

Community School District 17 English Language Learners

FINAL REPORT



CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Guiding Questions..... | 1 |
| Community School District 17..... | 2 |
| Methods..... | 2 |
| Key Findings | 6 |
| Key Finding 1: Standards..... | 6 |
| Key Finding 2: Instructional Strategies..... | 7 |
| Key Finding 3: Data-Driven Instruction | 10 |
| Key Finding 4: School-Wide Behavior Plan | 13 |
| Key Finding 5: Supplemental Services and Interventions | 15 |
| Key Finding 6: Professional development..... | 17 |
| Key Finding 7: Teacher Collaboration | 18 |
| Key Finding 8: Instructional Leadership and Support | 21 |
| Conclusion..... | 22 |

INTRODUCTION

This final report summarizes findings from an external district curriculum audit of Community School District 17 (CSD 17) by Learning Point Associates (LPA), an affiliate of the American Institutes for Research. This audit was conducted in response to the district being identified as in need of improvement under the NYSED differentiated accountability plan, pursuant to the accountability requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The audit process utilized was developed for and carried out under the auspices of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Office of School Development, within the Division of Portfolio Planning.

CSD 17 was identified as in need of improvement in part due to its failure to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in English Language Arts (ELA) for its students with disabilities (SWD) and English language learner (ELL) populations. The audit process focused on strategies and practices related to the ELA instruction of SWDs and ELLs. In particular, the audit process examined practices and strategies being implemented in schools in good standing (“high-performing” schools), and compared those to practices and strategies being implemented in schools not in good standing (“low-performing” schools). The purpose of the audit was not to determine compliance, but rather to ensure that the NYCDOE and CSD 17 gain useful feedback about challenges and effective practices that can have an impact on the achievement of SWDs and ELLs.

This particular report includes findings related to ELLs and all information relates to ELLs only. A companion report includes findings related to SWDs.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Several questions guided the data collection, analysis, and reporting for the CSD 17 audit. The questions focused on differences between high- and low-performing schools on critical factors related to educating ELLs. We asked how high- and low-performing schools in CSD 17 differ with respect to the following:

- Curricular standards used to guide instruction of ELLs
- Modifications to the curricular materials and/or programs when teaching ELLs
- Implementation of appropriate instructional strategies for teaching ELLs
- Implementation of data-driven instruction
- Availability and quality of supplemental services and interventions for ELLs
- Strategies to manage behavior in classrooms and throughout the school
- Professional development focused on topics related to the instruction of ELLs
- Collaboration among general education and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers

- Availability and quality of support staff for educating ELLs
- Administrative leadership regarding the education of ELLs

Data that pertained to each of the 10 guiding questions above were examined across all data sources.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT 17

CSD 17 is located in Brooklyn, New York. In 2010–11, when the audit was conducted, the district had 50 schools, including 17 elementary, 10 middle, 13 high, 5 K–8, and 5 secondary schools (grades 6–12). The district serves 26,897 students from grades pre-kindergarten through 12, of whom 13 percent¹ are SWDs and 9 percent are ELLs. Eighty-five percent are African-American, 11 percent are Hispanic, and 2 percent are Asian. Many of the students are economically disadvantaged, with 80 percent qualifying for free lunch and 7 percent for reduced-price lunch.

METHODS

Data collection and analysis focused on a subset of schools where ELLs have been successful, as well as on a subset of schools where success educating ELLs has been more of a challenge, to identify focused strategies and practices to improve the achievement of all students. Analysis of these data was combined with analysis of data gathered from all principals in the district, and a sample of network staff interviewees.

Data were collected from six sources. Two sources (principal survey and district administrator interviews) represented *all* schools in CSD 17, and four sources (school staff interviews, classroom observations, teacher surveys, and document review) represented a sub-sample of three high-achieving and three low-achieving schools within the district. The district-level sources give a more comprehensive picture of potential differences between high-performing and low-performing schools district-wide, while the school-level sources present a more focused and nuanced picture of these differences at the school level. Combined analysis of these data sources supported development of the key findings presented later in this report. All data are aggregated and reported at the district level.

District-Level Data Sources

Two district-level data sources were used to inform findings for this audit: (1) a principal survey and (2) network leader interviews. The principal survey was administered to principals of all 50 schools in CSD 17. Web-based surveys were administered over the course of six weeks in May and June 2011. The purpose of the survey was to collect information on curriculum and

¹ Calculated from the 2010–11 enrollment data provided in the CEP for each school in CSD 17.

instruction practices for the 2010–11 school year related to teaching students with disabilities and English language learners. Survey questions addressed issues such as access to the general education curriculum, instructional strategies, school-wide interventions, professional development, collaboration among staff, and administrative support. The overall response rate for the survey was 84 percent. Survey data were analyzed by comparing responses from principals in high-performing schools with those from principals in low-performing schools. High-performing schools were those identified by the district office as “in good standing,” meaning the school met AYP for all subgroups in all subject areas based on most recent state test data (2009–10). Low-performing schools in the sample were those whose accountability status was Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring.² The number of respondents to any given item for high-performing schools ranged from 20 to 25; for low-performing schools, the range was 13 to 16.

In addition to the principal survey, district-level data were gathered through a set of interviews with network staff who work with schools in CSD 17. Four network leaders participated in telephone interviews, offering their perspective on how high- and low-performing schools differ with respect to the education of ELLs. These interviews were used to add contextual, supporting information to the overall study findings.

School-Level Data Sources

The four school-level data sources used in this audit were collected as part of site visits to three high-performing and three low-performing schools within CSD 17. The sample of site visit schools was selected in collaboration with NYCDOE. High-performing schools were those whose accountability status was “in good standing” during the 2009–10 school year. The accountability status of the low-performing schools was either Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring, due in part to failure to make AYP for the ELL subgroup.

One-day site visits were conducted in each of these schools during May and June of 2011. During the site visits, researchers conducted approximately eight staff interviews and eight classroom observations. Interviewees typically included the principal, ELL/ESL coordinator or designee, an ESL teacher who uses a ‘plug-in’ model, an ESL teacher from a dual-language class, resource, or self-contained class, three general education teachers with at least three English language learners, and a general education teacher who co-teaches with an ESL teacher. Interview protocols included questions about curriculum, instruction, professional development,

² It is possible, although unlikely, for a school to not be in good standing, but still have made AYP for its ELL population. A school in this situation would technically not be “low-performing” with respect to its ELL population. In 2010–11, of the 16 CSD 17 schools categorized as low-performing for this study, 6 did not make AYP in ELA for their ELL subgroup. None of the remaining 10 made AYP for ELLs. Nine had insufficient numbers of ELLs to determine AYP status for this subgroup, and one made AYP for ELLs through the “Safe Harbor” provision. Because these 10 schools were deemed not in good standing overall, and because there was not enough information to determine if they could be considered “high-performing” for ELLs, these schools remained in the “low-performing” group for this study.

and staffing. All interviews were recorded (with the permission of the interviewee) and transcribed, and then coded using ATLAS, a qualitative data analysis software program. Researchers then reviewed all codes to identify common themes and emerging differences in interview responses between teachers in high- and low-performing schools.

Observations were conducted for an entire class period in general education, ESL, and dual language settings. Classrooms were selected in collaboration with the school principal, to accommodate scheduling and to ensure that a range of settings was included. Observers used an observation protocol covering the following topics: classroom environment, behavior management, grouping strategies, student activities, instructional practices, differentiated instruction, student engagement, and student-teacher interactions. Researchers reviewed observation data and notes to identify any consistent differences between classrooms observed in high- and low-performing schools.

In addition to the site visits, all teachers in the selected sub-sample of schools were asked to complete a teacher survey. This survey focused on actions, resources, and strategies related to identifying students for academic interventions and provision of effective interventions for ELLs; classroom practices; and school capacity, particularly instructional leadership, school management, professional development, and collaborative opportunities. The survey was administered in hard copy and took approximately 30 minutes to complete. Response rates ranged from 14 percent to 93 percent in the sample schools. Data were analyzed by comparing responses between teachers in high- and low-performing schools.

Finally, LPA collected and analyzed relevant documents from each of the selected schools. These data included the school's Language Allocation Policy (LAP), Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP), Quality Review report, school-wide behavior plan, and professional development plans. The LAPs, CEPs and Quality Review reports were coded to note language and action items relevant to the needs of English language learners. The school-wide behavior plans were reviewed and analyzed in conjunction with interview and observation data related to behavior, to determine the extent to which consistent expectations for behavior are communicated and implemented in the school. Professional development documents were reviewed in conjunction with interview data to determine the extent to which teachers are participating in professional development related to the instruction of English language learners. Again, researchers looked across schools to identify any consistent patterns of difference between documents submitted by high- and low-performing schools.

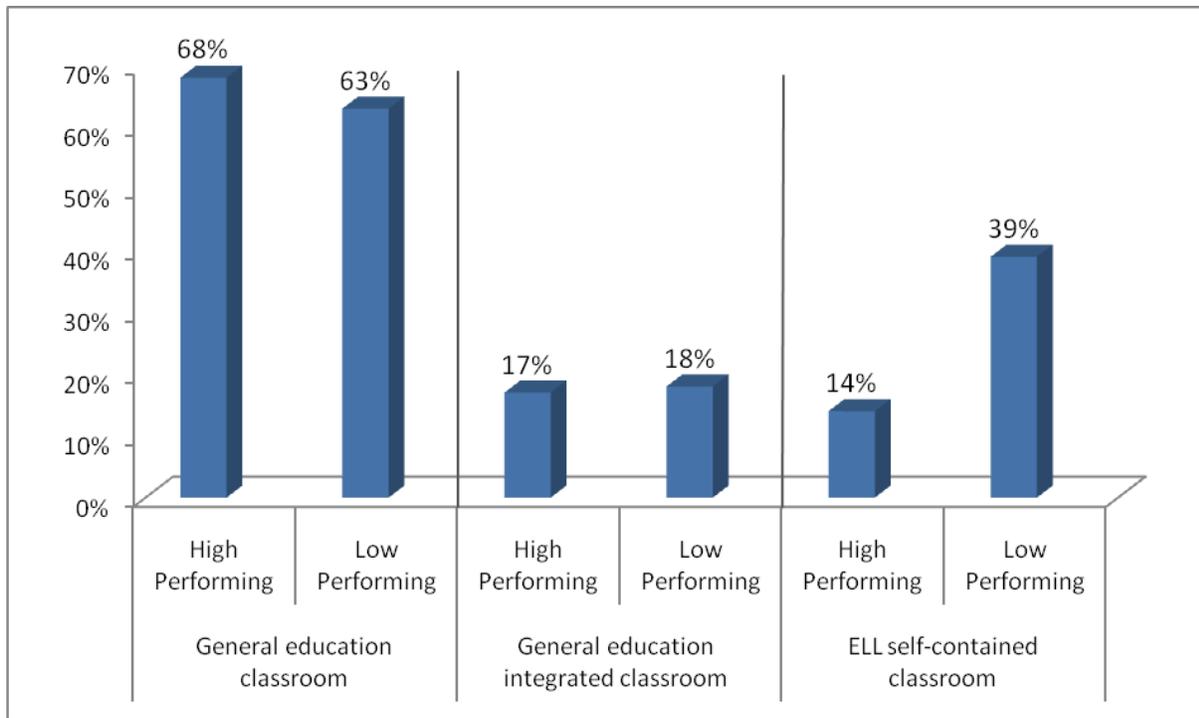
Study Limitations

This is a comparative study of high- and low-performing schools in CSD 17, with respect to the education of ELLs. However, three caveats must be noted. First, the definitions of “high-performing” and “low-performing” used for the purposes of this study are based on schools’ 2010–11 accountability status. These definitions do not directly take into account academic

performance of ELLs, nor take into account recent progress that schools may have made with respect to their ELL population.

Second, it is important to note that this study is not intended, nor able, to make determinations about what kinds of practices or strategies *cause* better outcomes for ELLs. This study identifies a set of practices and strategies that appear to be more consistently present in high-performing than in low-performing schools. There are likely many other factors that contribute to differences in ELL performance between the categories of schools, and these were not controlled for in this study. For example, according to the principal survey administered in this study, the identification rate for ELLs is higher in low-performing than in high-performing schools (15 percent compared with 9 percent). Additionally, principals in high-performing schools, reported a higher percentage of ELLs in general education classrooms (68 percent) than did principals in low-performing schools (63 percent). Principals in low-performing schools reported a higher percentage of ELLs in self-contained classrooms (39 percent) than did principals in high-performing schools (14 percent) (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1. Average percentage of English language learners by reported educational setting, for high- (n=15) and low- (n=11) performing schools



Source: CSD 17 Curriculum Audit Principal Survey (LPA, 2011). Note: Students may be reported in multiple settings; therefore, the sum across the categories do not equal 100 percent for a given school type. A “general education integrated classroom” was defined in the survey as a general education teacher and an ESL teacher co-teaching in the same classroom.

These data demonstrate that ELLs in high-performing schools, in general, are served in less restrictive settings than those in low-performing schools. While one could argue that this difference in service delivery models may be one of the factors contributing to the differences in

ELL performance, it could also reflect differences in the populations of ELLs. For example, those ELLs enrolled in low-performing schools may have lower English language proficiency than those in high-performing schools, and this difference may be a contributing factor to differences in their performance.

Third, most of the findings from this audit are based in large part on data gathered from a sub-sample of six schools. In some cases, school-level data are combined with data from the district-level principal survey to inform a finding. In all cases, multiple data sources are used to inform findings, and no findings are based on one data source only. Nonetheless, caution should be taken in generalizing findings from these data to all schools in the district. These findings should be used to inform district and NYCDOE personnel about challenges and effective practices that could potentially have an impact on outcomes for ELLs in CSD 17 schools and elsewhere.

KEY FINDINGS

This section presents key findings from the CSD 17 audit. Key findings reflect strategies and practices that were observed more consistently in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools, and are supported by multiple data sources. Below, we present each key finding, followed by a narrative describing the supporting evidence.

KEY FINDING 1: STANDARDS

In low-performing schools, not all teachers are using the core ELA standards to guide instruction of ELLs.

Key Finding 1 is supported by data from the school staff interviews and classroom observations. Interview and observation data showed that all teachers in high-performing schools were using core ELA standards to guide instruction. On the other hand, interviews with and observations of some teachers in low-performing schools revealed that they use different or modified standards when teaching ELLs.

Supporting Evidence

Interview data indicated that 2 of the 11 teachers in low-performing schools reported that they use different standards when teaching ELLs, rather than the core ELA standards for New York State. These teachers described using the ESL standards, instead of or in addition to the core ELA standards. When asked if the same standards were used for ELLs and general education students, one ESL teacher said, “No, it’s not the same ... they use the ESL standards and I don’t know how to do both standards.” Additionally, one teacher in a low-performing school who said that the core ELA standards are used also said that ELLs should not be taught to the same standards, saying, “Yes [they are taught the core ELA standards], and they shouldn’t be.” Comparatively, all teachers in high-performing schools said that they use same standards they do for general education students. An ESL teacher from a high-performing school said, “I teach the

same curriculum as is taught for the ELA because it is the same level and standard as the mandate.”

Core ELA standards instruction was observed in 100 percent of classrooms visited in high-performing schools, as opposed to 90 percent of classrooms visited in low-performing schools. Their use in high-performing schools was observed in all classrooms, and across all ELL settings (e.g. general education, ELL pullout, bilingual, dual language). In low-performing schools this was slightly less likely to be the case. In all 15 of the high-performing school classrooms visited, all had language and content objectives posted. In the 12 low-performing school classrooms visited, only 9 had these.

KEY FINDING 2: INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Teachers in high-performing schools described and implemented more instructional strategies that target the learning needs of ELLs than teachers in low-performing schools did.

Key Finding 2 is supported by data from school staff interviews and classroom observation data. These data indicated that instances of teachers implementing instructional strategies that benefit ELLs were often more likely to happen in high-performing as opposed to low-performing schools. Examples of such practices include the use of language learning goals, small group instruction, and scaffolding, among others.

Supporting Evidence

School staff interview data revealed that among high-performing schools, four out of seven administrators and 14 out of 16 teachers reported culturally responsive practices used in their schools or classrooms. This compared with only two out of four administrators and 4 out of 11 teachers in low-performing schools reporting the same. Three of those four administrators in high-performing schools described a school-wide approach to implementing culturally responsive instruction. For example, one ESL coordinator said, “This is a bilingual school and the teachers make sure through the teaching of social studies, and they have performances involving different cultures throughout the year. I think culture is very much promoted throughout the various activities that they have. It’s promoted all year. You can feel it when you visit the classes.” A primary grade bilingual teacher also stressed the importance of parent involvement. “You have to respond to their needs with sensitivity that responds to where they came from . . . I tell the Haitian parents that my classroom door is open any time. They have my cell number. They can call me any time for any reason. I know where the parents are coming from and respond accordingly to their needs and do what I need to do to help them adjust and to foster a sense of community in my classroom.”

Other teachers in high-performing schools spoke of making their academic content instruction more culturally responsive when possible. One classroom teacher said,

“When it comes to mathematics, that’s when I make the most connections, because the skills are global. So when it comes to fractions, I go back to their foods. Like I know in the Dominican Republic, there are certain dishes the kids might eat. So let’s say I am teaching fractions. Okay, what fraction of the salami can you put here and then I tied in ratios. So I’m not only teaching the content or the concept of ratio and fractions, I’m also talking about foods they can relate to.”

Teachers also mentioned using culturally responsive literature in their reading comprehension instruction. One teacher said, “I pull out the Treasure Chest books because they are very relevant to the different parts of the countries that they come from.” Yet another said, “Knowing the culture of my students, I really try to bring in stories that they can connect to. We read a story a few months ago called *Too Many Tamales* and we talked about that, and there was a story called *Abiyoyo* that they love. So I really try to as much as I can bring in the cultural component. They usually do a lot better in those types of books.”

What Is a Language Learning Goal?

Each academic content objective requires ELLs to use different language structures. These are the building blocks of language that we use to form sentences and coherent paragraphs, both orally and in writing. ELLs also need to know vocabulary that is content specific, as well as general academic vocabulary that is related to the content objective. For example, when teaching science content, a teacher might decide that ELLs need to be using the present tense, which is appropriate in expressions showing cause and effect. In order to express cause and effect, students need to know “signal” words (as they are referred to in the new Common Core Standards) that are used to express cause and effect. Usually these are conjunctions—most frequently used in science. In a history lesson, the past tense would most likely be used, with signal words such as afterward, finally, and until. Language-learning goals related to these signal words might be added to the content objectives for the lesson.

Among high-performing schools, 10 of 16 teachers reported that they incorporated language learning goals in academic content lessons for ELLs, compared with only 5 out of 11 teachers in low-performing schools. One teacher in a high-performing school said, “For the ELL, you have to use some strategies and approaches to adapt to the fact that the student is learning a second language, but the content is the same.”

Classroom observation data revealed a variety of additional instructional practices in high-performing schools that promote learning for ELLs that were not present in low-performing schools, or present to a lesser degree (see Exhibit 2). These differences were observed in classroom environment, grouping strategies used by teachers, instructional practices in the classroom, student activities, and student-teacher interaction and engagement:

- Classroom environments in high-performing schools were slightly more likely to be print rich than in low-performing schools. Observers noted classroom libraries and book baskets in these classrooms, with books arranged by topic and level. Picture word walls were in evidence, with words and pictures from science and social studies displayed. Items in the rooms were labeled in English. Often reading materials were in more than one language.

- In terms of grouping strategies, small group instruction was more prevalent in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools. Students were observed working as partners, working at centers while teachers instructed other students, and receiving reading instruction in small groups.
- In observations of student activities, students in high-performing schools were found working collaboratively more often than in low-performing schools. They were also more likely to be engaged in sustained reading and writing activities involving a workshop model than they were in low-performing schools.
- Observation of instructional practices revealed that teachers in high-performing schools were more likely to build on students’ diverse backgrounds and promote cultural awareness than those in low-performing schools.
- Finally, observations of student-teacher interaction indicated that teacher feedback to students on their language output was much higher in high-performing than in low-performing schools, as was their use of wait time. Teachers in high-performing schools also took time to stop and check for student comprehension before continuing with next steps in a lesson more often than in low-performing schools.

Exhibit 2. Number and percentage of classrooms observed where evidence of instructional practices were present, by practice, in high- (n=7–16) and low-performing (n=10–6) schools

| | High-Performing | Low-Performing |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| Print-rich environment is present* | | |
| Not Observed | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| Somewhat Present | 3 (23%) | 4 (44%) |
| Present | 10 (78%) | 5 (56%) |
| Small group instructional activity** | | |
| Not Observed | 4 (29%) | 6 (55%) |
| Somewhat Present | 5 (36%) | 2 (18%) |
| Present | 5 (36%) | 3 (27%) |
| Sustained writing/composition** | | |
| Not Observed | 2 (13%) | 4 (33%) |
| Somewhat Present | 11 (73%) | 7 (58%) |
| Present | 2 (14%) | 1 (8%) |
| Sustained reading** | | |
| Not Observed | 2 (13%) | 5 (45%) |
| Somewhat Present | 10 (67%) | 4 (36%) |
| Present | 3 (20%) | 2 (18) |
| Students working collaboratively** | | |
| Not Observed | 4 (27%) | 5 (50%) |
| Somewhat Present | 8 (53%) | 3 (30%) |

| | High-Performing | Low-Performing |
|--|-----------------|----------------|
| Present | 3 (20%) | 2 (20%) |
| Teacher develops cultural awareness by valuing and building on students' diverse backgrounds | | |
| Not Observed | 2 (29%) | 4 (50%) |
| Somewhat Present | 0 (0%) | 1 (13%) |
| Present | 5 (71%) | 3 (38%) |
| Regular feedback is provided to students on their language output (e.g., language, content, work) | | |
| Not Observed | 10 (77%) | 5 (50%) |
| Somewhat Present | 1 (8%) | 0 (0%) |
| Present | 2 (15%) | 5 (50%) |

Source: CSD 17 Curriculum Audit Observation Data (LPA, 2011)

* This item was originally rated on a 3-point quality scale with 1 meaning "low quality" and 3 meaning "high quality." For the purposes of comparative analysis across items, ratings of 1 were noted in this table as "not observed," ratings of 1.5, 2, and 2.5 were noted as "somewhat present," and ratings of 3 were noted as "present."

** These items were originally rated according to percentage of class time observed. For the purposes of comparative analysis across items, ratings of "never/not observed" were noted in this table as "not observed," ratings of "less than 25%" or "25%–50%" were noted as "somewhat present," and ratings of "50%–75%" or "more than 75%" were noted as "present."

KEY FINDING 3: DATA-DRIVEN INSTRUCTION

Data are used to inform instruction more consistently in high-performing than in low-performing schools.

Key Finding 3 is supported by data from the principal survey, network leader interviews, teacher surveys, school staff interviews, and document reviews. There was consensus among all schools regarding the need to use current student data to inform instruction. A majority of teachers surveyed reported referring to data from multiple sources. However, data from other sources demonstrated more consistent and embedded use of data to inform instruction in high-performing schools.

Supporting Evidence

Consistent with other findings, it is clear that data-driven instruction is better established in high-performing than low-performing schools, although there is evidence of its existence in both. Teacher survey data reveal that the majority of teachers (55 to 90 percent) from both high- and low-performing schools reported referring to data from multiple sources (data from annual standardized exams; formative, periodic assessment data; classroom or teacher-created assessments; data provided by a specialist) at least monthly when planning and delivering instruction. However, the percentage of teachers reporting that they never or almost never refer to these types of data when planning and delivering instruction was consistently higher in low-

performing schools than in high-performing schools (13 percent versus 6 percent; 13 percent versus 8 percent; 2 percent versus 0 percent; 14 percent versus 4 percent) (see Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3. Number and percentage of teachers who reported using data to inform their instruction, by frequency and data type, in high- (n=57) and low-performing (n=65) schools

| | High-Performing | Low-Performing |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| Data from annual standardized exams | | |
| Never/Almost Never | 3 (5.8%) | 8 (13.1%) |
| A Few Times a Semester | 12 (23.1%) | 16 (26.2%) |
| 1-2 Times a Month | 13 (25%) | 17 (27.9%) |
| 1-2 Times a Week or More | 24 (46.1%) | 20 (32.8%) |
| Formative, periodic assessment data (e.g. from AIMSWeb, Acuity) | | |
| Never/Almost Never | 4 (8.2%) | 8 (12.9%) |
| A Few Times a Semester | 17 (34.7%) | 15 (24.2%) |
| 1-2 Times a Month | 12 (24.5%) | 13 (21%) |
| 1-2 Times a Week or More | 16 (32.6%) | 26 (42%) |
| Classroom or teacher-created assessments (e.g., quizzes, in-class assignments, homework) | | |
| Never/Almost Never | 0 (0%) | 1 (1.6%) |
| A Few Times a Semester | 5 (9.6%) | 3 (4.8%) |
| 1-2 Times a Month | 8 (15.4%) | 7 (11.1%) |
| 1-2 Times a Week or More | 39 (75%) | 52 (82.6%) |
| Data provided by a specialist (e.g., reading specialist) | | |
| Never/Almost Never | 2 (3.8%) | 8 (14.3%) |
| A Few Times a Semester | 21 (40.4%) | 14 (25%) |
| 1-2 Times a Month | 15 (28.8%) | 19 (33.9%) |
| 1-2 Times a Week or More | 14 (27%) | 15 (26.8%) |

Source: CSD 17 Curriculum Audit Teacher Survey (LPA, 2011)

School staff interviews also reveal that data are used regularly in classrooms in high-performing schools. All 16 teachers reported using data regularly, and five out of seven administrators reported sharing data with teachers. One administrator discussed providing PD on looking at data and one school reported having a data specialist. Fifteen out of 16 teachers reported using data to inform classroom instruction and one teacher reported using data to inform decisions about exiting ELLs. Seven out of 16 teachers reported looking at data at least monthly and two reported looking at data at least weekly. Among low-performing schools, three out of four administrators and 8 out of 11 teachers reported using data regularly. Two of the administrators reported using data to inform instruction at the school and one administrator reported using data for placement purposes. All eight reported using data to inform classroom instruction; two of them reported sharing and discussing data in departmental meetings and one teacher reported sharing data with students.

Comparatively, among low-performing schools, three out of four administrators interviewed and 8 out of 11 teachers interviewed reported using data regularly in schools and classrooms. Two of the administrators reported using data to inform instruction. Another administrator reported using data for placement purposes. All eight teachers reported using data to inform classroom instruction. Two of these teachers reported sharing and discussing data in departmental meetings. One teacher reported sharing data with students. A review of CEP and LAP documents revealed that in high-performing schools, twice the amount of PD was provided to teachers on the analysis and use of data than in low-performing schools. In low-performing schools, usually only one example of such PD could be found, as opposed to four to six such offerings in high-performing schools.

Findings from network leader interviews confirmed these findings from the school staff interviews, revealing that while both low-performing and high-performing schools have systems in place for gathering student achievement data, the high-performing schools are more skilled at taking data and using it to drive instruction. Furthermore, the three high-performing schools received higher average Quality Review report ratings on data use than did the three low-performing schools. On a 4-point scale, with 1 meaning “underdeveloped” and 4 meaning “well developed,” the high-performing schools received an average rating of 3.7 and the low-performing schools received an average rating of 2.7.

In addition, Response to Intervention (RTI) seemed to be more common in high-performing schools, with 19 of the 24 principals (79 percent) in high-performing schools reporting having an RTI system in place, compared with 8 of the 14 principals (57 percent) in low-performing schools. Of those schools that had an RTI system in place, RTI principles sometimes appeared more established in high-performing schools. Although all principals with an RTI system reported that staff used progress monitoring data routinely to make decisions about the extent to which students require instructional intervention, 9 of the 19 principals (47 percent) in high-performing schools strongly agreed that this occurred, in comparison with two of the eight principals in low-performing schools (25 percent). A comparative profile of professional development offered in the use of data shows considerably more offerings in the high-performing than the low-performing schools. For example, descriptions of professional development on data use provided in the CEPs and LAPs for high-performing schools included the following: piloting new tools for collecting and analyzing data to create flexible groupings; using summative, running record, and retell data to group students; and collection and analysis of data to inform guided reading. A review of the

What Is RTI?

Response to Intervention (RTI) integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems. With RTI, schools use data to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities (www.rti4success.org).

CEPs and LAPs for the low-performing schools showed comparatively fewer professional development offerings on the use of data to inform instruction.

KEY FINDING 4: SCHOOL-WIDE BEHAVIOR PLAN

A school-wide behavior plan, reflecting principles of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and implemented throughout the school, was more prevalent in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools.

Key Finding 4 is supported by data from the principal survey, teacher surveys, school staff interviews, and document review. Evidence from all sources indicates that school-wide behavior plans developed at high-performing schools are more likely to reflect principles of PBIS than those developed at low-performing schools. Furthermore, teachers in high-performing schools are more likely to be able to articulate and describe what that school-wide behavior plan consists of than teachers at low-performing schools.

Supporting Evidence

A review of submitted documents indicated that two out of three high-performing schools submitted documents regarding school-wide behavior that reflected principles of PBIS, implemented consistently throughout the school. One high-performing school submitted documents that reflected “some” principles of PBIS implemented consistently throughout the school. Among low-performing schools, only one submitted documents reflecting principles of PBIS reflected consistently throughout the school. Another submitted a report that indicated only “some” principles of PBIS implemented consistently throughout the school. One school submitted documents that did not show principles of PBIS being implemented.

Descriptions of behavior documents submitted from high-performing schools were more highly developed and reflected more of an emphasis on positive, encouraging ways to manage student behavior. These included verbal praise, positive notes home, and participation in school leadership teams. They also included a PowerPoint presentation explaining PBIS and a letter describing it sent home to parents. There were many references to participation in state and national network groups regarding PBIS, and even student modules regarding bullying, coping with physical feelings of anger and stress, and self-control.

What Is PBIS?

“PBIS is a framework or approach for assisting school personnel in adopting and organizing evidence-based behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social behavior outcomes for all students.” (http://www.pbis.org/pbis_faq.aspx)

Low-performing schools were more likely to simply submit lists of appropriate behaviors and the consequences for inappropriate ones, with levels of intervention. One made reference to the Discipline Code from the Office of the Chancellor. Only one contained a school-wide positive behavior plan with discipline as well as reward systems.

Principal and teacher surveys tended to confirm information regarding school-wide behavior plans garnered from document reviews. For example, when asked if their school-wide behavior plan was written to reflect the principles of Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions, 91 percent of principals from high-performing schools responded affirmatively, compared with 64 percent of principals from low-performing schools. Among teachers surveyed, 81 percent of those from high-performing schools stated that their school had a school-wide behavior plan in place, as opposed to 64 percent in low-performing schools. When asked if strategies they used for managing behavior were consistent with those used throughout the school, 81 percent of teachers from high-performing schools answered affirmatively, versus 59 percent in low-performing schools.

School staff interview data lend further support to this finding. Among high-performing schools, 12 out of 16 teachers interviewed reported that there is a school-wide behavior plan at their school. Four teachers from two of the three schools specifically mentioned PBIS. Two out of seven administrators reported a school-wide behavior plan, although neither of these principals specifically mentioned PBIS. Among low-performing schools, only 1 interviewed teacher out of 11 reported that there is a school-wide behavior plan in place at their school. In contrast, all of the four administrators interviewed at these schools reported having a school-wide behavior plan in place. However, none mentioned PBIS.

Teachers interviewed at high-performing schools were more able to articulate their school's behavior plan than teachers in low-performing schools. When asked whether the school had a behavior plan, one teacher said,

“Absolutely we do. They have what the principal calls the ten ‘non-negotiables.’ Let me name just a few ... keep all objects and hands to themselves, no fighting ... and they also have conflict resolution programs which take place fourth period, that they pick up the leaders of the classroom and they are preparing those leaders to come and teach the rest of the class.”

Another teacher at the same school, when asked whether the school had a school-wide behavior plan, stated, “Yes, we have a discipline court. And it makes sure every child at the beginning of the year and every parent receives a book throughout the year. It's constantly referred to ... It's the plan... You go by the book. Always refer by the book of what should be and what shouldn't be.” Another teacher from a high-performing school said,

“We also came out with the PBIS program where we just started implementing that where we have children that are at risk that their behavior might be a little bit more of a problem. We mentor those students and we just had a big breakfast for them. And I have a mentee that I work with so every day or every morning, I might come up and I'll spend some time with him ... so we all use the same thing and it's a school wide effort.”

Finally, a teacher from a high-performing school remarked,

“What I’d like to share about the instruction of ELLs in this school is the dedication of teachers in this school . . . to take to heart the need of ELLs. What has been fostered is the idea that we are all responsible for the well-being of all the children in this school. And when it comes to reprimanding or watching what the child is doing, everybody is responsible, including the kitchen staff. The environment is safe here and we get along.”

KEY FINDING 5: SUPPLEMENTAL SERVICES AND INTERVENTIONS

ELLs in high-performing schools benefit from a broader range of targeted, supplemental services and interventions than do ELLs in low-performing schools.

Key Finding 5 is supported by data from the principal survey, teacher surveys, school staff interviews, and document review. Reports from all sources confirm that high-performing schools offer more supplementary services for ELLs who may be struggling. It also confirms that in high-performing schools, students who need those services do in fact receive them.

Supporting Evidence

A review of CEPs and LAPs indicates that all three high-performing schools offer an extended day, two offer Saturday Academy programs, and one offers summer remedial programs for students who struggle. Only one low-performing school actually listed supplemental services of this nature in its documents. In high-performing schools, between three and five specific interventions were listed as being available for students who require intervention in reading. High-performing schools were more likely to list concrete plans for the services of AIS teachers to ELLs. In low-performing schools, no more than three reading interventions were mentioned, and one school listed none at all. In one high-performing school, clubs and activities were listed that were designed to improve student oral and written English skills for ELLs, including a school yearbook, a school newspaper, and a debate team.

In interview data, high-performing schools’ staff members were consistent in that they were able to list and define supplemental services available and offered to ELLs who struggle. Two administrators and five teachers mentioned pull-out services and three teachers discussed push-in services during the school day. Two administrators and one teacher described specific services during the school day other than ESL teacher support (e.g., literacy coach, technology).

Among low-performing schools, there was less knowledge on the part of school staff members interviewed regarding supplemental services offered to ELLs. One teacher mentioned that push-in services occur only once a week. One teacher knew about the extended day program, but was not sure if it was for ELLs. There was a general lack of knowledge of supplemental programs, other than push-in and pull-out services that occurred during the school day.

In describing supplementary programs for ELLs, a principal of a high-performing school mentioned Saturday and extended day programs available in the school and said, “That affords

us to do a little more for the older children; six, seven and eight, where we bring them and keep them after school and on Saturdays for extra work.” This administrator also mentioned the students for whom these programs are intended. “We have the SIFE (Students with Interrupted Education) program, which means they are behind about three years or more. So those students received—we have afterschool for them, on some weekdays and Saturday...and also in the lower grades we have ELL students who need help. So they receive ELA or math instruction on Saturday.” A teacher in a high-performing school also detailed supplemental services for ELLs. “We have extended days, which we have for low, low, low performing [students]. That’s one group. And then we have further a group that come on Saturdays, that’s Saturday Academy ... They are assigned based on their needs or their proficiency.”

Teacher surveys indicate that slightly more teachers in high-performing schools believe their students will receive academic and other needed supports soon after being identified than in low-performing schools. More teachers in high-performing schools also believe their students will receive services and supports that are effective than in low-performing schools (See Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3. Number and percentage of teachers who reported on the likeliness of outcomes once a student is identified as needing additional academic supports, in low- (n=65) and high-performing (n=142) schools

| | High-Performing | Low-Performing |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| Academic and other needed supports are provided soon after student needs are identified. | | |
| Not at All Likely | 4 (2.9%) | 3 (4.8%) |
| Minimally Likely | 18 (12.9%) | 5 (8.1%) |
| Moderately Likely | 41 (29.5%) | 23 (37.1%) |
| Very Likely | 73 (52.5%) | 30 (48.4%) |
| Not Sure / NA | 3 (2.2%) | 1 (1.6%) |
| The student will receive services and supports that are effective | | |
| Not at All Likely | 4 (2.8%) | 1 (1.6%) |
| Minimally Likely | 14 (9.9%) | 9 (14.3%) |
| Moderately Likely | 44 (31.2%) | 20 (31.7%) |
| Very Likely | 77 (54.6%) | 32 (50.8%) |
| Not Sure / NA | 2 (1.4%) | 1 (1.6%) |

Source: CSD 17 Curriculum Audit Teacher Survey (LPA, 2011)

Finally, principal survey data also showed a stronger presence and use of instructional intervention in high-performing than in low-performing schools. When asked to what extent they agreed with the statement, “Students identified as at-risk receive individualized or small group interventions at least three times a week for at least eight weeks during the school year”, 53 percent of principals in high-performing schools strongly agreed, as opposed to 38 percent in low-performing schools. Additionally, when asked if they agreed with the statement, “Students

who do not respond to instructional interventions are provided with individualized and specialized instruction,” 42 percent of principals from high-performing schools strongly agreed, compared with 25 percent of principals from low-performing schools.

KEY FINDING 6: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development provided in high-performing schools is more cohesive and targeted to teaching ELLs than in low-performing schools.

Key Finding 6 is supported by data from teacher surveys, school staff interviews, and document review. Data from all sources corroborate the finding that professional development in high-performing schools is more cohesive and targeted to teaching of ELLs. More professional development is offered to teachers in these schools, and the professional development offered is more specifically planned to be of assistance to teachers, and to meet the needs of the students they teach. The professional development is also more likely in high-performing schools to be targeted to meet the demands of New York State testing and to promote high student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

A review of CEP and LAP documents revealed differences between high- and low-performing schools in the extent to which professional development experiences related to ESL instruction. Two of the three high-performing schools’ documents mention literacy training from which ELLs could benefit (balanced literacy, workshop model) and methodology such as scaffolding to make it more accessible to ELLs. There is information about preparation for the NYSESLAT and ascertaining whether instruction of ELLs is a match for assessment. There are also plans for working with helpful outside agencies. In the third high-performing school, documents noted that new special education teachers are mandated to receive a minimum of 10 hours of professional development in ESL materials, techniques, strategies, cultural sensitivity, ESL standards and assessments. Comparatively, documents submitted by low-performing schools were extremely vague about ESL professional development opportunities for teachers or said nothing at all about them.

Teacher survey data also indicated that professional development in high-performing schools was of greater value to teachers than it was in low-performing schools:

- 52 percent of teachers in high-performing schools reported that professional development they had received during the 2009–2010 and 2010–2011 school years on ELL topics was “very helpful,” as opposed to 36 percent in low-performing schools.
- 28 percent of teachers in low-performing schools reported that the professional development they had received on teaching ELLs was “not helpful” or “minimally helpful.” Only 10 percent of teachers in high-performing schools reported this.

- 56 percent of teachers of ELLs in high-performing schools strongly agreed that their professional development experiences addressed the needs of students in their classrooms, as opposed to 26 percent in low-performing schools.
- 75 percent of teachers in high-performing schools stated that their professional development experiences have been sustained and coherently focused, rather than short-term and unrelated. Only 68 percent of teachers in low-performing schools claimed this.
- 90 percent of teachers in high-performing schools agreed or strongly agreed that their professional development experiences had been closely connected with school goals, compared with 80 percent of teachers in low-performing schools.

Interview data revealed that among high-performing schools, 12 of the 16 teachers interviewed (75 percent) reported receiving professional development experiences that were helpful to their instruction of ELLs. Eight of these teachers provided specific examples of this. One teacher from a high-performing school said, “I went to workshops in the district ... where we get materials and ... they discussed how ELLs perform, and their culture, background, and things like those.” Another teacher, also from a high-performing school, said, “I was sent to this vocabulary discussion, the direct vocabulary instruction, and I thought that it was really informative, and I took a lot away from it.” Teachers interviewed in low-performing schools were slightly less likely to say that professional development experiences they had received were helpful in their instruction of ELLs, with 7 out of 11 (64 percent) reporting this.

Ten of the 16 teachers interviewed in high-performing schools (63 percent) stated they would like more professional development on teaching ELLs including best practices, technology, specific strategies, and the new Common Core standards. Eight of the 11 teachers interviewed from low-performing schools (73 percent) stated they would like more professional development on teaching ELLs, including strategies, technology, the ESL teacher’s role, and best practices for teaching ELA standards and content to ELLs.

KEY FINDING 7: TEACHER COLLABORATION

ESL and general education teachers use common planning time to collaborate more often in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools.

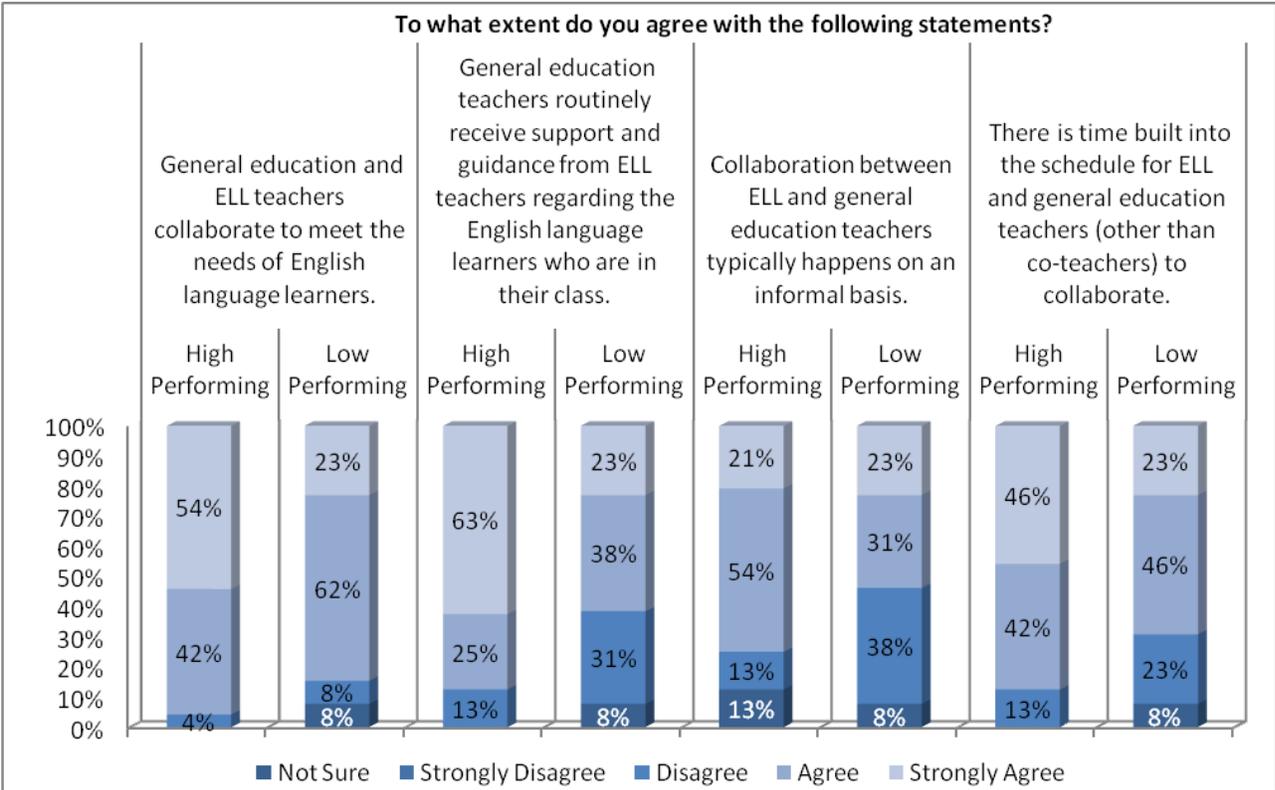
Key Finding 7 is supported by data from the principal survey, teacher surveys, and school staff interviews. While collaboration between general education and ESL teachers is a reported practice in most schools, it is clear that in high-performing schools, this practice is better coordinated and exists as a more formalized and structured practice than in low-performing schools. In high-performing schools, administrators and teachers alike describe collaboration among teachers as a scheduled, formal process that is designed to better meet the needs of ELLs in their school.

Supporting Evidence

According to the principal survey, 96 percent of principals in high-performing schools reported that some form of collaboration existed between general education and ESL teachers, as opposed to 85 percent of principals in low-performing schools. Moreover, when asked if general education teachers received guidance and support from ESL teachers regarding the ELLs they teach, only 61 percent of principals in low-performing schools said yes, while 88 percent of principals in high-performing schools agreed that this was a common practice in their schools.

Furthermore, principal survey data show that all forms of collaboration between and among teachers to find ways to better meet the needs of their ELLs happens more often in high-performing schools. Seventy-five percent of principals in high-performing schools reported that general education and ESL teachers collaborate informally, as opposed to 54 percent in low-performing schools. Moreover, 88 percent of principals of high-performing schools reported that there are formalized times built into the master schedule for general education and ESL teachers to collaborate, as opposed to 69 percent of principals in low-performing schools (see Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4. Principal respondents’ perceptions of the collaboration between ELL and general education teachers in their school, for high- (n=24) and low- (n=13) performing schools



Source: CSD 17 Curriculum Audit Principal Survey (LPA, 2011).

Teacher surveys confirm these findings. Sixty-nine percent of teachers in high-performing schools reported that ESL and general education teachers routinely used common planning or

professional development time to share knowledge and strategies with each other, as opposed to 55 percent of teachers in low-performing schools.

Also among high-performing schools, 11 of the 16 teachers interviewed indicated that general education and ESL teachers collaborate. Nine out of these 16 teachers and three out of seven administrators reported having common planning times available to them. Of the 11 teachers who reported collaborating, seven teachers indicated that they used the time to plan together and share curriculum and resources. Six reported that they used time to discuss strategies. Among low-performing schools, however, only 3 of 11 teachers and one of four administrators reported that common planning times are available at their schools. Three out of six ESL teachers in these schools reported that general education teachers had common planning times but that the ESL teachers were not always included in those times. Information garnered from interviews further indicates that in high-performing schools, not only has common time to collaborate been provided, but structures have been created to make this time more productive and beneficial. An administrator at one high-performing school described the collaboration time by saying, “They plan together as a grade. Every week, they have a conference, a meeting where they plan and talk about how children are learning, and what it is that we can do better.” The ESL coordinator at the same school expanded upon that information by saying, “Here the school has teacher meetings. They have common preps and ... guided by the assistant principal for that grade who works with them and also provide the help, the guidance, develop the PDs ... they get to address their students’ needs.” A teacher at the same school provided further detail on the collaborative planning time:

“We have a common prep, which is a common prep for the grade level. It gives me the opportunity to meet with the teachers on the second grade level so we can plan together with the experts in the building. We have, for example, the bilingual expert. When a question comes as to what the needs are or how to solve this or that problem, [he] provides the level of expertise that maybe the teacher is lacking.”

Teachers from all three high-performing schools described similar structures for collaborative planning existing for them in their schools.

Teachers from low-performing schools, on the other hand, could not describe such formalized, structured meeting times. One general education teacher, when asked how collaboration takes place with the ESL teacher, replied,

“He comes to me, I don’t know, maybe once every couple of weeks and asks me what we’re doing. The kids themselves go back and forth from his room to my room and I will send work with them and then he’ll in turn send the work that I’ve sent with them back down and I’ll make corrections and add notes and stuff, so that’s how he’s aware of what we’re doing and how to best apply what he’s doing specifically to us.”

Asked if the two teachers had any formal planning time at all, this teacher replied, “No.”

KEY FINDING 8: INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT

Teachers in high-performing schools receive more instructional guidance and support related to the instruction of ELLs than do teachers in low-performing schools.

Key Finding 8 is supported by data from the principal survey, network leader interviews, teacher surveys, and school staff interviews. In high-performing schools, not only does the principal provide leadership and support to the ESL program, but he or she also ensures that there are key staff in the building who are providing services to teachers of ELLs.

Supporting Evidence

Concerning the role of the principal and other leadership staff in the school, one network leader stated, “It’s really about leadership and how the leadership capitalizes on who they have in the building to ensure that you ‘get all’ ... And how there are high expectations for all. It starts with the leadership.”

Other data sources for the high-performing schools support this statement. According to interviews of staff in high-performing schools, 15 of 16 teachers reported that the principal was supportive. Eight out of those 15 teachers surveyed commented that the principal provides instructional support for teachers of ELLs. Eleven of the 15 teachers reported that the principal provide resources. One teacher from a high-performing school, when asked how the administration provides supports, replied,

“I have a class with several levels of proficiency, language proficiency, and academic preparedness, so administration provides the expertise ... If I have any issue that is burning, I can sit down with [my administrator] to discuss what the issue is and together we come up with a solution, or find a way to resolve the problem, or provide what’s lacking to the situation.”

Another teacher from a high-performing school said, when asked what the school did really well when it came to educating ELLs,

“Our principal gives teachers lots of support. Whatever they need, she looks at the data very closely and if the kids are deficient in some skill, she provides extra hours for them. She provides books, materials, everything—materials that can help with whatever and in whatever they are deficient. She’s very good at that—very, very good.”

In low-performing schools, 7 of 11 teachers reported that administrators are supportive. However, none of these teachers reported that the administration provides instructional support for ELLs. Only 4 of 11 reported that the administration provides resources.

In addition, according to the principal survey, 100 percent of principals in high-performing schools reported that there is a designated ELL lead teacher, and this person provides support to a “great” or “moderate” extent to staff to improve teachers’ instruction of ELLs. This was true in only 53 percent of low-performing schools.

Teacher survey data reveal that in high-performing schools, 46 percent of teachers reported that an ELL department chair or that an ELL lead teacher (50 percent) provided them with direct support to improve their instruction of ELLs to a “moderate” or “great” extent. Comparatively, only about one-third (35 percent and 36 percent) of teachers in low-performing schools said the same. Seventy percent of teachers in high-performing schools reported that their principal provided direct support to improve their instruction of ELLs to a “moderate” or “great” extent. In low-performing schools only 38 percent of teachers reported this. Sixty-five percent of teachers in high-performing schools also reported that a school-based literacy or instructional coach provided direct support to improve their instruction of ELLs to a “moderate” or “great” extent, compared with 36 percent of teachers in low-performing schools.

CONCLUSION

This report presents data demonstrating differences between high-and low-performing schools in CSD 17 related to strategies and practices for educating ELLs. The following key findings were presented:

- (1) More teachers in high-performing schools ***are using the core ELA standards to guide instruction*** than in low-performing schools.
- (2) Teachers in high-performing schools described and implemented more ***instructional strategies that target the needs of ELLs*** than teachers in low-performing schools.
- (3) ***Data are used to inform instruction*** more consistently in high-performing than in low-performing schools.
- (4) In high-performing schools, ***a school-wide behavior plan, based on the principles of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)***, was more prevalent than in low-performing schools.
- (5) ELLs in high-performing schools benefit from a broader range of ***targeted, supplemental services and interventions*** than ELLs in low-performing schools.
- (6) ***Professional development*** provided in high-performing schools is more cohesive and targeted to teaching ELLs than it is in low-performing schools.
- (7) ***ESL and general education teachers collaborate*** more often in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools.
- (8) Teachers in high-performing schools ***receive more instructional guidance and support related to the instruction of ELLs*** than do teachers in low-performing schools.

These findings reveal areas in which high-performing schools are demonstrating success, and low-performing schools are experiencing challenges. The data presented in this report can be used to inform recommendations and action planning for improvement in CSD 17 schools and elsewhere.

LEARNING POINT Associates®
An Affiliate of American Institutes for Research®

22 Cortlandt Street, Floor 16
New York, NY 10007-3139
800.356.2735 | 212.419.0415
www.air.org

Copyright © 2011 American Institutes for Research. All rights reserved.

This work was originally produced in whole or in part by Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research, with funds from the New York State Education Department (NYSED). The content does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of NYSED, nor does mention or visual representation of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement.