

Final Report: Syracuse City School District

June, 2006



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Introduction

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

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

This report contains an outline of the process, data, and methods used as well as the key findings from the data collection and the associated problem statements generated through the cointerpretation process for Syracuse City District Schools. The report also includes a section, Additional Auditor's Findings, which highlights findings identified by Learning Point Associates but not by the district. This section is presented separately to reflect the fact that some data were not available to the district at the time of cointerpretation and that there was a difference in opinion about the significance of the findings between the district staff and the auditors.

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

District Background

Overview

The City of Syracuse, located in Onondaga County and situated in the center of New York on the southern shore of Lake Ontario, is the region's major metropolitan center. Syracuse has been appropriately called the Crossroads of New York State, due to its central location. Year 2004 data places Syracuse's population at 143,101 with a year 2000 median income of \$25,000. The city's population is about 62 percent White, 25 percent Black, 5 percent Hispanic and about 5 percent Asian and American Indian. In 2004-2005, the Syracuse City School District served 1,446 Pre-K students, 21,286 K-12 students, and 2,200 adult education learners. Of those students enrolled, 52 percent were African American, 34 percent were White, 10 percent were Hispanic, 3 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander, and 1 percent were Native American/Alaskan. There are 18 elementary schools, four K-8 schools, six middle schools, four high schools, three alternative program facilities, two technical/vocational schools, and two administrative offices. 2001-2004 data indicates a steady rate of students eligible for free and reduced lunch (68 percent, 68 percent, and 67 percent). 2001-2004 district data also indicates a low, but consistent percentage of Limited English Proficient students (6 percent, 6 percent, and 5 percent). Syracuse is one of the large city school districts (along with Buffalo, Rochester, and Yonkers) identified as having high student needs relative to district resource capacity.¹

Student Academic Performance

On October 14, 2005, the state of New York designated the accountability status of Syracuse as a district "In Need of Improvement, Year 4" for English/Language Arts (ELA). Overall, Syracuse 4th grade 2003-2004 students made AMO/AYP for both ELA and mathematics with the exception of the students with disabilities subgroup which did not make AMO/AYP for ELA. Overall, 8th grade 2003-2004 students made AMO/AYP for ELA, with the exception of subgroups including students with disabilities, Black students, White students, and economically disadvantaged students. Overall, 8th grade 2003-2004 students did not make AMO/AYP for math including the subgroups: students with disabilities, Black students, Hispanic students, limited English proficient students, and economically disadvantaged students. Overall, 12th grade 2003-2004 students made AMO/AYP for ELA, with the exception of the Hispanic students and economically disadvantaged students subgroup. Overall, 12th grade 2003-2004 students did not make AMO/AYP for math, including the economically disadvantaged student subgroup.²

District Literacy Programs

According to the district, 16 schools are in various stages of implementing grant-funded programs to support literacy instruction and improve ELA performance. These programs include Reading First, the Success for All Program, and Read 180. The Reading First program is in its

¹ Data from this section was provided to LPA on 01/27/06 by SCSD

² Data from this section came from the New York State Department of Education 2005 District Accountability Status report, retrieved November 3, 2005 from http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts/school-accountability/2005/district-accountability-masterlist10-14-05_alpha.pdf and from the document, "Request for Proposals Application to Implement the New York State Education Department Sanctioned Audit of the Written, Taught, and Tested Curriculum as Required by No Child Left Behind Regulations" provided to LPA.

third year of implementation at nine elementary schools, including Bellevue, Blodgett, Elmwood, Franklin, Hughes, Dr. King, LeMoyne, McKinley-Brighton, and Seymour.³ The Success for All Program is implemented at the Delaware Elementary School. Read 180 is in the following five middle schools Lincoln, Blodgett, Danforth, Grant and Shea.⁴

Ongoing District Strategies

Syracuse has seven main areas in which it is making a concerted effort to implement “strategies for success.” The strategies from its 2004 – 2005 plan are listed below.

1. “Improve Student Achievement, Pre-K-12”, focusing on improving students’ ELA and math achievement, especially in Schools Under Registration Review (SURR) and potential SURR schools.

Strategies

- Integration of ELA in all curricular areas and provision of professional development in research-based practices to improve reading, writing, speaking, and listening in all content areas;
- Collection and utilization of information from Individual Growth Plans and School Improvement Plans regarding literacy;
- Disaggregation of student data at the district and building level for each group; continued provision of forums that communicate the use of data to improve instruction;
- Provision of staff development in scientifically-based reading and math research; and
- Provision of opportunities for strengthening student learning and community partnerships.

2. “Improve Graduation Rates” focusing on middle schools, high schools, career and technology education institutions, and inclusion programs.

Strategies

- Implementation of accelerated middle school models;
- Expansion of opportunities for secondary students to enroll in college-level courses;
- Development and maintenance of partnerships with community agencies and organizations to support district students and families;
- Monitoring and adjustment of Academic Intervention Services programs at the middle and secondary levels to meet learner needs;
- Plans to increase daily class attendance of all students; implementation strategies for smaller learning communities models; development of career clusters and curricula for the proposed Comprehensive Greater Syracuse Career and Technical High School;
- Formation of business and corporate partnerships in support of career and technical education;
- Redesign of alternative education programs aimed at reducing and reconnecting drop-out students; and

³ Data from this section was provided to LPA on 1/26/06 by SCSD.

⁴ Data from this section was provided to LPA on 1/26/06 by SCSD

- Expansion of School-Based Intervention Teams in all buildings through professional development and ongoing support
3. “Increase Parent and Family Involvement”, focusing on two-way communication, decision-making and leadership and involvement and support.
Strategies
 - Implementation of the Board of Education Family and Community Involvement Policy;
 - Education and involvement of families in school improvement planning;
 - Procurement of funding to increase parent involvement; and
 - The use of Promising Practices Network educators to facilitate discussions with parents on issues such as curriculum, homework, and family literacy.
 4. “Promote Diversity”.
Strategies
 - Promotion of initiatives through the District Diversity Committee;
 - Provision of National Coalition Building Institute training in all buildings to prepare teachers to work with the diverse cultures of their students; and
 - Expansion of the district’s system to collect, analyze and disseminate disaggregated student achievement data.
 5. “Enhance Facilities”.
Strategies
 - Identification of aspects of facilities that do not meet physical, operational, or educational needs;
 - Development and implementation of a planning process that supports the physical, operational, and educational needs for each facility and assures equity of resource allocation among all facilities;
 - Procurement of space for the expansion of pre-kindergarten classrooms and
 - Identification, configuration, and application for alternative methods of funding for capital projects where appropriate.
 6. “Fiscal Management”,
Strategies
 - Improvement of fiscal reporting procedures to support the Trustees’ (Commissioners’) role in meeting their fidelity responsibilities;
 - Use of performance and cost-efficiency measures while supporting high student achievement; and
 - Development of a long-term financial plan that maximizes revenue options for facility enhancements and improvement of school academic programs.
 7. “Leadership Development and effective Use of Human Resources”.
Strategies
 - Implementation of Syracuse City School District’s recruitment plan;

- Implementation of development activities designed to strengthen the skills of teacher leaders;
- Conducting of principal and vice principal academies and summer leadership institutes;
- Development and implementation of orientation and mentoring programs; implementation of the district's Professional Development Plan in supporting the Individual Growth Plan and the Annual Professional Performance Review; and continued development and implementation of labor and management committees on various levels and topics.⁵

District Resources

In 2003-2004, the district budget (general fund) was \$213,550,000; in 2004-2005, the budget was \$247,852,000 and in 2005-2006 the budget is \$261,884,000. Special revenue for 2003-2004 was \$92,505,000 and was \$89,262,000 in 2004-2005. Total staffing for 2004-2005 indicated a total number of 2,324 professional employees, including teachers, administrators, counselors, psychologists, and medical staff; and 1,795 support staff, including teacher aides, clerical support, transportation staff, lunch staff, and maintenance staff. Ninety-three percent of 2003-2004 core classes were taught by highly qualified teachers while 3 percent of 2003-2004 teachers did not hold a valid teaching certificate.

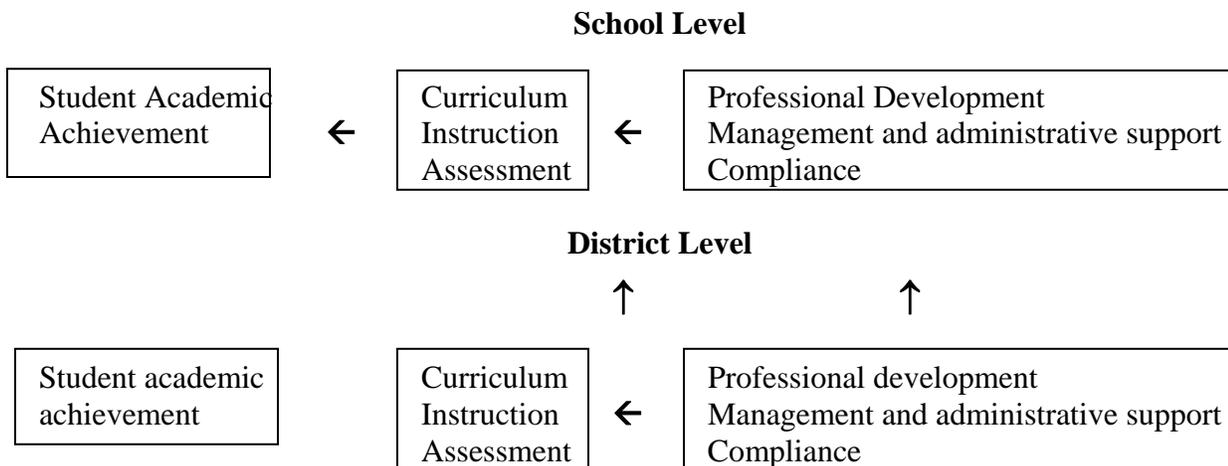
⁵ Data from this section came from the document, "Request for Proposals Application to Implement the New York State Education Department Sanctioned Audit of the Written, Taught, and Tested Curriculum as Required by No Child Left Behind Regulations" provided to LPA.

Theory of Action

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

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

Figure 1. Theory of Action



Guiding Questions for the Audit

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

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

Audit Process Overview

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

Phase 1: Covisioning

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

Phase 2: Data Collection and Analysis

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

Student Achievement Data

To provide a broad overview of district performance, student achievement data from the New York State Testing Program assessments were analyzed for Grades 4, 8, and 12 for the past three years. This analysis shows aggregate trends in performance and with NCLB subgroups.

SEC

To examine whether instruction was aligned to the New York state standards and assessments, teachers in the district completed the SEC. Based on two decades of research funded by the National Science Foundation, the SEC are designed to facilitate the comparison of enacted (taught) curriculum to standards (intended) and assessed curriculum (state tests), using teachers' self-assessments. The data for each content area for each teacher consist of more than 500 responses. The disciplinary topic by cognitive-level matrix is presented in graphic form, which creates a common language for comparison and a common metric to maintain comparison objectivity.

Observations of Instruction

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

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

Semistructured Individual Interviews and Focus Groups

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

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

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

Analysis of Key District Documents

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

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

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

Table 1 lists the key data sources and how they were used by the Syracuse City District Schools to review the district during the cointerpretation process.

Table 1. Alignment of Data Sources With Key Questions

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

Phase 3: Cointerpretation of Findings

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

The initial cointerpretation had several steps, starting with the interpretation of the data, followed by the development of problem statements, and concluding with the identification and prioritization of hypotheses specific to each problem statement. These steps occurred in a two-day meeting with key school and district staff. After the meeting, district staff edited and agreed on the problem statements and hypotheses. The synthesized information will be developed into a presentation for a broader school and community audience. Because this process was critical in identifying the priority areas for district improvement, the detailed approach is outlined here.

Interpretation of the Data

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

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

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

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

From this process, which required considerable thought and discussion, key findings emerged. All participants agreed to support key findings in the action-planning meetings with the community, parents, teachers, and students.

Development of Problem Statements

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

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

Identify and Prioritize Hypotheses

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

- Identify a set of hypotheses supported by evidence in the three priority areas for each identified problem.
- Prioritize hypotheses using specific criteria—such as those over which the district has control—and determine which hypotheses, if addressed, can leverage the most change.
- Reach consensus on a set of hypotheses for each problem statement.

A subset of participants met again after the initial cointerpretation meeting to further define these statements and hypotheses.

Aligning and Synthesizing Cointerpretation Results

The final steps of cointerpretation included refining the problem statements and hypotheses and developing a synthesis of the cointerpretation information (i.e., a district profile that will be presented to a broader group of school and community representatives during action planning).

Phase 4: Action Planning

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

The process entails initial goal and strategy setting by a core district team, followed by engaging with a carefully selected stakeholder group that includes district staff, parents, and community leaders. This group will provide input into the success indicators and potential barriers to success and will serve as champions for the district. Finally, action planning requires detailed planning meetings with groups or departments in the district to determine action steps and associated financial implications and timelines for implementation. Once this process is complete, the audit action plan should be aligned with other district plans.

Key Findings of Problem Statements

As illustrated in the Phase 3 process description, each problem statement was generated through the cointerpretation process. In a facilitated process, groups of district administrators and staff (see Appendix A) identified key findings across multiple data sets to develop the district problem statements. With each problem statement, the key supporting findings and hypotheses are included. These can be mapped back to the original data sets using the data map in Appendix B. A short review of research is included, which is intended to provide a broader context for the findings and hypotheses and, in some cases, to provide insight into potential strategies for action planning.

It is important to note that these problem statements and hypotheses have been, and may continue to be, refined because this is an iterative process. Those included here are the outcomes of several meetings including the cointerpretation meeting on November 21 and 22, 2005, a meeting on January 5, 2006 and an additional meeting on January 12, 2006. The revised version will be used in the action-planning process to develop the district's strategies.

Problem Statements

Statement #1

Curriculum is not implemented consistently throughout the district.

Findings in the Key District Document Review Summary, District Interviews, Teacher Principal Report, Student Focus Group, Parent Focus Group, and the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum confirmed that the curriculum is implemented differently across schools, and that more specific guidelines are needed to clarify the implementation of the district's written ELA curriculum within and across grade levels. While the district provides broad guidance around the implementation of ELA instructional content, findings indicated that greater depth of information is needed to provide more targeted support for special populations such as English language learners and Students with disabilities.

Participants found that a lack of depth and breadth in the curriculum influenced inconsistent program implementation and instructional delivery across schools. For instance, the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum suggests that teachers' content delivery in the primary grades, when compared to New York State Standards, focuses more intensively on reading comprehension, with less attention devoted to the writing components, listening and speaking. At the secondary level, comparisons of teachers' instruction to state standards suggests that teachers' instruction focuses on a variety of topics in reading and writing, but lacks intensity in specific areas such as critical reading, writing processes, and writing applications. A review of key documents revealed that the written curriculum and other key documents need more explicit information to support teachers' implementation of topics and strategies through a clearly articulated sequence and pacing guide.

Cointerpretation group members provided several hypotheses that addressed the root causes of curriculum misalignment. Participants indicated that a lack of collaborative planning was one potential cause. In addition, the absence of a “user-friendly” curriculum that includes content maps and pacing guides may contribute to the inconsistency in curriculum implementation across schools. Finally, participants indicated that school administrators do not have specific evaluative instruments for effective and ongoing monitoring of curriculum implementation. Participants suggested that school administrators may need more time and training to support teachers’ implementation of the curriculum.

Research supports the notion that curriculum needs to be developed for depth and coverage. Curricular priorities need to be addressed in order to create a “guaranteed and viable curriculum” (Marzano, 2003). In order for curriculum to be “guaranteed and viable”, curriculum development must extend beyond the creation of program guides that merely map out topics and materials. It must clearly specify appropriate experiences, assignments instructional practices, and assessments that can be used to bring about the desired learning and objectives (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005).

Standards based curriculum reform is hailed because it offers teachers a guide for their instructional practice by pointing to what knowledge or skills students must demonstrate (Darling-Hammond, 1997). This focus is believed to lead to improved and equalized student achievement (Sirotnik & Kimball, 1999). Research however, indicates that inconsistent teacher and administrative start-up and implementation of curriculum reforms such as standards based curriculum is a common problem in U.S. schools (Elmore, 1996; Sandholtz, Ogawa, & Scribner, 2004; Marzano, 2003). This inconsistency can often lead to unintended consequences such as the inequitable instructional practices and disparities in student achievement described by the co-interpretation team. This situation is compounded when teachers of students with special needs (disabilities) and English language learners do not have equal access to the ELA curriculum.

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Statement #2

Teachers feel unprepared to meet the needs of various sub groups of struggling students, especially students with disabilities and English language learners.

Findings in the Preliminary Report, Key District Document Review Summary, Student Assessment Report, Classroom Observation Report, Teacher Principal Report, Student Focus Group, Parent Focus Group, Manage and Compliance Report 2, and the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum indicated that teachers feel unprepared to meet the needs for increasing numbers of students they teach. This is due in part to the shift in student population at SCSD to include a greater percentage of English language learners who speak different languages and who represent a large number of racial and ethnic groups. District and school level staff members indicated that these and other students are entering classrooms with highly diverse academic and social/emotional needs, and that classroom conditions and resources to meet such a diversity of needs are often not available.

Findings from teacher and school administrator interviews revealed that students with special needs (disabilities), high achieving students, and English language learners were among those who were not well served by the district's curriculum and materials. Specifically, schools requested more materials for addressing students at both ends of the academic spectrum. Further, the Preliminary Report findings showed that teachers did not have adequate information or assessment data to address the needs of students' in summer school and other academic intervention services. Student assessment data confirms that gaps exist between minority subgroup performance (e.g., minorities, students with disabilities, and students qualifying for free/reduced lunch rates) when compared to schools' overall achievement levels.

Participants prioritized issues related to staff development and curriculum specificity to explain teachers' requested need for more support. First, participants indicated that staff development lacks focus on differentiating instruction and supporting students with disabilities, students learning English as an additional language, and students with academic needs at both ends of the continuum. In addition, participants identified lack of time after school as a potential cause. Participants suggested that the district curriculum may not provide enough information to support instructional modifications for individual students. Participants also indicated not all teachers believe all students can reach standards, i.e. they do not have the cognitive ability to learn.

Syracuse is not alone in its recognition of a changing student population. With inclusion, immersion, and mainstreaming, students' needs and backgrounds vary more now than in any other time in US history. More than six million students with special needs are served in American schools; more than thirteen million children under age 17 live in poverty; and over three million are learners of English as an additional language (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003a,b,c). As the SCSD so aptly recognizes, the diversity of students and their needs

requires a shift in curriculum and instruction, in classroom conditions, and in district-level programs for those students.

Curriculum and standards for learners with various needs has been recognized by the federal government through the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). NCLB requires states to develop a separate and specific set of English language proficiency (ELP) standards for students identified as ELLs, as well as determine appropriate assessments. In the recent final regulations for Part B of IDEA (December 2006), states are required to develop clear testing and assessment procedures for students with disabilities.

SCSD is aware that their curriculum, instruction, and materials must begin to more directly correspond to the needs of all learners and it will be important to change some of the attitudes and beliefs in the schools about the cognitive ability of students in subgroups. Several avenues exist for the district, which are considered “best practices” for teaching special populations. It is suggested that curriculum and instruction for English language learners have the following criteria: (a) the curriculum “reflects and values the students’ culture and adheres to high standards,” and (b) “the instruction is meaningful, technologically appropriate, academically challenging, and linguistically and culturally relevant” to the students (Intercultural Development Research Association, 2003, p. 57).

Other experts in the field propose the use of “culturally responsive teaching” which provides effective strategies for teaching non-middle class and/or non-white students. Initially, it includes some relatively simple changes in instruction such as student-controlled discourse, active learning, and small group instruction. These instructional practices (and others associated with culturally responsive teaching) more closely reflect the home cultures of many students and therefore, increases their ability to feel comfortable, be focused, and to learn (Hughes et al, 2004).

Professional development is also key to helping teachers change both their attitudes and practices and thereby becoming better prepared to teach learners from special populations. As the student population continues to become more diverse and dissimilar to the teacher population (Padolsky, 2002), many teachers find themselves without university coursework or classroom experience in teaching learners with unique needs (Hamayan, 1990). Yet “mainstream classroom teachers have an essential role to play in the(ir) education” (Hamayan, 1990, p.1), and thus, the importance of professional development – as requested by Syracuse staff.

Experts suggest that teachers also need to understand at a higher cognitive level the challenges faced by their students and ways to meet those challenges. For example, classroom teachers need to know about first and second language acquisition, reading and writing in a second language, alternative assessments, sociocultural issues in education and more (Intercultural Development Research Association, 2002; The Education Alliance at Brown University, 2003). They need to know about the types of learning disabilities and how they affect students’ receptive and expressive abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is extremely helpful for teachers to be exposed to various learning theories and their implications for ELL students. Effective professional development is intensive, builds teacher knowledge, and supports teachers

through implementation in their own classrooms – all critical elements of supporting diverse students (Garcia & Beltran, 2003).

Lastly, the findings indicate that teachers need more assessment data and they need it in a more timely manner. Again, NCLB and IDEA provide some assistance to districts as the states are required to develop lists of and/or create acceptable tests and alternate assessments for students with disabilities and students learning English as an additional language. The Acts also require districts to develop systems for storing, retrieving, disaggregating, and disseminating assessment scores and more. With such mandates, assessment information about special populations, received by teachers in a timely manner must become a priority.

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Statement #3

Parents and teachers do not share common perceptions about classroom rigor and that all students can learn.

New York State assessment results show that school performance levels remains below average annual progress targets in several SCSD schools. In addition, district-level trends suggest that gaps continue to exist between overall student performance and subgroup performance for black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students. While the challenges in improving student achievement are complex, the causes to which groups attributed achievement scores and subgroup achievement gaps differed. At the elementary level, parents and students who participated in focus groups reported that their teachers focused too much on “teaching to the [state] test.” At the high school, parents reported that teachers needed more time and better resources to support their students’ preparation for the Regents Exam. In schools across the district, parents revealed concerns that teachers’ instruction focused too narrowly on specific literacy skills, and suggested that more emphasis be placed on teaching areas such as comprehension and writing. While the SEC surveys showed that teachers across K-12 classrooms placed major focus on reading instruction, the surveys supports parents’ concerns that elementary teachers spent considerably less time teaching writing. In addition, the surveys revealed that literacy instruction at the secondary level covers a breadth of literacy topics, without adequate focus on key sub-topics as compared to state standards.

School level cointerpretation participants agree that more consistency is needed in curriculum implementation across schools. While teachers provided valuable insight and suggestions to improve consistent curriculum implementation and increased achievement, a few issues emerged as challenges over which teachers’ perceived little control. Some of these challenges included student behavior issues, poor attendance, and not enough time to effectively plan instruction. In addition, school interviews suggest that teachers perceived family participation in schools a critically important factor influencing student behavior and attendance, which directly affects student performance and school climate. While schools have implemented initiatives to improve behavior, attendance, and low family participation concerns, many participants reported that these issues still remain.

Hypotheses contributing to this problem statement focused around four major areas. First, participants reported insufficient understanding of poverty, language, and culture, and how these issues impact students’ behaviors, engagement, and achievement. Second, participants cited the inconsistently implemented curriculum. Poor communication between parents and teachers

emerged as a third critical issue contributing to misconceptions about school practices. Finally, participants indicated that schools are not as inviting and accessible to students as they should be.

Research clearly outlines the challenges in closing the achievement gap that persist between racial/ethnic minority and low income students and their white middle class peers in US schools (Johnson & Viadero, 2000; Oakes, Wells, Jones, & Datnow, 1997). The challenge is intensified as student demographics shift while teaching staffs remain the same (i.e. student population shifts from white to minority, middle to low income, and black to Latino for example) (Delpit, 1995; Noguera, 2003). Often cited are the issues raised by the co-interpretation team. These include a curriculum and pedagogy of low expectations in which racial/ethnic minority and low income students are perceived as incapable or not desirous of rigorous and challenging academic work, (Fine, Burns, Payne & Torre, 2004) and prevailing discourses that situate the problem within the cultures, home lives, and attitudes of students (Delpit, 1995; Oleson, 1997).

Increased depth and breadth of taught language arts skills among minority and low income students is considered necessary, yet lacking in the U.S, especially in middle and high schools (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999; Tatum, 2005). Students typically do well with decoding and literal comprehension - basic literacy skills - but struggle with comprehension skills such as inferencing, drawing appropriate conclusions, connecting text to their lives, and communicating complex ideas (Carr, Saifer, & Novick, 2002). The later are the same areas which the co-interpretation team found to be taught less often in their schools.

Much has been learned about ways of addressing these shifts and meeting the needs of culturally diverse learners such as the use of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies and curriculum that focus on: a) providing students with opportunities to learn and high expectations for them doing so (Banks 1995, Cummins, 1989; Marzano, 2003), b) depth and engagement (Nieto, 1992; Ladson Billings 1995), c) establishing a tone of decency and mutual respect (Cushman, 1991; Delpit, 1991) draws on the cultures and “funds of knowledge” that students bring with them to school (Moll, Amanti & Neff, 1992).

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Statement #4

The necessary data to inform decisions that drive instruction is insufficient, unreliable and untimely.

According to the following data sources: Key District Document Review, District Interviews, the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum, and Classroom Observation Data, schools in SCSD experience difficulty accessing district assessment

data. While district assessment results are available, they are often provided to schools well after they have been administered to students. Teachers are concerned that they often do not receive student assessment results in a timely manner- with some indicating that they often do not receive district assessment results at all- from the district. As a result, teachers perceive the tests as not useful for making instructional decisions. Some who do use the assessment results reported that they personally grade the district assessments before sending them to central office. Furthermore, administrators and teachers reported experiencing difficulties accessing the specific information they need. Because assessment results are not easily accessible or presented in a “user-friendly” way, it limits the extent to which school staff, families, and the greater community use these results to inform improvements. In addition, school administrators and district-level staff reported they do not have reliable instruments to monitor the district’s curriculum implementation.

Participants offered several hypotheses to help explain root causes, which are directly connected to findings. Participants perceived a lack of staff development for data analysis, the need for a better system to utilize data for formative improvement, the need to make data reports and results more user-friendly, and more people to support data use through professional development and better reporting mechanisms. One solution that emerged during co-interpretation included the creation of a Research and Evaluation Department for systemically organizing, collecting, analyzing, and reporting assessment results and supporting data utilization in schools.

Research supports that creating and sustaining a data driven decision making culture is a challenge in many districts and schools (Noyce, Perda,Traver, 2000). Schools and districts find it difficult to make data accessible and allocate time to allow staffs to look at it in deep and meaningful ways. Districts that decide to use a data driven model for school improvement, need to strategically plan the process and resources. A model of continuous improvement using data allows schools to examine their progress on a regular basis (Deligiannis, 2004). Data driven systems include: setting a vision, collecting and analyzing data to determine strengths and challenge areas, action planning and asses progress on a regular basis (Deligiannis,2004).

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Statement # 5

There is no district-wide system using multiple assessments (student work, tests, and observations) to identify student needs, inform student instruction and make programmatic decisions.

Findings in the Preliminary Report, Student Assessment Report, Key District Document Review, Teacher and Principal Report, Student and Parent Focus Groups, Classroom Observation Data Report, and Management and Compliance Report (2) informed this problem and suggested that schools are implementing multiple reading programs, particularly for at-risk students. Programs such as Reading First, Success for All, and Read 180 are each based on a different set of pedagogical principles, with a different set of assessments used to determine student progress. While each program may be effective in its own right, the numerous assessments implemented through various programs prevent a unified approach to measuring achievement growth. Multiple supplemental and academic intervention programs use various assessments as well, which inform progress that may not be aligned with district goals and benchmarks. The lack of common assessments influences fragmentation, as there is currently no formal way to determine the impact of supplemental programs and services on student achievement. Difficulties emerge for transient students who move from school to school within the district, as new programs and assessments create new expectations and confusion.

Data sources suggest that there are currently no established procedures for using data in systemic or systematic ways to make program decisions. Documents, interviews, and SEC survey results suggest that schools do not rely on district data to make decisions about programs or student progress; rather, teachers rely primarily on the assessment data they collect through various types of internally produced assessments, or assessments associated with a particular program. Furthermore, school reports that common district and state assessments are not provided in a timely manner influences school isolation, preventing their reliance upon a common set of data to measure the impact of instruction on student achievement.

Research has shown that strong correlations exist between test performance and the extensive use of student assessment data by the district and school principals in effort to improve instruction and student learning. In particular, high performing districts tend to set clear expectations for schools to meet state and federal (AYP) growth targets, provide schools with consistent and reliable achievement data on an ongoing basis, and ensure that district assessments and curricula are aligned with state standards. In addition, the district evaluated principals on the extent to which their teachers' instruction aligned with the district's curriculum, as well as student achievement. (Williams, Kirst, Haertel, et al., 2005). At the school level, principals used the data to develop strategies to follow up on progress of selected students and help them reach goals, the data utilized by the district that demonstrate particular effectiveness in teachers often feel confused, frustrated and anxious when creating and delivering assessments (Hargreaves, et al, 2002).

According to Earl and Fullan (2003), many administrators express insecurity about their data gathering skills, data interpretation, and data-based decision making. Many also indicate they have not had training or experience with data collection, management, or interpretation. Other experts have found that principals' training around data use is most beneficial when it focuses on using student assessment data for a wide variety of school improvement areas of focus. These areas of focus including using data to (1) identify struggling students, (2) develop strategies to follow up on the progress of selected students and help them reach goals, and (3) evaluate and provide formative feedback to improve teachers' performance (Williams, Kirst, Haertel, et al., 2005).

Effective data use among teachers begins with an in-depth understanding of the elements of strong assessments when choosing and using them (Stiggins, 2002). In addition, formative assessments are a key ingredient for consistent and detailed data driven decision making. When these assessments are used during instruction, they can aid in the planning of instruction, identify students at risk for reading difficulty, monitor student progress and determine what curricular changes need to be made. Used in this way, district and school-level formative assessments complement summative assessments in the goal of improving student academic achievement (Shinn, Shinn, Hamilton, & Clarke, 2002).

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Statement #6

There is no district process/procedure for selecting, limiting/focusing, evaluating and adjusting research-based programs.

Data sources including the Key District Document Review, Teacher and Principal Report, and Management and Compliance (2) indicate that the lack of specificity to guide curriculum implementation has influenced implementation of wide array of ELA programs across the district's schools. As problem statement five (above) explains, a variety of different ELA programs have been introduced into SCSD schools, which has influenced inconsistency and fragmentation across schools in terms of curriculum implementation and enactment. A review of key ELA documents and interviews show a lack of clear district processes and procedures for ensuring that adopted programs are both pedagogically consistent and aligned to district goals and benchmarks. In addition, tracking program implementation and evaluating their effectiveness over time tended to occur at the school level, as district processes and procedures were not accessible for selecting, focusing, and evaluating programs.

Participants at the co-interpretation meeting reported that consistent district procedures related to program selection, alignment, and evaluation appear to not exist, hindering the cohesiveness of the district's ELA programs and curriculum. Suggestions for improving the situation included (1) the development of clear program selection and evaluation processes and procedures, and (2) the creation of a program evaluation department to support tighter links between assessment and evaluative data and curriculum and instruction

Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs for the use by specific people to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness, and make decisions with regard to what those programs are doing and affecting (Patton, 1986). Alignment of curriculum, standards, assessment, and instruction is, according to Porter (2002), a principle prerequisite to educational reform and improvement. Therefore, programs should be aligned to an already in-place written curriculum that includes specific benchmarks. Alignment to benchmarks ensures that all programs are complementary and comprehensive so that all students have access to the full written curriculum (Webb, 1997).

La Marca (2001) argues that alignment should have two dimensions: content match and depth match. Content match alignment considers content coverage, range of coverage, and balance of coverage. Depth match alignment considers the cognitive dimensions of the standards or benchmarks. Matching content between benchmarks and programs may be relatively easy if programs make the content explicit for analysis purposes. Depth match, while identified in the literature primarily in terms of assessments matched to curriculum, is still applicable to program alignment. Analysis of programs must consider the cognitive levels at which the materials ask students to perform academic tasks (and how well the materials are set up to teach students *how* to perform at specific cognitive levels. Typical benchmark language should be set up for easy analysis of this match.

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Statement #7

Classroom instruction does not result in all students internalizing and demonstrating the literacy skills (on a daily basis) that will enable them to be successful on assessments.

Interviews with school staff and students revealed that select schools in the district appeared to spend significant time preparing for tests, particularly in grades in which NYSED assessments are administered. Principals and teachers reported that the increased focus on testing discouraged their willingness to take risks and compelled them to spend more time directing instruction on performing well on state tests. Parents in some of the sampled schools expressed concerns that the district placed too much emphasis on basic skills in reading and spent too much time preparing students for state tests.

Several hypotheses were generated during co-interpretation, which included (1) students not being explicitly taught important literacy skills, (2) students not being adequately prepared for the state assessments, (3) teachers not sufficiently trained or prepared to instruct specific skills tested on the assessments, to differentiate instruction, or to use assessment data to inform instruction, (4) lack of adequate intervention programs.

The increased emphasis on accountability using state test results has influenced teachers' instructional practices in schools across the country. Schools sometimes narrow and change the curriculum to match the test when test scores become the most important indicator of school improvement. In these cases, teachers place enormous focus on teaching only what is covered on the test, which leads to instructional gaps in the taught curriculum and instructional inconsistencies from grade to grade. In addition, teaching methods conform to the multiple-choice format of the tests, as teaching more and more resembles testing (Graves, 2002).

Curriculum and instructional guidance must be specific, consistent, and aligned to standards, in order to support teachers' focus on teaching to standards vs. teaching to assessments. In addition, methods must be integrated into teachers' instructional practice that motivate and engage their students. "Motivation and engagement are critical for adolescent readers. If students are not motivated to read, research shows that they will simply not benefit from reading instruction. As much of the work in motivation and engagement shows, these are critical issues that must be addressed for successful interventions. In fact, motivation assumes an important role in any attempt to improve literacy for students of all ages, not just adolescents." (Kamil, 2003, p. 8).

When implementing a school or district wide improvement model in reading, organizational features should be in place to support and complement teachers' focus on standards, and their implementation of active and engaging learning strategies. These key organizational features include: Prioritized reading goals and objectives, a research-based core reading program, focus on big ideas, dynamic and formative assessment, intensified early identification and intervention, prioritize and protected time, focused and sustained staff development (Simmons, Kame'enui, Good, Harn, Cole, & Braun, 2002).

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Statement #8

There is not an agreed-upon and expected set of effective literacy practices for professional development.

Syracuse has a professional development plan in place, which is designed to clarify goals and focus the district's efforts. However, data sources suggest that the plan has not been implemented across the district. As a result, schools are acting in isolation when implementing professional development. Interviews and documents suggest that current professional development practices have little impact on teachers, with some questioning the value of the content, its usefulness for their instruction, and its alignment with state standards. Principals reported the need for additional training to understand NCLB requirements, more collaboration and support for developing school improvement plans.

Participants generated hypotheses that centered around (1) a lack of district expectations, clear processes, and procedures, (2) lack of accountability for implementation of the Professional Development Plan, (3) variation in funding sources and amounts to support PD at each school, and (4) the absence of a core set of expectations that guide PD implementation. Participants indicated that it may be difficult for some school administrators and teachers to move toward a professional development program that is district-driven, particularly when the school has maintained control over PD in the past. These participants stressed that it would be important to implement monitoring and accountability procedures to ensure that PD programs are being consistently implemented.

Experts report the need to have accountability for professional development results. Their reports suggest that effective professional development models have staff, schools and districts working together to plan professional development. Schools or districts need to start with the end result in mind. Tying student learning or achievement to professional development makes it imperative that all stakeholders have a clear understand of the goal (Gusky,2000).

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Statement #9

Teachers do not have access to ongoing professional development on research-based strategies necessary to differentiate instruction to meet the needs and close the gap of various student subgroups.

While the district is committed to implementing differentiated instructional strategies to support diverse learners, teachers reported the need for more professional development to understand how to effectively implement these strategies in their classrooms. As stated earlier in the report, key documents suggest that the district's written curriculum does not provide detailed information such as mapping procedures, pacing guides, or a clearly articulated scope and sequence, to support consistent implementation.

In addition, classroom observations revealed that the classroom teachers' at the secondary level primarily implemented whole group strategies. Approximately 60% of grade 4-12 classrooms were arranged to effectively accommodate diverse instructional strategies (e.g., whole group, small group, independent work). Teachers expressed a desire for more training in differentiated instructional strategies through workshops and job-embedded training.

Hypotheses focused on the lack of professional development for working with student subgroups, such as students with limited English proficiency and students with disabilities. In addition, participants indicated that school staff and parents may have conflicting ideas how students are being supported in school and at home. For instance, the findings indicate that some parents were concerned that their schools were not doing enough to support students with special needs, while teachers reported frustration that some parents did not do enough to support their children's learning at home (e.g., monitoring homework, ensuring adequate attendance, etc.).

Participants reported that teachers do not have sufficient access to research about how to support specific groups of students (e.g., LEP, special education), and principals do not have sufficient strategies for supporting differentiation in the classroom. Suggestions for improving access to professional development for differentiation were similar to suggestions emerging from problem statement #8 (above). These included (1) the need for a more defined district focus on curriculum and instruction, (2) better PD for teachers to differentiated instruction, (3) better monitoring and accountability procedures for ensuring PD consistency, (4) stronger connections between district PD programs and funding sources to support them, and (5) PD for school administrators to support differentiation in the classroom.

District suggestions on differentiation are backed by experts. Differentiated instruction allows teachers to vary the instructional approaches in relation to the learning style of the student (Hall, 2002). Differentiation can be accomplished by varying the content, process or product (Tomlinson, 1999). When choosing to vary the process as a method of differentiation, a consistent variety of instructional strategies needs to be determined. A strong body of research based best practices for English Language Arts exists and can be taught (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1996).

Research suggests that effective professional development models have staff, schools and districts working together to plan professional development. Schools or districts need to start with the end result in mind. Tying student learning or achievement to professional development makes it imperative that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the goal (Gusky, 1999).

Finally, experts back teachers' desire for increased parental involvement, as it has shown to positively impact classroom performance. The actions a teacher uses are successful if it encourages parents to be a member of the school community (Ames, 1993).

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Statement #10

The district lacks a simple, reliable, and easily accessible communication system and clear and consistent communication among all stakeholders (BOE, superintendent, district office, building administration, instruction/support staff, and students and families).

District staff interviews revealed a common perception both in central offices and the schools that there is a lack of communication throughout the district. Participants reported perceiving a division between “two parts of the organization” and often did not view the central office as a support to schools. The current district organizational structure does not support clear communication within departments, between departments and schools, or between schools.

Findings suggest the situation is in part due to the central office being in constant transition, with frequent changes in structure, organization, top level staff, and directives to schools. Such transitions contributed to a lack of clarity about what needed to get done, and how to get things done in a timely way. School level interviews suggest that principals are not available to their staffs, and are generally unable to take on a more active role in the school. Among the sampled schools not making AYP, none of the teachers interviewed reported that their principal was visible around the school, and teachers in all sampled schools reported wanting to see their administrators more often. While *opportunities* were made available for teachers and other

school staff members to collaborate, a review of district documents provided limited evidence to suggest that the district *promoted* regular collaboration between English Language Arts teachers and other key stakeholders such as special education/ELL staff, other teachers, personnel services staff, and principals.

Participants during cointerpretation reported that the district's communication systems are inadequate. Specifically, the technology infrastructure is not effective, reliable, or updated, which significantly impedes communication between the central office and schools. Email often does not work properly, the district web page is outdated and lacks important information.

By their very nature, schools and school systems are "loosely coupled systems" (Weick, 1982). Loosely coupled systems are institutions that have weakly connected independent units (e.g., school sites within a school district operate under the same central office, but do not regularly interact with each other in daily work). While loosely coupled systems operate with high levels of focus and expertise, their primary drawback is that communication between departments or among employees with different roles is hindered. Specific and public plans of communication and job responsibilities must be in place, but plans need to take into consideration the ways in which intra-unit communication is inhibited (Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, 2002). The following questions can be a starting point for determining effective communication practices and procedures.

- Are key people serving as bottlenecks of information?
- Do certain units that should communicate regularly have no venue in which to do so?
- Most importantly, is there a venue in which to communicate?

Another possible cause of the lack of communication within the district may be due to the perception that the central office does not understand what is going on at the school sites; likewise, teachers may feel that their site administrators do not understand what is going on in their classrooms. And most likely, parents have the perception that both the central office and the school site are unaware of their specific concerns. A communication plan is only one minor step in dealing with this problem.

A recent meta-analysis determines that there is a good correlation between student achievement and school leadership that, among other things, (a) fosters positive culture, (b) maintains visibility, and (c) provides affirmation to staff (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). The lack of openness in the district possibly is due to a culture that does not sustain constructive talk, promotes secretiveness for fear of reprisal (Little, 1990), or has no mechanism to encourage problem solving based on suggestions or complaints.

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Statement #11

Roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined and communicated within the organization.

The district's challenges regarding communication (see problem statement #10) affect its ability to clarify the district organizational structure, which influences how specific how resources are disseminated and managed, and how administrative roles and responsibilities are interpreted. According to district staff, this lack of clarity is influenced by short term planning and goal setting, a frequently fluctuating and unclear organizational structure, constant changes in district staff responsibilities, and loosely defined expectations attached to specific district roles. The data sources used to support findings embedded in this problem statement were the same sources used to support problem statement #10 (see above).

According to participants in co-interpretation, (1) frequent changes in top level leadership influence the lack of clarity around district staff roles, responsibilities, and the overall organizational structure; (2) there is a lack of a team-oriented culture, and a trusting, safe, and supportive environment for staff members in some buildings; and (3) there is a lack of succession training for those who take over new positions when personnel leave or retire.

An employee's sense of safety within an organization is often the result of relational trust. So while turnover in district leadership is high, the people who stay in the organization need to feel that their histories within the organization—as well as their areas of expertise related to their positions—are respected. Currently, people within the district do not feel that relational trust exists, particularly as structures around them are in constant flux. Effective schools are a result of, among many other things, compelling vision and mission (Barth, 2004), collective purpose (Fullan, 2003), productive conflict, ongoing learning (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004), and high levels of trust and respect (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). A constantly changing environment cannot always be avoided; but leaders currently filling specific posts need to help design systems that can remain in place once they are gone. Specific structures that are in place that can last the changes in leadership may help to (a) provide stability where it is needed with teachers' levels of comfort, (b) instill elements of effective schools, and (c) keep those elements alive long enough to become successful and natural (Murphy & Datnow, 2003). Effectively running school-based management systems, for example, can assist in maintaining structure and improving instructional reform buy-in among teachers (Wohlstetter and Briggs, 2001).

Organizational structures, with clear job descriptions and lines of communication, serve the function of providing security and consistency (Bolman & Deal, 1997). While clear job descriptions do not fix organizational problems—or keep lines of communication operating on

informal levels—they do communicate value to employees. Providing a sense of order in an organization is well correlated with student achievement on school sites, primarily because teachers and other staff members feel safe enough to experiment in instruction and focus on their personal work as teachers (Waters, McNulty, & Murphy, 2003).

References

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Waters, T., Marzano, R.J., & McNulty, B. (2003). *Balanced leadership: What thirty years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

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Statement #12

Data is not used consistently to make budgetary decisions that support instruction.

Data sources including Preliminary Report, Management and Compliance Report (1) and Management and Compliance Report (2) show that data is not available and, thus, not used effectively to support instructional or budgetary decisions. School staff interviews revealed that some principals expressed a desire to be more involved in school-based budgeting decisions; however, instructional or budgetary data for making informed budget allocation decisions was not available. According to district and school administrators, schools have limited control over resource allocation because school administrators control limited dollars. In addition, state and district achievement data is reportedly delivered late- and sometimes not at all- which constrains schools' abilities to make data driven decisions about programs and instructional strategies. Some principals indicated that increases in school-level budgetary decisions would need to be

coupled with a more effective data system, in order to support informed decisions regarding the reallocation and distribution of funds.

Participants' hypotheses indicated that budget allocations and state assessment results are announced and delivered at different times during the year, making it difficult, if not impossible, to make budgetary decisions that are informed by state assessment results. In addition, legal and contractual issues (e.g., collective bargaining agreements) constrain the district's ability to reallocate funds and reduce the amount of money that can be allocated directly to instruction. The lack of communication between departments (e.g., budget, instruction, etc.), schools, and parents limits the extent to which these groups can make informed, collaborative budgetary decisions. Finally, participants reported that long term budget planning needed to replace year-to-year planning.

Research supports that data driven decision making requires professional development and continued support (Holloway, 2003). Creating an atmosphere where a consistent data driven approach is used requires strategic planning, support for the initiative as well as sustained focus (Feldman, Lucey, Goodrich, Frazee, 2003).

Research supports the need to have accountability for professional development results. Reports suggest that effective professional development models have staff, schools and districts working together to plan professional development. Schools or districts need to start with the end result in mind. Tying student learning or achievement to professional development makes it imperative that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the goal (Gusky,2000).

References

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Gusky, T.(2000). Evaluating professional development. Thousand Oaks, CA. Corwin Press.

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Statement #13

The strategic plan lacks clear indicators and activities to implement measurable achievement goals in ELA.

The data from the Summer Classroom Observations and the review of the district's plan used to inform the district's preliminary report showed that the district's strategic plan lacked the specificity needed for a district to operationalize its objectives. While the plan's purpose is "to establish a process to...focus the District's work and provide clear links to building plans," an external document review found that more specificity was needed about *who* will do the work, *how* it will be done, *what* data will be collected and *what* will be indicators of success. While

other district documents may provide this information, greater connection is needed to articulate how other plans support and jointly guide the district in aligning curriculum with state standards.

Hypotheses pointed to several issues to explain the Strategic Plan's low utility. Participants indicated that (1) school staff members may not be aware of the strategic plan, (2) key stakeholders were not involved in the planning process, (3) the district is not ready for a results-based document, (4) monitoring and accountability procedures are not in place to support the plan's implementation, and (5) the plan is complicated and difficult to understand.

A strategic plan is simply an administrative tool to help focus and coordinate the efforts of an organization. A strategic plan that does not do this is not an effective one. Getting results from a strategic plan requires first that the designers of the plan understand the *specific* performance goals that are needed to support the district goals (Clark & Estes, 2002). By doing so, the plan will consider *who* needs to be involved and *how* the work should be done. In the case of student achievement goals, the strategic plan needs to explicate the specific steps the district will take. Although documents do support that specific plans have been designed for particular tasks, an improved process of strategic planning will help the district look at the big picture to determine how achievement goals can reasonably be met and how intermediate work steps can be better distributed.

A strategic plan must be viewed as a long-term map for system-wide improvement, not merely as a set of goals or broad-based resolutions (Davies, 2003). In the case of a school system, strategic plans should help the district reach its achievement goals by laying out each step in the process. As with any map, a strategic plan needs to be clear to all stakeholders; it must also have extensive stakeholder input. The purpose of including stakeholder input is to get a clear idea from all segments of the organization *how* work can most reasonably and efficiently be done. Finally, strategic plans can serve to drive reform, particularly if they are created with extensive staff input and if they are clearly communicated to all stakeholders. Conversely, strategic plans that are not understood or are not grown from the ground up have the tendency not to last long (Datnow, 2002).

References

Clark, R.E. & Estes, F. (2002). *Turning research into results: A guide to selecting the right performance solutions*. Atlanta: CEP Press.

Datnow, A. (2002). Can we transplant educational reform and does it last? *Journal of Educational Change*, 3(3), pp. 215-239.

Davies, B. (2003). Rethinking strategy and strategic leadership in schools. *Educational Management and Administration*, 31(3), pp. 295-312.

Statement #14

Current technology does not adequately address the stated mission of the district.

The Teacher and Principal Interview Report and the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum indicate that the district's current level of technology capacity is a major barrier to district improvement efforts. Specifically, district and school interviews revealed that low capacity is reflected in unequal distribution of equipment in the schools, an overextended district technology center, and low technology skills of building staff. Computers are usually purchased through grants, which results in unequal resources, and incompatible equipment and programs. In some schools teachers have computers in their rooms, while in others teachers have to go to computer labs or libraries to use a computer. In addition, many schools had received Title2D funds for increasing technology; however, teachers and principals reported that district technical support personnel could not keep up with schools' installation requests. One principal indicated that a request for technical support had been pending for over a year, and several other principals said that computers are not used to the extent that they should be because "they are down all the time." Many buildings do not have an on-site person who can maintain and support applications, and many of the instructional staff have low computer skills. For instance, 44% (40 of 91) of teachers who responded to the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum reported using computers or other technology in language arts either a little (10% or less) or not at all. The district has adopted a technology plan that includes standards that teachers, administrators, and students should meet, but the plan is not yet implemented.

Hypotheses focused around (1) budget constraints, (2) lack of coordinated planning, and (3) inadequate staff training to account for the district's limitations around technology. Participants reported that an updated technology infrastructure would be critical for impacting classroom technology integration, as well as systemic change in other areas such as district (1) governance structures, (2) communication practices, (3) data driven decision making practices.

Recommendations for Action Planning

In this section, we use the problem statements and key findings, along with research and best practice on literacy, teaching learners with disabilities and those in ELL settings, and district improvement to suggest implications for the district's efforts over the next three years. It is important to note that a one-to-one connection between problem statements and recommendations does not exist. Rather, Learning Point Associates identified what we believe to be the most critical areas for focus. Further, the order of listing does not reflect a ranking or prioritizing of the recommendations. For each recommendation, we have provided additional information on specific actions the district may consider during the action planning process. The diversity and complexity of each problem statement places limits on the extent to which we can discern its relative impact on the district's improvement process. For this reason, recommendations are firm, but the associated actions for implementation should be considered point of reference for consideration.

Recommendations 1 – 4 focus on Curriculum, Instruction for Subgroups, Assessment, and Professional Development and become the foundation for improving instructional practices in the district. Due to the complexity of the issues regarding improving student achievement, additional recommendations (5-6) have been developed to address the district's Organization and Planning Process. Implicit in these recommendations is the need for the district promoting a vision among all staff that ELA is a priority area and adequate and protected time will be devoted to improving all students' performance, especially those not currently performing at grade level.

Nothing will go as far toward improving the educational attainment of all children—and especially those in the low performing schools—as ensuring that there is a qualified teacher in every classroom. Research has shown quite convincingly that students who lack effective teachers are destined to fall behind their peers (Jordan, Mendro, & Weerasinghe, 1997; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). District policies and practices have the most immediate impact on the situation. The following recommendations address many of the conditions needed to ensure students have high quality teachers, i.e. offering professional development tied to the curriculum and improving classroom instruction, using assessment data to drive decisions, providing teachers with a fully-articulated curriculum, promoting and monitoring instructional practices that research has shown will improve student achievement for all students including English language learners and Students with disabilities, structuring and organizing the district to improve communication and carrying out responsibilities, and providing aligned and integrated plans for carrying out the district's goals and actions. Not addressed will be topics outside the scope of this audit such as merit pay and alternative certification.

Jordan, H., Mendro, R., & Weerasinghe, D. (1997). *Teacher effects on longitudinal student achievement*. Paper presented at the National Evaluation Institute, Indianapolis, IN.

Sanders, W. L., & Rivers, J. C. (1996). *Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center.

Recommendation 1:

Provide a fully articulated ELA curriculum aligned with state standards across and within grade levels that allows learning to increase in complexity, provides strong guidance for teachers, on the breadth and depth of content, and includes explicit details such as the alignment of research based instructional strategies to curriculum. (Problem Statement (1))

A fully articulated curriculum would: 1) be standard-based, 2) have benchmarks, 3) be based on research; and 4) include an aligned assessment system that monitors student progress, and provides outcome information. This curriculum would also ideally, have supporting materials that identify and elaborate on the systemic use of research based instructional strategies that work to build strategic readers through scaffolding. In these materials, the use of a gradual release model for strategy implementation with the ultimate goal of creating strategic readers, k-12, would be further articulated.

Some other considerations include:

- Differentiation of the curriculum to meet the needs of individual students.
- Some flexibility in the design so that teachers still have some latitude to adjust for student needs.
- A system for monitoring implementation of the intended curriculum.
- A process for curriculum revision based on data. Once developed, the curriculum should be revised according to student achievement, changes in population, as well as teacher knowledge.

In order to create this curriculum, we suggest that Syracuse complete the following actions:

- Review and revise or supplement the current ELA written curriculum in order to provide specific and clear guidance to teachers consider using curriculum maps, scope/sequence or instructional guides.
- Ensure the inclusion of suggestions for modified and differentiated instruction to address the needs of ELL, Special Needs, GATE, and culturally diverse learners, as well as refer teachers to the state LEP standards and students' IEPs.
- Create specific district benchmarks for all grade levels across all elements of ELA.
- Develop processes for data collection, analysis, reporting and interpreting processes so teachers and administrators have data based information to determine changes in monitoring student progress, instructional practices and programs.
- Create specific guidelines for the use of screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic, and outcome assessments. The use of both formative and summative assessments is crucial.
- Findings also suggest that more professional development is needed. This is addressed in more detail in the recommendation addressing professional development.

Carr, J.F. & Harris, D.E. (2001). *Succeeding with Standards: Linking Curriculum, Assessment, and Action Planning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum. This text provides a comprehensive review of how to translate standards into curriculum.

Foriska, T. (1998). *Restructuring Around Standards: A Practitioner's Guide to Design and Implementation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. This text presents a step-by-step guide to designing curriculum around standards.

Jacobs, H.H. (1997). *Mapping the Big Picture: Integrating Curriculum and Assessment K-12*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development This text presents an excellent guide for creating curriculum maps for courses of study.

Marzano, Robert J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

O'Shea, M.R. (2005). *From Standards to Success*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum. This text presents a Standards Achievement Planning Cycle.

Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by Design*. Expanded 2nd Ed. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. This text presents an excellent but rigorous model for unit design.

Recommendation 2:

Increase supports for students with disabilities and English language learners including 1) The level of and kinds of information teachers receive about their learners with disabilities and their learners of English as an additional language as individuals and as groups; 2) The development and promotion of the belief that all teachers are responsible for the learning of all students; 3) The use of proven instructional approaches among all teachers for these students and 4) Equitable access to educational and social opportunities and needs-based academic assistance these students (Problem Statement 2, 3, 4, 5)

While students with disabilities and English language learners will likely benefit from all of the recommendations included here, both the district and Learning Point Associates recognized a need to highlight specific areas where targeted district supports are needed for these populations. Problem statement 2 indicated that teachers feel unprepared to meet the needs for increasing numbers of students they teach in these two subpopulations. In addition, Problem Statement 3 dealing with mis-aligned perceptions of classroom rigor identified insufficient information about students' backgrounds more generally as a potential root cause. Furthermore, both Problem Statements 4 and 5 address the need for better and more consistent use of data. While professional development (Recommendation 4) will play an important role here, information sharing is also important. One example is to provide information to classroom teachers about their individual English language learners by listing the students' native language; level of language arts abilities in that language; number of years of formal schooling in the home country; a description of the system of schooling in the home country (e.g. gender separation; girls attend until age 10); and other pertinent information.

Syracuse predicts an increase in the ESL population in upcoming years. In addition, teacher and administrator interviews indicated that the current curriculum does not address the needs of

diverse students, and that the availability of supplemental materials varies from school to school. Furthermore, findings indicate that academic intervention services for students are uneven and are not aligned with the classroom curriculum. A closer review of programs, supports, and resources is needed to determine which should be kept and discarded, and what additional programs, supports, and resources are needed and/or required by state and federal law. This review would need to include structures designed to support Special education, GATE, Low Income, and English language learners, as well as those partnerships with Universities, hospitals, clinics, and other health and social service institutions and organizations. Furthermore, it should include a review of mainstream materials and how they have been adopted for these populations. If new programs and resources are needed, the district, through a representative body of stakeholders, should consider investigating, selecting, and implementing a model at several schools and observing its outcomes. The state LEP standards, along with the district curriculum should be used to guide the selection process. Specific actions to inform this process could include:

- Working with the NY State Title III staff to adopt the NCLB required state English Language Proficiency Standards district-wide.
- Providing the means for district ELL/Bilingual/ESL directors/staff to gain additional information about proven instructional practices for classroom teachers with ELLs in their classrooms. Consider Sheltered Immersion Observational Protocol (SIOP), Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD), Enriching Content Classes for Secondary ESOL Students, Enhancing English Language Learning in Elementary Classrooms, or Culturally Responsive Schools. Visit other districts and schools to observe the programs in action.

Recommendation 3:

Develop the systemic use of data to drive decision making in the district, schools and classrooms, specifically in the area of English Language Arts. (Problem Statements 4, 5, 7, 12, 14)

A number of problem statements reflect the need for a systemic approach to data use. Problem Statement 4 identified the need to better disseminate/communicate and utilize ELA assessment data to inform instruction. Findings associated with Problem Statement 5 identified a need for consistent use of similar assessments across the district. Problem Statement 7 identifies that not all students are able to be successful on assessments. Hypotheses included students not being taught important literacy skills and not being equally prepared for assessment. Problem Statement 12 reflects the district's need to use data to make budgetary decisions to improve instruction. This recommendation has a complexity which directly impacts many aspects of the district, including personnel, infrastructure, instruction, curriculum, and professional development.

To systemically use data to drive decisions, the district will need to consider:

- Determining the essential data elements that are needed at the district, school, and classroom levels
- Developing operational processes and procedures that ensure data is collected, analyzed, disseminated/reported, and programmatic and instructional decisions are made at all levels in the district in a efficient and timely manner
- Ensuring that schools and staff have equitable access to the technology needed to collect and report data
- Providing the support (technology assistance, development of “user-friendly” reporting mechanisms, and professional development at multiple levels) needed to make the systemic use of data possible, understood, and valued
- Developing the requisite organizational and staffing structures needed at the district and school levels to carry out the actions necessary for the systemic use of data.

To improve performance in ELA, the district will need (1) administrators and teachers trained to understand the data sources, how to use data from various sources, and how to more effectively implement data-driven decision making practices; (2) procedures for administrators, academic directors, instructional specialists, and related staff to support and monitor effective data use in the classroom; (3) an integration and streamlining of various assessments that provide similar information; (4) to implement new and different kinds of classroom based assessments in a consistent manner district-wide, which are then reported up to the school and district and provide “user-friendly” information for teachers(e.g., running records, observation logs, etc.); (5) to improve communication between the district and schools to promote a deeper understanding of the importance of data and how to interpret and use the data on an ongoing basis, and (6) create guidelines and professional development to support the use of data to restructure curriculum and instruction to meet students’ needs.

In order to utilize data to assess the performance of students across the district, a similar assessment must be utilized across buildings. These assessments must be both formative and summative. Achievement test data should be used as a component of assessment. Effective data driven decision making requires the use of not only the standardized test data, but also formative assessments conducted throughout the academic year to accurately represent a student’s reading achievement and growth (Afflerbach, 2004).

Specific actions include:

- A district-wide committee led by the head of assessments that would **create an assessment plan**. This committee would determine what assessments should be used for progress monitoring, screening, diagnostic testing, eligibility for additional services, and program evaluation. This committee’s job would also include determining what assessments are **required district-wide** and **what assessments are recommended that schools and teachers can chose from** in addition to the district-wide assessments. The plan would include processes and procedures for the reporting of results and supporting the interpretation and sequent action planning, i.e. creation, implementation, and monitoring of those actions
- A series of **common reading assessment** that are given 3 to 4 times a year as progress monitoring to identify students in need of additional support and for program/intervention evaluation. The results of these assessments should be used at the district level to refine the

district curriculum. Currently, the Milestone Assessment is being given. The assessment committee would evaluate that assessment in terms of district's need and the current research on literacy assessments.

- **Timelines** for assessment administration and reporting need to be set and followed.
- Data analysis, data display, and interpretation of common district level assessments should be conducted at the district, school, and teacher level.
- **Professional development to build school capacity** and expertise in the area of assessments and interpretation.
- Examining how language and literacy acquisition is being **monitored and assessed** for linguistically and academically diverse students.

References

Afflerbach, Peter. (2004). *National reading conference policy brief: High stakes testing and reading assessment*. Retrieved from <http://www.nrconline.org/publications/HighStakesTestingandReadingAssessment.pdf> on December 20, 2005.

Recommendation 4:

Provide professional development opportunities that 1) Align with district priorities for improved literacy instruction for all students and for special education and ESL students, 2) Build teacher knowledge, skills, and pedagogy in literacy instruction, research-based instructional strategies, and on the revised Syracuse City School District Curriculum 3) Are part of a cohesive district plan for high quality teacher development which includes clear expectations and an accountability plan for teachers. (Problem Statements 2, 3, 7, 8)

Problem statements 2 and 3 identify the need for professional development focused on instructing students with disabilities and ELL students. This professional development is needed for all teachers, not just those serving special needs. Findings under problem statement 7 identify the need for teacher professional development more generally in literacy instruction. Given limited resources, Syracuse should consider focusing the majority of its professional development resources in these areas. We recognize that there will always be a need for some professional development in other areas, but we also know that if too scattered, professional development activities have little chance to change teacher behavior. Wenglinsky (2002) found that when teachers spend time on professional development that is not focused on content, there is little impact on student outcomes. It is critical that this focus is agreed upon and communicated across the district.

Problem statement 8 states that there is not an expected set of effective literacy practices for professional development. Once a fully articulated ELA curriculum is in place, this curriculum, along with strategies for content-area literacy instruction and instruction for special education and ESL students should provide a framework for the agreed upon practices. In addition, as curricular programs are implemented, professional development for those programs should be included. With a framework for literacy practices in place, the district can then determine where to prioritize professional development offerings. While the district may want to conduct a more

focused needs analysis in this area, findings from this audit reveal a need for targeted professional development in the following areas:

- Dispel myths and assumptions about the cognitive abilities of students with disabilities and English language learners and the need for high expectations for all learners.
- Reading methods at all grade levels and across subject areas.
- Theories and methodologies for second language acquisition.
- Differentiation of instruction for students with disabilities.
- Cultures and experiences of the students within the district.
- Specific research-validated teaching strategies.
- Instructional practices specific for English language learners

It is also important that the methods used for professional development are conducive to improving instruction and developing and retaining high, quality teachers. Job-embedded professional development is regarded by experts as a strong approach which offers multiple pathways. Professional Learning Communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1998), school wide study groups (Taylor, 2004), literacy coaching, using specialists, (Waleploe & McKenna, 2004), lesson study (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998), mentoring and induction (Boyer, 1999 as cited in Holloway, 2001), and a myriad of other systemic initiatives have a strong research base and require similar elements for successful implementation. The elements needed for successful implementation of professional development resemble those needed for developing a data driven organization and should include supporting common articulated goals, building professional knowledge, as well as providing support to teachers, especially those new to the profession, during the change process.

Finally, the district needs a cohesive plan for the development of high quality teachers with focused and targeted PD activities. The plan—before implementation—should be assessed for the following focus areas:

- *Administrator and faculty buy-in:* Given the current emphasis on building-level decision making, how will the plan elicit principals' and teachers' interest. How can planning be completed to ensure that the new initiatives are not punitive?
- *Sustainability:* What are the implementation timelines? Does the plan have a cohesive focus that helps teachers build on knowledge and skills over a long period of time?
- *Monitoring:* How will the district determine at multiple points within a school year and across school years if the professional development is impacting instruction? How will site administrators monitor the implementation of skills learned in professional development?
- *Addressing the right needs:* How will the district collect data to determine the content needs of professional development? Data sources should include a combination of student achievement data, teacher and principal recommendations, and data from analyses of enacted curriculum as compared to written curriculum (i.e., what teachers are not teaching of the state standards).
- *Research-based content:* Initiatives sponsored by SCSD should be guided by research. They should be creating an aligned set of research based strategies that are implemented in content based classrooms.
- *Appropriate and varied methodologies:* Methodologies for professional development should consider more than just informational sessions—peer review models, coaching programs, or other job-embedded programs can be added to increase staff buy-in,

sustainability, and effectiveness. The district may consider creating communities of practice that meet (with release time or other incentives) to engage in continuous, structured meetings to assess instructional practices, analyze data, read relevant research, and share knowledge.

- *Cohesiveness*: How will the district ensure that the professional development plan cohesively serves the entire district? What policies should be in place to ensure that all schools have access to the same level of professional development activities?

DuFour, R&Eaker, R. (1998). Professional Learning Communities at work: best practices for enhancing student achievement. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.

Holloway, J. (2001). Research link: The benefits of mentoring. *Educational Leadership* 58(8), 85-86. Review of research on mentoring as a professional development strategy. The article lists the benefits of mentoring for both the new and veteran teachers.

Lewis, C. & Tsuchida, I. (1998). A Lesson is Like a Swiftly Flowing River: Research lessons and the improvement of Japanese education. *American Educator*, Winter, 14-17 & 50-52.

Taylor, B. (2004) School Wide study Groups. In EDS Improving Reading Achievement Through Professional Development. Strickland & Kamil. (Ed). Norwood: MA. Christopher Gordon Publishers.

Walpole, S. & McKenna, M. (2004) The Literacy Coaches handbook. New York: Guilford Press

Weglinsky, H. (2000). *How teaching matters: Bringing the classroom back into discussions of teacher quality*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Recommendation 5:

Develop, document, and communicate accountability for results and job roles across the District. (Problem Statements 6,10,11).

This recommendation references problem statements six, ten and eleven. While problem statement ten reflects the district's dissatisfaction with the quality of communication within the district and its relationship to the SCSD's current organizational structure, problem statement eleven addresses a specific element within that larger problem: a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities. Problem statement six addresses the need for ownership over program evaluation.

Organizational structures, with clear role descriptions and lines of communication, serve the function of providing security and consistency (Bolman & Deal, 1997). Providing a sense of order in an organization is well correlated with student achievement on school sites, primarily because teachers and other staff members feel safe enough to experiment in instruction and focus on their personal work as teachers (Waters, McNulty, & Murphy, 2003).

It is critical that all staff understand who supervises their work, what they are expected to accomplish, and what authority and resources they have at their disposal. This can be made transparent to others in the organization through the publication of written roles and the larger organizational structure.

Program evaluation is an example of an area where authority needs to be clearly defined. Through established objectives, budgeted resources, direction, and evaluation central office staff will gain a clearer picture of their appropriate roles and relationships with schools.

At the heart of this recommendation is a specific delineation of the responsibilities for results that are assigned to the central office staff and the responsibilities for results that are assigned to individual school staff. Once these roles have been established and defined, a written organizational chart depicting roles and relationships should be created and widely circulated.

In addition, written role and responsibility statements for all administrative positions, including those of administrators for personnel, fiscal services, and special revenue should be developed. Role and responsibility statements are not job descriptions, which merely describe how jobs are to be performed and what work is to be done. Instead, they delineate publicly the results for which the incumbent is responsible. Written statements serve to clarify each individual's commitment to accountability for results. SCSD under direction of the new superintendent has begun to reorganize the district.

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1997). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice and leadership* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Waters, T., Marzano, R.J., & McNulty, B. (2003). *Balanced leadership: What thirty years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning

Recommendation 6:

Establish an annual district planning cycle that addresses major district activities including enrollment, staffing, testing, monitoring, and connecting ELA improvement initiatives and efforts to the funding/budget lines. (Problem Statements 12, 13)

Findings in problem statements twelve and thirteen point to the need for a coherent district planning process. This starts with the strategic plan, and continues through to department and building based plans. While Syracuse has a strategic plan, it currently lacks the specificity and structure to direct the planning cycle. Also, the plan does not contain an explicit focus on Literacy as a priority. The strategic plan is a critical component for keeping long-range focus while implementing daily operations.

Developing and implementing a predictable cycle for planning and budgeting activities will allow stakeholders to participate fully and will help to avoid suspicion and accusations of

capriciousness about spending decisions. The establishment of a regular planning cycle will help to anticipate and clarify data needs. It is crucial that this planning cycle, especially budget development activities, provide for staff and public involvement at the district and school level.

There are several guiding principals that have been effective in planning for many districts. These include:

- Establish district priorities and create a budget that clearly aligns the allocation of funds with these priorities
- Allocate of funds between individual central offices and individual schools based on the responsibility for achieving these goals and objectives that have been assigned to each.

When data are used to establish district priorities, it follows that resources should be allocated to attain them. However, it is not enough to align spending plans with budget priorities. Those priorities must be articulated as goals and objectives, and then specifically assigned to district staff to be accomplished. Line accountability dictates that budgeted funds should be available to those with whom the responsibility for accomplishing the goals and objectives rests.

Finally, once the process is in place, the budget should be monitored, both revenues and expenditures, including timely and regularly scheduled reporting to the district's Board of Education. This transparency about revenues and expenditures is essential to both the economic and community health of the SCSD. If the district's priorities, goals, and objectives are sufficiently clear and based on data driven needs, budget monitoring can serve as an opportunity for the district to enlist the support of community stakeholders.

Appendix A: Data Map

Syracuse School District Co-interpretation Key Findings, Problem Statements and Hypotheses

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

Table 1. Problem Statements and Hypotheses

Table 1 lists each of the problem statements identified by co-interpretation participants, followed by the hypothesized root causes. The hypotheses followed by ++++ are those that received enough support to move on in the process. The column to the right of each problem statement indicates the key finding associated with each problem statement. The problem statements are divided into the audit-guiding question they answer.

**Syracuse School District
List of Co-Interpreted Findings, 12-7-05**

	PR	SA	KDD	DS	TP	PS	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3	PD	Vote
Curriculum and Instruction Group													
13. There remain obstacles in student and teacher performance. First, are the basic procedural constraints such as the timing and hiring process and availability of highly qualified candidates reflective of the student body. Second is the lack of professional development due to shortage of subs and teacher participation. (K)			4,5,7				CIP 1-7; C 1-13	Tbl 6-9,11,12	2,4,5	2	6		6
14. There is a lack of communication to and involvement of parents.					X	X							1
15. There is a concern about the lack of resources for struggling students in the area of resources (e.g., school tutoring, small group instruction, facilities, volunteers, etc.).	X					X		X					1
16. Communication between all stakeholders (BOE, Supt., Central Office, building administration, instruction and support staff, and parents) lacks clarity and consistency.									3	1-3	3		6
17. Roles, responsibilities, and organizational structure lack clarification, resulting in inefficient functioning of the district and use of resources. (L)										1,3	2-3		9
18. Data needs to be reviewed and analyzed with emphasis on the performance of subgroups. (J)	Q#3	X	7		3-4	X		11-12		3			2
19. There is a need for data to become available in a timely manner to all stakeholders so that it can be used to drive instructional decision-making. (J)	Q#3	X	7		3-4	X		11-12		3			9
20. Schools meeting AYP did not identify extraneous barriers to learning (i.e., tardiness/attendance, discipline/behavior issues). Rather, the AYP schools focused on instructional best practices, rigor, and highly challenged curriculum.			6		3	X		X					1
21. The AIS plan does not seem to be aligned with district and state standards, curricula. Nor is student placement and assessment consistent district-wide. (1)	X		5	2									1

	PR	SA	KDD	DS	TP	PS	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3	PD	Vote
22. The curriculum as written is not conducive to levels of intensity with regards to (a) specific guidelines, (b) state standards and assessments, (c) varied instruction, and (d) consistency across the district. (C)			1,4	1,2	1-2		C 1-13						7
23. District cannot support consistent and equitable use of technology.			3		4	X							4
24. The accountability perception is viewed differently by different stakeholders. Rather than working together for one purpose there is division and blaming for poor student and district performance. (No evidence)													5
25. There are too many supplemental programs with little consistency among them. There is a need for more consistent, thoughtful, and research-based approach for the selection, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and adjustment of programs across the district. (E)			4		X								6
Professional Development	PR	SA	KDD	DS	TP	PS	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3	PD	
26. Schools spend significant time preparing for tests, especially in SED testing years; however, schools meeting AYP are consistently teaching and focusing on students and knowing/demonstrating and internalizing skills rather than on practicing the tests. (O)					6	2,8	X						7
27. Inadequate and inefficient formative data system hinders/prevents informed decisions, focused data-driven instruction and professional development, and targeted academic intervention services to students leading to higher achievement. (F)				3	3-4					X			9
28. Professional development is not seen as having a district-wide focus, even though there is a PDP which includes goals. The PDP is not translated to schools, and each school acts in isolation when implementing PD. Long term planning and the establishment of a connection between student achievement and teacher practice (PD) is missing. There is no budget to	X			2	5		25-207		1-4				9

	PR	SA	KDD	DS	TP	PS	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3	PD	Vote
support PD activities (other F-budgets). (Q)													
29. The curriculum does not provide teachers with an easily implemented scientifically research-based framework to guide classroom instruction for all students. (P)			1-3, 4-6		2			Tbl 5					0
30. There is a lack of consistency of materials and instructional strategies across the district. (No evidence)													0
31. Technology does not have the support necessary to be integrated consistently into classroom instruction. (G)					4-5		12, 80, 83						9
32. The academic gaps among disaggregated groups remain the same across grade levels. (L or N- m)		1-3	7			6-9	162- 163, 85	Tbl 7-12					13
Management and Compliance/CIA	PR	SA	KDD	DS	TP	PS	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3	PD	
33. Enacted curriculum indicates coverage, but no differentiation to place emphasis on state standards topics.					5		10, 11- 13			X	1,6		5
34. Fragmented professional development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achievement data analysis has no influence on instruction • Curriculum alignment not clear or consistent • Multi-year PD is not evident 				1-5									2
35. Written curriculum documents are not user-friendly or explicit enough to the taught curriculum of rigor and relevance.			1,4,6										0
36. No evidence of systemic implementation of technology across the district.			3										0
37. Equal access/opportunity for all student (at risk/special education) needs to be provided.			3										5
38. The need to develop and implement a consistent attendance/tardy policy to encourage student achievement.			6,9- 10		3								3
39. No policies that address time out of class were present in submitted materials.			3,6, 9-10										3
40. Lack of resources across the board, but reported as more prevalent in schools not meeting AYP.						X							0
41. Students and parents not clear on the relevance of the curriculum						X							0

	PR	SA	KDD	DS	TP	PS	SEC	CO	MC1	MC2	MC3	PD	Vote
or instruction in both schools that have and have not met AYP.													
42. Accountability is lacking in schools and across the district.										2			5
43. Data analysis- district does not use data to support instructional and budget decisions. (K or M)	13								4-5	X			8
44. Levels of communication varies widely, and data suggested that collaborative and shared decision making were critical to school success. (B)					6			X	2,3				7
45. Results-based strategic plan lacks the specificity needed for a district to operationalize the objectives. (H)	11												8
46. Classroom practices are not reflecting the needs of the students as defined by the assessment data, state standards, and district curriculum. (A)							Gr. K- 12, 134						8
47. No consistency across the district on the use of multiple assessments to inform/drive instructional and support of at-risk students. (D)													6
48. Current way of doing things in reading is not making a difference, as no growth in state test scores is evident.		X											0

Key Findings

	Votes
1. There remain obstacles in student and teacher performance. First, are the basic procedural constraints such as the timing and hiring process and availability of highly qualified candidates reflective of the student body. Second is the lack of professional development due to shortage of subs and teacher participation.	6
1. Communication between all stakeholders (BOE, Supt., Central Office, building administration, instruction and support staff, and parents) lacks clarity and consistency.	6
2. Roles, responsibilities, and organizational structure lack clarification, resulting in inefficient functioning of the district and use of resources.	9
1. There is a need for data to become available in a timely manner to all stakeholders so that it can be used to drive instructional decision-making.	9
7. The curriculum as written is not conducive to levels of intensity with regards to (a) specific guidelines, (b) state standards and assessments, (c) varied instruction, and (d) consistency across the district.	7
1. There are too many supplemental programs with little consistency among them. There is a need for more consistent, thoughtful, and research-based approach for the selection, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and adjustment of programs across the district.	6
2. Schools spend significant time preparing for tests, especially in SED testing years; however, schools meeting AYP are consistently teaching and focusing on students and knowing/demonstrating and internalizing skills rather than on practicing the tests.	7
3. Inadequate and inefficient formative data system hinders/prevents informed decisions, focused data-driven instruction and professional development, and targeted academic intervention services to students leading to higher achievement.	9
4. Professional development is not seen as having a district-wide focus, even though there is a PDP which includes goals. The PDP is not translated to schools, and each school acts in isolation when implementing PD. Long term planning and the establishment of a connection between student achievement and teacher practice (PD) is missing. There is no budget to support PD activities (other F-budgets).	9
5. The curriculum does not provide teachers with an easily implemented scientifically research-based framework to guide classroom instruction for all students.	0
1. Technology does not have the support necessary to be integrated consistently into classroom instruction.	9
2. The academic gaps among disaggregated groups remain the same across grade levels.	13
11. Data analysis- district does not use data to support instructional and budget decisions.	8
1. Levels of communication varies widely, and data suggested that collaborative and shared decision making were critical to school success.	7
2. Results-based strategic plan lacks the specificity needed for a district to operationalize the objectives.	8
3. Classroom practices are not reflecting the needs of the students as defined by the assessment data, state standards, and district curriculum.	8

4. No consistency across the district on the use of multiple assessments to inform/drive instructional and support of at-risk students.	6
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Prioritized Problem Statements

	Votes	Key Findings
Are the written, taught, and tested curriculum aligned with one another and with state standards?		
Q1.1: Curriculum is not implemented consistently throughout the district.	17	10, 34
What supports exist for struggling students, and what evidence is there of the success of these opportunities?		
Q2.1: Teachers feel unprepared to meet the needs of various sub groups of struggling students, including those students with disabilities and English Language Learners.	32	7, 20
Q2.2: There is a disconnect between the teachers' beliefs that the students cannot be held to high expectations and are low achievers; and the students and parents' perceptions that the curriculum and classroom instruction is not consistent, rigorous, and challenging.	16	5, 20
Is assessment data used to determine program effectiveness and to drive instruction?		
Q3.1: The necessary data to provide decisions/information that drives instruction is unreliable and untimely. (19). F: The current data system is not usable for the decision making needs of the educational staff, families, and community. There is not enough data, and the data that is available is not useful or timely. (11) <i>(Two initial problem statements integrated)</i> .	19+11	1, 13, 15
Q3.2: There is no district-wide consistency on the use of multiple assessments, such as student work, tests, and observations, to develop and measure instruction and support for at-risk students.	19	35
Does classroom instruction maximize the use of research-based strategies?		
Q4.1: Students are not internalizing and demonstrating the skills (on a daily basis) that will enable them to be successful on assessments.	13	14
Q4.2: There is not sufficient time or evidence to determine which programs/materials are effective to support the implementation of curriculum resulting in student achievement. (10). E: There is no district process/procedure for selecting, limiting/focusing, evaluating and adjusting research based programs (4). <i>(Two initial problem statements integrated)</i> .	10+4	13, 17
Is the district PD focused on the appropriate content areas, and are there strategies in place to translate it into effective classroom practice?		
Q5.1: Professional development is determined on a school-by-school need, resulting in an inconsistent and fragmented implementation of curriculum district-wide.	20	16
Q5.2: Teachers do not have access to ongoing scientifically-based researched professional development necessary to differentiate instruction to meet the needs and close the gap of various student subgroups.	9	17
Do management and administrative structures and processes support increased student achievement?		
Q6.1: The district lacks a simple, reliable and easily accessible communication system and clear and consistent communication among all stakeholders (BOE, superintendent, district office, building administration, instruction/support staff, and students	25	4

and families.		
Q6.2: Roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined and communicated within the organization.	23	5, 32
Q6.3: Data is not used consistently to make budgetary decisions that support instruction	18	31
Is the district in compliance with local, state, and federal mandates and requirements?		
Q7.1: The strategic plan lacks clear indicators and activities to implement measurable improvement goals.	13	33
Q7.2: Current technology does not adequately address the stated mission of the district.	10	19

Hypotheses – Revised January 5, 2006 and January 12, 2006

	Key Findings
Are the written, taught, and tested curriculum aligned with one another and with state standards?	
Q1.1: C: Curriculum is not implemented consistently throughout the district.	10, 34
Q1.1: Hypotheses	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is no required, continuous, consistent professional development for using the SCSD curriculum. +++++ 2. There is no plan for curriculum implementation, monitoring and evaluation. 3. Neither building nor district staff has sufficient opportunities to collaborate. +++++ 4. Curriculum is not “user-friendly”, and there is no single district-wide curriculum map. +++++ 5. Administrators do not have the necessary professional development to support the expectation of curriculum implementation, including observation and evaluation. +++++ 	
What supports exist for struggling students, and what evidence is there of the success of these opportunities?	
Q2.1: Teachers feel unprepared to meet the needs of various sub groups of struggling students, especially students with disabilities and English Language Learners.	7, 20
Q2.1 Hypotheses:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is insufficient professional development and mentoring. +++++ 2. There is a lack of understanding of appropriate strategies to address students’ needs. +++++ 3. There is a lack of understanding how to differentiate instruction within the SCSD curriculum to meet the needs of all students. +++++ 4. There is a lack of time for professional development. +++++ 5. There are limited opportunities for teaching assistants to have professional development and support for how 	

<p>to work with special needs' students. +0++</p> <p>6. There is a lack of “in classroom” student support. +0++</p> <p>7.</p>	
<p>Q2.2: Parents and teachers do not share common perceptions about classroom rigor and that all students can learn.</p>	5, 20
<p>Q2.2 Hypotheses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a lack of understanding poverty, language, culture. +++++ 2. There is a lack of curriculum consistency across the district. +++++ 3. There is a lack of communication between parents and schools. +++++ 4. Schools are not inviting and accessible.++++ 	
<p>Is assessment data used to determine program effectiveness and to drive instruction?</p>	
<p>Q3.1: The necessary data to inform decisions that drive instruction is insufficient, unreliable and untimely.</p>	1, 13, 15
<p>Q3.1 Hypotheses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data from NYSED is not timely. -0++ 2. There is a lack of professional development on data analysis and use for all stakeholders. +++++ 3. There is no comprehensive system for utilizing data to improve student achievement. +++++ 4. The SCSD current system is not “user-friendly”, so that information/reports can be easily accessed. +++++ 5. The existing technical support in the system does not meet the needs of stakeholders adequately. +0++ 6. There is a lack of item/task analysis information from existing data. +0+0 	
<p>Q3.2: There is no district-wide system using multiple assessments (student work, tests, and observations) to identify student needs, inform student instruction and make programmatic decisions.</p>	35
<p>Q3.2 Hypotheses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are no established procedures, follow up, timely data, communication, and collaboration. +++++ 2. A difference exists between the availability and type of assessments in Reading First Schools, Success for All, Read 180, etc. and remaining schools. +++++ 3. There are insufficient funds (city, state, grants) and resources to effectively implement a district-wide plan. - 	

<p>+++</p> <p>4. We do not use student work on a regular basis to inform instruction. +0++</p> <p>5. There is a perception that data to inform instruction must come from somewhere else. 0+++</p>	
<p>Does classroom instruction maximize the use of research-based strategies?</p>	
<p>Q4.1: Classroom instruction does not result in all students internalizing and demonstrating the literacy skills (on a daily basis) that will enable them to be successful on assessments.</p>	14
<p>Q4.1 Hypotheses</p> <p>19. Students are not being explicitly taught the literacy skills. +++++</p> <p>20. Students are not prepared to enter school. 0+++</p> <p>21. All students are not prepared with the necessary literacy skills for instruction at their grade level. +++++</p> <p>22. All teachers are not prepared to instruct identified literacy skills. +++++</p> <p>23. Literacy skills are not clearly identified. +++++</p> <p>24. There is a lack of intervention programs. +++++</p> <p>25. There is limited support staff.++++</p> <p>26. Teachers are not using data from assessments to inform instruction. +++++</p> <p>27. There is too much emphasis on covering material rather than on student mastery of skills. +++++</p> <p>28. Instruction is not differentiated to meet individual needs. +++++</p> <p>29. There is too much emphasis on assessments instead of student learning. +++++</p> <p>30. State assessments do not provide information that can be used to differentiate instruction.</p> <p>31. The district has not clearly defined effective research-based literacy strategies, especially at the middle school and high school. +++++</p> <p>32. Teachers are not using student work to affect instruction/outcomes: +++++</p> <p>33. Students are not provided sufficient opportunity to practice skills. +++++</p>	
<p>Q4.2: There is no district process/procedure for selecting, limiting/focusing, evaluating and adjusting research-based programs</p>	13, 17
<p>Q4.2 Hypotheses</p> <p>0. Research-based programs are not evaluated prior to consideration for implementation. +++++</p> <p>1. No procedures are in place to assess current programs to determine if they are working per expectations. +++++</p>	

<p>Is the district PD focused on the appropriate content areas, and are there strategies in place to translate it into effective classroom practice?</p>	
<p>Q5.1: There is not an agreed upon and expected set of effective literacy practices for professional development.</p>	<p>16</p>
<p>Q5.1 Hypotheses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. There is a lack of district expectation, process, procedures. ++++ 4. Different funding sources and amounts exist at each school. 0+++ 5. It is difficult for buildings to balance district and building professional development needs. ++++ 6. There is a lack of a clearly articulated professional development plan for literacy. ++++ 7. Accountability for implementation of Professional Development is lacking. ++++ 8. Effective building professional development is dependent on administrator leadership. ++++ 9. District identified programs/professional development does not have continued district resources to be sustained over time.++++ 10. There is a lack of structured time to delve into research, data analysis, professional discussions. 0+++ 	
<p>Q5.2: Teachers do not have access to ongoing professional development on scientifically- based strategies necessary to differentiate instruction to meet the needs and close the gap of various student subgroups.</p>	<p>17</p>
<p>Q5.2 Hypotheses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a lack of specialized professional development to meet the needs of teachers in supporting sub-group populations. ++++ 2. Conflicts exist about responsibilities for ELL and special education students. ++++ 3. There is no district-wide plan for professional development with funding to support it. ++++ 4. There is resistance of some staff to change/implement new instructional method. ++++ 5. Some staff believe that some subgroups of students cannot meet the standards. ++++ 6. Some teachers do not believe that they should differentiate instruction. ++++ 7. Some teachers will not differentiate instruction because they are afraid they will lose control of behavior in the classroom. ++++ 8. Some administrators do not know how to support teachers through the change process.++++ 9. Teachers lack materials to differentiate instruction. +--+ 10. The district has not identified a system-wide professional development plan to help teachers become proficient 	

<p>in differentiated instruction. +++++</p> <p>11. There is a lack of a reliable scientifically-research based instrument to identify student subgroup needs. +++++</p> <p>12. There is a lack of understanding and a lack of solid research about effective instructional practices for ELL students. +++++</p>	
Do management and administrative structures and processes support increased student achievement?	
Q6.1: The district lacks a simple, reliable and easily accessible communication system among all stakeholders (BOE, superintendent, district office, building administration, instruction/support staff, and students and families).	4
<p>Q6.1 Hypotheses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication through technology is not effective, reliable, or accessible. +++++ 2. The web page needs to be updated with current, important key information. +0++ 3. Email is not working most of the time. +++++ 	
Q6.2: Roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined and communicated within the organization.	5, 32
<p>Q6.2 Hypotheses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizational flow (chart) does not support clear communication. +++++ 2. There is a lack of consistent organizational structure. +0+- 2. There are some roles and responsibilities that are not clearly defined. +++++ 3. There is a perception that the organizational structure does not promote unity of purpose. +++++ 4. Changes have occurred with leadership. -0++ 5. There is a lack of planning for succession training for those who retire/leave. +++++ 6. Many responsibilities are split among several people, each having vested role. +0+- 7. The district's culture needs to be more team-oriented. +++++ 8. Staff need to feel safe and supported. +++++ 	
Q6.3: Data is not used consistently to make budgetary decisions that support instruction.	31
<p>Q6.3 Hypotheses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a lack of timeliness of state budget vs. assessment results. 0+++ 2. There is a lack of understanding of the budget development process. ++0+ 3. Legal and contract language affect allocation of funds to instruction. +++++ 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. There is a lack of long-term budgetary planning. (three- to five-year plan) +++++ 5. There is a lack of communication between budget staff and stakeholders.++++ 6. There is a lack of evidence that stakeholder input was taken into consideration for budgetary decisions. +++++ 	
Is the district in compliance with local, state, and federal mandates and requirements?	
Q7.1: The strategic plan lacks clear indicators and activities to implement measurable achievement goals in ELA.	33
<p>Q7.1 Hypotheses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People are not aware of the strategic plan. +++++ 2. Key stakeholders are not consistently involved in the planning process. +++++ 3. There is a lack of professional development regarding for results-based planning. +++++ 4. The strategic plan is incomplete. +++++ 5. A monitoring and accountability system for implementation is lacking. +++++ 6. The plan design is complicated and is not user friendly for all stakeholders. +++++ 7. Too much time is spent on process and not content. +++++ 	
Q7.2: Current technology does not adequately address the stated mission of the district.	19
<p>Q7.2 Hypotheses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is not an adequate technology budget to support maintenance, hardware, software, professional development and personnel. +++++ 2. There is a lack of efficient use of existing technology resources. +++++ 3. The district lacks a comprehensive, coordinated technology plan. +++++ 4. Technology staff do not always receive professional development related to their job responsibilities. +++++ 5. Professional development is insufficient for staff to integrate technology into instruction. +++++ 	

Appendix B: Action Planning

Action Planning Process Overview

Syracuse followed closely the action planning process recommended by Learning Point Associates. A brief description of the steps taken, along with the agreed upon goals and strategies are included here. Submission of the completed action plan is the responsibility of the district.

Goal and Strategy Planning

After the review of the interim report, the Strategy Planning meeting was the preliminary step within the Audit Action Planning Process. On February 7th, Learning Point Associates facilitated a group of 41 teachers and administrators from across the district in review and reflection of the recommendations for the district as written in the interim report; and to set goals, strategies and success indicators. Learning Point Associates provided templates for this process. The staff worked in small groups to develop three draft goals and associated strategies. Learning Point Associates' staff worked with a smaller group of administrators afterwards through emails and phone calls to refine the goals and strategies, and to ensure alignment of these strategies with the recommendations in the interim report. The goals and strategies were solidified in March. The same process was used to develop the indicators of success. They were completed in late April.

Action and Task Planning

Learning Point Associates facilitated a two-day meeting on May 15-16 to assist the district in completing action planning. The district identified action items and began the process of developing task descriptions during the two days. Learning Point Associates provided feedback on the actions and task descriptions.

Integration and Alignment Actions

This step discussion encourages articulation and collaboration of action steps across areas of concentration. Plans for each of the goals were reviewed across groups to identify areas of overlap, commonality, and difference with regards to their action steps and timelines. Learning Point Associates provided feedback to SCSD through emails. A small group of administrators at the school district will work to integrate and align actions.

Integration and Alignment of Audit Action Plan with Other District Plans and/or to School Plans as Needed

The final component of the Action Planning process involves the integration and alignment of the audit action plan with other district and school plans. Syracuse will embark on this process once the actions are approved.

Action Planning for English Language Arts

Goal #1: By the end of the 2008-2009 school year, the SCSD instructional staff will be accountable for the consistent implementation of a cohesive, research-based ELA curriculum PK-12.

. (Use District AYP Targets)

GOAL 1 STRATEGY A	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS			EVIDENCE TO VERIFY PROGRESS TOWARD STRATEGIES
	2006-2007 SY	2007-2008 SY	2008-2009 SY	
By the end of the 2006-2007 school year, the Syracuse City School District will adopt, implement, and monitor an aligned and mapped PK-12 ELA curriculum.	By the end of the 2006-2007 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have disseminated a revised PK-12 ELA curriculum, which includes instructional strategies and performance indicators for differentiated instruction.	By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, all ELA teachers will have implemented the revised PK-12 ELA curriculum.	By the end of the 2008-2009 school year, after effectively implementing and monitoring the revised PK-12 ELA curriculum, there will be an increase in student achievement from the 2005-2006 baselines at each divisional level.	

GOAL 1 STRATEGY B	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS			EVIDENCE TO VERIFY PROGRESS TOWARD STRATEGIES
	2006-2007 SY	2007-2008 SY	2008-2009 SY	
B. By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, the Syracuse City School District will implement a formative ELA assessment system aligned with the PK-12 ELA curriculum.	By the end of the 2006-2007 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have defined, identified, and adopted an ELA formative assessment system aligned with the PK-12 ELA curriculum.	By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have implemented an ELA formative assessment system in all buildings to provide information needed to drive instruction.	By the end of the 2008-2009 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have increased ELA achievement from the 2005-2006 baseline by: Elementary TBD Middle TBD High School TBD	

GOAL 1 STRATEGY C	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS			EVIDENCE TO VERIFY PROGRESS TOWARD STRATEGIES
	2006-2007 SY	2007-2008 SY	2008-2009 SY	
By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have a cycle of professional development for administrators, teachers, and support staff responsible for the implementation of the PK-12 ELA curriculum	By the end of the 2006-2007 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have developed a plan, calendar, and funding needed to provide professional development to all administrators, teachers and support staff responsible for the implementation of the newly revised PK-12 ELA curriculum and the use of the ELA formative assessment system.	By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have implemented the professional development for the ELA curriculum and formative assessment system.	By the end of the 2008-2009 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have implemented follow-up professional development for the ELA curriculum and formative assessment system.	

Goal #2: By the end of the 2008-2009 school year, the Syracuse City School District will meet New York State AMO targets in ELA for all disaggregate groups of students.

GOAL 2 STRATEGY A	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS			EVIDENCE TO VERIFY PROGRESS TOWARD STRATEGIES
	2006-2007 SY	2007-2008 SY	2008-2009 SY	
By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, the Syracuse City School District will implement the cohesive research-based PK-12 ELA curriculum to meet the differentiated needs of English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities.	By the end of the 2006-2007 school year, the SCSD will have identified and adopted a cohesive research-based PK-12 ELA curriculum, including technology, that meets the differentiated needs of ELL and SWD.	By the end of the 2007-2008 school year the Syracuse City School District will have increased by 50% the number of ELL and SWD meeting proficiency on state ELA assessments.	By the end of the 2008-2009 school year the Syracuse City School District will have increased by 50% the number of ELL and SWD meeting proficiency on state ELA assessments.	

GOAL 2 STRATEGY B	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS			EVIDENCE TO VERIFY PROGRESS TOWARD STRATEGIES
	2006-2007 SY	2007-2008 SY	2008-2009 SY	
By the end of the 2007-2008 school year the Syracuse City School District will provide required supplemental /intervention ELA instructional materials, including technology	By the end of the 2006-2007 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have identified and adopted intervention/supplemental ELA instructional materials, including technology.	By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, teachers and administrators will have implemented the required and supplemental ELA materials including technology.	By the end of the 2008-2009 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have increased by 50% the number of ELL and SWD meeting proficiency on state ELA assessments.	

GOAL 2 STRATEGY C	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS			EVIDENCE TO VERIFY PROGRESS TOWARD STRATEGIES
	2006-2007 SY	2007-2008 SY	2008-2009 SY	
By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have a cycle of professional development for administrators, teachers and support staff responsible for the delivery of the ELA curriculum to ensure the effective implementation of research-based practices in differentiating ELA instruction.	By the end of the 2006-2007 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have developed a plan, calendar, and funding needed to provide professional development to all administrators, teachers and support staff responsible for the implementation of the research-based practices in differentiating ELA instruction.	By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have implemented professional development to all administrators, teachers, and support staff responsible for the implementation of research-based differentiated ELA instructional practices.	By the end of the 2008-2009 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have implemented follow-up professional development to all administrators, teachers, and support staff responsible for the implementation of research-based differentiated ELA instructional practices.	

Goal #3: By the end of the 2008-2009 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have a system that demonstrates accountability for school and district ELA performance.

GOAL 3 STRATEGY A	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS			EVIDENCE TO VERIFY PROGRESS TOWARD STRATEGIES
	2006-2007 SY	2007-2008 SY	2008-2009 SY	
By the end of the 2006-2007 school year, the roles and responsibilities of the SCSD administrators and school staff will be defined with regard to ELA student achievement.	By the end of the 2006-2007 school year a copy of roles and responsibilities of administrators and teachers with regard to ELA student achievement will be distributed to all staff.	By the end of the 2007-2008 school year the SCSD administrators and school staff will have developed a plan and timeline regarding roles and responsibilities to support ELA achievement.	By the end of the 2008-2009 school year the accountability system for ELA performance, including the roles and responsibilities of administrators and staff, will have been operationalized across the district at all instructional levels.	

GOAL 3 STRATEGY B	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS			EVIDENCE TO VERIFY PROGRESS TOWARD STRATEGIES
	2006-2007 SY	2007-2008 SY	2008-2009 SY	
By the end of the 2006-2007 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have an evaluation, assessment and planning department that will provide effective information for ELA accountability at the student, staff, and school and district level.	By the end of the 2006-2007 school year, Syracuse City School District will have a restructured Evaluation, Assessment, and Planning department that is fully funded and staffed, which will be producing and disseminating regular and timely reports regarding ELA accountability performance at the school and district levels.	By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, each school will have received regular and timely information on ELA student achievement to be integrated with continuous school improvement planning.	By the end of the 2008-2009 school year, all disaggregated groups will show increased student achievement on ELA assessments.	

GOAL 3 STRATEGY C	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS			EVIDENCE TO VERIFY PROGRESS TOWARD STRATEGIES
	2006-2007 SY	2007-2008 SY	2008-2009 SY	
By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, the Syracuse City School District will fully implement a multi-year planning cycle connecting goals, strategies, assessments, and funding.	By the end of the 2006-2007 school year, the SCSD will have developed a clearly articulated, multi-year planning cycle that will connect district goals, strategies, assessments, and funding.	By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have implemented a multi-year planning cycle for goals, strategies and funding.	By the end of the 2008-2009 school year, the multi-year planning cycle connecting district goals, strategies, assessments, and funding will have been linked to increased ELA performance.	

GOAL 3 STRATEGY D	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS			EVIDENCE TO VERIFY PROGRESS TOWARD STRATEGIES
	2006-2007 SY	2007-2008 SY	2008-2009 SY	
By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have a cycle of Professional Development for administrators, teachers, and appropriate school staff to assist staff in the effective use of accountability data.	By the end of the 2006-2007 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have developed a plan, calendar, and funding needed to provide professional development for all administrators, teachers and appropriate school staff in the use of accountability data.	By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have implemented professional development for all administrators, teachers, and support staff responsible for the effective use of accountability data.	By the end of the 2008-2009 school year, the Syracuse City School District will have implemented follow-up professional development for all administrators, teachers, and support staff responsible for the effective use of accountability data.	
			By the end of the 2008-2009 school year, all schools will have used accountability data to identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement in relation to ELA performance.	