

# Community School District 5 English Language Learners

FINAL REPORT



New York City Department of Education External District Curriculum Audit | August 2011

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# INTRODUCTION

This final report summarizes findings from an external district curriculum audit of Community School District 5 (CSD 5) 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 5 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 5 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 5 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 5 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 5**

CSD 5 is located in New York City, New York. In 2010–11, when the audit was conducted, the district had 31 schools, including 12 elementary, 7 middle, 5 high, 3 K-8, and 4 secondary (grade 6–12) schools. The district serves 12,952 students from pre-kindergarten through 12, of whom 16 percent<sup>1</sup> are SWDs and 11 percent are ELLs. Fifty-seven percent are African American, 38 percent are Hispanic, and 2 percent are Asian. Many of the students are economically disadvantaged, with 72 percent qualifying for free lunch and 6 percent for reduced-price lunch.

## **METHODS**

Data collection and analysis focused on a subset of schools where ELLs have been successful, as well as 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 from a sample of network staff interviewees.

Data were collected from six sources. Two sources (principal survey and network leader interviews) represented *all* schools in CSD 5, 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-wide sources give a broader, 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 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 31 schools in CSD 5. 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 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

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<sup>1</sup> Calculated from the 2010–11 enrollment data provided in the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) for each school in CSD 5.

education curriculum, instructional strategies, school-wide interventions, professional development, collaboration among staff, and administrative support. The overall response rate for the survey was 61 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 the most recent state test data (2009–10). Low-performing schools in the sample were those whose accountability status was Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring.<sup>2</sup> The number of respondents to any given item for high-performing schools ranged from 8 to 13; for low-performing schools, the range was from 2 to 6.

In addition to the principal survey, district-level data were gathered through a set of interviews with network leaders who work with schools in CSD 5. Two 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 5. The sample of site visit schools was selected in collaboration with NYCDOE. All six schools had relatively high percentages of ELLs (17 percent or more) in their school populations. 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 room, or self-contained class, three general education teachers with at least three English language learners each, and a general education teacher who co-teaches with an ESL teacher. Interview protocols included questions about curriculum, instruction, professional development, 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.

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<sup>2</sup> 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 seven CSD 5 schools categorized as low-performing for this study, two did not make AYP in ELA for their ELL subgroup. None of the remaining five made AYP for ELLs; they had insufficient numbers of ELLs to determine AYP status for this subgroup. Because these five 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.

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 51 percent to 96 percent in the sample schools. Data were analyzed by comparing responses between teachers in high- and low-performing schools.

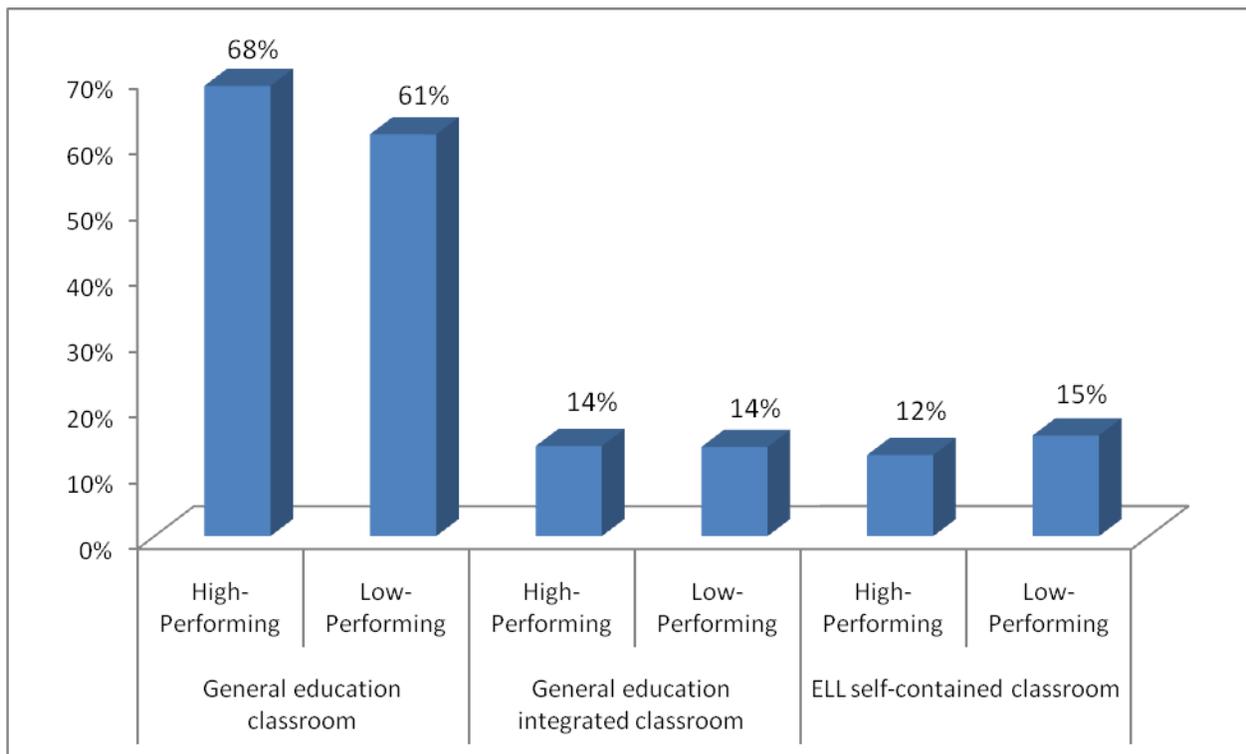
Finally, LPA collected and analyzed relevant documents from each of the selected schools. These data included the school's Language Allocation Policy (LAP), Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP), Quality Review report, school-wide behavior plan, and professional development plans. The LAPs, CEPs and Quality 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 5, 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, and is not 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 (16 percent compared with 12 percent). Additionally, high-performing schools’ principals reported a higher percentage of ELLs in general education classrooms (68 percent) than low-performing schools’ principals did (61 percent). Principals in low-performing schools reported a slightly higher percentage of ELLs in self-contained classrooms (15 percent) than did principals in high-performing schools (12 percent) (see Exhibit 1).

**Exhibit 1. Average percentage of English language learners by reported educational setting, for high- (n=10) and low-performing (n=5) schools**



Source: District 5 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 ELL populations. 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 used 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 5 schools and elsewhere.

## KEY FINDINGS

This section presents key findings from the District 5 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: INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

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

Key Finding 1 is supported by data from school staff interviews, classroom observation data, and document review. 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 modeling, among others.

### Supporting Evidence

All 15 teachers interviewed in high-performing schools described specific instructional strategies they use to teach ELLs, and nearly two-thirds (9) of those teachers reported using at least three different strategies. Comparatively, 13 of the 14 teachers interviewed in low-performing schools named specific instructional strategies that they use when teaching ELLs, and fewer than half (5) of them named at least three different strategies. Specific strategies named by teachers in high-performing schools included the following: technology, grouping, hands-on, visual cues, listening centers, graphic organizers, music, conferencing, modeling, worksheets, vocabulary strategies, mini-lessons, manipulatives, tiered instruction, stop and jot, total physical response (TPR), read-alouds, pre-teaching, turn and talk, and dance. Strategies named by teachers in low-performing schools included technology, grouping, TPR, modeling, auditory cues, scaffolding, guided reading, vocabulary strategies, tiered assignments, music, and visual cues.

According to both interview and observation data, grouping was used more often by teachers in high-performing than low-performing schools. Two-thirds of the teachers interviewed in high-performing schools described using grouping as an instructional strategy, compared with half of the teachers in low-performing schools. Small group instructional activity was observed in 11 of 15 (73 percent) of classrooms visited in high-performing schools, compared with 4 of 12 (32 percent) in low-performing schools.

One important strategy for teaching ELLs is to incorporate language-learning goals alongside content goals during instruction. Among interviewees in high-performing schools, 10 of 15

**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.*

teachers said that they incorporate language-learning goals into their instruction of ELLs, and 6 of those 10 were able to give examples of how they do so. As one teacher in a high-performing school explained, “I would write the aim and the ‘do now’ [for the lesson], and then I would have vocabulary or I’ll tell them, by the end of this lesson, this is how you have to express it . . . whether it’s [a] cause and effect sentence, or we’re looking at your past tense, or most of the time it’s been content area vocabulary in the content area unit.” In low-performing schools, 9 of 14 teachers said that they incorporate language-learning goals into their instruction, but only 3 were able to give examples of how they do so.

Observation data also showed that teachers in high-performing schools were more likely than those in low-performing schools to integrate language-learning goals with content instruction. Specifically, in high-performing schools, the teacher was observed

integrating language-learning goals in 9 of 13 classrooms visited (69 percent), compared with 6 of 13 classrooms visited (46 percent) in low-performing schools. Language-learning goals observed in those high-performing school classrooms included figurative language (simile and metaphor, alliteration), suffixes and root words, vocabulary, word order in sentences, capitalization and punctuation, and questions vs. declarations.

Other differences related to the instruction of ELLs were noted in high-performing and low-performing schools. For example, differentiated instruction was observed more often in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools. This included differentiation of the learning environment to allow for effective native language support, grouping strategies, and culturally responsive interactions. Teachers observed in high-performing schools (85 percent) were also more likely to provide regular feedback to students on their language output (e.g., language, content, work) than those in low-performing schools (58 percent).

Documents submitted for this study also reflected differences between the two groups of schools in the implementation of instructional strategies for ELLs. For example, the CEPs and LAPs for all three high-performing schools included detailed language and descriptions of the instructional strategies used for ELLs. This level of detail was included in these same documents for only one of the three low-performing schools.

## **KEY FINDING 2: DATA-DRIVEN INSTRUCTION**

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

Key Finding 2 is supported by data from the network leader interviews, teacher surveys, school staff interviews, and document reviews. While schools in both groups gather and use data, the consistent use of data to inform instruction is more established and pervasive in high-performing than in low-performing schools.

### **Supporting Evidence**

Network representatives interviewed for this study noted that while both high- and low-performing schools have systems in place for gathering student achievement data, the high-performing schools tend to be more skilled at using the data effectively to drive instruction. As one interviewee said, “In higher-performing schools, you have much ... deeper analysis of the data.” One of the high-performing sample schools exemplified this consistent use of data with this quote from its CEP: “We are guided by data analysis. We are constantly aware of the necessity to improve student achievement as measured by standardized test scores. We continually evaluate, analyze, and assess our progress as a whole, and as a grade, a class, and as individuals.”

Both teacher survey and school staff interview data show that, while staff in both groups of schools use data to drive instruction, those in high-performing schools are more likely to do so. For example, teachers surveyed in high-performing schools reported referring to data from standardized exams (32 percent), formative, periodic assessment data (40 percent), and data provided to them by a specialist (28 percent) at least once or twice a week—all higher percentages than in low-performing schools (20 percent, 34 percent, and 24 percent, respectively) (see Exhibit 2).

**Exhibit 2. Number and percentage of teachers surveyed that reported using various forms of data when planning and delivering instruction by frequency of use, for high- (n=73–82) and low-performing (n=84–95) schools**

	High-Performing	Low-Performing
<b>Data from annual standardized exams</b>		
Never / Almost Never	6 (8.2%)	11 (12.4%)
A Few Times a Semester	21 (28.8%)	31 (34.8%)
1–2 Times a Month	23 (31.5%)	29 (32.6%)
1–2 Times a Week or More	23 (31.5%)	18 (20.2%)
<b>Formative, periodic assessment data (e.g., from AIMSweb, Acuity)</b>		
Never / Almost Never	8 (10.4%)	11 (12.5%)
A Few Times a Semester	11 (14.3%)	17 (19.3%)
1–2 Times a Month	27 (35.1%)	30 (34.1%)
1–2 Times a Week or More	31 (40.3%)	30 (34.1%)
<b>Data provided by a specialist (e.g., reading specialist)</b>		
Never / Almost Never	8 (11%)	20 (23.8%)
A Few Times a Semester	23 (31.5%)	22 (26.2%)
1–2 Times a Month	22 (30.1%)	22 (26.2%)
1–2 Times a Week or More	20 (27.3%)	20 (23.8%)

Source: CSD 5 Curriculum Audit Teacher Survey (LPA, 2011)

In school staff interviews, all of the 15 teachers and four of the seven administrators interviewed in high-performing schools reported using data to drive instruction. This compared with 11 of the 14 teachers and one of the six administrators interviewed in low-performing schools who reported the same. Teachers in high-performing schools described using data to adjust the content or pacing of instruction, and to inform instructional groupings. For example, one dual language teacher in a high-performing school said, “Depending on the information I gather from the notebooks or predictive exams ... or diagnostics that we administer ... I notice that some of the ELLs might need a lot more fluency work, so I do a lot of guided reading and shared reading on that. So, I might pull them to the side while the other groups are working more on inferential work.” A general education teacher in a different high-performing school said, “Just based on the data, we have 60, 65 percent of the students who are, you know, struggling with [understanding the] main idea. That may be where you start and then you just go from there. So we’re constantly looking at it and just revisiting it and just making adjustments.”

Documents submitted by the schools also demonstrated a more pervasive and established use of data in the high-performing schools. For example, according to the Quality Review reports, which rate schools on different aspects of how they use data to inform instruction, the high-performing schools received, on average, higher ratings (“Well-Developed”) compared with low-performing schools (“Developed” or “Proficient”) (see Exhibit 3).

**Exhibit 3. Average Quality Review ratings for high- (n=3) and low-performing (n=3) schools**

Quality Standard	High-Performing	Low-Performing
Instructional & Organizational Coherence	3.5	3.1
Gather and Analyze Data	4.0	3.1
Plan and Set Goals	4.0	2.8
Align Capacity Building	4.0	3.0
Monitor and Revise	3.8	3.0
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>2.7</b>

*Source:* CSD 5 Curriculum Audit Document Review (LPA, 2011)

Rating Scale: 1=Underdeveloped; 2=Developed; 3=Proficient; 4=Well Developed

Note: Depending on the year in which any given Quality Review was conducted, rating scales and metrics differ slightly by school. The averages in the above table reflect adjustments made in order to ensure a common metric across schools, for purposes of comparative analysis.

The Quality Review report narratives for these schools note that, while data are being gathered and used in all six of these schools, they are not used consistently in all classrooms in the low-performing schools.

### **KEY FINDING 3: MANAGING BEHAVIOR**

**Teachers are effectively managing student behavior in the classroom more consistently in high-performing than in low-performing schools.**

Key Finding 3 is supported by data from the school staff interviews and classroom observation data. These data show that teachers who teach ELLs in high-performing schools are implementing more effective classroom management strategies than those in low-performing schools.

#### **Supporting Evidence**

Within the high-performing schools, 10 of 15 teachers interviewed reported using strategies to manage behavior in their classrooms. Of these 10 teachers, 3 described their strategies as primarily involving negative consequences, and 4 described their strategies as primarily positive (rewards-based). For example, one teacher in a high-performing school described an incentive system for rewarding positive behavior:

“It’s a lot of incentives ... I believe in working with them all together, [but also] the kids that are individually doing well, I give them incentives. So, as a group we have the 50 compliments. As a whole class if you cooperate, you get the compliments...and at the end of the 50 ... they get a pizza party. The other thing is bravo cards—individual bravo cards where ... at the end of the month, they can come to a movie. And they can buy things.”

Comparatively, only half (7 of 14) of the teachers interviewed in the low-performing schools reported using strategies to manage behavior in their classrooms. Of these 7 teachers, 4 described

their strategies as primarily involving negative consequences, and only 1 described their strategies as primarily positive (rewards-based).

Classroom observation data lend further support to this finding, showing that, among classrooms visited, the teachers in high-performing schools were observed implementing a classroom management/discipline activity that complements instruction and supports students’ opportunity to learn, more often than were teachers in low-performing schools. This was true in all types of classrooms observed. Specifically, 6 of 15 teachers (40 percent) observed in high-performing schools were implementing an effective classroom management activity more than 75 percent of the time, compared with 3 of 12 teachers (25 percent) observed in low-performing schools (see Exhibit 4).

**Exhibit 4. Number of classrooms in which the teacher was observed implementing a classroom management/discipline activity that complemented instruction and supported students’ opportunity to learn, by time observed, for high- (n=15) and low-performing (n=12) schools**

Time Observed	High-Performing	Low-Performing
Never / Not Observed	3 (20%)	4 (31%)
Less than 25%	3 (20%)	5 (45%)
25%-50%	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
50%-75%	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
More than 75%	6 (40%)	3 (25%)

Source: CSD 5 Curriculum Audit Observation Data (LPA, 2011)

Examples of effective management strategies observed included bringing students close to the teacher, using a calm tone of voice, brisk pacing, frequent teacher circulation throughout room, smooth transition procedures, counting 1-2-3, and hand-raising.

## **KEY FINDING 4: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

Key Finding 4 is supported by data from teacher surveys and document review. Data showed that professional development in high-performing schools is of better quality, more focused on the instruction of ELLs, and more cohesively aligned with school goals than it is in low-performing schools.

### **Supporting Evidence**

According to the teacher survey, the quality of professional development was rated as higher in high-performing than in low-performing schools. For example, a greater percentage of teachers in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools agreed or strongly agreed that their professional development experiences have been sustained and coherently focused, rather than short term and unrelated (77 percent vs. 56 percent). A greater percentage of teachers in high-

performing schools agreed or strongly agreed that their professional development experiences have been closely connected to their school’s goals (89 percent vs. 70 percent).

Teacher survey data also showed that high-performing schools offered better-quality professional development related to the instruction of English language learners. For example, among teachers of ELLs (ESL and non-ESL teachers), a greater percentage of those in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools strongly agreed that their professional development experiences have addressed the needs of students in their classrooms (79 percent vs. 61 percent). Furthermore, a greater percentage of all teachers in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools reported that professional development they had received during the 2009–10 and 2010–11 school years on teaching English language learners was “moderately helpful” or “very helpful” (58 percent vs. 47 percent). Additionally, a greater percentage of all teachers in low-performing schools than in high-performing schools reported that they had not received any professional development on teaching English language learners (32 percent vs. 21 percent) (see Exhibit 5).

**Exhibit 5. Number and percentage of teachers surveyed by the extent to which professional development on teaching English language learners received during the 2009–10 school year and the current school year helped to improve their instruction, for high- (n=119) and low-performing (n=91) schools**

	High-Performing	Low-Performing
Not Helpful	3 (2.5%)	4 (4.4%)
Minimally Helpful	20 (16.8%)	15 (16.5%)
Moderately Helpful	29 (24.4%)	21 (23.1%)
Very Helpful	42 (35.3%)	22 (24.2%)
Did Not Receive PD on teaching English Language Learners	25 (21%)	29 (31.9%)

Source: CSD 5 Curriculum Audit Teacher Survey (LPA, 2011)

Analysis of documents submitted by the sample schools revealed a more coherent and targeted approach to professional development in the high-performing than low-performing schools. For example, in two of the three high-performing schools, professional development is coordinated by a team of teacher leaders, to ensure close alignment of professional development with teachers’ evolving needs. A discussion of professional development, and how it is targeted to the schools’ goals, was deeply embedded in each of the high-performing schools’ CEPs. Further, the CEPs in the three low-performing schools included comparatively less discussion of professional development.

## **KEY FINDING 5: TEACHER COLLABORATION**

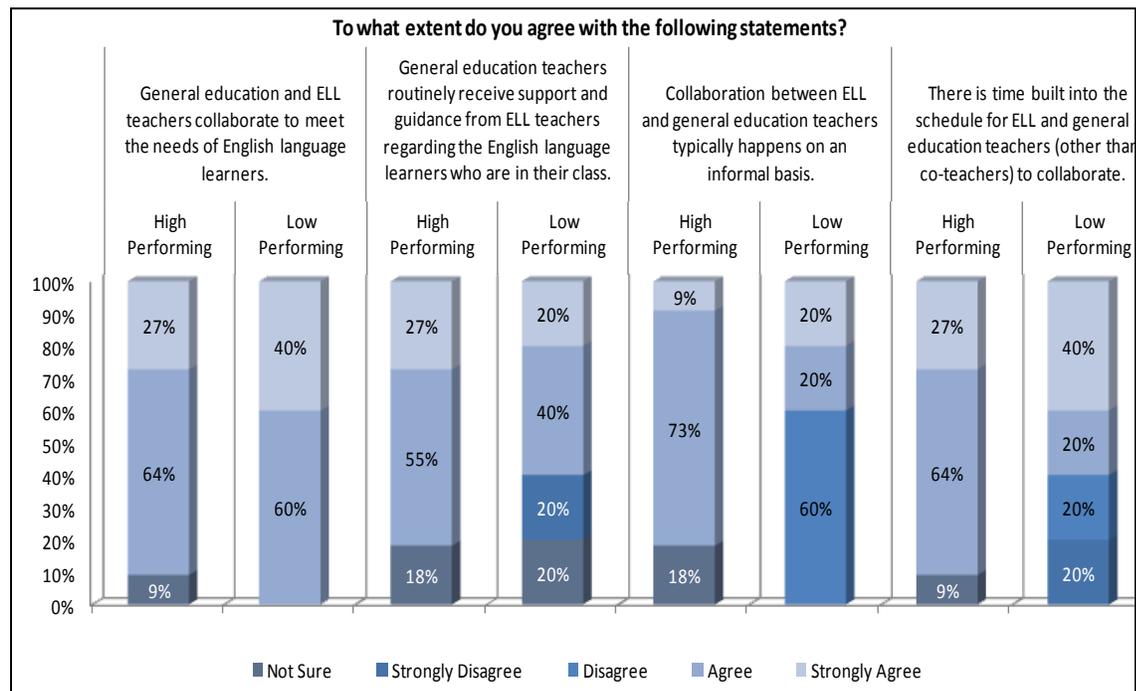
**ESL and general education teachers collaborate more often in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools.**

Key Finding 5 is supported by data from the principal survey, teacher surveys, and school staff interviews. In general, these data show that, in high-performing schools, general education and ESL teachers collaborate regularly around the instructional needs of ELLs. This type of consistent collaboration was not as evident in low-performing schools.

### **Supporting Evidence**

According to principal reports, collaboration occurred across both school groups, with 10 of 11 high-performing school principals and all five principals of the low-performing schools agreeing or strongly agreeing that general education and ESL teachers collaborate. Informal collaboration appeared more common in high-performing schools, with 9 of 11 (82 percent) of those principals agreeing or strongly agreeing that there was informal (unscheduled) collaboration between general education and ESL teachers, in contrast to 2 of 5 (40 percent) low-performing school principals. Structured collaboration also appeared more likely at high-performing schools, with 10 of 11 (91 percent) principals of those schools agreeing or strongly agreeing that collaboration time was built into the school schedule, compared with 3 of 5 (60 percent) principals in low-performing schools. In addition, general education teachers in high-performing schools appeared somewhat more likely to routinely receive support and guidance from ESL teachers, with 9 of 11 (82 percent) principals in high-performing schools agreeing or strongly agreeing this practice occurred in comparison to 3 of 5 (60 percent) principals in low-performing schools (see Exhibit 6).

**Exhibit 6. Principal respondents' perceptions of the collaboration between ESL and general education teachers in their school, for high- (n=11) and low-performing (n=5) schools**



Source: CSD 5 Curriculum Audit Principal Survey (LPA, 2011)

Teacher survey data echoed the principal survey data, with more teachers in high-performing than low-performing schools reporting that ESL and general education teachers collaborate regularly. Specifically, in high-performing schools, 72 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that ESL and general education teachers at their school routinely use common planning or professional development time to share knowledge and strategies with each other, compared with only 37 percent of teachers in low-performing schools. This pattern was also true for informal collaboration. In high-performing schools, 71 percent of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that there was informal (unscheduled) collaboration between ESL and general education teachers, compared with only 56 percent of teachers in low-performing schools.

During interviews, more than half of teachers interviewed in high-performing schools described informal collaboration between general education and ESL teachers, compared with about a third of teachers interviewed in low-performing schools. Furthermore, the interviewees in high-performing schools were more specific in their responses about *how* and *around what topics* they collaborated with one another than were the interviewees in low-performing schools. An ESL teacher in a high-performing school, when asked about working with general education teachers in the building, explained, “That’s one thing we do often. We meet daily. We talk about our kids ... what are you doing that is working for you, and what am I doing, and then we just share.” According to another ESL teacher in a high-performing school,

“We talk frequently, and so if there’s a concern that comes up, we talk about what the concern is, and then we talk about how do we modify a lesson, how do we address their behavior. Sometimes we troubleshoot together ... So there’s constant, I mean, and I’m not exaggerating, constant communication, as to how we’re going to develop ourselves as a professional and communicating with that student, and how we’re going to try to have that student have their own goals to reach as well.”

In low-performing schools, some teachers expressed difficulty finding time to meet. One ESL teacher explained, “Currently for gen-ed teachers who have ELLs, the only time they see me is when I come and take the kid and I speak to them because I pull out some kids and I see what they are doing.” A general education teacher in a low-performing school, when asked about collaborating with ESL teachers, said, “They don’t come to our English meetings. So we don’t always know what they’re doing and what they’re working on.”

## **KEY FINDING 6: 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 6 is supported by data from the network leader interviews, teacher surveys, school staff interviews, classroom observations, and document review. These data sources demonstrate the particularly strong role that administrative leadership and support staff in high-performing schools have in addressing the effective instruction of ELLs.

### **Supporting Evidence**

CSD 5 network representatives who were interviewed for this study noted that leadership, specifically from the principal, is a crucial factor in the success of high-performing schools in educating ELLs. Indeed, interview data showed that principals in high-performing schools have more experience than those in low-performing schools. Among the three high-performing schools that were visited, the average level of experience among principals was seven years, compared with four years in the three low-performing schools that were visited.

Teacher survey data also indicated stronger principal leadership in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools. For example, a higher percentage of teachers in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools agreed or strongly agreed that their principal makes clear to the staff expectations for meeting instructional goals, communicates a clear vision for their school, sets high standards for teaching, presses teachers to implement what they have learned in professional development, carefully tracks student academic progress, and actively monitors the quality of teaching in the school (see Exhibit 7).

**Exhibit 7. Number and percentage of teachers surveyed, by extent to which they agreed with various statements on their principal’s leadership skills, for high- (n=122-123) and low-performing (n=94-95) schools**

<i>The principal at this school ...</i>	High-Performing	Low-Performing
<b>Makes clear to the staff his or her expectations for meeting instructional goals.</b>		
Strongly Disagree	3 (2.4%)	9 (9.5%)
Disagree	2 (1.6%)	21 (22.1%)
Agree	41 (33.3%)	48 (50.5%)
Strongly Agree	76 (61.8%)	15 (15.8%)
Not Sure / NA	1 (0.8%)	2 (2.1%)
<b>Communicates a clear vision for our school.</b>		
Strongly Disagree	4 (3.3%)	12 (12.6%)
Disagree	2 (1.6%)	20 (21.1%)
Agree	45 (36.6%)	46 (48.4%)
Strongly Agree	71 (57.7%)	15 (15.8%)
Not Sure / NA	1 (0.8%)	2 (2.1%)
<b>Sets high standards for teaching.</b>		
Strongly Disagree	3 (2.4%)	5 (5.3%)
Disagree	2 (1.6%)	8 (8.5%)
Agree	42 (34.1%)	56 (59.6%)
Strongly Agree	75 (61%)	18 (19.1%)
Not Sure / NA	1 (0.8%)	7 (7.4%)
<b>Presses teachers to implement what they have learned in professional development.</b>		
Strongly Disagree	2 (1.6%)	5 (5.3%)
Disagree	4 (3.3%)	18 (19.1%)
Agree	36 (29.5%)	50 (53.2%)
Strongly Agree	76 (62.3%)	17 (18.1%)
Not Sure / NA	4 (3.3%)	4 (4.3%)
<b>Carefully tracks student academic progress.</b>		
Strongly Disagree	2 (1.6%)	5 (5.3%)
Disagree	2 (1.6%)	15 (15.8%)
Agree	38 (31.1%)	47 (49.5%)
Strongly Agree	70 (57.4%)	16 (16.8%)
Not Sure / NA	10 (8.2%)	12 (12.6%)
<b>Actively monitors the quality of teaching in this school.</b>		
Strongly Disagree	4 (3.3%)	6 (6.4%)
Disagree	1 (0.8%)	20 (21.3%)
Agree	47 (38.2%)	46 (48.9%)
Strongly Agree	68 (55.3%)	12 (12.8%)
Not Sure / NA	3 (2.4%)	10 (10.6%)

Source: CSD 5 Curriculum Audit Teacher Survey (LPA, 2011)

Additionally, a greater percentage of teachers surveyed in high-performing schools (46 percent) than those in low-performing schools (33 percent) reported that their principal provides support to improve the instruction of ELLs, to a moderate or great extent.

In high-performing schools, nearly all teachers interviewed described their administration as supportive regarding the instruction of ELLs, compared with about half of the teachers interviewed in low-performing schools. One teacher in a high-performing school said, “They [the administration] do everything well, from providing materials, from making sure that the kids get what they need, from setting high expectations, from making sure that you are doing everything that is needed to help these kids be successful students.” A teacher in a low-performing school described the limited support from the administration as follows: “She supports me because she lets me teach the curriculum that I think would be best for the students, and so in that way I feel that she supports me. But she doesn’t, or she hasn’t, provided me any tools specifically for me to teach ELLs.” One of the interviewees also emphasized the stronger presence of instructional leadership and guidance in high-performing schools: “There is more follow-up on the part of those people who are coaches. Instructional leaders go into classrooms and they see what teachers need.”

The presence and quality of additional support and administrative staff, beyond the principal, was also stronger in high-performing than in low-performing schools. However, staff in both school groups reported insufficient staff support. For example, five of the six (83 percent) principals surveyed in low-performing schools reported that they had insufficient classroom paraprofessionals at their school, compared with 4 of the 10 (40 percent) principals in high-performing schools. Similarly, teacher survey data showed that none of the teachers in low-performing schools reported relying on a classroom paraprofessional to support the instruction of ELLs either to a moderate or great extent, whereas about a third (29 percent) of teachers surveyed in high-performing schools reported this.

Observation data also demonstrated a stronger presence of support staff, particularly in general education classrooms, in the high-performing schools than in low-performing schools. For example, of the seven general education classrooms observed in high-performing schools, four had one or two additional staff (volunteers, student teacher, or ESL teacher) in addition to the teacher. Among the four general education classrooms observed in low-performing schools, an additional staff person was observed in only one classroom, and this was a special education teacher supporting SWDs.

Among interviewed administrators, five of the six in low-performing schools reported needing more staff to support the instruction of ELLs, with three of these five reporting needing more ESL teachers. One of these administrators said, “We need another full-time ESL teacher, please. It’s not just because I’m struggling to meet the mandate. It’s the kids. It’s such a disservice to the students.” Comparatively, only one of the six administrators in high-performing schools reported needing more staff to support the instructional needs of ELLs. This person specifically described

needing more paraprofessionals, or “ESL aides.” Other administrators and teachers from the high-performing schools were satisfied with their current system of support staff for educating ELLs. One principal said, “We’re doing tremendous work with our paraprofessionals, and now they’ve become more instructional.” Another interviewee described how the school tapped existing teacher talent to create a pool of coaches:

“Another huge area was the decision to take some of the most talented people and pull them out of classroom and make them...in-school full-time coaches. And so, I think we have about six or seven coaches now. We have a lower-grade literacy coach, upper-grade literacy coach, lower-grade math coach, upper-grade math coach, a bilingual coach, a special ed coach, a tech coach ... these are teachers who have shown their expertise and now that’s kind of their full-time job ... to go in and help other teachers develop their craft or cover them so they can go in and see one another.”

Documents submitted showed some differences between the high-performing schools and low-performing schools in the number of paraprofessionals employed. Among the high-performing schools, the average number of paraprofessionals employed was eight, compared with three in the low-performing schools. Documents showed no consistent differences between the two schools groups in the number of ESL teachers.

## CONCLUSION

This report presents data demonstrating differences between high-and low-performing schools in CSD 5 related to strategies and practices for educating ELLs. The following key findings were presented:

- (1) Teachers in high-performing schools described and implemented ***more instructional strategies that target the learning needs of ELLs*** compared with those in low-performing schools.
- (2) ***Data are used to inform instruction*** more consistently in high-performing than in low-performing schools.
- (3) Teachers are effectively ***managing student behavior*** in the classroom more consistently in high-performing than in low-performing schools.
- (4) The ***professional development*** provided in high-performing schools is more cohesive and targeted to teaching ELLs than it is in low-performing schools.
- (5) ***ESL and general education teachers collaborate*** more often in high-performing schools than in low-performing schools.
- (6) 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 5 schools and elsewhere.

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