding lesson content, design, and implementation, which may affect student performance.	1, 2, 4, 6, 11, 22
7. The district is not taking advantage of the potential that technology has to support teaching and learning (in both mathematics and English language arts) for all students	16

Table A2 lists the key findings identified by cointerpretation participants. The key findings are associated with curriculum and instruction (CI), professional development (PD), or management and compliance (MC). The right-hand column indicates the number of priority votes made by participants for each key finding.

Table A2. Key Findings

Key Findings	Priority Votes
1. Middle school reading and writing are weak and poorly correlated; however, student-created writing and applications are strong. (2, 6, 7, 8 – CI findings)	2
2. There is a lack of student demonstration as well as a lack of rigor in mathematics. (12, 13, 16, 17, 31 – CI findings)	0
3. Assessment is not driving instruction. (18, 21, 27 – CI findings)	7
4. There is a disproportionate focus on the strands of math in Grade 4, e.g., heavy geometry, low number sense and probability. (8, 9, 10 – CI findings)	0
5. There has been a reduction of self-contained classes and an increase in team teaching. (28, 29 – CI findings)	0
6. There is an overall increase in achievement for students with disabilities; however, there is still a large gap between achievement levels of students with disabilities and students in regular education. (49, 50 – CI findings)	0
7. Parents with children in schools not making AYP felt there were inadequate resources, a lack of communication, and inconsistent implementation of curriculum. (30, 31, 33, 36, 37, 38, 39 – CI findings)	1
8. There is a plan in place to align curriculum for ELLs, and there is evidence of curricular coherence. (23, 24 – CI findings)	0
9. There are not enough textbooks (including nonfiction texts) in use. (57, 58 – CI findings)	3

Key Findings	Priority Votes
10. Overall, district scores increased; Grade 8 remained steady, and math scores increased for Grades 4 and 8. (65, 66, 67, 68 – CI findings)	0
11. There is strong evidence that suggests that best “instructional” practices are not being utilized around lesson content, design, and implementation of the curriculum and standards. (1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 18, 20, 31 – CI findings)	10
12. General education teachers in focus groups said they needed more professional development, including articulation and collaboration with their peers, around meeting the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities in their classrooms. (15, 25, 26 – PD findings)	10
13. School-based special educators have difficulty accessing appropriate professional development. (15, 16 – PD findings)	4
14. The number of students with disabilities in self-contained classes in District 3 is significantly higher than the New York state average. (39 – PD finding)	0
15. Academic intervention services and supports are not consistently available to identified students with disabilities. (17 – PD finding)	1
16. There is minimal use of technology in instruction. (4, 33 – PD findings)	9
17. Students with disabilities consistently participate in assessment at a lower rate than general education peers; the district does not make AYP.	0
18. Multiple data sources noted lack of clarity regarding roles, responsibilities, and guiding principles governing central regional operation center, district, and schools. (1 – MC findings citing Teacher-Principal interviews, Management and Compliance 1, 2, 3)	4
19. Duplication, inconsistency, and mixed messages are sent to principals from management. (MC finding citing Teacher-Principal interviews, Management and Compliance 1, 2)	1
20. A number of pieces of data point to a less-than-positive school climate. (MC findings citing Teacher-Principal interviews, Management and Compliance 1, 2, 3)	7
21. Four of forty-two schools did not make AYP, but the entire district is in corrective action. (MC finding citing Student Assessment Report)	6
22. There is a marked difference between the performance of Grade 4 and Grade 8 English language learners on state English language arts and mathematics assessment. (MC finding citing Student Assessment Report)	3

Key Findings	Priority Votes
23. District Department of Education does not demonstrate how it knows if PD provided is effective. (MC finding citing Key District Documents)	3
24. Some parents felt that resources are not equitably distributed. (MC finding citing Parent/Community Report)	4

Table A3 lists all of the findings identified by cointerpretation participants. Findings were pulled from various data sets, which are available in the supportive documentation section of this report. The data sets include the following:

- SA—Student Assessment Report (Supportive Document A)
- KDD—Key District Document Review Summary (Supportive Document B)
- SWD – Students With Disabilities (Supportive Document C)
- ELL – English Language Learners (Supportive Document D)
- DS—Key Findings from District Interviews (Supportive Document E)
- TP—Teacher and Principal Report (Supportive Document F)
- PC—Findings from Parent Focus Group and Community Leaders Focus Group (Supportive Documents G)
- SEC—*Surveys of Enacted Curriculum* Reports for District and Schools (Supportive Document K)
- CO—Classroom Observation Data Report (Supportive Document H)
- MC1—Management and Compliance Document Review Summary (Supportive Document I)
- MC2—Management and Compliance Findings from Administrator and Board Interviews (Supportive Document I)
- MC3—Management and Compliance Findings from Principal and Teacher Interviews (Supportive Document I)
- Methodologies—(Supportive Document J)

The letters indicate the section of the supportive documentation in which the data set can be found. An indication of where support for each finding is supported can be seen in the table.

**Table A3. All Identified Findings by Priority Area:
Curriculum & Instruction, Professional Development, and Management & Compliance**

Curriculum and Instruction	SA	KDD	SWD	ELL	DS	TP	PC	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3
1. English Language Arts (ELA) – Not enough modeling in middle school and high school								X				
2. ELA – Individual reading weak at all levels								X				
3. ELA – Differentiated instruction diminishes by middle school and high school.								X				
4. ELA – Low-level comprehension (e.g., retelling) is prevalent in instruction. It diminishes more as the grades increase.								X				
5. ELA – Teachers feel less supported in professional development (PD).								X				
6. ELA – Grades 6 and 7 student-created writing and applications are strong.								X				
7. ELA – Grades 6 and 7: author’s craft is weak.								X				
8. ELA – Grades 6 and 7: weak reading/writing correlation								X				
9. Math – Grade 4: lack of focus on analysis/probability/stats								X				
10. Math – Grade 4: heavy focus on geometry								X				
11. Math – Grade 4: low focus on number sense/operations/measurement								X				
12. Math – Students not demonstrating/presenting findings								X				
13. Math – Projects are not being completed.								X				
14. Math – There is some use of performance-based assessments, and that is decreasing and misaligned to state standards.								X				

Curriculum and Instruction	SA	KDD	SWD	ELL	DS	TP	PC	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3
15. Math – Use of instructional technology is decreasing from elementary to middle school.								X				
16. Math – High school: a lot of focus on number sense; decrease on performance, measurement								X				
17. Math – High school: advanced algebra functions, geometry adv geometry low performance/demonstration								X				
18. Math – High school: assessment is not driving instruction.								X				
19. Math – Lack of alignment: content focus, cognitive demand – lack of rigor								X				
20. Widespread issues with pedagogy, e.g., calculators								X				
21. Lack of authentic assessments								X				
22. Math – PD day-to-day program is not reflective with what is going on in the classes.								X				
23. Some evidence of curricular alignment for ELL students.				X								
24. There is a plan in place to align curriculum for ELL.				X								
25. ELL program has lots of PD, materials, and resources.				X								
26. ELL teachers receive consistent PD from the region.				X								
27. Teachers do not use state assessment data to inform instruction.				X								
28. Reduction of self-contained special education classes			X									
29. Emphasis on team teaching from the region			X									

Curriculum and Instruction	SA	KDD	SWD	ELL	DS	TP	PC	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3
30. Focus group noted connection between making AYP and adequate resources and parent involvement at the school.							X					
31. Focus group felt there was a lack of rigor.							X					
32. Parents with children in schools not making AYP were not involved with PTA.							X					
33. Parents with children in schools not making AYP felt there were inadequate resources, lack of communication, and the curriculum was being taught too quickly with not enough depth.							X					
34. Parents in schools not making AYP felt the special education curriculum is good.							X					
35. Parents in schools not making AYP felt the Saturday learning program is good.							X					
36. Parents in schools not making AYP felt that teachers are not challenging students.							X					
37. Parents in schools not making AYP saw inequity among different academic programs in the building.							X					
38. Parents in schools not making AYP said there was not enough preparation for the math Regents exam.							X					
39. Parents in schools not making AYP said that their school lacked adequate books, materials, and classroom computers.							X					
40. Parents in schools not making AYP thought that the presence of academically successful programs disqualified the whole school from participating in supplemental educational services.							X					
41. Parents in schools meeting AYP indicate there is a lack of depth to the curriculum.							X					

Curriculum and Instruction	SA	KDD	SWD	ELL	DS	TP	PC	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3
42. Parents in schools meeting AYP think there is too much focus on conceptual thinking in math at the expense of skill development.						X	X					
43. Parents in schools meeting AYP feel there is a strong focus on achieving proficiency but a need for more challenging content.						X	X					
44. Parents in schools meeting AYP felt that there was open communication with teachers.						X	X					
45. Parents in schools meeting AYP felt that there is adequate access to textbooks and in some cases access to laptops.							X					
46. There are not enough ELL teachers (district staff).					X							
47. None of those interviewed could verbalize the guiding principles for the operation of the school district (district staff).			X									
48. Program does not work for special education (district staff).			X									
49. There is an overall increase in achievement for students with disabilities from 2003 to 2005.			X									
50. There is still a large gap between achievement levels of students with disabilities and students in regular education.			X									
51. In some categories, students with disabilities have a larger percentage of students at level 2.			X									
52. Numbers of special education students in “more” restrictive environments declining, but the percentage is still above the state average.			X									
53. PD specifically for special education teachers is not identified.			X									
54. Several teachers report the ELL students don’t get enough support.						X						

Curriculum and Instruction	SA	KDD	SWD	ELL	DS	TP	PC	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3
55. Collaboration between teachers of general education, ELL, and special education is sporadic.						X						
56. School buildings need improvement.						X						
57. Schools report there are not enough textbooks or they are not used.						X						
58. There are not enough nonfiction books.						X						
59. Tardiness is a problem.						X						
60. School-based people believe that “it” is aligned with curriculum.						X						
61. City and state tests are not useful.						X						
62. Teachers say that PD supports the curriculum.						X						
63. Teachers prefer PD by experienced classroom teachers.						X						
64. Subgroups are showing increased proficiency in Grades 4 and 8 in ELA and math except whites, African American Grade 8 (ELA) and Hispanic Grade 4 (ELA).	X											
65. Overall district scores went up.	X											
66. Grade 8 remained steady	X											
67. Overall increase in Grade 4 in mathematics	X											
68. Overall increase in Grade 8 in mathematics	X											

Table A3. All Identified Findings by Priority Area (continued)

Professional Development	SA	KDD	SWD	ELL	DS	TP	PC	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3
1. Very little silent reading time reported for ELA Grades 9–12								X				
2. At all grade levels, vocabulary is mostly taught utilizing recall and demonstration.								X				
3. Speaking & presenting, listening & viewing skills are not addressed in alignment with the standards (ELA).								X				
4. Very low use of technology in the classroom (p. 4 of 8).								X				
5. Low “n” listen to outside speakers, attend plays, performances, etc. (pp. 3, 6).								X				
6. Sources are addressed “moderately” or “some of the time.”								X				
7. Writing instruction in the early grades is not aligned to standards.								X				
8. Self-monitoring and use of rubrics is low at all levels (K–12).								X				
9. Fewer writing activities were observed at the K–3 level than the 4–12 level.									X			
10. Only 25% of instructors observed modeled steps in the writing process.									X			
11. In 35% of elementary classrooms observed, the lesson design was only minimally or somewhat reflective of best practice in mathematics.									X			
12. In 50% of elementary classrooms observed, the lesson implementation was only minimally or somewhat reflective of best practice in mathematics.									X			

Professional Development	SA	KDD	SWD	ELL	DS	TP	PC	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3
13. In 37% of elementary classrooms observed, the lesson content was only minimally or somewhat reflective of best practice in mathematics.									X			
14. High school teachers are not following, or do not know of, mandated curriculum.									X			
15. The PD calendar does not identify opportunities for general ed teachers to learn how to meet the needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms (p. 8).			X									
16. Special educators are not routinely included in district- and regional-level PD.			X									
17. Academic intervention services and supports are not consistently available to identified students with disabilities (p. 8).			X									
18. Fluency and word study instruction is rarely seen in Grades 4–12 ELA classes.									X			
19. Minimal ELA PD is available to middle and high school teachers, with the exception of Ramp-Up.						X						
20. In Grades K–3 ELA classes, a focus on comprehension was seen most often, while word study and fluency was observed least often.									X			
21. Teachers interviewed reported that they do not have the training to interpret student test results.						X						
22. Teachers reported needing more flexibility to address individual student needs in mathematics instruction.						X						
23. Teachers reported having little opportunity to introduce students to material outside of the prescribed curriculum.						X						

Professional Development	SA	KDD	SWD	ELL	DS	TP	PC	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3
24. Reported activities in mathematics classrooms indicate a number of items that are not part of the adopted curriculum, including arts & crafts, student writing, and story time (p. 5, table 13).									X			
25. Collaboration and articulation among general ed, special ed, and ELL teachers is inconsistent (p. 5).						X						
26. General ed teachers reported needing more PD around meeting the needs of the ELL students in their classrooms (p. 5).						X						
27. Teachers reported wanting more PD presented by recent practitioners.						X						
28. Most teachers indicated that the weekly PD (aka “Monday PD”) has had little impact on their instruction.						X						
29. No schedule of assessments seems to be in place to assess ELA in the higher grades (no “authentic” assessment).						X						
30. Teachers continue to utilize traditional/lecture style teaching and worksheets in the classroom.								X				
31. Teachers are not completely following the curriculum, and not always teaching to state standards.								X				
32. Teachers do not utilize real-world connections in teaching mathematics.								X				
33. There is minimal use of technology in instruction.								X				
34. There is minimal use of student portfolios.								X				
35. More informal tests/quizzes are needed.								X				

Professional Development	SA	KDD	SWD	ELL	DS	TP	PC	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3
36. Parents need PD to obtain a clear overview of the district’s curriculum, how it aligns to standards, and its consistency across schools and programs (Sp Ed, ELL, Gen Ed) (pp. 1–2).							X					
37. Parents with children in schools not making AYP are dissatisfied with the availability of extra help for students in need of assistance.							X					
38. Special ed student achievement must increase (SWD, p. 6).			X									
39. The number of students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms is significantly higher than the state average (p. 3).			X									
40. Community leaders report that district policy and programs are fragmented (owing to turnover in district leadership); this fragmentation makes it difficult to provide services to District 3 schools.							X					

Additional “findings” that felt important to the Professional Development Group:

- The lack of students-with-disabilities participation might exist in only a few schools (SWD, p. 7).
- Group members were happy that there was even a question about use of computers or other technology.
- More modeling was reported on the K–8 level (CP – SEC).
- The translation and interpretation unit is available to assist schools with written translations and oral interpretation services when working with parents and guardians of ELL students (ELL).
- In Grades 4–12, the room arrangements were conducive to learning (CO, p. 4).
- Math teachers feel supported by the math coaches. They also like that the math curriculum guides are aligned with the mandated curriculum, laying out what should be taught when.
- Math and English language arts teachers feel that the coaches have an understanding of the district curriculum.
- Comprehension and writing were observed more than 50 percent of the time in Grades 4–12 (CO).
- Observers reported that in all classrooms observed, the environment was supportive of reading.
- Commercially produced materials are utilized most often in the Grade 4–12 classrooms observed (CO).
- Rankings reflect a great disparity between general ed and students with disabilities (inverse relationship in terms of achievement) (SWD, p. 3).
- Elementary school teachers reported using a more uniform approach to the English language arts curriculum than middle or high school teachers.
- Teachers appear to be teaching to their comfort levels (SEC).
- Parental involvement is a key component in new policies for ELL students (ELL).

Table A3. All Identified Findings by Priority Area (continued)

Management and Compliance	SA	KDD	SWD	ELL	DS	TP	PC	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3
1. Multiple data sources noted lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities at the regional operations center, district, and schools.										X	X	X
2. Data identified a lack of clarity of guiding principles governing the chancellor’s organization down to the building level.						X				X	X	
3. Duplication, inconsistency, mixed messages to principals from management						X				X	X	
4. A variety of data points to a negative school climate.						X				X	X	
5. High percentage of ELL students perform at levels 1 and 2 (did not indicate source).	X											
6. Only four schools in District 3 have subpopulations large enough to be counted at the school level; subpopulation results “roll up” to the district level.	X											
7. There is no written mathematics curriculum.		X										
8. District doesn’t demonstrate how it knows if PD provided is effective.		X										
9. There is little evidence to demonstrate that data from assessments is used to inform curriculum and instruction.		X										
10. Parents in low-performing schools feel that resources are not equitably distributed.							X					

