ACHIEVEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS

Task Force on Achievement and Professional Development

2025-2026

Task Force Goals

To assist urban public school systems in teaching high academic standards and social emotional learning competencies in service to closing identifiable gaps in the achievement of students by race.

To improve the quality of professional development for teachers and principals in urban public education in service to (1) closing identifiable gaps in achievement of students by race and (2) retaining and developing highly skilled educators.

To improve the recruitment and retention of highly skilled urban school instructional staff (paraprofessionals, teachers, principals) who have the greatest influence on student achievement.

Task Force Chair

Joe Gothard, Madison Superintendent

Task Force Members

Sabrina Bazzo, San Diego School Board
Deanna Kaplan, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School Board
Deborah Shanley, Brooklyn College

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Academics Overview
July 2025

Overall Academic Goals, Priorities, and Progress

The goal of the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) academic team is to support the work of urban educators to improve student achievement for all students in our member districts. The team collaborates with expert researchers, as well as national, state, territory, and local practitioners to determine district systems and resources correlated with improved student achievement. These results inform recommendations to instructional leaders for implementation. The academic team's work focuses on Technical Support & Assistance, Professional Learning, Cross-Collaboration, Annual Conferences, Task Force Convenings, and Strategic Support Team Visits.

Academic Team Organization, Role-alike Groups, & Contacts

The Academic Team organization around a service model that enables us to work collaboratively and cohesively in support of our member districts has been successful. Below is a chart of responsibilities under the Chief of Schools, Chief of Academics, and Chief of Curriculum. Of particular importance, the Academic Team is making a concerted effort to increase liaising between other role-alike groups within the organization, modeling improved coherence, and reducing working in silos.

Chief of Schools Robin Hall – rhall@cgcs.org	Chief of Academics Nicole Mancini – nmancini@cgcs.org	Chief of Curriculum Denise Walston – dwalston@cgcs.org
Chief of Schools	Chief Academic Officers	Math
Principal Supervisors	Special Education	Science
ELA/Literacy	Early Learning	History/Social Science
Black and Latina Young Women and Girls Task Force	Social Emotional Learning (SEL)/Mental Health/ Restorative Practices (including trauma-informed practice)	Gates & Hewlett Grants Lead
	Academics Canvas Lead	Equity Lead
Liaison to: English Learners	**Liaison to:** Management Services (CIOs, Procurement)	**Liaison to:** Research
Achievement Gaps and Professional Development Taskforce		
Muti-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)		
Professional Learning		

The Academic Team continues to share high-leverage information through publications and videos, provide virtual support and webinars, on-site strategic support team visits, facilitate role-alike monthly virtual meetings, and job-alike conferences to encourage networking and collaboration among our members. We have expanded our collaboration with other national organizations and field experts in support of raising student achievement for all learners in our member districts including:
- Student Achievement Partners (SAP)
- Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
- National Academy of Education (NAEd)
- Institute of Educational Sciences (IES)

- National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB)
- College Board
- Leading Educators
- Center for Education Market Dynamics (CEMD)
- National P-3 Center
- Rivet Education
- Center for Outcomes-Based Contracting
- Hewlett Foundation
- Gates Foundation
- Whiteboard Advisors
- Wallace Foundation
- The Hill for Literacy

Monthly, bi-monthly, and quarterly role-alike meetings are focused on supporting districts as they continue to work on systems and structures for improving student learning and achievement. These efforts include strengthening Tier 1 instruction by addressing unfinished learning, and planning Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction that enables students to access Tier 1 grade-level content. Guidance and support are also offered in attending to the social, emotional, and well-being of staff and students, and developing and implementing high-quality curriculum and instructional materials. The role-alike meetings also create more opportunities for cross-collaboration among district leadership across our membership to plan and implement coherent streams of support to schools.

Technical Assistance and Support

The CGCS academic team provides on-site and virtual technical assistance for district curriculum leaders and their teams throughout their curriculum development and implementation process. We customize our work for individual districts in determining implications for teaching and learning, curriculum development and refinement, implementation, and raising student achievement. Such technical assistance is available to member districts upon request. For example, the academic team is serving as a critical friend to the instructional team from the School District of Philadelphia by providing technical assistance on their updates and revisions to the district curriculum guidance for history/social science and science based on changes in their state standards. The academic team also facilitates and compiles instructional inquiries for member districts and distributes them to any requesting district.

Professional Learning

The Council of the Great City Schools continues to host and expand role-alike virtual meetings for member districts to provide a safe space to share effective practices, common challenges, and solutions for issues that impact the safety, wellbeing, and success of staff and students. If you would like more information about a role-alike meeting, please use the contact list referenced above.

Role-alike Virtual Meetings & Instructional Spotlights

Monthly, Bi-Monthly, and Quarterly Meetings	
Chief Academic Officers (CAO) - Meet jointly with Chiefs of Schools	**Chief of Schools (COS) - Meet jointly with Chief Academic Officers**
Provide support with adapting curriculum guidance for	Provide opportunities to share approaches and practices for

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teachers using essential instructional content, acceleration versus remediation, addressing unfinished learning by building on student assets, developing coherence between Tier 1, 2, and 3 instruction and supporting the needs of diverse learners including English language learners and students with disabilities. Focus on implementing systems and structures to ensure coherence across the district and sharing best practices. This role-alike meeting has expanded to include district highlights demonstrating intentional collaborations between the Chief Academic Officer and Chief of Schools to build a shared understanding of the curriculum, instructional materials, formative vs. benchmark assessments, and teaching and learning expectations that should be observed in the classroom across the PK-12 grade levels to accelerate school improvement.

March 2025 - Topics included:
- Supporting Excellence Curriculum Quality Rubric, Second Edition
- Literacy Position Statement
- Group Networking and Collaboration
    - o What's on Your Mind?
    - o Common challenges currently in our districts
    - o How will we help each other through these next few months?
- July Conference and Award Reminders

May 2025 - Topics included:
1. College Board (CB) facilitated this session to meet CGCS member district needs to receive AP data at the district level as well as the comparison points.
2. CB shared the 2024 graduating class cohort data.
3. CB provided information on how districts can access their data and inform what data points are available.
4. Discussed and encouraged use of CB representatives to pull and customize data to better meet district needs.
5. Reviewed PL opportunities available and benefits to districts:
    a. AP PL grant
    b. Pre-AP incentive
    c. Engage in conversation on what type of training will be beneficial to district leaders.

Meets bi-monthly on the second Wednesday at 3 pm ET on TEAMS.

providing support to principal supervisors in various stages of leadership development. Share process for formalizing expectations, priorities for school improvement that include quality of instruction, culture and climate, and student outcomes. Highlight districts that demonstrate intentional collaboration between the Chief of Schools and the Chief Academic Officer to build a shared understanding of the curriculum, instructional materials, formative vs. benchmark assessments, and teaching and learning expectations that should be observed in the classroom across the PK-12 grade levels to accelerate school improvement.

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- Literacy Position Statement
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    a. AP PL grant
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    c. Engage in conversation on what type of training will be beneficial to district leaders.

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Special Education (SPED) Instructional Leaders	**Principal Supervisors (Meet Quarterly)**
Sharing best practices in special education programming, assessment, instruction, accountability, and external partnerships. This includes addressing the supports and scaffolds needed so students can access grade-level learning in the least restrictive environment. Discussing legislation and current compliance topics impacting the effective provision of services. This year, K-12 SPED Instructional Leaders have been encouraged to attend the ELA, Math, Science, and History/Social Science Meetings to ensure the needs of students with disabilities are met within the context of the least restrictive environment. • **Science** – 2nd Tuesday of each month @ 4:00 pm ET. • **Mathematics** – 2nd Thursday of each month @4:00pm ET • **History/Social Science** – 3rd Tuesday of each month @ 4:00 pm ET. • **English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy** – 3rd Thursday of each month @ 4:15 pm ET. **PK SPED Leaders** are encouraged to attend the **Early Learning Leaders** meetings. Special Education Leaders were invited to the Legislative Updates Meeting on **January 8, 2025** - Topics included: • CGCS Academics Updates • Lessons learned and funding issues based on executive orders and changes at the national level • Legislative and legal updates from the Legislative Team, General Counsel, and English Learner Policy Director **PK-12 SPED Compliance Leaders** continue to meet with SPED Legal Counsel on the first Tuesday of each month. Recent topics included OCR reviews, Title IX regulations, Private Schools and Students with Disabilities, Public Meetings and Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities, Increases in ADA Cases after Sturgis, and Emergency Teacher Certifications.	Sharing effective practices for supporting principals as instructional leaders, strengthening collaborations, and leveraging assistance from the department of teaching and learning, designing principal pipeline programs, recruiting and retaining teachers and principals of color, helping principals support teachers in addressing unfinished learning by building on student assets, and investigating and bolstering programs/offerings showing promising results. **April 2025** - Topics included: • Networking • Discussing current challenges districts are facing • Supporting current and upcoming work **Meets quarterly at 3 pm ET.**
Equity Leaders Provide ongoing opportunities for districts leaders to co-learn and deepen their shared understanding on critical topics and issues related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging that impact students on the margins and those who are historically underserved. Additionally, district leaders will share best practices, relevant	**Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Mental Health (MH), and Restorative Practice (RP) Leaders** Provide ongoing opportunities for districts leaders to co-learn and deepen their shared understanding on critical topics and issues related to Social Emotional Learning, Mental Health and Restorative Justice by sharing best practices, strategies, and relevant resources.

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resources, and processes for actively collaborating with senior leadership to dismantle inequitable practices and structures.

January - February 2025 - Topics included:
- CGCS Academics Updates
- Interrogating motives, mindset, and methods
- Legislative and legal updates from the Legislative Team, General Counsel, and English Learner Policy Director
- Work of Equity Leaders even with executive orders and changes at the national level

Meets quarterly on the first Thursday at 2:00 pm ET.
Meeting Schedule:
- March 13, 2025
- May 1, 2025

*Legislative and Legal updates – invited to attend the meeting with CAOs and Chief of Schools in January

March 2025 – Topics included:
- CGCS Academics Updates
- Group Networking and Collaboration
  - What's on your mind?
  - Networking on common challenges currently in our districts.
  - How will we help each other through these next few months?
- July Conference and Award Reminders

May 2025 – Topics included:
- Networking
- Discussing current challenges districts are facing
- Supporting current and upcoming work

Meets bi-monthly on the second Wednesday at 2 pm ET on TEAMS.

English Language Arts & Literacy District Leaders

Provide ongoing opportunities to share strategic and systemic approaches to meet and exceed today's teaching and learning expectations in English Language Arts and Literacy. This includes applying the research on the science of reading to improve instructional practices in literacy within a comprehensive English Language Arts Program. Facilitate discussions and share best practices for developing district curriculum guidance that illustrate the key features of a high-quality curriculum provided in the *Second Edition of the Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework* and working collaboratively across districts to effectively address problems of practice. This group continues to discuss practices for intentionally addressing early readings and the teaching of reading to older learners, as well as explicit text-based writing instruction.

Meets monthly on the third Thursday at 4:15 pm ET.

Mathematics District Leaders

Provide ongoing opportunities for districts to embrace the systemic change required for both teaching and student learning to meet and exceed today's expectations in mathematics. During the first part of SY 24-25, this included creating a powerful vision of mathematics teaching, student learning, and student outcomes that further operationalizes the districts' vision. Beginning in February, participants will discuss the research and hear from state-level experts around designing equitable high school mathematics pathways. The remaining monthly sessions will center on high school pathways. A white paper will be developed based on lessons learned about designing strong high school mathematics pathways.

Meets monthly on the second Thursday at 4:00 pm ET.

Science District Leaders

Provide ongoing opportunities for districts to collaborate on increasing opportunities to learn, overhauling the work in science to create equitable structures and practices so all students engage, learn, and experience the joy and wonder of science to advance excellence. This will include criteria for high-quality instructional units for science, STEAM careers, the interdependence of language and science, and integrating engineering design into science. Additionally, this group will delve deeply

History/Social Science District Leaders

Provide ongoing opportunities for districts to collaborate and build a strong history and social science program as a window and sliding door into our world, foster civic engagement and discourse, understand the past, make connections to the present, and consider implications for the future. Meetings include noted university historians bringing varied perspectives on key topics. Additionally, our monthly meetings address how to support teachers in engaging students in reading a variety of historical texts, examining and applying primary sources, interrogating,

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into engagement in science for students and families after school and during the summer. **Meets monthly on the second Tuesday at 4:00 pm ET.**	and evaluating online information that affects them, their communities, and the world. **Meets monthly on the third Tuesday at 4:00 pm ET.**

<u>Early Learning Leaders</u>
 	
Provide ongoing opportunities for districts to collaborate on increasing opportunities to learn about systemic changes occurring in urban school districts required in the early learning years to ensure our youngest students are Kindergarten ready across all developmental domains. This includes designing equitable structures and practices both internally and externally, developing district curriculum guidance, leveraging high-quality instructional materials and professional learning, working collaboratively to effectively implement developmentally appropriate practices to support teachers and optimize student learning across all developmental domains.
 	
March 2025 - Topics included:
• CGCS Academics Updates
• Guest Speaker: Nell Duke
• Literacy Position Statement
• Group Networking and Collaboration
   o What's on Your Mind?
   o Common challenges currently in our districts
   o How will we help each other through these next few months?
• July Conference and Award Reminders
 	
May 2025 - Topics included:
• Networking
• Discussing current challenges districts are facing
• Supporting current and upcoming work
 	
Meets bi-monthly on the second Wednesday at 1 pm ET on TEAMS.
	<u>Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Workgroup</u>
	
	The MTSS workgroup will review current CGCS documents and develop supports, resources, and guidance for member districts that include:
	• Strategies for Instructional and Systemic Coherence
	• Equity in District and School Level Decision Making Across Content and Behavioral Areas
	• System Levers (District/ School/Classroom)
	• Designing Tier 2 and Tier 3 Instruction/Interventions in Service of High-Quality Tier I Instruction
	• Data Analysis to Drive District Strategy and Effective Decision-Making
	• Addressing Disproportionality
	• Effective Student Support School Teams
	• Attendance and Family/Community Engagement
	• Planning for Tiered Professional Learning
	• Examples of Successful MTSS Guidance
	
	April 2025 - Topics included:
	• Literacy Position Statement
	• Curriculum Quality Rubric
	• CGCS & District Guidance Documents Uploaded
	• District Implementation of MTSS, including academic and positive behavior intervention and supports
	• Organizational structure for supporting MTSS, universal screening, progress monitoring, problem-solving, data collection and review, data reports, procedures, and training
	• Next Steps: MTSS Resource Compilation, Review, and Development of CGCS MTSS Guidance
	• July Conference and Award Reminders
	
	Meets quarterly at 2 pm ET on TEAMS.

Science Units

The Council team continues to collaborate with OpenSciEd to provide regular updates and feedback on implementation of their high school science units and during the development of elementary units. OpenSciEd is a project led by ten states and funded by four foundations committed to improving the supply of high-quality science curriculum aligned to new college and career ready standards. OpenSciEd provides the units free of charge and offers professional development for a fee. The high school level units are designed to address equity gaps in science by reorienting classrooms to be driven by phenomena while cultivating student interest and curiosity. Presently, OpenSciEd is developing elementary science units that several member districts are piloting and providing feedback.

In addition, the academic team collaborated with the **C**ollaborative **R**esearch in **E**ducation, **A**ssessment and **T**eaching **E**nvironments for **STEM** (CREATE for STEM), at Michigan State University, to provide district science directors experiences with project-based learning materials designed to meet Next Generation Science

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Standards (NGSS). These units, developed by writers of NGSS, applicable for high school chemistry and physics, are learner-centered, knowledge-centered, and assessment centered. CREATE for STEM worked with the group and shared units that could be used in programs for increasing family engagement, after school, and during the summer.

Summit on Data Science, Data Literacy, and Artificial Intelligence

The Council, in collaboration with Data Science 4 Everyone, University of Chicago, with philanthropic support from the Gates and Valhalla Foundation, held an inaugural national conference on Data Science and Literacy, February 17-19, 2025, Hyatt Regency San Antonio Riverwalk.

This national conference became a wide community-driven effort and engaged several education associations throughout the K-12 sector. The conference became a cross-subject convening space (math, science, social studies, computer science, etc.), that allowed for productive conversations on how to teach students about data science and literacy along with the use of data-driven technologies (such as AI) in a thoughtful, intentional, and equitable way, centering equity in both approach and the ultimate student experience.

Additional details included:
- Partnering with the first majority-Hispanic institution to launch a dedicated data science school in higher-education (UT San Antonio),
- Engaging more than 300 attendees, including district leaders, state mathematics and science leaders, education researchers, K-12 educators, and state education policymakers,
- Facilitating cross-sector conversations, including "flipped sessions" in which district leaders or classroom teachers shared their needs and experiences with researchers and curriculum vendors.

Canvas Modules

The *Supporting Excellence Framework, Edition 2* course modules are in draft form. They will be vetted and reviewed next. Academics continues to work with Management Services to create design standards for CGCS Canvas Courses and provide consistency for members participating in various courses within the same platform.

CGCS Literacy Position Statement Paper

The Academics Team finalized a draft CGCS Position Statement paper on Literacy. David Lai, Nell Duke, and other experts in the field have or are in the process of providing feedback to the first draft. The Academics Team is reviewing and incorporating recommendations from the feedback.

Cross-Collaboration

The academic team embraces cross-collaboration internally and externally as referenced below:
- Attended the workshop ***Data is Power: Youth Researcher Perspectives in Critically Navigating an Increasingly AI-Driven World*** (one of many CRAFT sessions at ACM Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency (FAccT) 2025) facilitated by Evan Shieh from Young Data Scientists. This interactive workshop brought together students, educators, researchers, and industry members to reimagine AI justice that centers on diverse youth through engagement with the world's largest AI ethics community.
- Participated in the CGCS CIO conference in Chicago, June 10-12, 2025. Discussed strategies and opportunities to bridge Academics with Technology Leaders for the 25-26 school year.
- Met with *ExcelinEd* to discuss potential grant collaboration with the 7 CGCS Florida Member Districts.

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- Attended **AIM's 13th Annual Research to Practice Symposium** on *Implementation Science and Systems Change for Literacy Improvement*. Information will be shared with Academic Leaders as part of the role-alike meetings in 2025-2026.
- Met with the *Hill for Literacy* to discuss potential professional learning collaboration efforts to benefit all member districts.
- Attended the MTSS Mini-Summit expert-led virtual learning focused on one of today's most urgent challenges in education: supporting students with intensive behavioral needs. The summit explored behavioral screening and tiered supports, strategies to determine the function of behavior, effective de-escalation practices, and real-world approaches to Tier 3 interventions and wraparound services. Information will be utilized with the MTSS Leaders in the 25-26 school year.
- Attended ***Empowering Learners for the Age of AI: Draft AI Literacy Framework Launch*** addressing AI increasingly impacting our society, how we work and learn, and many other aspects of our lives. As education prepares students to succeed and contribute to the world, we must answer the question: Do our young people have the skills that matter in the AI age? To address this question, the European Commission and OECD have joined forces to develop an AI Literacy framework for primary and secondary education. Its development is supported by Code.org and leading international experts. The framework outlines the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to interact with AI technologies. It features competencies that educators can integrate across school subjects, introducing AI literacy into everyday classroom practice. The framework will be finalized in early 2026 after extensive stakeholder consultations. This initiative also contributes to the innovative domain of the PISA 2029 Media and AI Literacy assessment, aligning with the EU's long-term goals to promote quality and inclusive digital education and skills and the objectives of the Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027.
- Attended The Reading League Summit in Chicago, IL to learn about the most recent developments in literacy development.

- Disseminated information to all role-alike groups as information is released from the federal level.
- Collaborated with IES, selected speakers, and the planning committee to develop a proceedings paper about the Mathematics Summit in 2023. The proceedings paper included considerations for improving mathematics teaching and student learning.
- Continued collaborations with Student Achievement Partners on assessing their *Essential x Equitable (e²) Instructional Practice Framework: Toward a vision for high-quality instruction* in English Language Arts and Mathematics.
- Collaborated with external strategic partners to support urban districts with standards implementation and sunsetting of ESSER funds.
- Provided technical support to districts by reviewing and providing feedback on their curriculum guidance using the Council's resource *Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum*.
- Collaborated with leading mathematics, science, history/social science, and literacy organizations to surface and share perspectives from policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders on emerging issues and trends in teaching and student learning.
- Created and disseminated a *Mathematics Area of Interest Survey* to transition the mathematics role-alike group to work-groups where a small group of district directors can engage in deep learning around a problem of practice or initiative to receive continuous feedback and support on implementation.
- Continued to meet and attend convenings with Gates Foundation, Hewlett Foundation and Wallace Foundation to align the Academic team's work with respective grant goals.
- Represented CGCS at the following events:
  - Steering Committee for the **National Academy of Education**, NAEd project, *Addressing Educational Inequities in the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic;*

- Facilitated a session during the virtual conference hosted by **Just Equations** on disrupting tracking in mathematics;
- Moderating a session during the virtual conference, *The Mathematics of Opportunity: Beyond Limits*, hosted by **Just Equations**;
- Planning committee that designed and implemented the national conference, **Data Science Education K-12: Research to Practice Conference** in San Antonio, TX, February 17-19, 2025; and
- Participated in **The Math Narrative Convening** in Seattle, WA with a variety of stakeholders targeting the utilization of messaging techniques regarding mathematics in; a way that will engage students of all ages, as well as parents, teachers, administrators, and the community.

Annual Conferences

The Academic Team attended the TUDA meeting on March 21, 2025, and the Legislative Conference from March 22-25, 2025, in Washington, D.C. At the Achievement and Professional Development Taskforce, the team presented on the *Supporting Excellence Framework* (2nd edition) *Curriculum Quality Rubric*, CGCS's *Position Statement Paper on Literacy*, and strategies and best practices districts can implement at various levels of the system to address mathematics and literacy based on the most recent release of the NAEP results.

The Academics Team worked with the Research Team to prepare for the 22nd Annual 2025 Curriculum, Research, and Instructional Leaders Conference being held in Detroit, MI from July 8-11, 2025, at the Westin Cadillac Book Hotel. The theme this year is ***"Breaking Barriers: Advancing Strategic and Tactical Solutions for Urban Education"***. The *2025 CGCS Achieving Excellence and Equity in Urban Education Award* and the *Opportunity and Access Leader Award* applications were distributed to all member districts. We received a record number of submissions. The awards will be presented at the conference during the Awards Luncheon on July 10, 2025.

Tools, Resources, and Publications

Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively
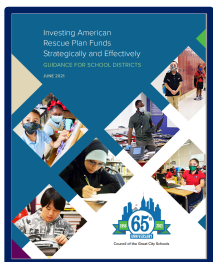
This document lays out a framework for the nation's large city school systems to spend the new federal dollars strategically and effectively. It sets out overarching goals for the use of funds; articulates broad investment strategies; defines principles for the effective use of funds; and asks a series of questions that leaders and stakeholders should ask themselves as they embark on planning, implementation, and evaluation efforts. The document also draws on lessons learned from previous infusions of federal dollars and summarizes the main provisions of the federal legislation and agency guidance. **https://www.cgcs.org/Page/1283**

Now updated with Interim Progress Assessment Guides that provide guidance and support to school districts in assessing the investments related to instructional materials and resources. Districts can use this document in the ongoing process of investment planning, implementation, and oversight to ensure that federal relief funds are allocated strategically and effectively. Here is the link to the guides, including Investing in Instructional Resources and Student Support Services: **https://www.cgcs.org/Page/1430**

Addressing Unfinished Learning After COVID-19 School Closures

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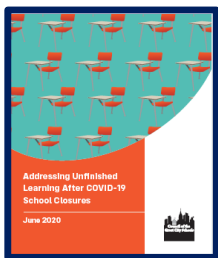
While this was released following school closures due to Covid-19, the academic team continues to provide guidance for implementing a districtwide approach to addressing unfinished learning in a just-in-time rather than a just-in-case model. The document emphasized that school districts would need to address the significant social and emotional toll the crisis has taken on children and widespread unfinished learning. We have always had students who entered a grade level with unfinished learning; however, our previous, well-intentioned attempts to use remediation programs had the impact of keeping students from engaging in grade-level content and resulted in their falling further behind their peers. We continue to highlight districts that are making progress in accelerating student learning and achievement in English Language Arts/Literacy and mathematics.

The document highlights key transition grades and illustrates how to focus on essential content for the grade. This approach provides the space and opportunities to address underlying unfinished learning just in time for all students to engage in grade level work, and acquire facility with language demands, skills, and concepts to accelerate their learning. To illustrate these approaches, the document provides examples of just-in-time scaffolds to accelerate student learning in mathematics and English language arts. **https://tinyurl.com/ya4g73f9**

District Considerations for Universal Dyslexia Screening: Ensuring Appropriate Implementation and Instruction for English Learners
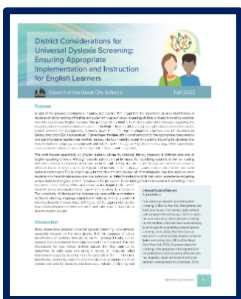
Many states across the country now have policies requiring districts to implement universal dyslexia screeners and/or processes that identify students at risk for reading difficulties and dyslexia. In response to Council members request for more guidance on the utilization of universal dyslexia screeners with English learners, a brief was developed. The purpose of this brief is to (1) share potential challenges regarding the implementation of universal dyslexia screening for English learners (ELs) and (2) highlight considerations that ensure English learners are appropriately screened given their language development trajectory and the foundational literacy instruction ELs have received. Furthermore, the brief offers considerations for the appropriate interpretation and use of screener results when districts are required to universally screen for dyslexia, including for students who have limited oral language development and little to no knowledge of English phonemes (e.g., when sound/letter correspondence differs between languages with different writing systems). **https://www.cgcs.org/publications#35**

### *Professional Development Framework*
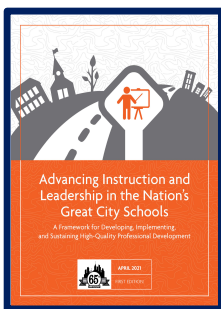
This guide presents district instructional leaders and staff with a core set of criteria for what high-quality professional development entails. What makes this document different and useful is the focus on practical issues of district-level implementation in multiple teaching and learning environments. This is a guide designed by practitioners for practitioners, and it was important to the advisory committee and project team to develop a resource that provides clear, concrete guidance for district leaders based on our collective experience with best practices—and common pitfalls—in selecting, designing, implementing, and sustaining high quality professional development that not only represents what has traditionally worked in the past, but is nimble enough to meet the demands of the present.

The guide lays out a working definition of high-quality professional development, and then briefly reviews the research on what makes professional learning effective including lessons from the field. The framework then presents a set of preconditions and design principles of high-quality professional learning. These principles touch on the "why" (What is the purpose of professional development? How does it serve students, teachers, leaders, and the district as a whole?), the "what" (What knowledge or skills should professional development provide or

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focus on?), the "who" (Who are we targeting? Who should have access to professional learning opportunities, and who should be deployed to provide, support, and reinforce this professional learning?), and the "how" (How should professional development be structured, delivered, and evaluated to best improve instructional outcomes?). To illustrate these principles in action, the framework then provides a set of annotated exemplars from districts around the country. The academic team continues to make explicit connections between this framework and the recently updated, *Supporting Excellence Framework* to support effective implementation of the curriculum. **https://www.cgcs.org/Page/660**

Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework, Second Edition

The Council shared an updated framework, the second edition of the **Supporting Excellence Curriculum Framework** which includes additional areas of focus:
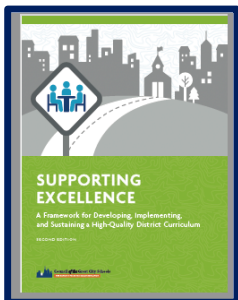
- Standards-aligned expectations for student work and writing.
- Instructional coherence within and across grade levels and learning environments.
- Culturally and linguistically relevant instruction.
- Current research and best practices on addressing unfinished learning, scaffolding, and support for diverse student populations (including English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities, and gifted students).
- Addressing social-emotional learning and trauma.
- Expanded instructional use of technology.

The Curriculum Framework Advisory Committee comprised of Chief Academic Officers, curriculum leaders from the four core content areas, Bilingual Education, and Special Education from our member districts provided guidance and feedback during the revision process as well as national experts who served as technical advisors. **https://www.cgcs.org/curriculumframework**

Curriculum Quality Rubric

Based on the second edition of the *Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum*, the Academic Team revised a rubric members can use to evaluate the quality of their curriculum guidance materials. The rubric will be reviewed by members of the Achievement and Professional Development Taskforce during the 2025 CGCS Legislative Conference and by several curriculum leaders in mathematics, English Language Arts, bilingual education, and special education from our member districts to provide additional feedback and test the rubric using their curriculum documents. The first version of the *Curriculum Quality Rubric: A Self-Assessment Tool for Districts* (**https://tinyurl.com/t8xh85hs)** is now in use in curriculum reviews. The academic team revised the *Curriculum Quality Rubric* associated with the *Supporting Excellence Framework (Second Edition)* focusing on the newly included key features first, followed by revising the existing sections. The final *Curriculum Quality Rubric (Second Edition)* will be released prior to the 2025 Fall Conference.

Academic Key Performance Indicators
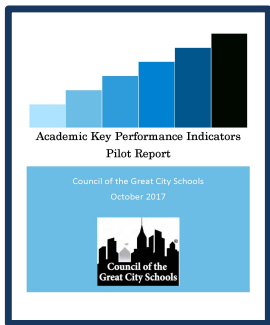
The Council developed academic key performance indicators (KPIs) in a process like the one used to develop operational KPIs. Using feedback from the Achievement and Professional Development Task Force, indicators were selected for their predictive ability and linkage to progress measures for the Minority Male Initiative pledge taken from a list of 200 potential KPIs.

Since SY 2016-17, the indicators have been refined and are part of the annual KPI data collection and reporting. This now enables districts to compare their performance with similar urban districts and to network to address shared challenges.

Resources from the Early Reading Accelerators Pilot

Recordings from a **three-part webinar series** from the Early Reading Accelerators Pilot in San Antonio Independent School district is available for district support and implementation of foundational skills instruction in the early grades. In this three-part series, hosted by the Council and Student Achievement Partners, experts and urban school district practitioners presented and discussed: (1) the latest findings about teaching foundational skills and making use of complex text as part of comprehensive literacy approach and (2) the pedagogy related to teaching foundational skills, including phonemic awareness to monolingual students and English Language Learners. The content of the recordings used the science of reading as the umbrella. The recordings for the series and additional resources are available using this link.

Important outcomes of the pilot were the increase in academic rigor and engagement in classrooms, more collaboration and cohesion on school campuses and within the district, instructional environments that became more culturally sustaining and visually rich, and re-ignition of the joy of teaching and learning literacy. This work continues to evolve as we partner with member districts in designing current early literacy plans. To learn more about the details of this pilot, use this link https://achievethecore.org/page/3360/shifting-early-literacy-practices to access the case study, ***Shifting Early Literacy Practices: The Story of an Early Reading Pilot in San Antonio Independent School District.***
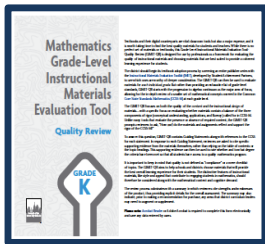
Evaluation Tool-Quality Review

CGCS developed the following tools to help its urban school systems and others implement college- and career-readiness standards. These materials continue to be referenced and used by CGCS member districts and staff.
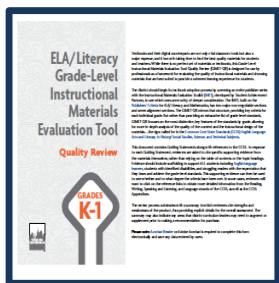
The Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool-Quality Review (GIMET-QR), (English Language Arts). A set of grade-by-grade rubrics and a companion document that define the key features for reviewers to consider in examining the quality of instructional materials in English Language Arts K-12. In addition, the tools are useful in helping teachers decide where and how adopted classroom materials could be supplemented. The documents align with similar tools developed by the Council for English language learners. See below. (2015) **http://www.cgcs.org/Page/483**

While GIMET-QR was designed to support textbook materials adoption, feedback from Council members using the tool indicates that there are additional uses:
1) to assess alignment and identify gaps/omissions in current instructional materials;
2) to assess alignment of district scope and sequence, and the rigor and quality of instructional tasks and assessments; and
3) to provide professional development that builds capacity and a shared understanding of the CCSS in ELA/Literacy and/or Mathematics.

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The Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool–Quality Review (GIMET-QR), (Mathematics). A set of grade-level rubrics and a companion document that define the key features for reviewers to consider in examining the quality of instructional materials in mathematics K-8. The key features include examples and guiding statements from the Illustrative Mathematics progression documents to clarify the criteria. (2015) **http://www.cgcs.org/Page/475**

While GIMET-QR was designed to support textbook materials adoption, feedback from Council members using the tool indicates that there are additional uses:

1) to assess alignment and identify gaps/omissions in current instructional materials;
2) to assess alignment of district scope and sequence, and the rigor and quality of instructional tasks and assessments; and
3) to provide professional development that builds capacity and a shared understanding of the CCSS in ELA/Literacy and/or Mathematics.

The Text Analysis Toolkit: The Council and Student Achievement Partners partnered to provide CGCS ELA/ Literacy District Leaders opportunities engage in professional development of this toolkit. This toolkit aims to support educators in selecting and analyzing texts based on complexity and cultural relevance. The resources focus on tools for reflecting on the identities of educators and the students they serve, analyzing texts with multiple lenses, and considering implications for use in their specific context.
**https://achievethecore.org/page/3369/text-analysis-toolkit**

The Great City Schools Professional Learning Platform. A series of 10 video-based courses for school administrators and teachers to enhance language development and literacy skills for English Language Learners and struggling readers. (2018)
**https://www.cgcs.org/Page/667**
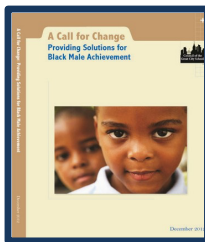
A Call for Change: Providing Solutions for Black Male Achievement. A book-form compendium of strategies by leading researchers that advocates for improving academic outcomes for African American boys and young men. Areas addressed include public policy, expectations and standards, early childhood, gifted and talented programming, literacy development, mathematics, college- and career-readiness, mental health and safety, partnerships and mentoring, and community involvement. (2012). **https://www.cgcs.org/domain/88**
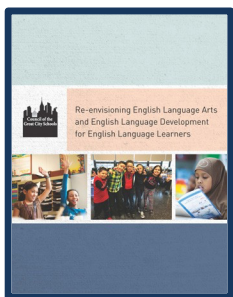
Re-envisioning English Language Arts and English Language Development for English Language Learners. A framework for acquiring English and attaining content mastery across the grades in an era when new college- and career-readiness standards require more reading in all subject areas. (2014, 2017) **http://tinyurl.com/yasg9xc4**

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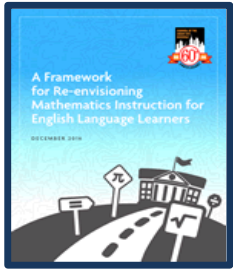
A Framework for Re-envisioning Mathematics Instruction for English Language Learners. A guide for looking at the interdependence of language and mathematics to assist students with the use of academic language in acquiring a deep conceptual understanding of mathematics and applying mathematics in real world problems. (2016) **http://tinyurl.com/y7flpyoz**
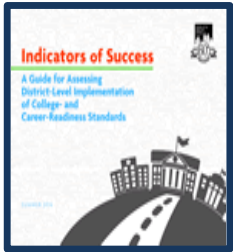
Indicators of Success: A Guide for Assessing District Level Implementation of College and Career-Readiness Standards. A set of indicators districts might use to track their implementation of college- and career-readiness standards. Indicators are divided into seven sections, including: vision and goal setting, resource allocation, parent and community outreach, curriculum, and instruction, professional development, assessment, and student data. Each section provides descriptions of what "on track" or "off track" might look like, along with examples of evidence to look at in determining effective implementation. (2016) **http://tinyurl.com/hh6kesd**

Calendar of Questions. A series of questions about ongoing implementation of college- and career-readiness standards, arranged by month, focusing on aspects of implementation for staff roles at various levels of the district, as well as milestones for parents and students. (2013) These types of questions are still valid and can be customized for any districtwide project implementation. The Academic Department will be reviewing and updating this document with an anticipated completion date of December 2024. **http://cgcs.org/Page/409**

SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE RUBRIC

SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE RUBRIC

A Self-Assessment Tool for Districts

SECOND EDITION

Council *of the* **Great City Schools**

THE NATION'S VOICE FOR URBAN EDUCATION

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The Council of the Great City Schools is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. Composed of 78 large city school districts, its mission is to promote the cause of urban schools and to advocate for inner-city students through legislation, research, instructional support, leadership, management, technical assistance, and media relations. The organization also provides a network for school districts sharing common problems to exchange information and to collectively address new challenges as they emerge in order to deliver the best education for urban youth.

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Executive Director
Raymond Hart
The Council of the Great City Schools

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Teaching and learning have changed substantially in recent years, driving the demand for more responsive curricular materials and guidance to help teachers address unfinished learning, boost student engagement, and meet the social emotional and mental health needs of students. While these learning necessities are not new, the pandemic served to highlight their fundamental role and connection to academic outcomes. Furthermore, the pandemic exposed the significant systemic and structural barriers to learning faced by marginalized populations and diverse learners that have been present for decades.

These factors included physical barriers, such as a lack of proficiency or access to technology and the Internet, as well as barriers such as low expectations, limited communication between communities and schools, and outdated or culturally inappropriate curricular materials that limited student access to rigorous, grade-level instruction.

Developed through combined efforts of Council staff together with school district academic leaders and other experts, this 2nd edition of the Curriculum Quality rubric is designed to help districts:

- Determine the quality and alignment of curriculum guidance to clarify the district's learning expectations at each grade-level with a focus on student assets and diverse learners;
- Ensure the curriculum guidance includes appropriate scaffolding and support for English learners (ELs), students with disabilities, and historically marginalized students that is rigorous and aligned to district standards; and
- Provide support in the district's curriculum guidance for addressing unfinished learning during Tier I instruction that attends to the multi-faceted needs of students.

The rubric is based on the content and structure of the 2nd edition of the Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum, allowing districts to individually assess the extent to which their curriculum reflects the nine key features of effective curriculum guidance outlined in the framework document. It provides detailed descriptions of what it looks like, in practice, to have a curriculum that requires substantial revision, one that is minimally effective, and one that is effective in each of these categories. Moreover, a fourth rating—ideal—should provide districts with a direction for ongoing improvement and progress. We encourage districts to be honest about where their curriculum guidance falls short, and to use this tool to engage in a process of self-assessment that is both candid and constructive.

Dr. Ray Hart
Executive Director

KEY FEATURE

1

The district's standards-based curriculum reflects the district's beliefs and vision about learning and achievement for all students.

References:

See Supporting Excellence Key Feature 1

| Requires Substantial Revision	Minimally Effective	Effective	Ideal
The district has not developed or has not effectively communicated an instructional vision or beliefs about how students learn best. The district has not communicated how to foster student empowerment. The district has not communicated an expectation of effective support or instruction for diverse learners or articulated the importance of creating culturally inclusive learning environments. The district relies on the adopted resources or online materials as its sole guide.	The introduction to the curriculum references the district's instructional vision and beliefs about how students learn best, but this instructional vision is not consistently reflected throughout the central document in the explanation of learning targets, tasks and assignments from the adopted resource, and expected student work products. The district guidance refers to empowering all students for college and/or career aspirations but does not articulate how these attributes are developed in the tasks, assignments, and student work products. The district has articulated an expectation that schools should serve all students, but teachers are left without sufficient curriculum guidance, scaffolds and supports, or resources for supporting diverse learners or creating culturally inclusive learning environments to exceed district expectations.	The introduction to the curriculum directly references the district's instructional vision and beliefs about how students learn best and the importance of empowering all students for college and/or career aspirations. These beliefs are reflected throughout the central document in what students are expected to learn and do in the recommended tasks, assignments, and student products. The district has expressed a dedication to serving all students, and the curriculum guidance offers teachers specific instructions, including suitable scaffolds, language supports, how to make connections to the lived experiences of students, and resources to support every learner. This curriculum guidance includes sample units and exemplars of student work explicit connections to the adopted resource and instructional approaches that teachers can use as models as they develop lessons to meet the needs of all their students.	The curriculum directly references the district's instructional vision and beliefs about how students learn best, and that all students will rise to challenges, and unlock infinite possibilities for college and career aspirations. The guidance provides details to indicate how the units, tasks, assignments, and expected student products reflect the district's instructional vision and beliefs. The guidance and resources provided to teachers—including explanations of state standards, lesson overviews, sample units, models of student work, and instructional approaches—clearly reflect the district's commitment to serving all their students and inspire educators to set high expectations for all students, from struggling students to gifted and talented students. The curriculum provides explicit guidance to teachers on how to create learning environments that allow all students access, including model lessons or units that enable students to make connections between what they are learning and its impact on their future aspirations.

DISTRICT NOTES AND NEXT STEPS

Indicate your rating based on the indicators for Key Feature 1.

✓ ——○—— ○ —— ○ —— ○

Requires Substantial Revision Minimally Effective Effective Ideal
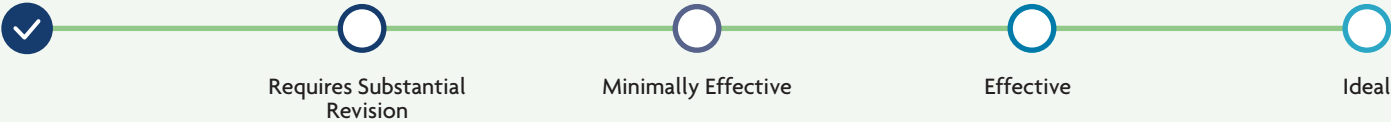
KEY FEATURE

2

A district's standards-based curriculum is clear about what must be taught and at what depth to address unfinished learning while leveraging student assets and college- and career-readiness standards for each grade level and course.

References:
See Supporting Excellence (2023), Key Feature 2

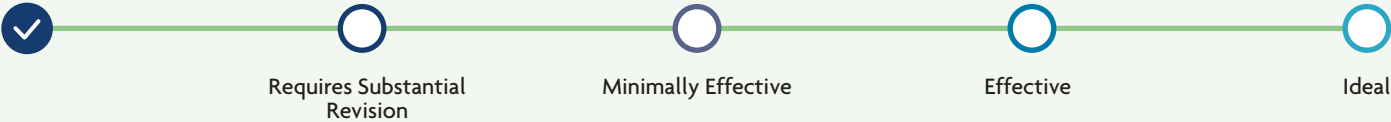| Requires Substantial Revision	Minimally Effective	Effective	Ideal
The district curriculum provides a list of standards for each grade level, but it lacks explanations on how to interpret them and does not indicate the depth of knowledge students should demonstrate at various grade levels.	The curriculum guidance identifies what needs to be taught at each grade level but lacks clarity on the depth of knowledge students should develop. Additionally, the guidance does not sufficiently address common misconceptions or unfinished learning that might impact student success.	The curriculum guidance provided to teachers clearly describes what needs to be taught—including the depth of knowledge students need to demonstrate—for each grade level/course.	The curriculum guidance provides a clear, detailed description of what must be taught-including depth of knowledge students are expected to demonstrate at each grade level.
The curriculum fails to clarify essential learning expectations, leading to potential inconsistencies in instruction and gaps in student learning. Teachers do not receive exemplars of units, student work, or explanations to help them develop a common understanding of grade-level expectations for student learning.	The curriculum guidance provides teachers with a few examples of lessons and student work, but these do not include clear explanations of how the work illustrates the intent of the standards and the district's grade-level instructional expectations.	This guidance includes annotated exemplars of units, lessons, and student work that help clarify districtwide grade-level expectations and support instructional consistency. Additionally, teachers are provided with insights on common student misconceptions and strategies to address unfinished learning.	The curriculum guidance includes detailed explanations and exemplars to develop a shared understanding of what learning is essential and district grade-level expectations. In addition, more explicit guidance is provided in areas where student achievement is stagnant districtwide.
There is no mechanism for identifying unfinished learning or for using student work, walk-throughs, or data to leverage student assets and move student understanding forward.	The curriculum guidance provides general guidance for classroom observations, but it primarily focuses on instructional strategies rather than ensuring alignment with grade-level content.	The district provides clear guidance to administrators on what to look for in classroom instruction to ensure grade-level standards are met.	The curriculum guidance ensures that all students, including those historically marginalized, have access to grade-level content and the necessary scaffolds and support to succeed.
The district provides no guidance or look-fors for classroom observations, and there is no expectation that administrators are to visit classrooms on a regular basis to ensure that grade-level standards are being met.			Curriculum guidance is regularly updated based on district student achievement data, classroom walk-throughs, and student work. This includes clear instructions for areas with stagnant achievement.
			The district provides clear guidance to administrators about what to look for in classroom instruction for each unit and at each grade-level they observe to ensure that grade-level standards are being met. Moreover, shared professional development opportunities ensure that classroom observation techniques, feedback, and metrics are calibrated and consistent across classrooms and school sites.

24

DISTRICT NOTES AND NEXT STEPS

Indicate your rating based on the indicators for Key Feature 2.

| ✓ | Requires Substantial Revision | Minimally Effective | Effective | Ideal |

25

KEY FEATURE

3

The district's standards-based curriculum builds instructional coherence within and across grade levels and learning environments.

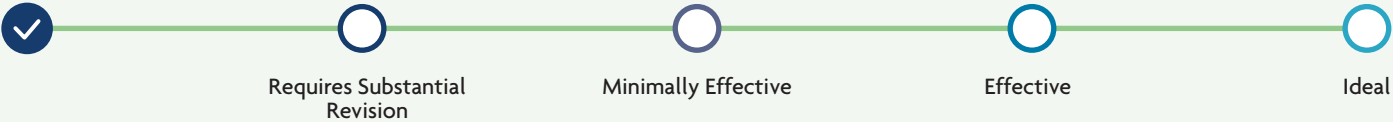| Requires Substantial Revision	Minimally Effective	Effective	Ideal
The curriculum guidance includes state and district-level standards but does not address how concepts and skills build from previous grades or extend beyond the current grade level. There are missed opportunities for creating a coherent learning progression. The curriculum provides standalone units or lessons, lacking guidance on how to connect concepts across grades or lessons. This leaves teachers without support for intentionally bridging student learning. This lack of clarity in the curriculum guidance results in the use of varied approaches, creating incoherence within and across grade-levels that inhibits students successfully accessing and learning Tier I grade-level content.	The curriculum provides a cursory description of how concepts and skills progress within a grade but does not adequately address how it is connected to previous learning or show the progression of the learning across grades. The curriculum guidance provides teachers with sample units and lessons along with how this connects to concepts within the grade (i.e., connecting area with multiplication). However, the guidance is inconsistent or unclear which leads to a lack of instructional coherence as concepts increase in complexity during the year. This may lead to misconceptions forming which cause student understanding to become fragmented or incomplete. What students learn—and the suggested instructional approaches employed—may or may not reflect what and how they have learned it in previous grades.	The curriculum outlines how concepts, knowledge, and skills develop within and across grades in the standalone units and lessons by making explicit connections between and among concepts. The curriculum guidance identifies what students have learned in the previous grade, how that learning should advance over the course of the school year, and how it connects to the next grade level. This also includes connections within the grade (i.e., connections between area and multiplication). The curriculum guidance provides teachers with detailed units and lessons that show the interrelationships between concepts and illustrates the increasing complexity in the development of concepts and skills through the academic year. The curriculum guidance provides support to teachers in addressing unfinished learning and gaps in students' knowledge as they work to meet grade-level expectations.	The curriculum provides explicit guidance on the progression of concepts across grade levels, emphasizing how prior knowledge is the foundation for future learning, ensuring continuity and coherence. The curriculum makes explicit and meaningful connections between concepts and skills across multiple units and grades, ensuring that students continually build, integrate knowledge, and deepen their understanding. The curriculum guidance provided to teachers includes numerous exemplary units, lessons, and strategies to help them deliver instruction that is consistent with how and what students have learned in previous grades, but with increased rigor and depth consistent with college-and career-readiness standards at each ensuing level.

DISTRICT NOTES AND NEXT STEPS

Indicate your rating based on the indicators for Key Feature 3.

✓ ———○——————○——————○——————○

           Requires Substantial   Minimally Effective   Effective   Ideal
              Revision

27

KEY FEATURE

4

The district's standards-based curriculum explicitly articulates standards-aligned expectations for student work or writing at different points during the school year and across grade levels. It also provides guidance and metrics on how to gauge student progress in meeting these expectations.

References:
See Supporting Excellence (2023), Key Feature 4

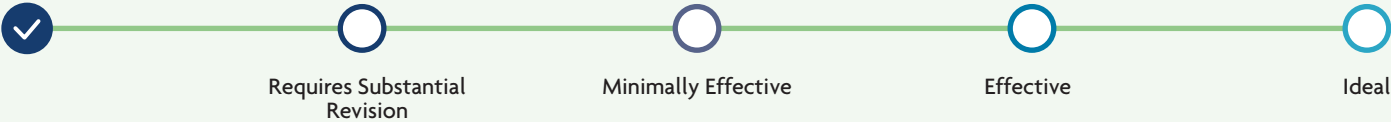| Requires Substantial Revision	Minimally Effective	Effective	Ideal
The curriculum lacks guidance for teachers and administrators about the level of proficiency students are expected to demonstrate in classwork, tasks, assignments, or writing samples —or the complexity of the texts they are expected to read—at different points throughout the year to be on track to meet grade-level college- and career-readiness standards. There are no exemplars or models of student work to illustrate proficiency, leaving teachers without concrete examples to assess student progress or to adjust their teaching. There is no structured guidance on how to formatively assess student work throughout the year. There are no mechanisms or criteria for tracking student progress or intervening with supports, leaving teachers without a way to measure student development over time.	The curriculum lacks clarity in communicating the district's expectations for the level of proficiency students are expected to demonstrate in classwork, tasks, assignments or writing samples—or the complexity of the texts that students are expected to read at different points throughout the school year to be on track to meet grade-level college-and career-readiness standards. There are some examples of student work provided, but they are either incomplete, not annotated, or not consistently aligned with grade-level expectations. Some guidance is provided on formative assessments, but it does not cover the full scope of content or offer meaningful strategies to address any gaps in understanding as they appear.	The curriculum explicitly identifies the level of proficiency students are expected to demonstrate in class work, tasks, and assignments—as well as the complexity of the texts that students are expected to read —at different points throughout the school year to be on track to meet grade-level college-and career-readiness standards. The curriculum includes well-annotated exemplars of student work, aligned to district standards, clearly illustrating various performance levels at different points during the school year. This helps teachers to develop a shared understanding about indicators for a range of student proficiency. The curriculum incorporates structured formative assessment guidance, helping teachers intervene effectively so students can access grade-level standards. The curriculum includes metrics for progress monitoring, ensuring that teachers can assess whether students are on track to meet grade-level expectations.	The curriculum explicitly identifies the level of proficiency students are expected to demonstrate in the classroom work, tasks, and assignments—as well as the complexity of the texts that students are expected to be reading—at different points throughout the school year to be on track to meet grade-level college-and career-readiness standards. The guidance includes extensions for students who exceed grade-level/course performance indicators. The guidance includes performance indicators for each unit aligned to district standards, annotated exemplars of student work that clearly illustrate various performance levels at different points during the school year, and guidance to teachers on how to move students to the next level. This supports teachers in developing a shared understanding of performance expectations for each unit. The curriculum provides sample formative assessment tools and metrics, as well as progress monitoring tools to offer insights into student thinking, with recommendations for specific scaffolds and language supports for ELs and students with disabilities. The curriculum offers instructional strategies and targeted resources, suggested research, readings, or video segments to support teachers in diagnosing and moving student understanding to the next level.

DISTRICT NOTES AND NEXT STEPS

Indicate your rating based on the indicators for Key Feature 4.

✓ ———○——— Requires Substantial Revision ———○——— Minimally Effective ———○——— Effective ———○——— Ideal

29

KEY FEATURE

5

The district's standards-based curriculum supports culturally relevant instruction and embraces respect and appreciation for racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity.

References:
See Supporting Excellence (2023), Key Feature 5

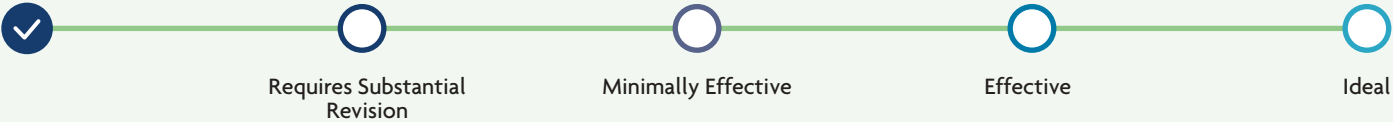| Requires Substantial Revision	Minimally Effective	Effective	Ideal
The district's curriculum guidance does not allow students to connect across cultures, nor does it include lessons that help students see themselves as valued members of the learning community.	The curriculum includes language stating that instruction should be inclusive of diverse learners and provides a list of scaffolds, but it lacks clear guidance on how to affirm students' cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and identities during instruction.	The curriculum guidance ensures instruction meets all learners' needs, with scaffolds and supports to help every student achieve their academic and career aspirations.	The curriculum guidance reaffirms the importance of delivering instructional content that meets the needs of all learners so that they are successful in their academic and career aspirations.
The district's curriculum includes people, events, and issues from other cultures, but fails to incorporate this information directly into the units or lessons of study for students.	The district's curriculum guidance includes some culturally relevant activities, but there are no examples of how these activities aligned to grade-level standards or expectations to support student learning, nor are they intentionally designed to foster student identity, agency, and perseverance.	The curriculum guidance supports teachers in helping students use the content as a mirror, reflecting students "own" lived experiences.	The curriculum guidance supports teachers in helping students use the content as both a mirror, reflecting students "own" lived experiences, and a window, learning and respecting insights about other cultures and varied perspectives.
The curriculum lacks scaffolds or supports for teachers in helping students from other cultural and linguistic backgrounds access grade-level standards.	The curriculum guidance includes scaffolds and instructional strategies that are a listing of suggestions and does not provide explicit guidance on how these scaffolds contribute to academic success.	Curriculum guidance is explicit on how to implement and refine instructional strategies that affirm student assets, foster agency, and encourage perseverance.	The curriculum guidance is written to ensure that all students see themselves as valued contributors to the learning community, with opportunities to engage in meaningful units and lessons that develop identity, perseverance, and academic success.
The curriculum does not include strategies for developing academic language or vocabulary in a way that builds on students' linguistic assets and lived experiences.	The curriculum lacks guidance about selecting appropriate texts and assignments that validate students' backgrounds and perspectives as an expectation that all students will meet grade-level/course expectations.	Detailed strategies for addressing academic language development are described to incorporate students' linguistic repertoires as assets in learning.	The curriculum provides explicit guidance on the selection and use of texts, ensuring they are free from bias and stereotypes. It also includes a variety of tasks and representations, while elevating discourse as students consider multiple perspectives and maintaining academic rigor.
		The curriculum includes strategies for selecting texts, addressing any bias and stereotypes in texts, and designing assignments that promote an appreciation for different perspectives and experiences.	The curriculum units and sample lessons includes project-based learning (PBL) and service learning opportunities for students to engage with real-world issues and develop agency in addressing issues impacting their local, state, and global community.
		The curriculum provides examples of lessons and discussion techniques that support student voice, respectful dialogue, and allow students to engage with real-world issues affecting students' communities.	

DISTRICT NOTES AND NEXT STEPS

Indicate your rating based on the indicators for Key Feature 5.

| ✓ | Requires Substantial Revision | Minimally Effective | Effective | Ideal |

31

KEY FEATURE

6

The district's standards-based curriculum contains scaffolds and other supports to address unfinished learning while leveraging the assets of diverse learners to ensure broad-based student attainment of grade-level standards.

References:

See Supporting Excellence (2023), Key Feature 6

Addressing Unfinished Learning After Covid-19 Closures

A Framework for Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction for English Learners: Instructional Practice and Materials Considerations

District Considerations for Universal Dyslexia Screening: Ensuring Appropriate Implementation and Instruction for English Learners

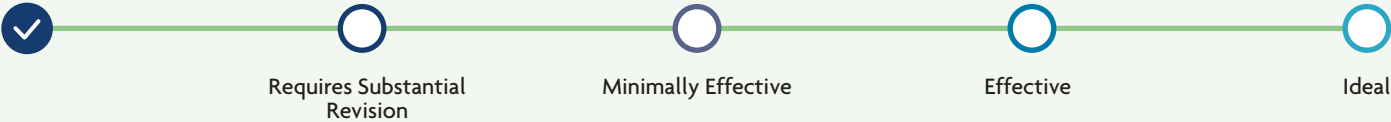| Requires Substantial Revision	Minimally Effective	Effective	Ideal
The curriculum does not provide any guidance on how to address common student misconceptions, or overgeneralizations, leaving these issues to be resolved independently by teachers. The curriculum lacks guidance on how to support learners within Tier 1 instruction, requiring teachers to determine appropriate scaffolds on their own and depend on remediation that does not allow access to grade-level content/course. The curriculum does not include strategies, scaffolds, or supports for English learners, students with disabilities, or advanced learners to use during Tier I grade level instruction.	The curriculum guidance mentions addressing unfinished learning and lists strategies for scaffolding and differentiation but does not provide details or clear structures on how it looks in the context of specific units/lessons. There is little if any guidance on how to activate student's prior knowledge within a unit or lesson or address possible student misconceptions that may impact access to grade-level content/course. The curriculum provides limited guidance to address the academic attainment for advanced learners or English Language Learners often relying on teachers to find or create additional resources.	The curriculum guidance includes detailed scaffolding and stresses gradual release in units and lessons on how to address unfinished learning by providing just-in time support during Tier 1 instruction so students can access grade-level content/course. The curriculum guidance provides details within the units to describe how to connect student's prior knowledge to grade-level or course content, includes typical misconceptions that students may experience, as well as how this impacts the learning across grade-levels. The curriculum offers structured opportunities for students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and advanced students to further their learning within each unit or lesson by exploring concepts with greater depth and complexity. The curriculum includes some quick pre-assessments that can be used to identify typical misconceptions or gaps in student learning. Just-in time supports are provided to ensure all students can access grade-level content during Tier 1 instruction. Additional suggestions are provided to indicate when students will require additional supports, i.e., Tier 2 or Tier 3 support.	The curriculum guidance emphasizes the significance of addressing unfinished learning using just-in-time supports during Tier 1 instruction. This approach aims to accelerate student learning by building on and leveraging student assets, such as connecting prior knowledge and skills. The curriculum guidance includes scaffolds and supports for addressing typical misconceptions in content, (i.e., a student thinks that heavier items fall faster than lighter ones because they've observed it in some cases but has not connected it to gravity); overgeneralizations with academic language such as, a student learning English might say "goed" instead of "went" because they learned that -ed is used to indicate the past tense). The curriculum includes instructional strategies, targeted supports, processes (models and resources such as videos or exemplary lessons), and accommodations to meet the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners. This includes integrating details from specialized departments so students can successfully access grade-level/course instruction. The curriculum includes quick pre-assessments that may be used to identify unfinished learning to move student thinking forward.

DISTRICT NOTES AND NEXT STEPS

Indicate your rating based on the indicators for Key Feature 6.

✓   ○   ○   ○   ○

     Requires Substantial   Minimally Effective   Effective   Ideal
     Revision

33

KEY FEATURE

7

The district's standards-based curriculum supports the effective use of technology to enhance grade-level instruction and student engagement.

References:

See Supporting Excellence (2023), Key Feature 7

Guidelines for Supporting Technology-based Learning Environments

| Requires Substantial Revision	Minimally Effective	Effective	Ideal
The curriculum guidance includes the use of some technology but leads to passive or disengaged student experiences. The curriculum guidance lacks alignment with modern technological practices. This indicates a significant gap between the curriculum and current educational technology standards. The curriculum guidance inconsistently includes technology, causing confusion and disrupting continuity in learning experiences. As a result, the use of technology in the curriculum is dependent upon the user leading to uneven experiences for students. The curriculum guidance lacks any consideration of how units/lesson might differ in virtual or hybrid environments, and no guidance is provided to help teachers adapt instruction accordingly. There is little to no variation in the types of technology used, often resulting in a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to engage all learners.	The curriculum guidance includes evidence of the use of technology, but it lacks a coherent strategy or alignment with curriculum goals. Technology use is not fully optimized or innovative. The curriculum guidance includes isolated pockets of technology use, but these instances are not systematic or reflective of a district-wide approach to integrating technology into the curriculum. The curriculum guidance identifies the use of technology as a strategy during instruction, but its use fails to contribute to student engagement or enhance instructional delivery. The recommendations for technology use replaces traditional methods without adding value or improving learning outcomes. The lack of a coherent technology strategy in the curriculum creates missed opportunities where technology could enhance and become a tool for student learning. The curriculum guidance relies on technology for mundane instructional, i.e., practicing skills, using a word processor, rather than to engage students in their learning, thus missing opportunities for deeper student engagement. The curriculum occasionally references different learning environments but does not provide sufficient guidance for adapting lessons for virtual or hybrid contexts.	The curriculum guidance promotes the use of technology to enhance student learning with clear intentions. The curriculum includes a clear strategy behind the selection of specific technological tools to facilitate specific curriculum goals and objectives. The curriculum guidance integrates the use of technology as a tool for student explorations, making conjectures, conducting research, and combing through primary source documents to increase engagement, building knowledge, and optimizing student learning. The curriculum guidance identifies recommendations from departments, such as ELs and students with disabilities, to indicate interactive and assistive technology to ensure access, promote student engagement, and deepen understanding. The curriculum guidance provides instructions for adapting sample lessons for different learning environments, including virtual and hybrid models, ensuring instructional coherence across all contexts.	The curriculum guidance reiterates the district's philosophy, understanding, and support for the role of technology in the curriculum. The district curriculum promotes the use of technology as an essential tool for enhancing and transforming learning experiences as students engage in higher-order thinking skills and personalize learning experiences. The curriculum guidance illustrates technology as a powerful instructional tool, for eliciting student explorations, experiments and investigations, making conjectures, managing research, combing through primary source documents, and leveraging independent investigations to increase engagement, achieve deeper learning, and helping students developing identity and agency. The curriculum guidance identifies recommendations from departments, such as ELs and students with disabilities, to indicate which interactive and assistive technology will ensure access, promote student engagement, and deepen understanding. The curriculum offers detailed guidance for teaching in a variety of learning environments, including specific strategies and adaptations for units and lessons for virtual, hybrid learning, flipped classrooms, gamification, augmented reality experiences, ensuring coherence and consistency in both in-person and remote instruction.

DISTRICT NOTES AND NEXT STEPS

Indicate your rating based on the indicators for Key Feature 7.
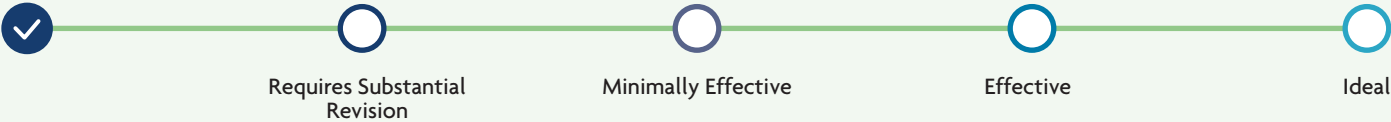
✓ ——— ◯ ——— ◯ ——— ◯ ——— ◯
      Requires Substantial   Minimally Effective   Effective   Ideal
      Revision

35

KEY FEATURE

8

The district's standards-based curriculum provides guidance and resources for integrating social emotional learning and skill-building into core content instruction.

References:

See Supporting Excellence (2023), Key Feature 8

Addressing Mental Health and Social-Emotional Wellness in the Covid-19 Crisis: A Resource Guide for School Districts

Fostering Mental Health and Wellness with Universal Social-Emotional and Behavioral Supports

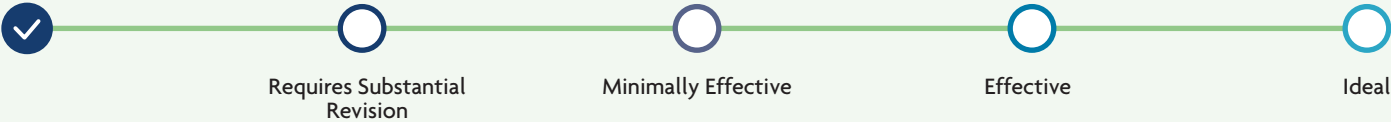| Requires Substantial Revision	Minimally Effective	Effective	Ideal
The curriculum does not provide guidance on how to address social emotional learning and skill-building within the instructional program for academic success, school and civic engagement, health and wellness, and for fulfilling careers.	The curriculum guidance includes an overview of the importance of social-emotional learning, but it does not provide content specific resources or examples to illustrate how it is looks within the instructional program for academic success, school and civic engagement, or for fulfilling careers. The curriculum guidance lacks examples, hyperlinks, resources, or strategies for integrating social-emotional learning and skill building.	The curriculum describes the importance of addressing social emotional learning and provides concrete examples for its integration into content specific lessons and units. The curriculum guidance emphasizes the importance of social emotional learning and how it contributes to the classroom and school learning environment so that every student is seen and heard. The curriculum contains research, links to videos, and hyperlinks about social-emotional learning and skill-building to support teachers so that they can use resources appropriately for implementation with students.	TBD

DISTRICT NOTES AND NEXT STEPS

Indicate your rating based on the indicators for Key Feature 8.

| ✓ | Requires Substantial Revision | Minimally Effective | Effective | Ideal |

KEY FEATURE

9

The district's standards-based curriculum provides teachers with guidance on where the materials are high quality, where gaps exist, and how to fill them to meet district expectations, including links to supporting instructional resources.

References:
See Supporting Excellence (2023), Key Feature 9

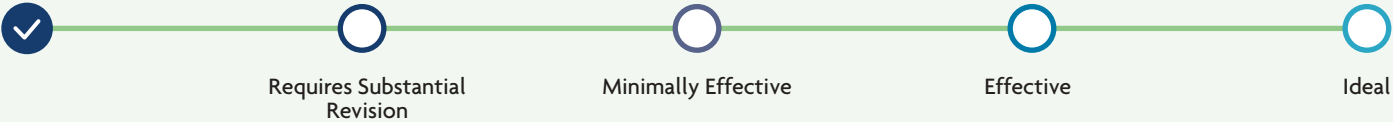| Requires Substantial Revision	Minimally Effective	Effective	Ideal
The curriculum lists adopted textbooks and online materials without indicating which resources align with specific standards, units, or lessons. The curriculum guidance does not indicate areas which are weak or misaligned in the instructional materials, nor does it offer strategies to fill these gaps.	The curriculum guidance references adopted textbooks, videos, or computer-based products that correspond to each standard, unit or lesson, but does not provide links, page numbers, or annotations. The curriculum guidance occasionally points out areas where materials are misaligned but lacks sufficient guidance on how to address those gaps, leaving teachers to figure out the needed adjustments. The curriculum guidance offers limited opportunities for advanced students to extend their learning, but these are not integrated into daily instruction, leading to uneven support.	The curriculum guidance provides detailed references (such as page numbers or links) to materials that align with standards, units, or lessons, while identifying areas that may need additional support for each and every student. The curriculum guidance identifies areas where materials may be weak or unclear and provides teachers with strategies or supplementary resources to address these gaps during instruction. The curriculum guidance incorporates formal feedback loops, including input from teachers and analysis of student work, to continually revise and improve upon curriculum guidance.	The curriculum guidance offers explicit links and annotations to resources, including differentiated supports for diverse learners (e.g., ELs, students with disabilities, and gifted students), to support access to grade-level content. The curriculum guidance systematically identifies gaps in materials and offers comprehensive guidance on how to address these gaps including scaffolds, differentiated supports, and additional resources to use for all learners. The curriculum guidance includes annotations for supplementary resources, including pictorial representations and primary source documents, and indicates any bias and weaknesses with any of these resources The curriculum guidance incorporates teacher feedback, student work analysis, and collaborations with departments such as EL and Special Education to ensure student needs are met comprehensively.

DISTRICT NOTES AND NEXT STEPS

Indicate your rating based on the indicators for Key Feature 9.

| | Requires Substantial Revision | Minimally Effective | Effective | Ideal |

COUNCIL OF THE GREAT CITY SCHOOLS

1331 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
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Washington, D.C. 20004

CURRICULUM, RESEARCH, AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS MEETING

22nd Curriculum, Research, and Instructional Leaders Conference
"Breaking Barriers: Advancing Strategic and Tactical Solutions for Urban Education"
July 8 – 11, 2025 – Westin Book Cadillac Detroit, Detroit, MI

Agenda-At-A-Glance

	Tuesday, July 8	Wednesday, July 9	Thursday, July 10	Friday, July 11
7:30 am	Registration (7:30 am – 4:00 pm)	Registration (7:30 am – 4:00 pm)	Registration (7:30 am – 1:00 pm)	
8:00 am	Breakfast (8:00 am – 9:00 am)	Breakfast (8:00 am – 8:45 am)	Breakfast (8:00 am – 9:00 am)	Breakfast (8:00 am – 9:00 am)
8:45 am		Welcome & Keynote Speaker: Dr. Nikolai Vitti		
9:00 am	Strategic Shifts: Leading Change with Evidence		Transition/Break	Legislative Updates & Debrief Closing Remarks
9:15 am			District-Led Presentations	
10:15 am	Transition/Break	Transition/Break		
10:30 am	Role-Alike Sessions	Joint Role-Alike Session		End of Conference See you next year!
10:45 am				
11:30 am		Lunch		
12:00 pm	Lunch		Awards Luncheon (12:00 pm – 1:45 pm)	
12:30 pm		Keynote Panel: Dr. Gloria Ladson Billings, Dr. Sue Dynarski, Dr. Cara Jackson, Dr. Michael Casserly		
1:00 pm	Keynote Speaker: Dr. Shawn Joseph		Transition/Break	
2:00 pm	Transition/Break	Transition/Break	Student Panel	
2:15 pm	Role-Alike Sessions	District-Led Presentations	Transition/Break	
3:00 pm				
3:15 pm			Role-Alike Sessions	
5:00 pm				
Evening	On-site Reception (5:30 pm – 7:30 pm)	Off-site Reception: Detroit Institute of Arts Museum (6:00 pm – 8:00 pm)	On Your Own	

Registration/Break	Meals	Joint Session	Role-Alike Sessions	District-Led Presentations	Evening/Receptions

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Agenda Key for Role-Alike Sessions

Academic Leaders:

Deputy Superintendents, Chiefs of Schools, Chief Academic Officers, Chief Innovation Officers, Principal Supervisors, Equity Leaders, Content (ELA/Literacy, Math, Science, Social Science) Leaders, Early Learning, Special Education, Social Emotional Learning, Mental Health, Restorative Practice Leaders, English Language Learner Leaders, Multi-Tiered System of Supports

Research Leaders:

Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Accountability Leaders

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22nd Curriculum, Research, and Instructional Leaders Conference
"Breaking Barriers: Advancing Strategic and Tactical Solutions for Urban Education"
July 8 – 11, 2025 – Westin Book Cadillac Detroit, Detroit, MI

Time	Tuesday, July 8th
7:30 am – 4:00 pm	**Conference Registration (Woodward Pre-Function)**
8:00 am – 9:00 am	**Breakfast (Venetian Ballroom)** **Welcome and Opening Remarks**
9:00 am – 10:15 am	**Strategic Shifts: Leading Change with Evidence** CGCS academic and research leaders will facilitate a group discussion and interactive exercise focused on the strategic use of evidence-based practices and effective change management. District leaders will use this time to reflect on current performance trends, assess the impact of existing strategies, and identify opportunities to strengthen planning and implementation for the upcoming school year.
10:15 am – 10:30 am	**Transition/Break**
	Role-Alike Sessions
10:30 am – 11:00 am	**Academic Leaders (Woodward AB)** **Setting the Stage: Mindset, Motive, & Methods (3 Ms)** Academic Leaders will collaborate to "set the stage" during this interactive and meaningful session. Being the change you want to see in the world is no easy feat, especially given the current educational landscape. Participants will learn what it takes to establish mindsets, motives, and methods that will launch into a successful week of learning. Participants will also discuss how these 3Ms can be used to "set the stage" for a successful school year in their respective districts. **Research Leaders (Woodward D)** **Research Director Icebreaker and Networking** Kick off the conference by connecting with fellow research directors in an engaging and interactive icebreaker session. Build relationships, share experiences, and set the tone for meaningful collaboration throughout the week.
	Role-Alike Sessions
11:00 am – 12:00 pm	**Academic Leaders (Woodward AB)** **Laying the Groundwork for a Coherent & Aligned Curricular Framework – Building a Powerful Vision** Building on Mindset, Motive, and Methods, this session will help district leaders lay the groundwork for establishing a powerful instructional vision that can be realized through a coherent and aligned curricular framework. Utilizing the *Supporting Excellence Framework, 2nd Edition*, participants will address initial steps in building a collective instructional vision and identifying areas of their current curriculum that could be enhanced with improved coherence and alignment. **Research Leaders (Woodward D)** **Addressing Key Challenges in Leading Research in Urban Districts** This session is designed for research directors to collaboratively tackle specific problems of practice in their work. Using a structured consultancy protocol, participants will present a specific professional dilemma, engage in reflective questioning, and receive constructive feedback from their peers. This discussion will lay the foundation for the work ahead, setting the stage for deeper reflection and solution-building throughout the week.

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Time	Tuesday, July 8th
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	**Lunch (Venetian Ballroom)**
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	**Keynote Speaker (Woodward AB)** *Dr. Shawn Joseph,* Interim Superintendent of Prince George's County Public Schools and Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy at Howard University
2:00 pm – 2:15 pm	**Transition/Break**
	Role-Alike Sessions
2:15 pm – 3:15 pm	**Academic Leaders (Woodward AB)** **Laying the Groundwork for a Coherent & Aligned Curricular Framework –Building a Roadmap from Research to Practice (Part 1)** District Leaders will learn how their member district colleagues utilized research to translate their instructional vision, transformed instructional practices, and improved student outcomes. The *Supporting Excellence Framework Curriculum Quality Rubric, 2nd Edition,* will be introduced as a springboard for participants to use as they create and/or modify their roadmap to excellence, identifying barriers needing to be broken down, and addressing unfinished learning to close achievement gaps. **Research Leaders (Woodward D)** **Addressing Key Challenges in Leading Research in Urban Districts (Continued)** This session is designed for research directors to collaboratively tackle specific problems of practice in their work. Using a structured consultancy protocol, participants will present a specific professional dilemma, engage in reflective questioning, and receive constructive feedback from their peers. This discussion will lay the foundation for the work ahead, setting the stage for deeper reflection and solution-building throughout the week.
3:15 pm – 3:30 pm	**Break**
	Role-Alike Sessions
3:30 pm – 5:00 pm	**Academic Leaders (Woodward AB)** **Laying the Groundwork for a Coherent & Aligned Curricular Framework –Building a Roadmap from Research to Practice (Part 2)** Panel presentations on Key Features 1, 2, 5, and 6 from the *Supporting Excellence Framework* will feature Amanda Grossi, Jazleen Othman, and Carynne Conover from Newark Public Schools, along with Elizabeth (Liz) Triden from Detroit Public Schools. **Research Leaders (Woodward D)** **Centering Data in the Strategic Planning Process** In this session, we will explore the crucial role of data in strategic planning and the challenges of leveraging it effectively. Led by the Council's Director of Governance, AJ Crabill and Research Manager, Chester Holland, we will examine the key responsibilities of research directors in both planning and monitoring data in strategic planning. Additionally, we will discuss important contextual factors that shape these efforts, ensuring data-driven decisions that align with organizational goals.
5:30 pm – 7:30 pm	**Onsite Reception (Venetian Ballroom)** ***Student Performance:*** *Cody High School Drumline*

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Time	Wednesday, July 9th
7:30 am – 4:00 pm	**Conference Registration**
8:00 am – 8:45 am	**Breakfast (Venetian Ballroom)**
8:45 am – 9:00 am	**Transition/Break**
9:00 am – 10:15 am	**Keynote Speaker** **(Woodward AB)** ***Student Performance:*** *Renaissance High School Chamber Orchestra* ***Welcome and Introduction of Speaker*** – *Ray Hart, Ph.D.,* Executive Director, Council of the Great City Schools ***Speaker*** – *Dr. Nikolai Vitti,* Superintendent, Detroit Public Schools Community District
10:15 am – 10:30 am	**Transition/Break**
10:30 am – 11:30 am	**Joint Role-Alike Session** **Academic & Research Leaders** **(Woodward AB)** **Bridging Research and Curriculum: Strengthening Academic Programming** Bringing together curriculum and research leaders from Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), this joint session will explore strategies for effectively integrating research into academic program development. Discussions will focus on selecting high quality resources, identifying key points for cross-department collaboration throughout the process, and ensuring programs are designed with evaluation in mind. Participants will also examine current challenges and best practices for fostering research-driven approaches to program development and curricular design. – *Dr. William Johnston,* Senior Executive Director of Strategy, LAUSD – *Dr. Frances Baez,* Chief Academic Officer, LAUSD ***Cross-District Reflection & Discussion***
11:30 am – 12:30 pm	**Lunch (Venetian Ballroom)**
12:30 pm – 2:00 pm	**Keynote Panel** ***Reimagining What's Possible: Innovations, Insights, and Impact*** **(Woodward AB)** ***Moderator*** – *Dr. Michael Casserly,* Strategic Advisor, Council of the Great City Schools ***Keynote Panel Speakers*** – *Dr. Gloria Ladson Billings,* Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Education – *Dr. Cara Jackson,* Founder, Evidence Use in Education LLC, and Research Manager for the Center for Outcomes Based Contracting at the Southern Education Foundation – *Dr. Susan Dynarski,* Graham Professor of Education, Harvard University
2:00 pm – 2:15 pm	**Transition/Break**

Time	Wednesday, July 9th
District-Led Presentations – 2:15 pm - 3:00 pm	

Room	Title and Description	Presenters and Districts
Crystal Ballroom	**Making Learning Local: How Districts Build Community-Centric Curriculum** Join us for a rich exchange of ideas, strategies, and success stories as we celebrate the power of local voices. In this era where one-size-fits-all materials often fail to move the dial, community-centered curriculum offers a way to transform the educational landscape through materials that reflect and center the voices and needs of the communities we serve. In this session, participants will hear from three districts that have supplemented, revised, or rebuilt their curricula to incorporate local histories, languages, texts, and contexts. District leaders will share the unique challenges that led them to prioritize localized materials, steps they took to ensure the process worked for their stakeholders, strategies they used to support implementation, and the impact these efforts have had on teaching and learning. Come explore how thoughtful, district-driven curriculum design can help us create a more inclusive educational future.	• Jane Fleming, Director of Literacy, *Chicago Public Schools* • Melissa Aviles-Ramos, Chancellor, *New York City Public Schools* • Mike Feeney, Executive Director, Elementary Education, *Pinellas County Schools* • Paul Wilson, Senior Education Lead, *Public Consulting Group* • Katanna Conley, Ph.D., Senior Managing Education Advisor, *Public Consulting Group* **Diamond Sponsor:** Public Consulting Group
Woodward C	**Philadelphia's Not Counted Out! Accelerating Philly Math** In this session, The School District of Philadelphia (SDP) team will share the strategic efforts of system leaders to accelerate math achievement by centering schools as a primary unit of change. They will share their strategies for system implementation of High-Quality Instructional Math Resources across all schools and strategic efforts to monitor and support effective implementation. All of these efforts are a part of the district's strategic plan to Accelerate Philly and ensure that SDP becomes the fastest improving large urban school district!	• Dr. Jermaine Dawson, Deputy Superintendent of Academic Services • Dr. Nyshawana Francis-Thompson, Chief of Curriculum and Instruction *The School District of Philadelphia* **Diamond Sponsor:** Imagine Learning

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Time	Wednesday, July 9th	
District-Led Presentations – 2:15 pm - 3:00 pm		
Room	**Title and Description**	**Presenters and Districts**
Woodward D	**Silos to Synergy: Creative Strategies to Integrate Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Supports with Academics** In large urban districts, curriculum leaders are uniquely positioned to shape systems that address both academic achievement and student well-being—but siloed initiatives and limited capacity often stand in the way. This session explores how Austin ISD partnered with CharacterStrong to design and implement a comprehensive MTSS framework that truly integrates social, emotional, behavioral, and academic supports. Through a lens of creative problem-solving and system-level design, participants will learn how the district: • Centered adult behavior change to drive classroom and school-wide implementation • Equipped educators with low-burden, high-impact Tier 1, 2, and 3 strategies • Built internal expertise by empowering school-based champions • Aligned SEL and behavior efforts with academic goals and the district strategic plan • Used visibility and storytelling to spotlight momentum and build ownership	• Krystal Colhoff, Director of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, ***Austin Independent School District*** • Dr. Clay Cook, Chief Development Officer, **CharacterStrong** • Dr. Alisha Hill, Executive Director of Professional Services, **CharacterStrong** • Sarah Mathew, **CharacterStrong** • Britt Shurley, **CharacterStrong** **Diamond Sponsor:** CharacterStrong
Founders A	**AI for All: Bridging the Digital Divide in Urban Education** Recognizing that "access to AI education is not just a privilege—it's a necessity," District 19 has partnered with MagicSchool to integrate generative AI within K-8 curricula, provide hands-on training for educators and administrators, and engage families through informative workshops. This comprehensive strategy ensures AI education is both accessible and sustainable, embedding culturally responsive content and inclusive pedagogical practices that empower students not merely as consumers but as creators and leaders in the AI era. This initiative showcases how strategic use of data and meaningful community engagement drive sustainable change and the implementation of high-quality curricula in urban education. As highlighted in the recent article "The human edge in the AI era," embracing AI in education demands a commitment to continuous learning and adaptation, effectively preparing students for future challenges. Conference participants will leave with actionable insights for building equitable, future-ready learning environments that bridge the digital divide and empower every child to succeed.	• Teneika Benn, Ed. D., Founding Principal, District 19 • Jabari K. Edwards, Principal, District 19 ***New York City Public Schools*** • Dr. Shawn Joseph, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent, **Prince George's County Public Schools** • Sarah Marr, Regional Vice President, **MagicSchool** • Gerry Denza, Account Executive, **MagicSchool** **Diamond Sponsor:** MagicSchool

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Time	Wednesday, July 9th
District-Led Presentations – 3:10 pm - 3:55 pm	

Room	Title and Description	Presenters and Districts
Crystal Ballroom	**Fresh Ideas: Effective Practices to Support Freshmen in Guilford County Schools** Harder classes, unfamiliar teachers and students, and bigger buildings to navigate – freshman year is marked with many potential challenges. National research has shown that ninth grade is a make-or-break year when it comes to graduating from high school. Learn how Guilford County Schools used a mixed methods approach and stakeholder engagement strategies to understand how to improve school supports for rising freshmen and inform a districtwide comprehensive transition plan. Our approach prioritized student and administrator voice to understand current challenges and practices, as well as a difference-in-difference analysis to understand the impact of the specialized freshman academy model.	• Dr. Jimmy Leak, Interim Director of Accountability, Research and Planning • Dr. Kimberly Steinke, Chief Exceptional Children and Student Support Service Officer *Guilford County Schools*
Woodward AB	**Scoring Big in Advanced Placement: Accelerating Access and Equity Through Data-Driven Strategy** This session will showcase a comprehensive Advanced Placement (AP) strategy adopted by the Detroit Public Schools Community District designed to expand access, accelerate instructional quality, and actualize student success through the intentional use of data and collaborative professional learning. Grounded in a theory of action that connects equity with excellence, this strategy leverages data at every level to meet three districtwide goals: (1) expand participation in Advanced Placement courses in underrepresented schools, (2) strengthen AP instructional quality at all schools, and (3) increase the number of students earning college credit through AP exams. Presenters will also share how school-based instructional leaders and AP teachers are supported through recurring Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) focused on data-driven collaboration. Participants will examine how a wide range of data, including AP Potential reports derived from P/SAT results, AP Instructional Planning Reports, AP Classroom usage data, classroom observation data, student work artifacts, and school-level participation trends to inform goal setting, guide resource allocation, and shape instructional support at scale.	• Dr. Sharon Hopkins, Assistant Director of Accelerated Programs • Dr. Angela Sherman, Senior Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction *Detroit Public Schools Community District*

Time	Wednesday, July 9th	
District-Led Presentations – 3:10 pm - 3:55 pm		
Room	**Title and Description**	**Presenters and Districts**
Woodward C	**District Leadership and Implementation Teams as Levers of Teaching and Learning to Maximize Capacity Building in Math and ELA Across the District** Guilford County Schools leveraged District Leadership and Implementation teams as strategic levers to maximize capacity building in Math and ELA across the district. This session will explore how cross-department collaboration fostered instructional alignment, enhanced professional learning, and strengthened leadership structures to drive student success. Participants will gain insights into how Guilford County Schools built a cohesive framework for sustainable instructional improvement, utilizing implementation teams to support teachers, refine curriculum, and create data-driven strategies. Join us to discover how a districtwide approach to leadership can bridge departments, empower educators, and improve outcomes in core academic areas.	• Emily Hare, Director of Mathematics • Ashley Hewitt, Director of Literacy *Guilford County Schools*
Woodward D	**Coaching Our Coaches: Building Instructional Coach Capacity at Scale** In this experiential presentation, educational leaders will reflect on their current model of building instructional coach capacity, learn about structures for developing capacity for high-leverage coaching tasks that foster teacher self-efficacy, and collaborate with colleagues to design structures that fill the gaps in their current model. Leaders will leave with a research-based plan for Coaching their Own Coaches in their districts.	• Marie Garrido Zoeller, Curriculum Supervisor *Broward County Public Schools*
Founders A	**Rooted and Relevant: Localizing Social Studies to Deepen Engagement and Civic Thinking** In this session, curriculum leaders from Detroit Public Schools Community District will share how they reimagined high school ELA and social studies curricula by grounding them in Dr. Gholdy Muhammad's 5 Pursuits—identity, skills, intellect, criticality, and joy. Moving beyond surface-level inclusion, the district redesigned its approach to reflect students' histories, lived experiences, and communities. Presenters will detail how they used a teacher-led Think Tank model, elevated student voice through place-based inquiry, and partnered with local artists and community historians to bring cultural relevance to the core of curriculum design. They will also share the leadership practices, revision cycles, and tools that supported this transformation. Participants will leave with a blueprint for developing culturally responsive curricula that disrupt traditional narratives and build collective capacity across large urban systems.	• Alisa Ruffin, Senior Director of Leadership • Liz Triden, Executive Director of Science and Social Studies *Detroit Public Schools Community District*

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Time	Wednesday, July 9th
District-Led Presentations – 3:10 pm - 3:55 pm	

Room	Title and Description	Presenters and Districts
Founders B *Panel Session*	**Turning Pages and Building Power: Elevating Reading Resilience and Student Efficacy through Stronger Connections:** In today's classrooms, literacy instruction must do more than build reading skills, it must inspire resilience, empower voice, and strengthen student identity. Our Stronger Connections Program does just that by embedding creativity, purpose, and ownership into every child's reading journey. In this session, we'll share how students made significant gains in reading and became published authors through a structured, scaffolded program that guides them through engaging experiences to develop a love for reading while affirming their cultural identities. The implementation of this program reduced the literacy gap among economically disadvantaged students from 5.8 (MAP RIT) points to just 0.19 points after the program. **Creating Pathways to Algebra I Success: From Gatekeeper to Gateway** Algebra I is a pivotal course for student success and a key predictor of college and career readiness. Yet for too many students in urban districts, inequitable access and inconsistent supports in Algebra I continue to create barriers to achievement. This session draws on the Creating Pathways to Algebra I Success case study developed by the National Math Improvement Project (NMIP) to highlight the strategies that Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is using to change that narrative.	• Dr. Soraya Matthews, Chief Officer for Student Success ***Fayette County Public Schools*** • John Vladovic, Executive Director of Secondary Instruction ***Los Angeles Unified School District***

District-Led Presentations – 4:05 pm - 4:50 pm	

Room	Title and Description	Presenters and Districts
Crystal Ballroom	**Enhancing Chronic Absenteeism Monitoring: Using Holistic Data to Progress Monitor Education's Most Critical Measure** Improving chronic absenteeism at every level is rightfully a top priority in the Washoe County School District (WCSD) and across the nation. As a field, we need to do everything we can to help students attend school regularly. This begins with understanding who is missing school, followed closely by understanding why they are missing, what is causing them to miss, and how we can improve their circumstances. Participants will leave this session with knowledge of the chronic absenteeism mathematical lock and a framework for enhancing chronic absenteeism monitoring based on work in WCSD. This approach uses a spectrum of absenteeism data to better inform chronic absenteeism in real time and in context. It includes monitoring ADA, consecutive days missed, period attendance, tardies, days missed thresholds, MTSS flags, transiency, new variables we've innovated, and others!	• Dr. JT Stark, Data Analytics Coordinator ***Washoe County School District***

Time	Wednesday, July 9ᵗʰ	
District-Led Presentations – 4:05 pm - 4:50 pm		
Room	**Title and Description**	**Presenters and Districts**
Woodward AB	**Analyzing the Impact of Discretionary Suspension Policy on Student Attendance and School Climate** In the 2023-2024 academic year, the Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) implemented new administrative guidelines granting school leaders greater flexibility to suspend students. This study analyzes the consequences of this policy shift, examining the relationship between suspension rates, student attendance, school climate, and academic achievement across two academic years (2022-23 and 2023-24). Using district administrative data, this analysis compares outcomes for suspended and non-suspended students and investigates school-level trends. The research indicated that while intended to manage student behavior, increased suspension flexibility comes at a significant cost to student attendance and school environment. We will provide recommendations that district leadership can use to lower student attendance and ensure disciplinary actions are balanced with the district's primary goal of student presence and learning, while addressing data quality issues to facilitate more robust monitoring and analysis.	• Jake Winfield, PhD, Senior Research Analyst • Walter Cook, Senior Director of Research and Data Science ***Detroit Public Schools Community District***
Woodward C	**Coaching for Coherence: Cross-Content Leadership and Implementation Support for HQIM** Participants will learn how the math and literacy departments are working together to champion instructional vision and systemic designs that support shared language, aligned practices, and meaningful coaching cycles. Participants will discuss utilizing different roles in the system such as external partners, school-based coaches, school-based leaders, and district support roles to maximize implementation support. Additionally, GCS will share how district math and literacy specialists, often siloed by subject, are being intentionally integrated into this system to provide aligned, high-impact support to coaches and school leaders. Join us to explore how coordinated leadership and unified coaching models can drive systems-level change and improve instruction across content areas. Attendees will leave with key design considerations and ideas to bring back to their own districts.	• Emily Hare, Director of Mathematics • Ashley Hewitt, Director of Literacy ***Guilford County Schools***

Time	Wednesday, July 9ᵗʰ
District-Led Presentations – 4:05 pm - 4:50 pm	

Room	Title and Description	Presenters and Districts
Woodward D	**Solving for Scale: Implementing High-Quality Math Curriculum Across Urban Systems** What does it take to scale high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) in mathematics across some of the largest and most complex school systems in the country? In this session, district leaders from Los Angeles Unified School District, New York City Public Schools, and the School District of Philadelphia will share how they are driving systems-level change through their participation in the National Math Improvement Project (NMIP). Each district has taken a unique approach to scaling HQIM, from piloting new materials in targeted cohorts to launching district-wide implementations. Presenters will highlight key strategies around central office alignment, school-level supports, and professional learning that are helping them build coherence and fidelity in math instruction. The session will also explore how districts are monitoring implementation, supporting educator capacity, and using data to make mid-course adjustments—all in service of improving student achievement and closing equity gaps in mathematics. This session is designed to be interactive, with ample time for discussion and Q&A. Participants are encouraged to bring questions, share experiences, and engage with peers and presenters around what it takes to move from adoption to sustainable, equity-driven implementation at scale.	• Dr. Nyshawana Francis-Thompson, Chief of Curriculum & Instruction, *School District of Philadelphia* • Nicole Williams, Executive Director of STEM, *New York City Public Schools* • Dr. Frances Baez, Chief Academic Officer, *Los Angeles Unified School District*
Founders A	**How Aligning Teams Around Excellent Instruction Accelerated Achievement in Charleston** Over four years, including the onset of the global pandemic, Charleston County School District rapidly accelerated math and literacy outcomes in the district's historically lowest-performing schools through intentional teacher support and collaboration rooted in high-quality instructional materials. Nine out of 10 turnaround schools are now off the state improvement list, students have outpaced pre-pandemic gains, and a culture of professional learning is flourishing. As of 2024, the district overall leads the nation in literacy and math recovery. This case study session will unpack key moves the district took to enable a coherent strategy that is producing sustainable results. Key system-level academic leaders within the district and their partners at Leading Educators will explain the conditions that were necessary for ownership of high-quality instructional materials and ongoing professional learning, how responsibilities were shared across vertically aligned roles, how delivery formats and content evolved over time, and the role of progress monitoring to support continuous improvement.	• Jacqueline Haynes, Associate Superintendent for Acceleration Schools • Michelle Simmons, Chief Academic Officer *Charleston County School District*

Time	Wednesday, July 9th
District-Led Presentations – 4:05 pm - 4:50 pm	

Room	Title and Description	Presenters and Districts
Founders B *Panel Session*	**Breaking Barriers: Culturally Responsive Practices for Multilingual Learner Success** In today's increasingly diverse classrooms, supporting multilingual learners requires innovative approaches that build on students' cultural strengths rather than focusing solely on English acquisition. Panelists will share how they've created meaningful connections with families through two-way translated communications, enabling parents to actively participate in their children's learning journey regardless of language barriers. The discussion will explore how students develop both academic language and social-emotional skills when they can record themselves, reflect on their progress, and make connections between school content and home experiences. Educators will showcase how this culturally responsive approach helps multilingual students develop pride in their identities while gaining the confidence to excel academically. Join us to hear practical strategies and success stories from this district's ongoing work to create inclusive learning environments where every student's voice and background is honored and elevated. **Maximizing District and Teacher Voices to create a Differentiated Support Program for New Teachers** Guilford County Schools employs a differentiated approach to supporting new teachers by analyzing research, stakeholder data, and the voices of our new educators to design a personalized induction experience. This program aims to create effective teachers early and to promote retention. In this session, we will share about our approach and key levers of GCS Induction: A differentiated orientation plan that focuses on instruction, followed by professional learning events and in-field coaching; Tailored coaching and support from an expert New Teacher Support Coach to foster growth and highly trained, responsive and supportive mentors.	• Kim Guzman, School Administrator • Hilary Furnis Lawrence, Teacher *San Diego Unified School District* • Jusmar Rodriguez Maness, Chief Academic Officer • Crystal Vandiver, Director of New Teacher Support *Guilford County Schools*
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm	**Offsite Reception – Detroit Institute of Arts Museum** **Transportation will be provided**	

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Time	Thursday, July 10th
7:30 am – 1:00 pm	Conference Registration
8:00 am – 9:00 am	**Breakfast (Venetian Ballroom)**
9:00 am – 9:15 am	**Transition/Break**
District-Led Presentations – 9:15 am - 10:00 am	

Room	Title and Description	Presenters and Districts
Crystal Ballroom	**Beyond the ABCs: Addressing Non-Academic Factors in MTSS to Enhance Graduation Rates** This dynamic presentation explores the critical role of non-academic factors within Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to boost high school graduation rates. While traditional early warning systems focus on Attendance, Behavior, and Course completion, research reveals that mental health, self-efficacy, and social-emotional wellness significantly impact student success, particularly at the secondary level. Participants will learn practical strategies for implementing comprehensive screening that captures both academic and non-academic risk factors, using tools that provide educators with a holistic view of each student. We'll explore effective methods for addressing mental health concerns, building student self-efficacy, and integrating social-emotional learning across curriculum areas to support students' overall wellbeing and academic success. Special attention will be given to creating systems that recognize diverse student experiences and provide appropriate interventions based on individual needs rather than one-size-fits-all approaches. Attendees will leave with actionable frameworks for developing graduation coaching, student success plans, and community partnerships to expand support options.	• Akoni Derige, MTSS Director • Jennifer Hoogerhyde, Director of Special Education *San Diego Unified School District* • Dr. Robert R. Zywicki, Superintendent in Residence, Rutgers Graduate school of Education and Senior Director, **Renaissance** **Diamond Sponsor:** Renaissance
Woodward C	**Chicago Public Schools: Systems to Support Principal** Leadership at the Instructional Core Daniel de los Reyes, Principal in CPS, shares how equity-driven change management and internal coherence transformed his school—and how those systems are now scaling across the district. Learn how CPS builds principal capacity to lead with the instructional core through HQIM, dual-language programming, and distributed leadership. Participants will leave with insight and tactics on how school-level leadership can drive districtwide equity, academic rigor, and student-centered transformation through rigor walks.	• Daniel De Los Reyes, Principal **Chicago Public Schools** **Diamond Sponsor:** ThinkCERCA

Time	Thursday, July 10th
District-Led Presentations – 9:15 am - 10:00 am	

Room	Title and Description	Presenters and Districts
Founders A	**Scaling Success: Implementing Math Programs for Districtwide Impact** Recent Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) results showed Houston as one of the few large districts making strong progress in Grade 4 math while improving outcomes for students at all starting proficiency levels. Among 14 TUDA districts achieving significant gains in math, Houston stands out not only for returning to near pre-pandemic performance levels but also for narrowing the achievement gap between higher- and lower-performing students. While most TUDA districts saw their gaps widen by four points (reaching a record 51-point disparity), Houston narrowed these gaps, demonstrating that struggling students can catch up and move forward in grade-level math. This session will delve into the strategies behind these results, which align with Houston ISD's strategic priorities. Central to this progress is a districtwide K–8 math learning acceleration initiative that standardized curriculum implementation and provided high-quality instructional materials to ensure rigorous math content across all campuses. In line with HISD's commitment to improving the quality of instruction, the district also invested in professional development, equipping educators with research-backed strategies and effective use of technology to enhance instruction.	• Donelle Williams, Director of Professional Development, **Houston Independent School District** • Beth Sappe, Director of Partnerships, **Zearn Math** **Diamond Sponsor:** Zearn

| **District-Led Presentations – 10:10 am - 10:55 am** |||

Room	Title and Description	Presenters and Districts
Crystal Ballroom	**Cultivating a Culture of Coaching to Foster Team Success in Detroit** More than 1 in 10 public school principals left their roles between 2020-21 and 2021-22, with turnover higher in schools serving students of color. Detroit Public Schools Community District recognizes that for schools to succeed in accelerating learning, our principals and the teams they lead must have meaningful and coherent support to own our instructional strategy, continue developing role-specific skills, receive frequent and meaningful feedback, and feel aligned around the collective charge. That is why we have worked with Leading Educators to implement a multi-layer coaching approach embedded in our data-driven approach to instructional improvement. To see our schools "rise up," we seek to build the capacity of local leaders who are prepared to take action, develop others, prioritize long-term student success, and celebrate our students' assets. These investments are paying off in student growth that outpaces many of our regional peers, and we're seeing greater consistency across schools. This case study session will unpack the coaching model, key moves DPSCD took to enable a coherent coaching approach, and what we are thinking about next.	• Leenet Campbell-Williams, Chief Academic Officer • Alisa Ruffin, Senior Director of Leadership Development *Detroit Public Schools Community District*

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22nd Curriculum, Research, and Instructional Leaders Conference
"Breaking Barriers: Advancing Strategic and Tactical Solutions for Urban Education"
July 8 – 11, 2025 – Westin Book Cadillac Detroit, Detroit, MI

Time	Thursday, July 10th
District-Led Presentations – 10:10 am - 10:55 am	

Room	Title and Description	Presenters and Districts
Woodward AB	**Summer Programs in SDP: From Insights to Action - One Year Later** This is a follow-up to a presentation given at last year's conference about the evolution of summer program evaluation and planning in the School District of Philadelphia. From 2020-2023, we were stuck in an annual pattern: the research office would conduct evaluations and share findings, and the program office would have good intentions of taking action based on the findings, but the next summer we would be right back where we started—doing the same evaluation and sharing the same findings once again. At last year's conference, I talked optimistically about disrupting that pattern for summer 2024 programming by putting the research findings into action. In this presentation, I'll provide an update on that story and share key successes and areas for continued improvement that have emerged during a period of strong collaboration, coordination, and communication among staff in the research and program offices.	• Joy Lesnick, Deputy Chief, Research, Evaluation, and Academic Partnerships ***School District of Philadelphia***
Woodward C	**Connecting Content: Leveraging Social Studies Skills to Enhance Literacy** Social Studies teachers are often asked to support ELA standards, sometimes at the expense of their own content. However, many social science disciplinary skills are also literacy skills, just applied differently. To clarify these connections, we developed a crosswalk showing where Social Studies and ELA intersect, demonstrating how Social Studies can support literacy while maintaining its disciplinary integrity. This session offers a high-level overview of the document and its intended use for Social Studies teachers and PLCs, helping educators leverage disciplinary skills to support literacy without sacrificing high-quality Social Studies instruction.	• Karen Ellis, Executive Director of Academics • Ashley Hewitt, Director of Literacy ***Guilford County Schools***
Woodward D	**From Vision to Impact: Lessons From our K-5 Math Academies** Dallas ISD is committed to advancing teachers' knowledge of the content and pedagogy of elementary mathematics. This sparked the creation and launch of a three-day, internal math academy for Kindergarten through 5th grade teachers. Each session incorporated hands-on activities, student-centered collaboration, and focused content conversations on learning progressions across and between grade levels. Together, these experiences equipped teachers with the knowledge and skills to foster strong mathematical foundations in their students. Join us to learn about the content, logistics, and impact of this professional learning series in Dallas ISD.	• Angie Gaylord, Chief Academic Officer • Aaron Aguirre-Castillo, Executive Director • Aaron Daffern, Director of Mathematics ***Dallas Independent School District***

Time	Thursday, July 10th
	District-Led Presentations – 10:10 am - 10:55 am

Room	Title and Description	Presenters and Districts
Founders A	**Writing with Purpose: Building a Student-Centered, Knowledge-Rich Curriculum** Newark Public Schools has embarked on a multi-year journey to design and implement a comprehensive, standards-aligned curriculum that places students at the center of learning. Grounded in the district's instructional vision and philosophy, the curriculum is intentionally knowledge-building, supporting students in making meaning through writing while deepening their understanding of content across disciplines. In this session, we will share how the framework from the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS), as well as feedback from district stakeholders, informed the curricular revision process from unit design to instructional planning. Participants will learn how the curriculum was revised to align with the updated New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) while honoring the district's core belief that writing is both a tool for learning and a means for student voice and agency. This presentation will highlight the collaborative structures used to engage teachers, the tools developed to support implementation (including unit overviews, student work protocols, and pacing guidance), and the professional learning plan designed to build capacity across schools.	• Jazleen Othman, Director of English *Newark Public Schools*

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Time	Thursday, July 10th
District-Led Presentations – 10:10 am - 10:55 am	

Room	Title and Description	Presenters and Districts
Founders B *Panel Session*	**Turning Short-Term Wins into Long-Term Impact in Urban Schools** Districts are racing to accelerate academic recovery while building lasting systems of support for historically underserved students. Although the U.S. invests over $800 billion each year in K–12 education, too many students—particularly in large urban systems—are still falling behind in reading and math. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), one of the nation's most effective and innovative districts, is leading efforts to change that. The University of Chicago Education Lab's Personalized Learning Initiative is tackling one of the biggest challenges in education: how to help students who are years behind catch up—fast. In partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools and other leading districts, we are designing and scaling high-dosage tutoring models that are intensive, personalized, and affordable enough to reach every student who needs them. This session will unpack: • How M-DCPS is leading the charge by co-designing tutoring that meets students where they are without compromising on quality or affordability, • What it really takes to scale high-impact tutoring in a large urban system—from smart scheduling to strong infrastructure, and • How to turn short-term pilots into lasting programs that districts own—without relying on temporary funding or burning out teachers.	• Michelle White, District Director, *Miami-Dade County Public Schools* • Anne Lombardi, Senior Research Manager, *University of Chicago Education Lab*

Time	Thursday, July 10th
District-Led Presentations – 10:10 am - 10:55 am	

Room	Title and Description	Presenters and Districts
Founders B *Panel Session*	**Navigating the Challenges and Affordances of Data Sharing in a Research-Practice-Platform Partnership** Linking disparate data, such as student test scores, student demographics, and teacher assignments, is central to the education research enterprise. In this session, NYC Public School Research & Policy Support Group staff will share how they have worked with one digital learning platform provider and a group of researchers, as an example of the promises and challenges of leveraging platform data for research purposes. We will discuss the evolution of data sharing within a partnership between the district, research organizations, and a digital learning platform provider, with respect to: (a) compliance and ethics, legal frameworks, and technical and security safeguards and (b) challenges that arose and how the relevant parties worked through them in order to establish a data transfer process, with particular attention to the technical, adaptive, and interpretive challenges. We will also share our reflections on the questions that emerged as well as our recommendations for data sharing among these types of partnerships. We invite other districts to join us in discussing the challenges they have encountered and solutions they have developed in using and sharing digital learning platform data for research and evaluation **Strategy in Focus: Activating Your Organization's Competitive Edge** Faced with limited resources and declining public school enrollment trends, K-12 districts are presented with a universal challenge: discovering and activating their unique competitive advantage. Operational effectiveness is necessary but not sufficient; districts also need to make intentional trade-offs and choose strategic positioning that allows them to compete and fuel their resource engine. In this session, Guilford County Schools will share their systemic approach to identifying a "Hedgehog Concept", inspired by Jim Collins' Good to Great, to define the district's strategic focus. The Hedgehog Concept lies at the intersection of what we are deeply passionate about, what drives our resource engine, and what we can be best in the world at. The district prioritized capacity-building at multiple levels of the organization to simultaneously gain a deeper understanding of comparative strengths, support continuous improvement of implementation, and use implementation data to inform allocation of resources to advance the strategic focus. GCS will share key considerations in operationalizing the Hedgehog Concept, centered on providing postsecondary experiences to students while they are in school. The district will also share reflections on the importance of stakeholder engagement and data use to understand opportunities and gaps in achieving our vision.	• Josh Smith, Research & Data Director, Research & Policy Support Group • Emily Stevens, Research & Evaluation Manager, Research & Policy Support Group *New York City Public Schools* • Jusmar Maness, Chief Academic Officer • Kimberly Steinke, Chief Exceptional Children and Student Services Officer *Guilford Public Schools*

Time	Thursday, July 10th
District-Led Presentations – 11:05 am -11:50 am	

Room	Title and Description	Presenters and Districts
Crystal Ballroom	**Understanding the Implementation and Impact of i-Ready Personalized Instruction in Oakland Unified School District** As investments in digital learning platforms, such as i-Ready Personalized Instruction, continue to grow, it is important to understand the implementation and impact of these resources in specific district contexts. In this session, Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and the Center for Education Efficacy, Excellence, and Equity (E4) at Northwestern University will describe how they worked together to better understand the impact of i-Ready Personalized Instruction on academic growth in the district. This presentation will highlight how the partnership between OUSD and E4 unfolded and provide an overview of the collaborative process through which the two organizations sought to communicate complex and nuanced findings to district leaders and educators. Presenters will: • Explore the relationship between usage of i-Ready Personalized Instruction (minutes used and lesson pass rates for math and reading lessons) and subsequent growth on the i-Ready Diagnostic Assessment, • Detail how this relationship varies by grade level, baseline academic performance, and student demographics, • Describe school-level variation in the implementation of i-Ready Personalized Instruction, and Reflect on lessons learned from conducting partnered research, including how to navigate challenges related to data sharing, interpretation, and district capacity.	• Rinat Fried, Research Associate, 0-8, *Oakland Unified School District* • Amy Auletto, E4 Assistant Director, *Northwestern University*
Woodward C	**Keeping the Momentum to Accelerate Learning: Aligning Resources and Leveraging Research in a Post-ESSER Era to Sustain High-Dosage Tutoring in Guilford County Schools** As federal ESSER funding wound down, Guilford County Schools is strategically aligning resources to sustain high-dose tutoring as a critical intervention for accelerating student learning. This session will explore how research-driven insights, including findings from the R2R deep dive study, inform tutoring implementation and data-driven decision-making. Participants will learn how cross-department collaboration—engaging literacy and math teams, data specialists, and community partners—has strengthened instructional alignment, tutor training, and impact measurement. Attendees will gain practical strategies for securing funding, fostering policy support, and leveraging real-time tutoring data dashboards to meet the needs of our most vulnerable students.	• Kara Hamilton, Director of Tutoring • Dr. Jimmy Leak, Interim Director of Accountability, Research and Evaluation *Guilford County Schools*

Time	Thursday, July 10th	
District-Led Presentations – 11:05 am -11:50 am		
Room	**Title and Description**	**Presenters and Districts**
Woodward D	**Bilingual Brilliance: Strategies for Coherent and Culturally Responsive Instruction for Multilingual Learners** As urban districts across the country seek more effective ways to support Multilingual Learners (MLLs), Denver Public Schools (DPS) has developed a set of intentional, research-informed practices that have led to stronger academic outcomes and deeper student engagement. This session will provide district leaders with actionable strategies for designing language programming that honors students' home languages while accelerating their English language development. Participants will walk away with an understanding of how to build instructional systems that are linguistically and culturally sustaining while maintaining high academic rigor. We will highlight key structures DPS has put in place to support teacher capacity, curriculum alignment, and data-informed decision-making at both the classroom and system levels. Additionally, attendees will have opportunities to reflect on their own district's context and begin identifying concrete next steps for enhancing programming for MLLs.	• Jacquelyn Wagner, Program Manager, Humanities • Jennifer Begley, Director, Humanities • Leah Younkin, Manager, Humanities • Leticia Jara-Leake, Executive Director, Multilingual Education ***Denver Public Schools***
Founders A	**Coaching Coaches: Investing in Instructional Leadership** Too often, the best educators are promoted into instructional leadership—and then left to figure it out. And while study after study shows that instructional coaching can have a huge impact on student outcomes, quality of coaching matters. So how do you ensure instructional leaders are set up for success? Learn how Pittsburg Public Schools took a systems-approach to improving math instruction, pairing investments in our instructional leaders with an ambitious roll-out of Illustrative Math's problem-based math curriculum. Dig into our professional learning plan to see how we connected workshops, 1:1 virtual coaching, self-paced courses, and learning walks to ensure our coaches—and ultimately teachers—were implementing high-quality math instruction with fidelity.	• Jessica Pisano, Coordinator of 6-8 Mathematics ***Pittsburgh Public Schools***
Founders B	**Leveling Up Civic Thinking: A Partnership to Promote Local Civic Engagement in Social Studies** In this session, Detroit Public Schools Community District will share how they are evolving high school Civics materials and instruction to foster deeper civic thinking, local engagement, and inquiry. Using our core curriculum as a foundational tool, the district has designed strategic enhancements that center student voice, community relevance, and action-oriented learning through our Citizen Manual. This locally developed resource elevates civic agency by guiding students through real-world issues, Detroit-specific case studies, and opportunities for informed action. Attendees will leave with practical strategies for leveraging core curriculum as a launchpad for promoting justice-oriented, place-based civic education in urban schools.	• Liz Triden, Executive Director of Science and Social Studies ***Detroit Public Schools Community District***

Time	Thursday, July 10th
11:50 am – 12:00 pm	**Transition/Break**
12:00 pm – 2:00 pm	**Awards Luncheon (Venetian Ballroom)** *Student Performance: Detroit School of Arts African Drum/Dance Performance* *Special Presentation of Awards* **Curriculum Award** *Sponsored by Curriculum Associates* **Research Team Award** *Sponsored by NWEA* **Opportunity and Access Award** *Sponsored by Amplify*
2:00 pm – 2:15 pm	**Transition/Break**
2:15 pm – 3:00 pm	**Student Panel (Woodward AB)** *Moderator: Ms. Michaela Leslie-Rule*, K-12 Education, Gates Foundation In this session, high school students will share their perspectives on the purpose of education and reflect on how their K–12 experiences, academic and non-academic experiences such as extracurricular activities or community service, have shaped their identities, aspirations, and sense of ownership over their learning journey. Panelists will discuss what and who helped them to set and reach their goals, what challenges they have faced, and what changes they hope students will experience in schools in the future. This session provides participants an opportunity to listen, learn, and consider how student voice can drive meaningful improvements in educational practice and policy.
3:00 pm – 3:15 pm	**Transition/Break**
3:15 pm – 4:00 pm	**Role-Alike Sessions** **Academic Leaders (Woodward AB)** **The Intersection of Data-Driven Practices Across the Educational Ecosystem** This session will begin with a reflection on the Student Panel. Participants will discuss how what they heard could be incorporated into their instructional vision and roadmap. The group will shift to highlight the role of data and Generative AI as ways to support instruction and improve efficiencies within the context of a coherent and aligned curricular framework. **Research Leaders (Woodward D)** **Putting Data to Work: Actionable Early Warning Systems** In this session, we will explore early warning systems, highlighting a research-driven, homegrown predictive algorithm developed to identify graduation risks with 96% accuracy as early as 9th grade—significantly outperforming traditional methods. Currently implemented district-wide in high schools and expanding into elementary and middle schools, this system leverages advanced machine learning techniques to deliver actionable, data-informed insights. The session will cover its methodology, distinctive features, effectiveness, and the district's commitment to building proactive, student-centered supports through strong school partnerships.

Time	Thursday, July 10th
	Role-Alike Sessions
4:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Academic Leaders **(Woodward AB)** **Plot-Twist! Progress Monitoring and Course Correction: Knowing More and Doing Better** Accelerating Learning for ALL through Joyful, Grade-Level, High-Quality Instruction Focused on accelerating learning for ALL students through joyful, grade-level, high-quality instruction, Guilford County Schools will share their district's approach to providing high-quality instruction to all students by exploring joyful instruction as an integrated approach across academic subjects, aligning indicators for grade-level instruction, and deepening their implementation of effective PLCs as a tool to implement joyful, grade-level instruction, and impact student learning outcomes. – *Jusmar Rodriguez Maness*, Chief Academic Officer, Guilford County Schools – *Karen Ellis*, Executive Director of Academics, Guilford County Schools Research Leaders **(Woodward D)** **Developing Strategic Solutions for Key Challenges** Building on the challenges discussed in our first session, this session will focus on identifying actionable next steps to advance our work. Cara Jackson, Founder of Evidence Use in Education, LLC and Research Manager for the Center for Outcomes Based Contracting at the Southern Education Foundation, will guide districts in developing clearer insights, practical strategies, and stronger collaborative networks to address key challenges and drive meaningful progress.
5:00 pm	**Night on Your Own**

Time	Friday, July 11th
8:00 am – 9:00 am	**Breakfast (Venetian Ballroom)**
9:00 am – 10:15 am	**Legislative Updates Session** **(Woodward AB)** This session will provide an update on legislation and legal cases impacting urban public school systems (to date). – *Manish Naik,* Director of Legislative Services, Council of the Great City Schools – *Mary Lawson,* General Counsel, Council of the Great City Schools
10:15 am – 10:25 am	**Cross-District Reflection & Discussion**
10:30 am	**Closing Remarks**

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MEMPHIS SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS
ACADEMIC STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM REVIEW

A Review
of the Academic Program of Memphis Shelby County Schools

by the

Council of the Great City Schools

January 2025

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

The Council of the Great City Schools thanks the many individuals who contributed to this project to improve the academic achievement of the students in the Memphis Shelby County Schools. The efforts of these individuals were critical to our ability to present the district with the best possible recommendations.

First, we thank the newly appointed Superintendent, Dr. Marie Feagins, for requesting the review. Doing so demonstrated her unwavering focus on and commitment to accelerating student achievement by objectively and strategically assessing the district structures to support this goal.

Second, we thank the Board of Education for its leadership and focus on students' academic success, having conducted a comprehensive nationwide search for and selection of a highly qualified superintendent.

Third, we thank the Deputy Superintendent of Education Services, Dr. Angela Whitelaw, for her logistical support: arranging interviews, focus groups, school visits, and providing the documents and data the Council team needed to conduct this review.

Fourth, we thank the Principals and staff at the schools the team visited as well as the many individuals we met during our interviews. We recognize the many constraints of their schedules and appreciate the time they afforded us during our visit.

Fifth, the Council thanks the team members from CGCS member urban public school districts who took time out of their busy schedules to join us, working together to provide their technical expertise. We especially thank Dr. Kathryn Shuler, Chief Schools Officer (Orange County Public Schools), Dr. Aliya Washington Smith, Director of Elementary Literacy (Metro Nashville Public Schools), and Pamela Seki, Assistant Superintendent-Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Development (retired, Long Beach Unified School District). We also thank the CGCS member districts who provided exemplars to illustrate the recommendations in this report.

Finally, the Council thanks the CGCS staff members for their support, and specifically, Ms. Denise Walston, Chief of Curriculum who provided the leadership and expertise critical to the success of this project. *(Appendix A: Strategic Support Team)*

Introduction

Dr. Marie Feagins, Superintendent of the Memphis Shelby County Schools (MSCS), requested that the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) conduct a high-level review and analysis of the school district's instructional program and provide guidance and recommendations that would align and enhance the district's core principles of equity, excellence, and preparing their students for future success. To that end, the Council assembled a Strategic Support Team (SST)[1] comprised of senior executives with extensive experience in urban educational systems. The team also included current and former academic executives from major city school systems. The review of the district's academic program, conducted between September and December 2024, asked that the Council--

- Identify opportunities to improve instructional supports, streamline processes, implement industry best practices, improve existing procedures, systems, and internal controls within academics, and strengthen internal and external communications.

- Examine the current organizational structure to identify and address scopes of responsibilities, gaps in the structure, alignment, redundancies, and duplication of efforts across the academic division.

- Develop actionable recommendations to achieve greater clarity, enhance managerial effectiveness, increase operational efficiencies, and enhance the system's ability to address and support all students.

In response to this request, the CGCS assembled a Strategic Support Team (SST/CGCS Team) of senior managers from other state and large city school systems across the country. These team members brought diverse backgrounds and extensive experience in leadership, education, curriculum, talent management, and information technology. The CGCS Team was composed of the following individuals. (*Appendix A provides brief biographical sketches of the CGCS Team members.*)

Dr. Raymond C. Hart
Executive Director
Council of the Great City Schools (Washington, D.C.)

Denise Walston, Project Director
Chief of Curriculum
Council of the Great City Schools (Washington, D.C.)

Pamela Seki, Principal Investigator

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[1] The Council has conducted over 350 organizational, instructional, management, and operational reviews in over 65 big city school districts over the last 25 years. The reports generated by these reviews are often critical, but they also have been the foundation for improving the operations, organization, instruction, and management of many urban school systems nationally. In other cases, the reports are complementary and form the basis for identifying "best practices" for other urban school systems to replicate. (*Appendix R lists the reviews that the Council has conducted.*)

Assistant Superintendent (Retired) – Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Development
Long Beach Unified School District (Long Beach, CA)

Dr. Kathryn Shuler, Chief Schools Officer
Chief Schools Officer
Orange County Public Schools (Orlando, FL)

Dr. Aliya Washington Smith
Director of Elementary Literacy
Metro Nashville Public Schools (Nashville, TN)

The review of the district's academic program, conducted in September and December 2024 focused on:

- Analysis of student performance data to identify the district's strengths and challenges.
- Review of the district's overall organizational structure, practices, and processes to support the Superintendent's goals outlined in her *100-Day Entry Plan* and the companion transition document, *Legacy Legends*.
- Review of the district's organizational and management structures of the academic departments, focusing on strategic support and resources to accelerate students' academic achievement.
- High-quality core instruction (curriculum implementation and impact).
- Professional learning for teachers and administrators.
- Targeted and intensive support for special populations.

To conduct its work, the Strategic Support Team reviewed documents, analyzed available data, visited schools, and conducted on-site interviews with district leadership, specialists, teachers, Board of Education members, students, and community partners. Additionally, the team studied the district's central office support structures, core, and supplemental instructional programs with a focus on special populations (English learners, students with disabilities, gifted and talented students). The Council team assembled their findings and observations and developed both short- and long-term recommendations designed to assist the district to improve their academic programs leading to desired student outcomes. (*Appendix B: Individuals Interviewed; Appendix C: Documents Reviewed*)

This report contains a summary of the findings and recommendations of the review team. The report is divided into four sections: Memphis Shelby County Schools Context, Organizational Overview and MSCS Performance, Findings (areas of strength and need) and Recommendations, Proposals, and Next Steps. Within the scope of this report, the academic program areas addressed include:

- Organization (organizational and leadership structures, coherence and communication).
- Curriculum and Instruction.
- Professional Learning.
- Assessment and Accountability.

- RTI2 and Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS).
- Special Populations and Struggling Students.

Memphis Shelby County Schools Context

The Council team met with the Superintendent and Senior Leadership to understand the expectations and intent of the peer review. At the time of the review, the Board of Education, having completed a comprehensive nationwide search, had recently selected Dr. Marie Feagins as the new Superintendent. In general, district staff are optimistic about the district's future and acknowledge that a successful change process requires time, communication, and a certain degree of initial discomfort. To support her new role as Superintendent and deepen her understanding of the district, Dr. Feagins created a transition team composed of local, state, and national educators, community members, and other stakeholders who engaged in extensive outreach to the community with a focus on elevating student voice. The resulting report, *Legacy Legends,* outlines strategic recommendations from the transition team for the district moving forward under the new Superintendent's leadership. This plan is identified as the "first steps" as Dr. Feagins begins this, her first full, school year as Superintendent. In multiple venues, the Superintendent has frequently communicated her commitment to, as quickly as possible, engage and deliver positive results, as detailed in her *100-Day Entry Plan.*

The CGCS Team was on site to conduct interviews for this review September 22 – 26, 2024. The dates are important to note because, as detailed later in this report, the week signaled the final days that stimulus funds from the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds III (ESSER 3) could be obligated. Unlike their peers around the country, Memphis Shelby County Schools (MSCS) added 1,296 ESSER Staff Positions with temporary federal funds (for context, Broward County Public Schools with an enrollment of over 254,000 students added approximately 300 ESSER positions with a plan to phase out the positions year by year to zero based on attrition rates - Approximately 308 teachers in FY23 reduced to 154 teachers in FY24, etc.). Consequently, our visit coincided with the first few weeks of the start of school, under a new superintendent, and at the same time over 1,200 positions needed to sunset in the district. The CGCS team would expect any large urban school district offices and systems to be strained under those conditions.

Memphis Shelby County Schools (MSCS) has a unique history that includes the development of the Shelby County School District, the establishment of the Memphis City Schools district, and the merger of the two districts. Developed in the late 19th century, the Shelby County School District served Shelby County residents, except for Memphis, until 2013. Established in 1867, the Memphis City Schools district served the city of Memphis and some unincorporated areas of Shelby County. In 2011, Memphis City Schools residents voted to disband their district, and the two districts merged on July 1, 2013. This was the largest school district consolidation in American history. In 2014, six incorporated cities in Shelby County broke away from MSCS to establish their own school districts.

The district is the largest school system in Tennessee and the second largest employer in Shelby County with nearly 14,000 employees, including more than 6,000 teachers. The district serves more than 106,000 students, including over 3,300 pre-kindergarten students. The district enrolls over 15,000 students with disabilities and over 8,800 English language learners. The district's Mission is: *Preparing all students for success in learning, leadership, and life*. The district's

Vision is: *Our District will be the premier school district attracting a diverse student population and effective teachers, leaders, and staff committed to excellence.*[2]

MSCS is the 17th largest school district among the 78 large urban districts in the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS). In the 2022-23 school year, MSCS was 71.7% Black, 18.5% Hispanic/Latino, 5.4% White, 3.56% Other, and 0.84% Asian (see Exhibit 1).

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[2]Source: https://www.scsk12.org/about/

Exhibit 1. MSCS Enrollment History by Race/Ethnicity
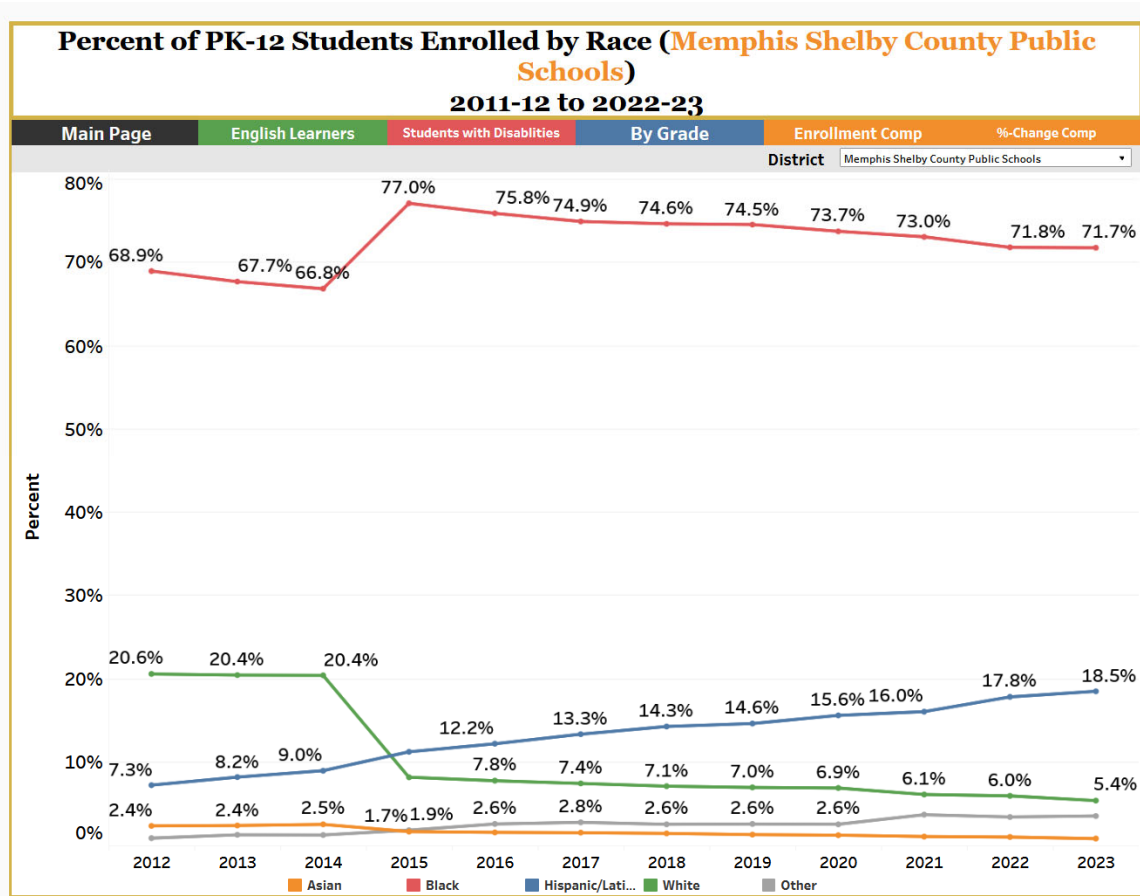
Source: United States Department of Education, Common Core of Data. Retrieved 4/3/2024.

Across all CGCS districts, poverty interacts with race to exacerbate the educational challenges that our school districts face, and MSCS is not unlike the large urban districts across the country. The CGCS has studied how some of our large school districts overcome the impact of low socioeconomic, English learner, and special education status for our students in the report, *Mirrors or Windows: How well to do large city public schools overcome the effects of poverty and other barriers*. Specifically, the report describes the importance and unique challenges of educating our nation's students in abject poverty and the unique challenges of poverty that is well below the threshold for free- or reduced-price lunch. Many are not aware that the National School Lunch Program provides free meals to eligible children in households with income at or below 130 percent of federal poverty guidelines, and reduced-price meals to eligible children in households with income above 130 percent but at or below 185 percent of poverty. The new Community Eligibility Provision in the National School Lunch Program often extends program eligibility to students who do not meet the school lunch criteria above, further masking the true identification of students in poverty.

To illustrate the true influence of poverty in districts, Exhibit 2 illustrates the percentage of households in the MSCS school boundaries with annual Household Income Levels less than

$10,000, $10,000 to $14,999, 15,000 to $24,999, and the total percentage of households across all three categories. The data shows that nearly 1 in 5 households in the district have an annual income below $25,000, ranking MSCS as one of the most impoverished districts in the country and the largest district with that level of poverty among CGCS members. This rate is nearly double the same rate for households across Tennessee and in Metro Nashville Public Schools. The CGCS Windows or Mirrors report cited earlier shows that MSCS was ranked 5th highest among member school districts with household incomes below $50,000 annually, behind only Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Fresno, and that any comparison between districts or the state should always consider differences in demographic factors when analyzing student outcomes.

Exhibit 2. Percentage of Households by Income Levels Among Select CGCS Member Districts and Tennessee Districts Excluding MSCS

District	Less than $10,000	$10,000 to $14,999	$15,000 to $24,999	Total (Less than $25,000)
Memphis Shelby County Schools	*6.4*	*3.3*	*8.0*	*17.7*
Rest of Tennessee	**3.2**	**2.0**	**5.1**	**10.3**
Detroit Public Schools Community District	10.5	6	10.9	27.4
Cleveland Metropolitan School District	10	5.5	10.6	26.1
Dayton Public Schools	7.5	5.1	11.7	24.3
San Antonio Independent School District	7.2	4.6	10.6	22.4
Toledo Public Schools	8.8	5.1	8	21.9
Birmingham City Schools	7.1	5.3	8.8	21.2
Fresno Unified School District	7.1	4.8	8.1	19.9
Indianapolis Public Schools	7.9	3.6	7.6	19.1
Rochester City School District	8.1	4.9	5.8	18.8
Milwaukee Public Schools	5.7	4.4	8.6	18.6
Jackson Public Schools	6.6	5.1	5.8	17.5
Providence Public School District	6.0	4.1	7.1	17.2
Baltimore City Public Schools	6.1	3.3	6.5	15.9
Atlanta Public Schools	5.0	3.2	5.8	14.0
Metro Nashville Public Schools	4.1	1.6	4.5	10.2
Long Beach Unified School District	3.5	1.5	4.7	9.8
Fayette County Public Schools (KY)	3.5	1.6	4.7	9.7
Minneapolis Public Schools	3.0	2.0	4.4	9.4
Charleston County School District (SC)	3.4	1.0	4.8	9.2

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Few individuals or organizations across the country truly understand the unique context of MSCS and the confluence of abject poverty and race on efforts to improve academic outcomes for students. The findings and recommendations that follow from SST team members' draw on lessons learned from our research and experience learning from large urban school districts that excel at closing achievement gaps and improving learning outcomes for traditionally marginalized students. The data analysis in the next section of the report and the findings and recommendations that follow acknowledge the improvements that have been made while focusing on the continuous improvement process needed for the district to better serve students with greater urgency.

Staffing Levels

When conducting SST reviews, the CGCS makes every effort to propose budget-neutral recommendations whenever possible. At times, recommendations require making budget adjustments in staffing or other areas to best accomplish the district's academic goals for students. To better understand the context for the recommendations that follow, the CGCS team reviewed the relative staffing level for teachers and administrators across the district.

● The CGCS Team reviewed current MSCS FTE staffing levels, ratios, and percentages using the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)[3] 2022-23 data to analyze MSCS student-to-staff ratios compared to other CGCS school districts.[4] NCES defines the categories below and consistently reports the data across all states and districts. The x-axis for all of the charts below are large school districts. The CGCS Team found that-

  o MSCS has a higher percentage of teaching staff (57.60 percent) among all personnel than the CGCS national median (48.02 percent) and the state of Tennessee (50.26 percent),[5] indicating one of the highest percent of teaching staff in the nation. Exhibit 3 below compares MSCS to other Tennessee and CGCS school districts using NCES data;[6]

Exhibit 3. Teachers as a Percentage of *Total* MSCS Staff compared with Tennessee and other CGCS Districts
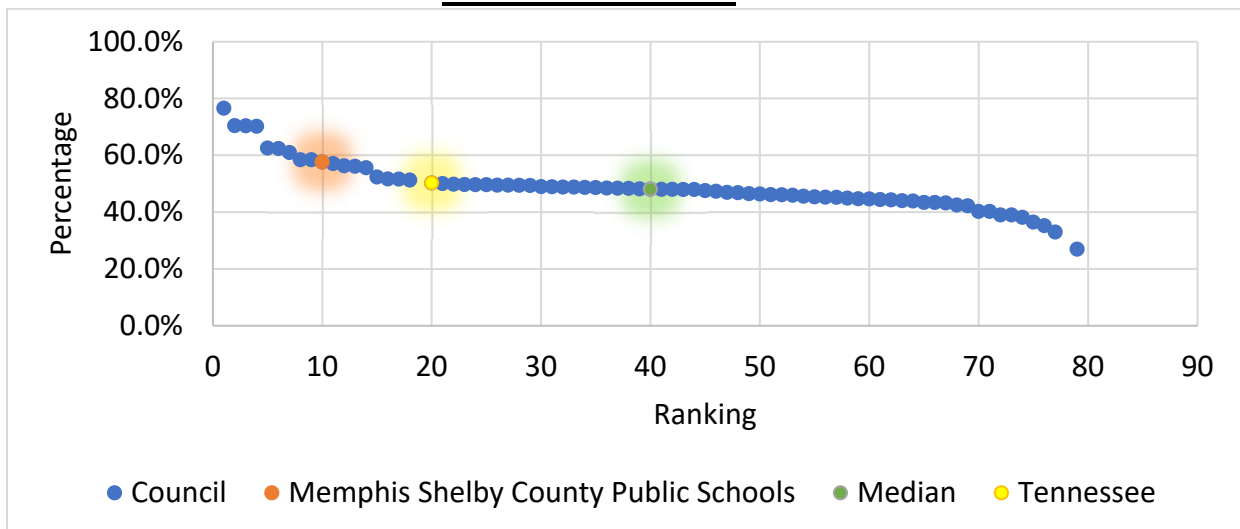
Source: CGCS, Using Data Provided by the NCES

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[3] Source: https://nces.ed.gov/. The NCES has an extensive array of data on every school district in the nation, including data on staffing levels by category.

[4] The team must rely on the accuracy of the data reported by school districts to NCES when making comparisons.

[5] This percentage is calculated by dividing the total number of teachers by the total number of MSCS staff.

o MSCS has about the same student-to-teacher ratio (15.9) as the CGCS national median (15.2) and Tennessee (15.3).[7] Exhibit 4 below compares MSCS to other CGCS school districts using NCES data;

Exhibit 4. Students per Teacher in MSCS Compared with Tennessee and other CGCS Districts

Source: CGCS, Using Data Provided by the NCES
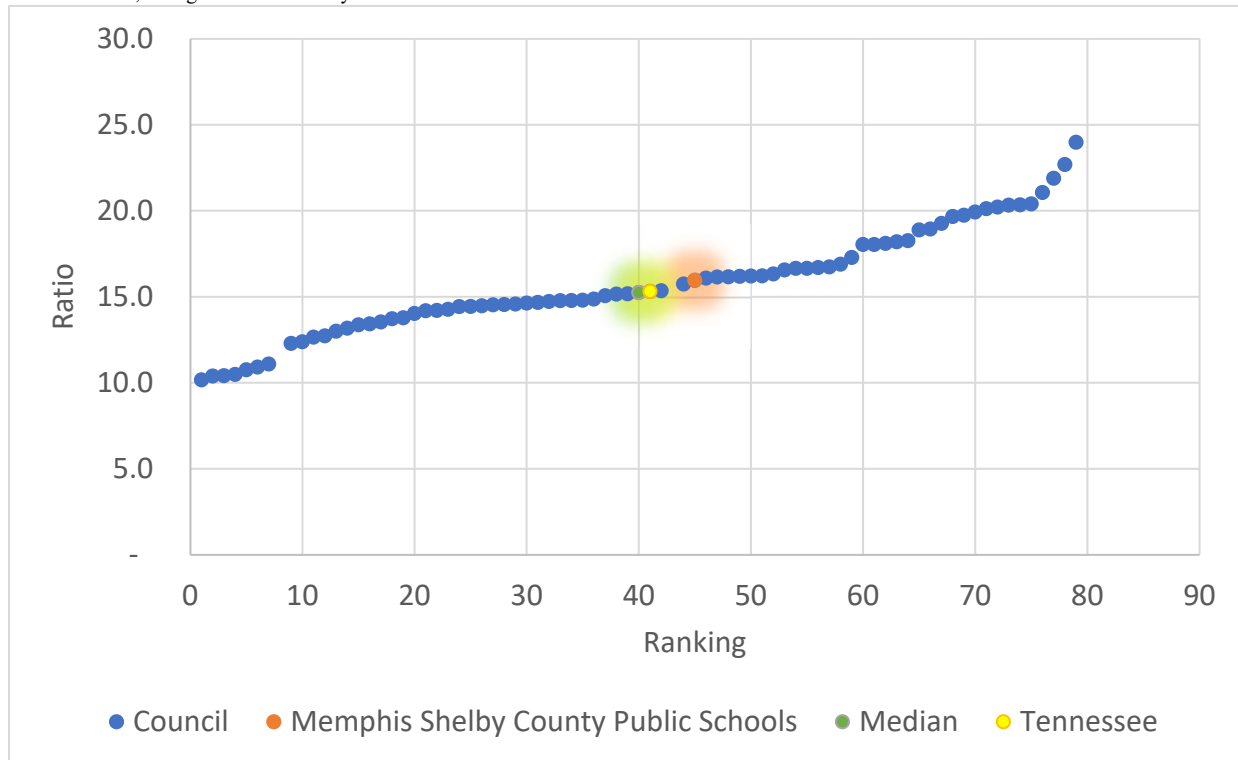
o MSCS student-to-total staff ratio (9.19) is higher than the TN (7.70) and CGCS national median (7.43),[8] which suggests that the MSCS has about the same number of pupils per staff compared to their peers. Exhibit 5 below compares MSCS to TN and other CGCS school districts using NCES data;

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[7] This percentage is calculated by dividing the total number of K-12 students by total number of MSCS teachers.
[8] This ratio is calculated by dividing the number of MSCS students by the total MSCS staff count.

Exhibit 5. Student-to-*Total* MSCS Staff Ratio compared with Tennessee and other CGCS Districts
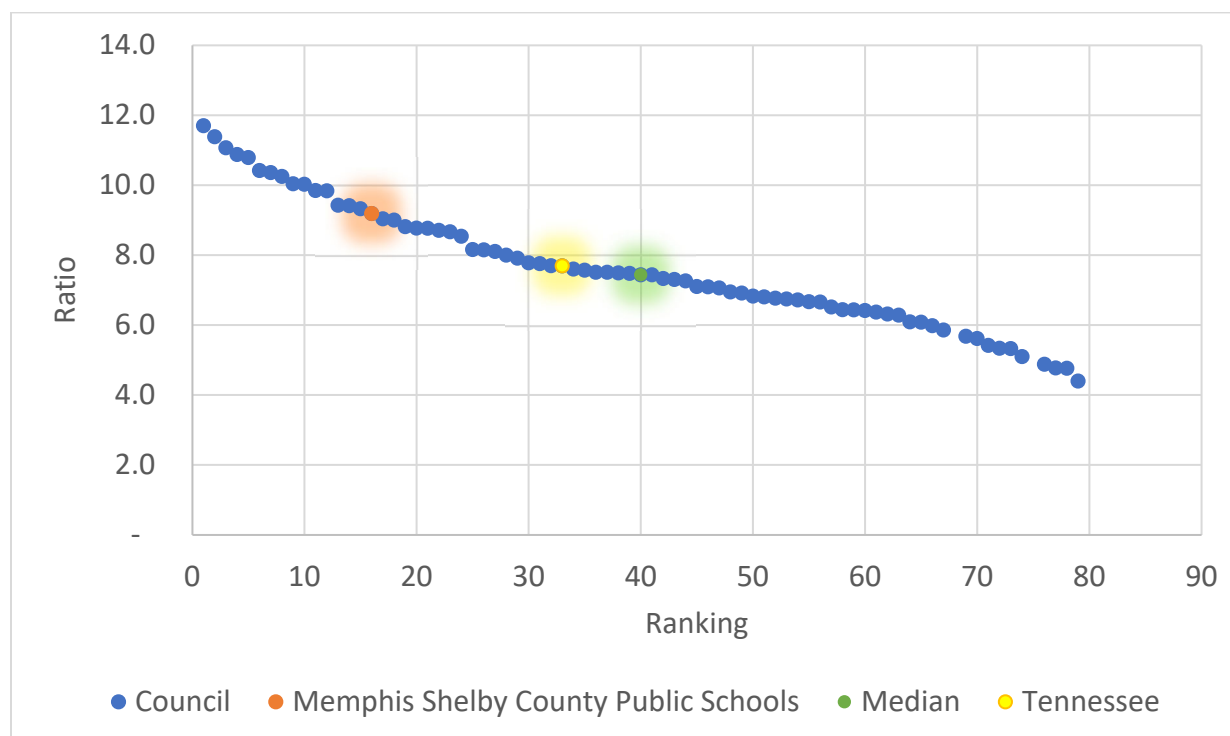
Source: CGCS, Using Data Provided by the NCES

o MSCS had fewer students per central office administrative and support staff members, 141.7, compared to TN and the CGCS national median for large city school districts, 247.1 and 191.4, respectively.[9] At the time of this data collection, MSCS had more central office administrative and support staff members compared to their peers across the state and the nation. Exhibit 6 below compares MSCS to TN and other CGCS school districts using NCES data;

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[9] This ratio is calculated by dividing the number of MSCS students by the combined total of the central office administrative and support staff. Central office staff for this measure include superintendents, deputies, and assistant superintendents; other persons with districtwide responsibilities, e.g., accountants, auditors, business managers, facilities managers, technology or information system administrators, or supervisors of transportation, food services, or security. Support staff members providing direct support to LEA administrators, business office support, data processing, secretarial and other clerical staff; staff implementing software solutions and staff providing hardware and software maintenance and data user support.

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Exhibit 6. Students per Total MSCS *Central Office* Administrative and Support Staff Compared with Tennessee and other CGCS Districts
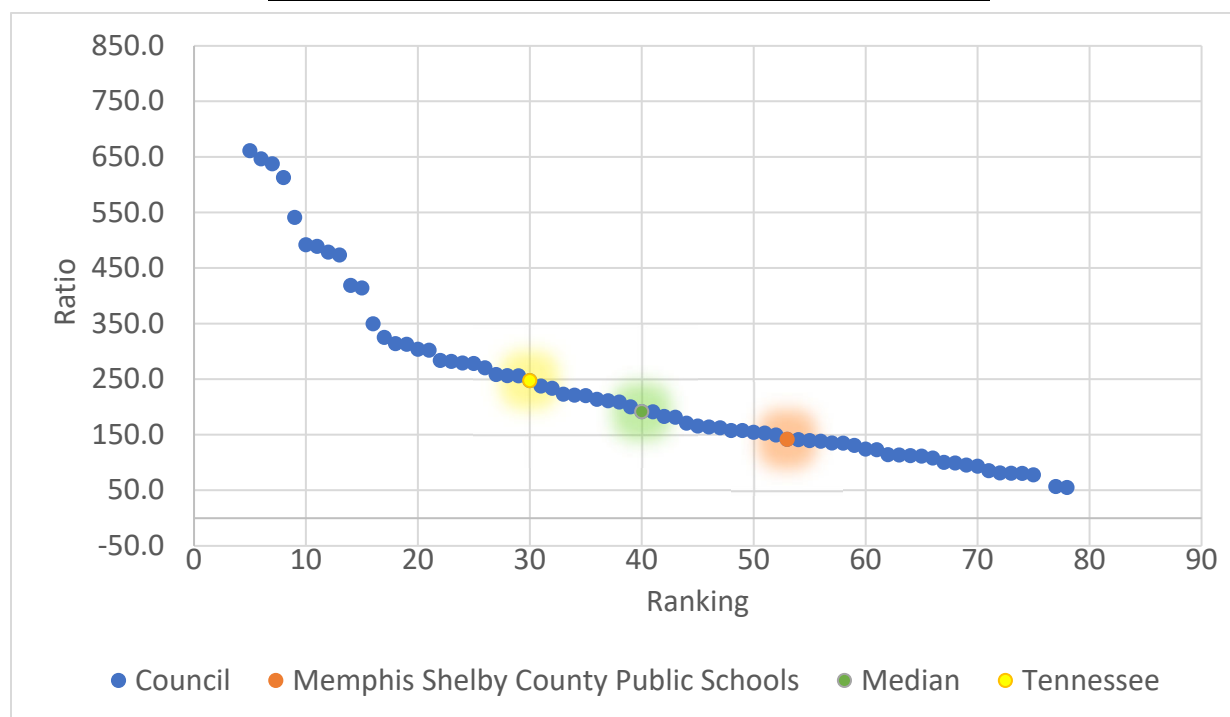
Source: CGCS, Using Data Provided by the NCES

- o MSCS has a student-to-school site administrative and support staff ratio (176.7),[10] which is higher than TN (125.79) and the CGCS national median ratio (104.99) among other CGCS districts. This indicates that MSCS has fewer school site administrators than their peers across the state and the nation. Exhibit 7 below compares MSCS to TN and other CGCS school districts using NCES data; and

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[10] This ratio is calculated by dividing the number of MSCS students by total school site administrative and support staff. School site staff in this measure include principals, assistant principals, and persons who supervise school operations, assign duties to staff members, supervise and maintain the records of the school, and coordinate school instructional activities with those of the education agency, including department chairpersons, clerical staff and secretaries.

**<u>Exhibit 7. Students per Total MSCS *School Site* Administrative and Support Staff
Compared with Tennessee and other CGCS Districts</u>**

Source: CGCS, Using Data Provided by the NCES
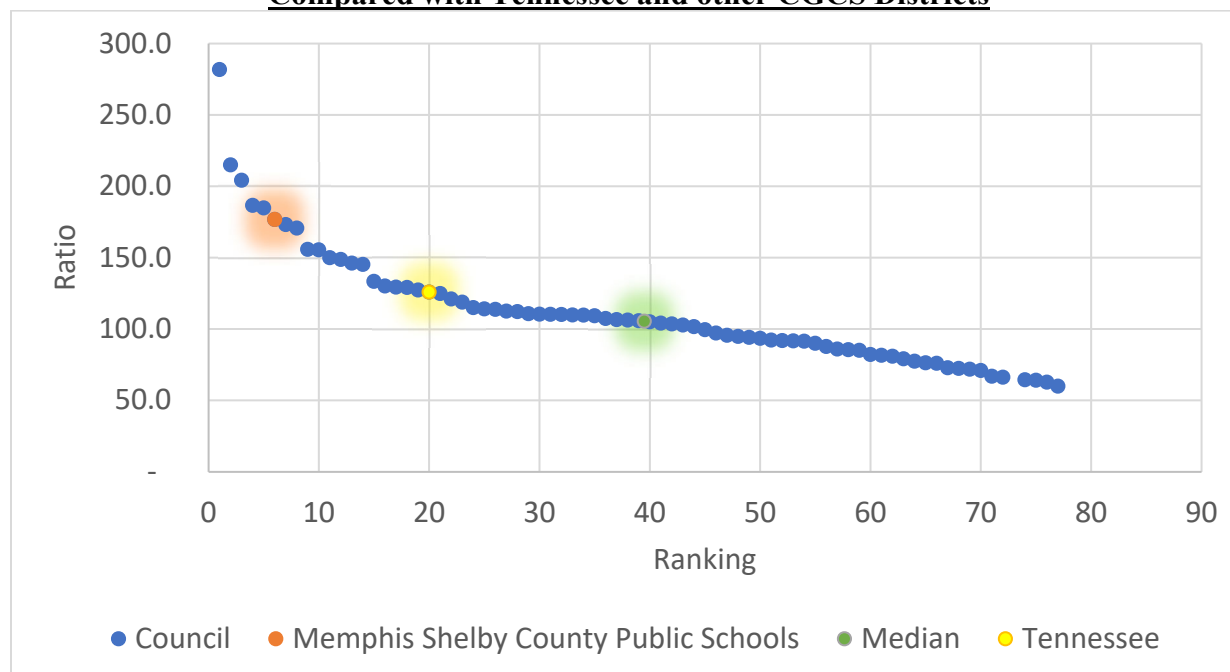
o   MSCS's *combined* student-to-school-site and central office administrative/support staff ratio of 78.6 falls below TN (83.4) and above the CGCS national median of 67.6.[11] This ratio may indicate that MSCS employs comparable total administrative and support staff per student compared to the average school system. Exhibit 8 below compares MSCS to TN and other CGCS school districts using NCES data.

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[11] This ratio is calculated by dividing the number of MSCS students by total school and central office administrative and support staff. School site staff in this measure include principals, assistant principals, and persons who supervise school operations, assign duties to staff members, supervise and maintain the records of the school, and coordinate school instructional activities with those of the education agency, including department chairpersons, clerical staff and secretaries. Central office staff for this measure include superintendents, deputies, and assistant superintendents; other persons with districtwide responsibilities, e.g., accountants, auditors, business managers, facilities managers, technology or information system administrators, or supervisors of transportation, food services, or security. Central office support staff includes staff members providing direct support to LEA administrators, business office support, data processing, secretarial and other clerical staff; staff implementing software solutions and staff providing hardware and software maintenance and data user support.

Exhibit 8. Students per *Combined* School and Central Office Administrative and Support Staff Compared with Tennessee and other CGCS Districts
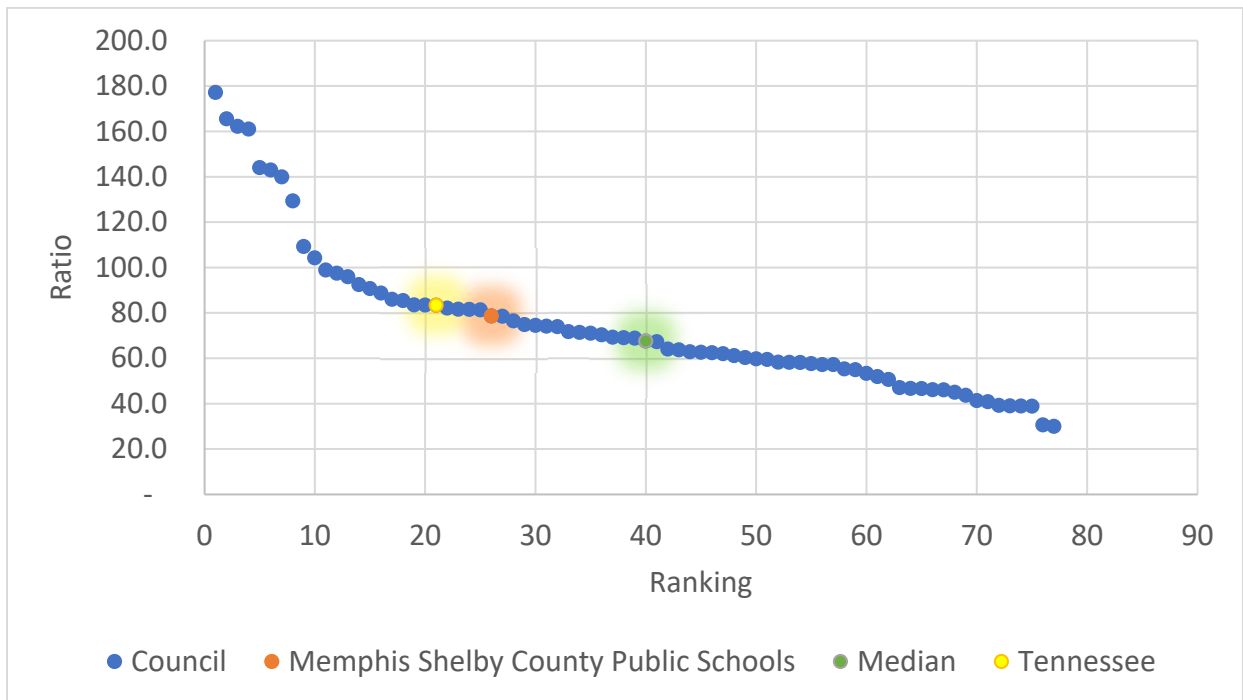

Source: CGCS, Using Data Provided by the NCES

When considering recommendations for this report, the CGCS team recognizes that the district has made adjustments to central office and school-based staff this school year. The data presented here support the need for the change, but the SST attempted to balance the support needs of the schools with the administrative staffing adjustments needed based on the data analyzed above.

Organizational Overview and MSCS Performance

For further MSCS context related to improving student achievement and fulfilling its educational mission, the CGCS Team analyzed data on MSCS student outcomes. This past year, MSCS schools and students have demonstrated improvements on Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) school letter grading system in a number of areas. The team carefully analyzed the Assessment and Accountability Briefing Report published in December 2024, by Brant Riedel. As the school board, superintendent, and district staff are already familiar with this report, we will not provide detailed information on the report here. However, we do note that 40.7 percent of schools improved at least one letter grade on the state report card, and the number of schools with an "F" rating was cut nearly in half from 42 to 22 schools. Several of these schools improved two or more letter grade levels on the state report card.

Moreover, the report indicates (Exhibit 9) that nearly half of the schools in the district had the highest possible Growth or Growth25 scores of 5, 46.2% and 46.7% respectively. Conversely, nearly half of the schools (47.2%) had Achievement scores below 2, and 77.9% had achievement scores below 3. Given the discussion in the previous section regarding the intersection of race and student poverty, the CGCS team recognizes that school performance measures like those provided by TDOE often ignore the demographic differences in the students attending schools across the state or the district. Consequently, the analysis below takes the additional step of comparing the district's performance based on similar demographic factors first by race and economic status.

Exhibit 9. Individual Indicators that Contribute to Overall TDOE School Letter Grades

ALL SCHOOLS	ACHIEVEMENT		GROWTH		GROWTH25		CCR	
Score	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
1-1.9	94	47.2%	39	19.6%	6	3.0%	7	17.5%
2-2.9	61	30.7%	16	8.0%	14	7.0%	6	15.0%
3-3.9	19	9.5%	33	16.6%	51	25.6%	9	22.5%
4-4.9	11	5.5%	19	9.5%	32	16.1%	7	17.5%
5	14	7.0%	92	46.2%	93	46.7%	11	27.5%
TOTAL	199	100.0%	199	100.0%	199	98.5%	40	100.0%

Source: Riedel, B. (December, 2024). Assessment and Accountability Briefing Report. Retrieved from: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.scsk12.org/about/files/2024/23-24%20School%20Letter%20Grade%20Brief%203.0%2012_20_24.pdf

Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program

The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP)[12] results provide an overview of the progress MSCS made overcoming this impact of the pandemic. Exhibit 10 illustrates that

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[12] Source: Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) retrieved from https://www.tn.gov/education/districts/federal-programs-and-oversight/data/data-downloads.html.
Note: Due to school closures and assessment waivers for 2019-20, fall 2019 school- and district-level EOC data are incomplete and incomparable to data from previous years. For 2020-21 spring TCAP administration, participation rates varied among districts.

between 2019 and 2024, MSCS has exceeded the TCAP English Language Arts (ELA) rate for students who meet or exceed Tennessee expectations for all students across all tested grade levels. Prior to the pandemic, 20.6 percent of students met or exceeded state expectations compared to 22.4 percent in 2024. However, when comparing the percentage point difference between 2019 and 2024, the district's recovery for all students was slower than Tennessee (TN), Knox County (KC), and Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), 1.8, 3.9, 2.5, and 3.7 percentage points, respectively.

The chart also shows that the percentage of students who met or exceeded state expectations in MSCS was 18.8 percentage points lower than KC, 15.2 percentage points lower than the state of Tennessee, and 7.2 percentage points lower than MNPS for all students in 2024. This pattern was consistent across all five years and holds in mathematics (Exhibit 11) for all students in MSCS where the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state expectations is 10 percentage points lower than MNPS and nearly 20 percentage points lower than TN and KC.

Exhibit 10. Percentage of ELA Scores Across All Grades At or Above Expectations for All Students on the TCAP, 2019 to 2024

	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Metro Nashville Public Schools	25.9	18.4	25.6	27.4	29.6
Knox County (Knoxville, TN)	38.7	32.7	38.6	40.1	41.2
Memphis Shelby County Schools	20.6	13	20.5	20.7	22.4
Tennessee	33.7	28.4	35.1	36.6	37.6
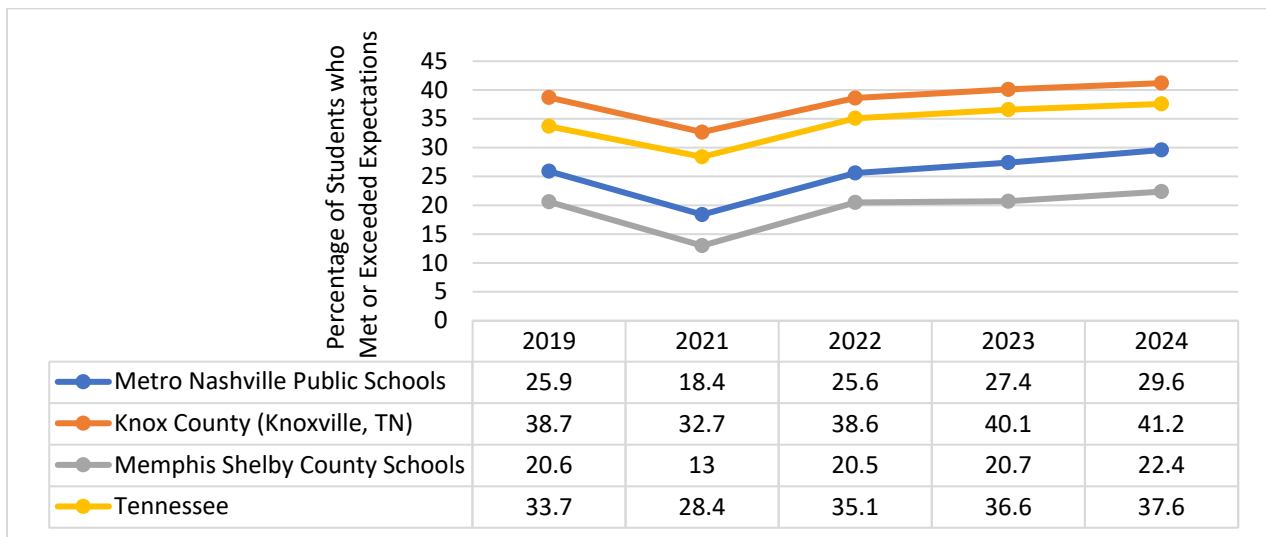
Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).

Exhibit 11. Percentage of Math Scores Across All Grades At or Above Expectations for All Students on the TCAP, 2019 to 2024

	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Metro Nashville Public Schools	29.9	12.6	21.3	26.4	29.3
Knox County (Knoxville, TN)	40.8	31	33.6	38.1	40.3
Memphis Shelby County Schools	27.2	7.4	14.5	17	20
Tennessee	40.8	28.4	34.1	38.1	39.7
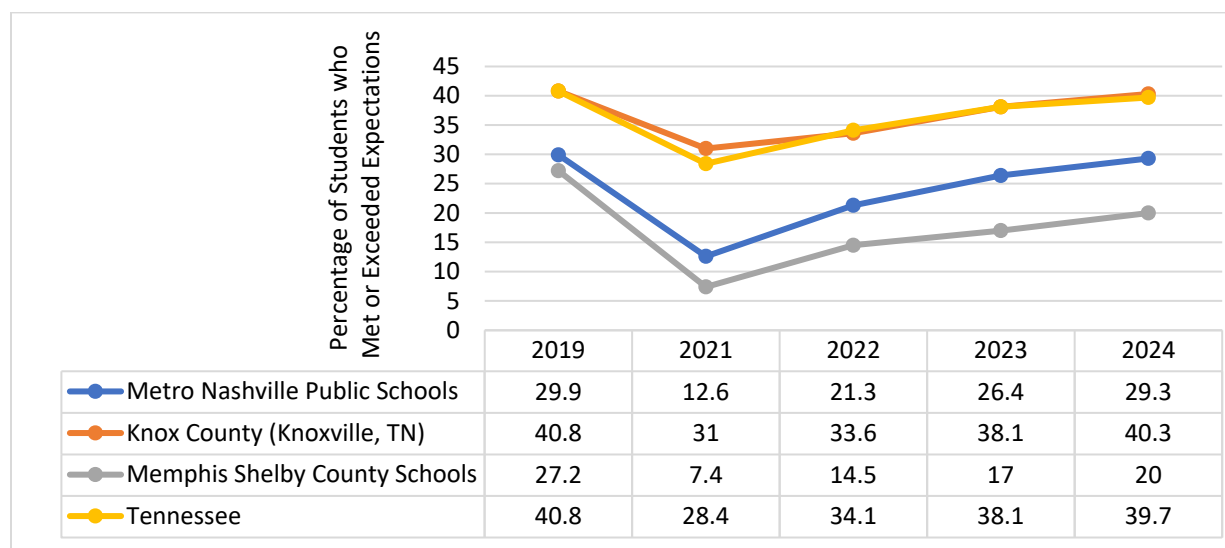
Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).

However, as discussed in the previous section of this report regarding the demographic context from students in MSCS, the population of students is nearly twice as likely to be in more abject poverty than their peers across the state and in MNPS. According to the 2023-23 district and state *Profile and Demographic Information* report provided by the Tennessee Department of Education, 53% of MSCS students were economically disadvantaged compared to 29% of students in Tennessee, 31% of students in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, and 20% of students in Knox County. Moreover, 73% of MSCS students were Black compared to 24% across the state, 38% in MNPS, and 17% in KC.

Since the majority of students in MSCS are Black, Exhibits 12 and 13 illustrate that the achievement gaps between MSCS and their peers is significantly smaller when analyzing Black student achievement. It is also important to note that the comparison by race/ethnicity does not consider the fact that students in MSCS are 43% more likely to be economically disadvantaged compared to their TN and MNPS peers and more than twice as likely as their KC peers.

Exhibit 12. Percentage of ELA Scores Across All Grades At or Above Expectations for Black Students on the TCAP, 2019 to 2024

	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Metro Nashville Public Schools	17	10.7	17.4	18.9	20.9
Knox County (Knoxville, TN)	15.9	13.2	17.5	18.7	20.1
Memphis Shelby County Schools	17	10.2	17.3	17.7	19.3
Tennessee	18.4	13.2	19.5	20.8	22.3

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).

Exhibit 13. Percentage of Math Scores Across All Grades At or Above Expectations for Black Students on the TCAP, 2019 to 2024

	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Metro Nashville Public Schools	20.2	5.2	12.4	16.9	19.4
Knox County (Knoxville, TN)	17.3	10	13.1	15.7	17.6
Memphis Shelby County Schools	23.1	4.7	11	13.5	16.4
Tennessee	23.9	10.1	16	19.4	21.5
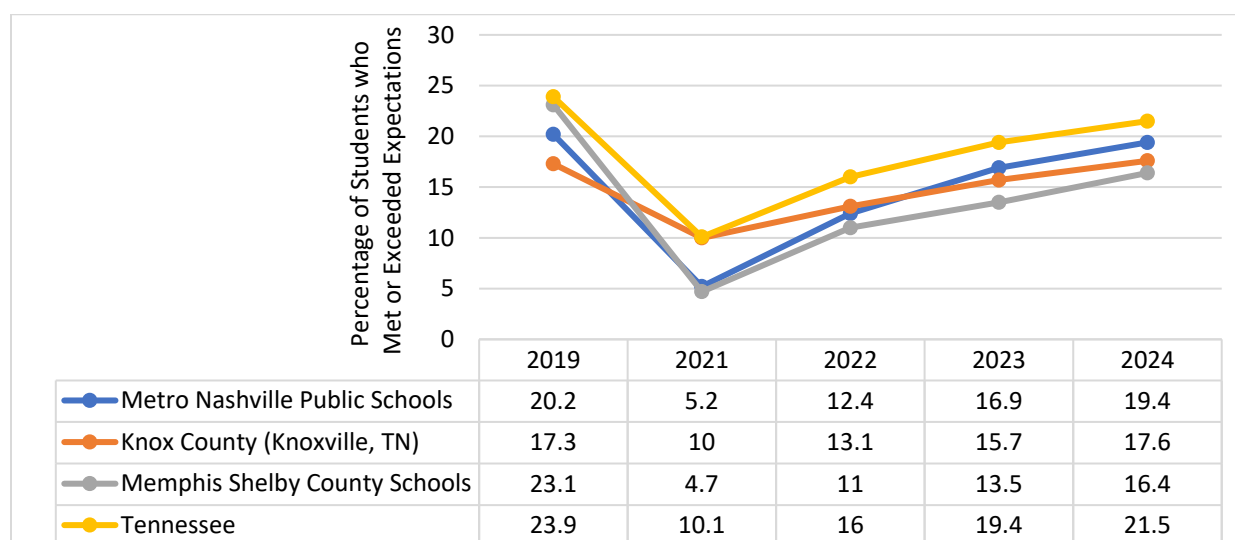
Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).

Exhibits 14 – 21 show that when comparing similar student groups, the performance gaps between the state and peer districts are eliminated or narrow significantly. For English learners (Exhibits 16 and 17) the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state expectations was higher than Tennessee, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, and Knox County. Hispanic student (Exhibits 18 and 19) achievement surpassed MNPS and KC in 2024 in ELA and mathematics.

Exhibit 14. Percentage of ELA Scores Across All Grades At or Above Expectations for Economically Disadvantaged Students on the TCAP, 2019 to 2024

	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Metro Nashville Public Schools	14.3	8.6	13.5	14.1	15.4
Knox County (Knoxville, TN)	17.8	13.6	17	17.7	17.2
Memphis Shelby County Schools	14.8	7.7	14.1	14.5	16.3
Tennessee	18.6	13.6	18.8	19.7	20.8

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).

Exhibit 15. Percentage of Math Scores Across All Grades At or Above Expectations for Economically Disadvantaged Students on the TCAP, 2019 to 2024

	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Metro Nashville Public Schools	18.5	4.7	9.8	13.1	14.7
Knox County (Knoxville, TN)	19.4	11.1	12.8	15.1	15.9
Memphis Shelby County Schools	21.5	3.5	9.2	11.5	14.1
Tennessee	24.7	12.6	17.1	20.2	21.8
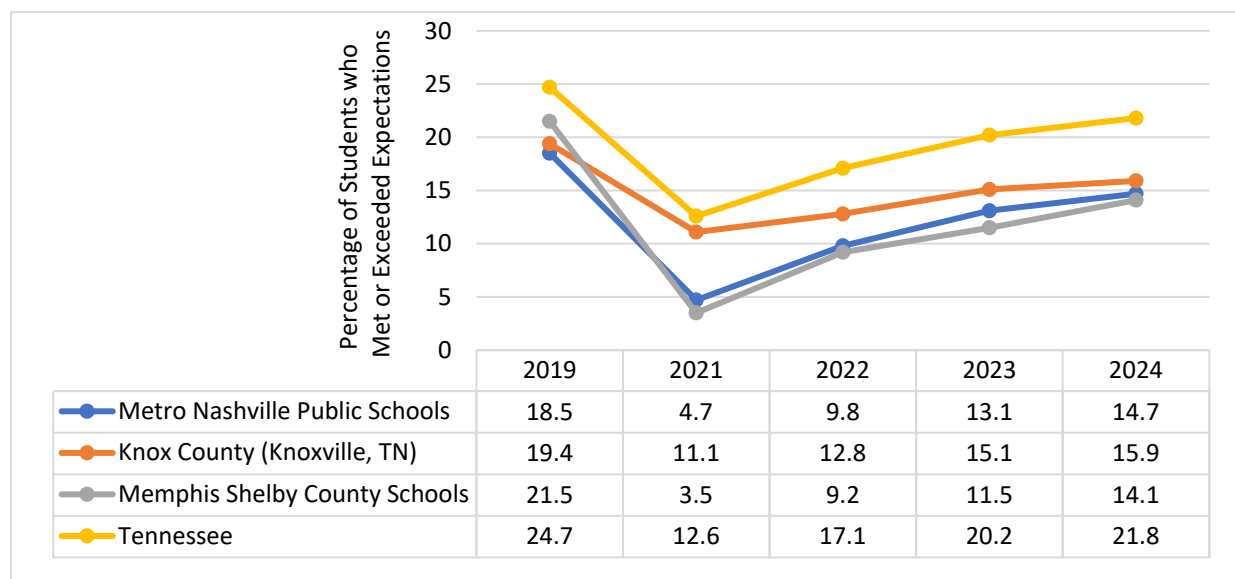
Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).

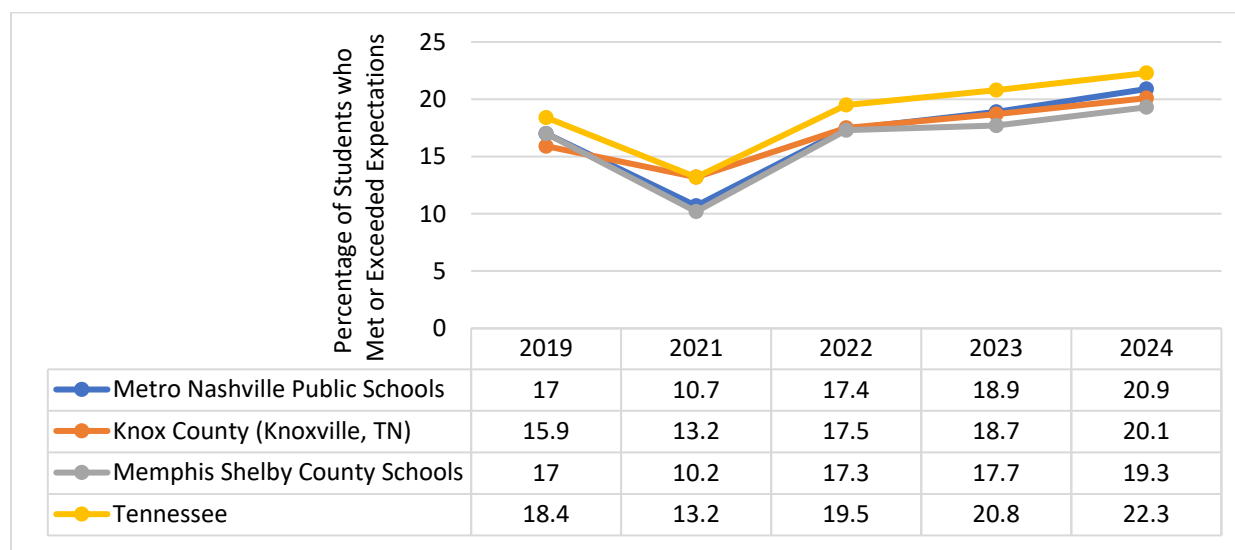**Exhibit 16. Percentage of ELA Scores Across All Grades At or Above Expectations for English Learners on the TCAP, 2019 to 2024**

	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Metro Nashville Public Schools	3.8	3.4	5.5	6.1	5.8
Knox County (Knoxville, TN)	2.9	3.9	4.8	5.1	4.5
Memphis Shelby County Schools	6	2.8	8.4	8.2	10.1
Tennessee	4.5	3.9	6.3	7.2	7.4

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).

Exhibit 17. Percentage of Math Scores Across All Grades At or Above Expectations for English Learners on the TCAP, 2019 to 2024

	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Metro Nashville Public Schools	9.3	2.7	6	9.4	10.5
Knox County (Knoxville, TN)	8.9	5	6	8.3	8.9
Memphis Shelby County Schools	15.3	2.7	8.4	11.5	12.9
Tennessee	11.8	5.8	8.9	11.6	12.2

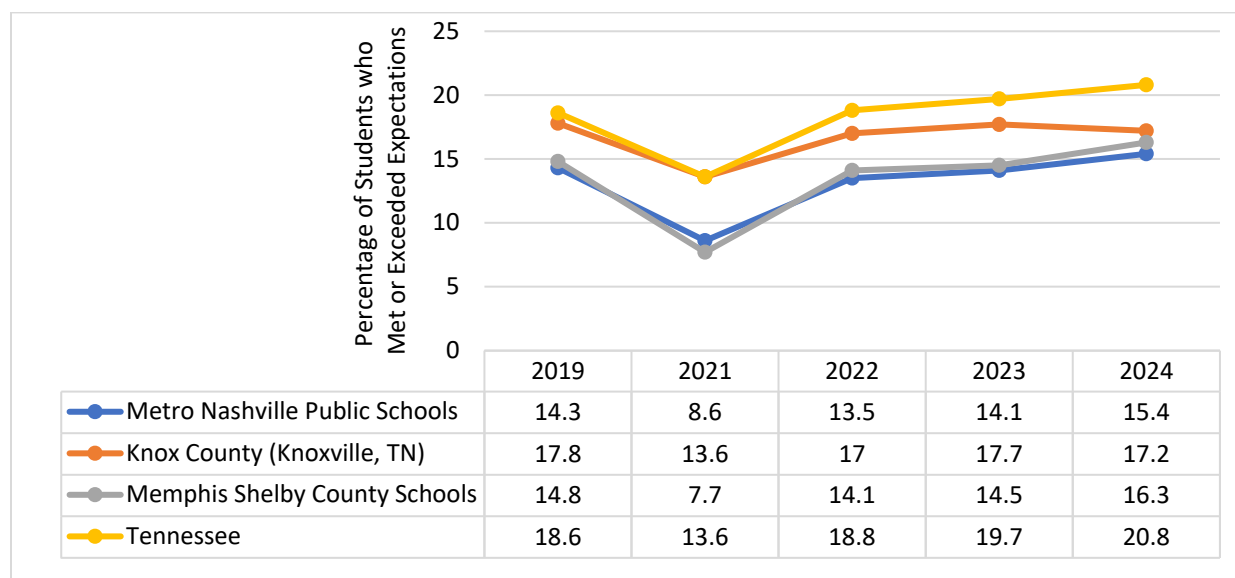Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).

Exhibit 18. Percentage of ELA Scores Across All Grades At or Above Expectations for Hispanic Students on the TCAP, 2019 to 2024

	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Metro Nashville Public Schools	18.7	11.8	16.9	17.9	18.8
Knox County (Knoxville, TN)	23.6	19.7	22.2	23	22.1
Memphis Shelby County Schools	22.6	13.4	21.3	21.6	23.3
Tennessee	23.9	18.9	24	25.4	26.1

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).

Exhibit 19. Percentage of Math Scores Across All Grades At or Above Expectations for Hispanic Students on the TCAP, 2019 to 2024

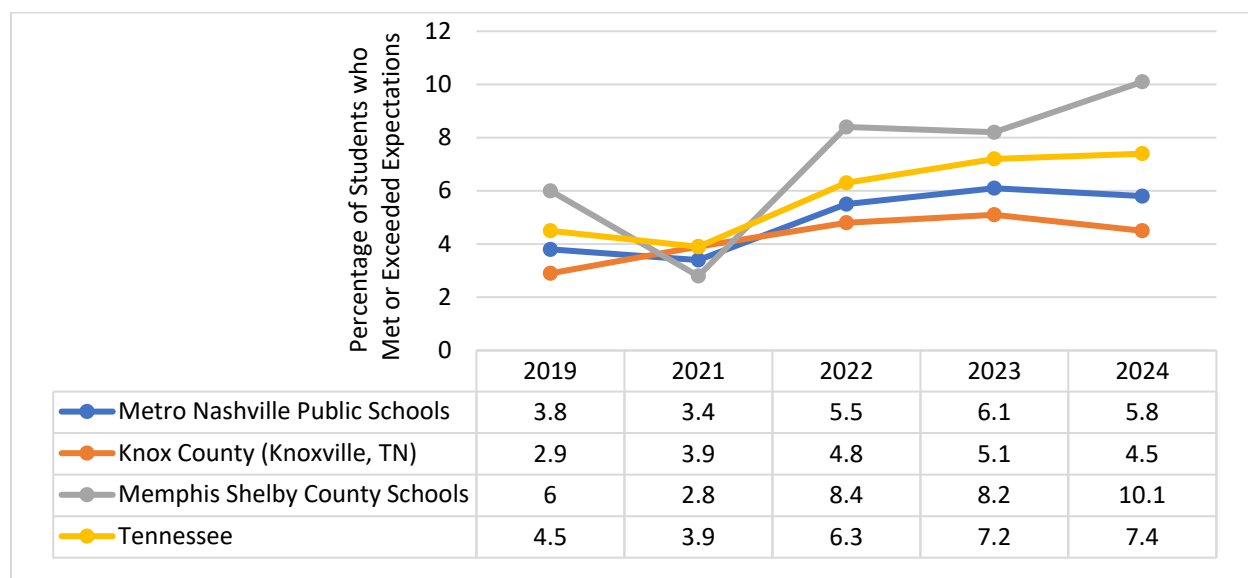|	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Metro Nashville Public Schools	25.5	7.3	14.4	18.8	21.2
Knox County (Knoxville, TN)	27.3	16.6	18.2	22.1	22.3
Memphis Shelby County Schools	32.2	8.7	17.6	20.9	24
Tennessee	32.3	18.8	24	28	29.1

Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).

Exhibit 20. Percentage of ELA Scores Across All Grades At or Above Expectations for Students with Disabilities on the TCAP, 2019 to 2024

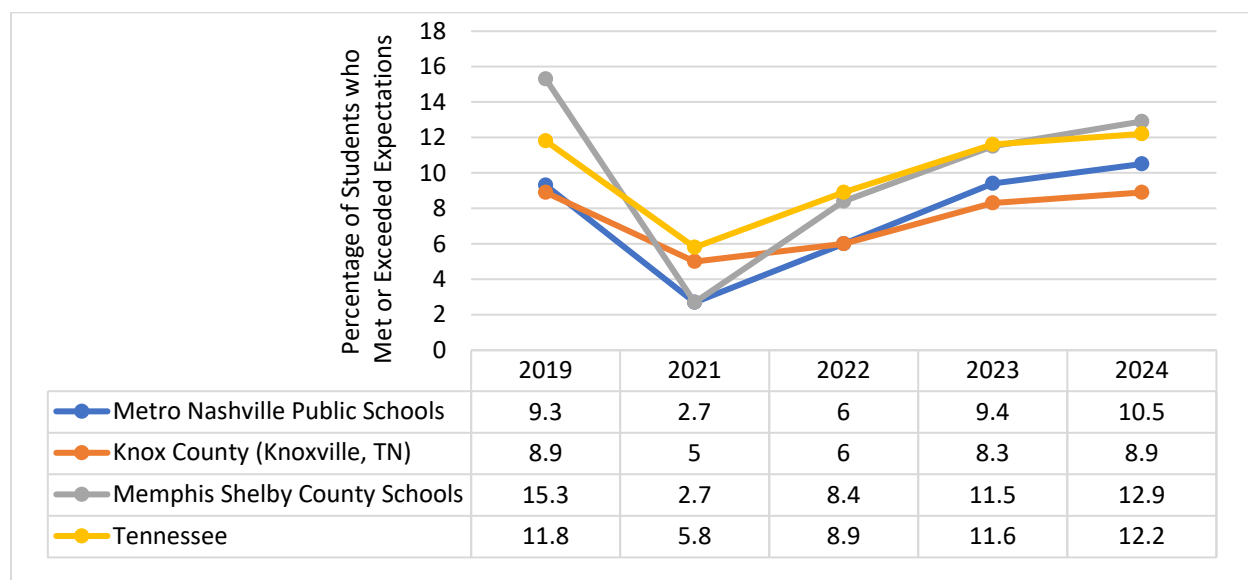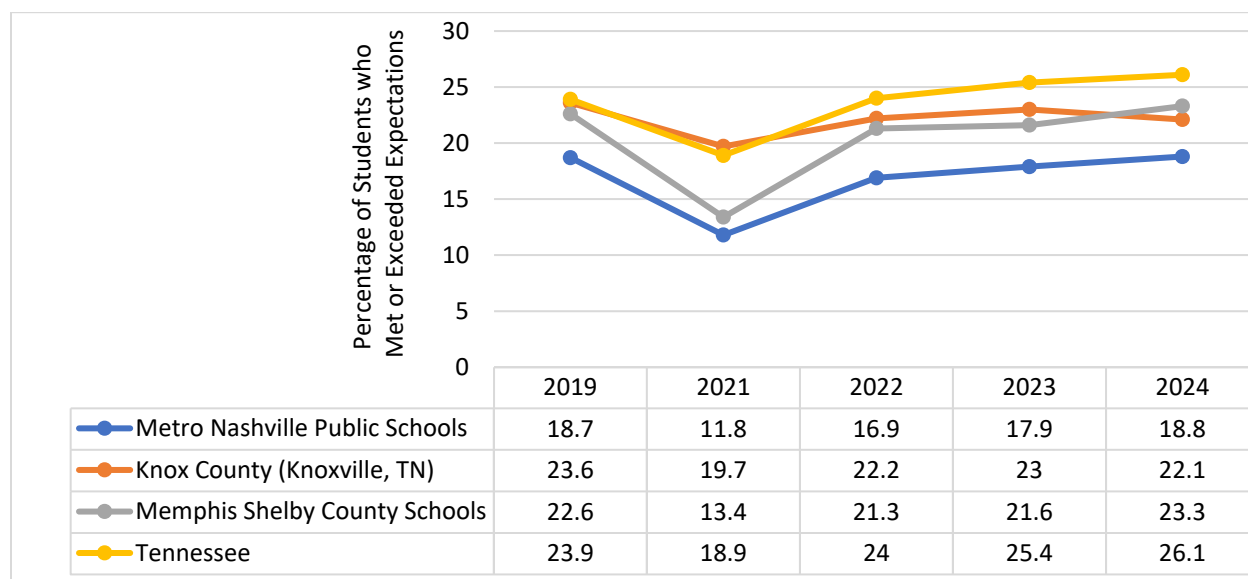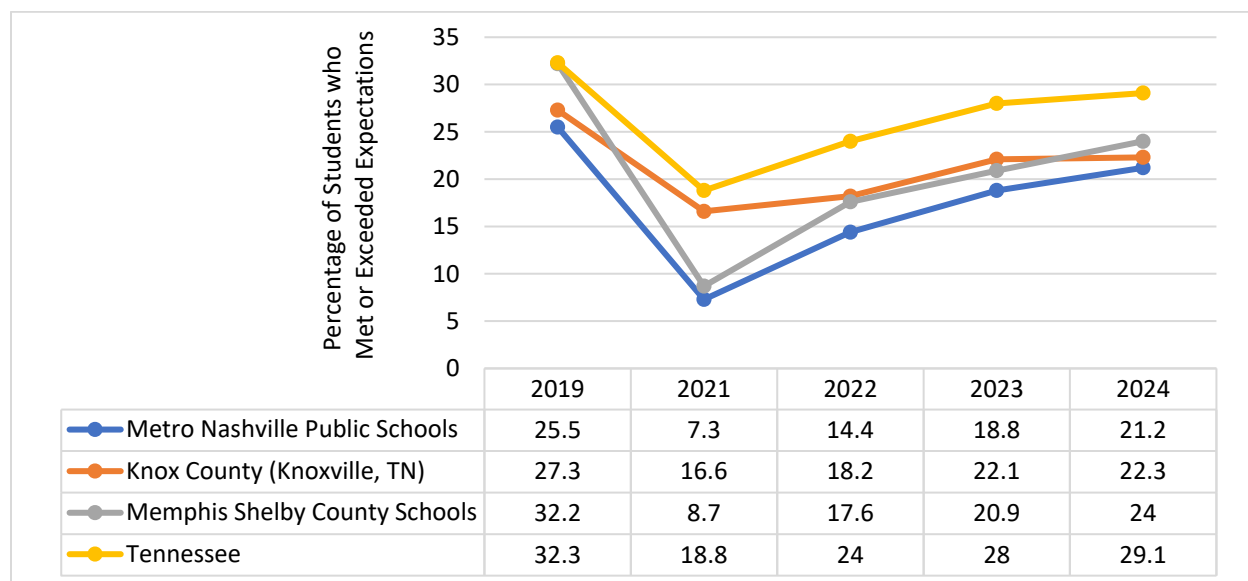|	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Metro Nashville Public Schools	5.3	4	6.2	6.5	7
Knox County (Knoxville, TN)	7	6.3	8.9	9.3	10.1
Memphis Shelby County Schools	3.5	2.7	4.8	5.6	6.4
Tennessee	7.4	6	8.4	9.2	9.5
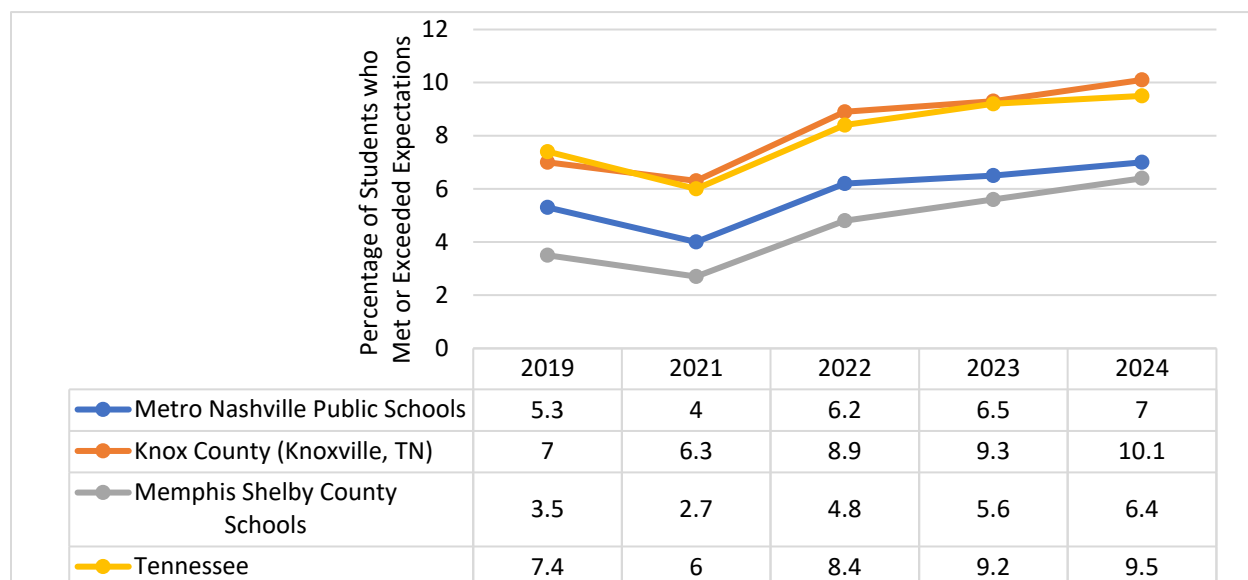
Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).

Exhibit 21. Percentage of Math Scores Across All Grades At or Above Expectations for Students with Disabilities on the TCAP, 2019 to 2024

	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
Metro Nashville Public Schools	8.1	3.4	6.4	7.3	8
Knox County (Knoxville, TN)	9.3	7.7	8.3	11	12.1
Memphis Shelby County Schools	6.6	2	4.7	5.7	7.1
Tennessee	11.6	7.7	10.1	11.5	12.1
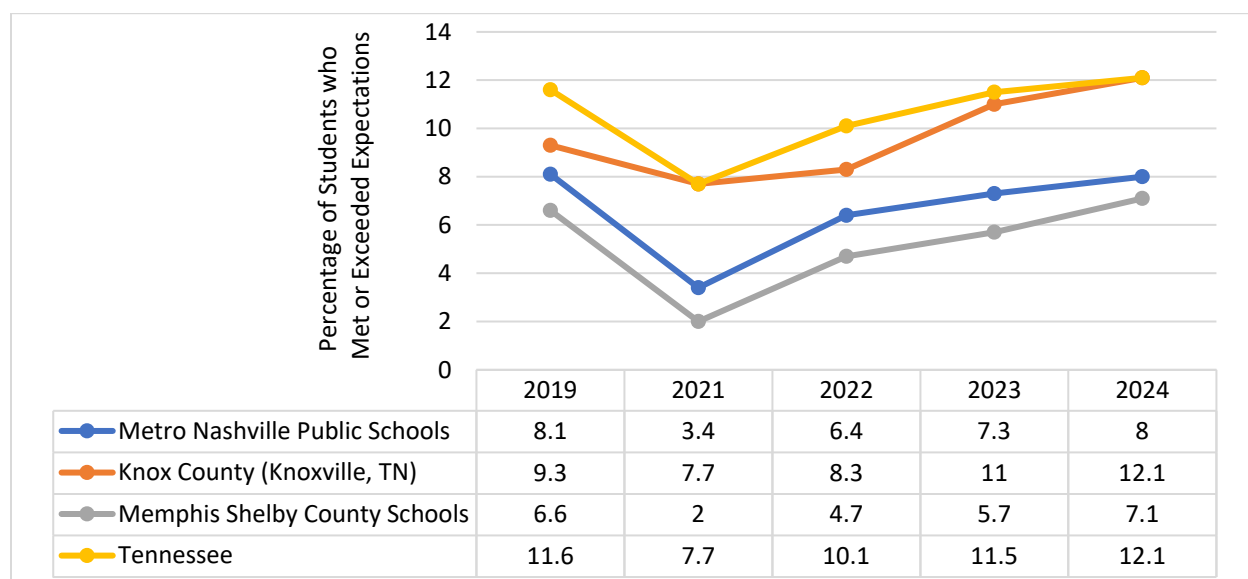
Source: Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).

National Assessment of Educational Progress

While TCAP data is not reported in a manner that allows districts to compare who may be in

multiple groups that are traditionally marginalized (e.g. Black students who are also economically disadvantaged), the results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) does offer such comparisons. Historically, MSCS has volunteered to participate in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) program of NAEP with 26 of their peer urban districts across the country. MSCS opted out of the voluntary program in 2024, and the comparisons provided here will no longer be available. The assessment provides student achievement results in fourth and eighth grades in reading and mathematics.

Exhibits 22 – 25 illustrate that there were no significant average scale score differences between MSCS and TN for Black students eligible for the school lunch program and those who are not eligible for the school lunch program in 2022. Meaning when both the race/ethnicity and economic conditions of students are accounted for, MSCS provides the same quality of education (or better as students are more likely to be in abject poverty compared to peers across the state) as other school systems across the state of Tennessee.

Exhibit 22. Average Fourth Grade Reading Scale Scores for Black Economically and Not Economically Disadvantaged Students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2022

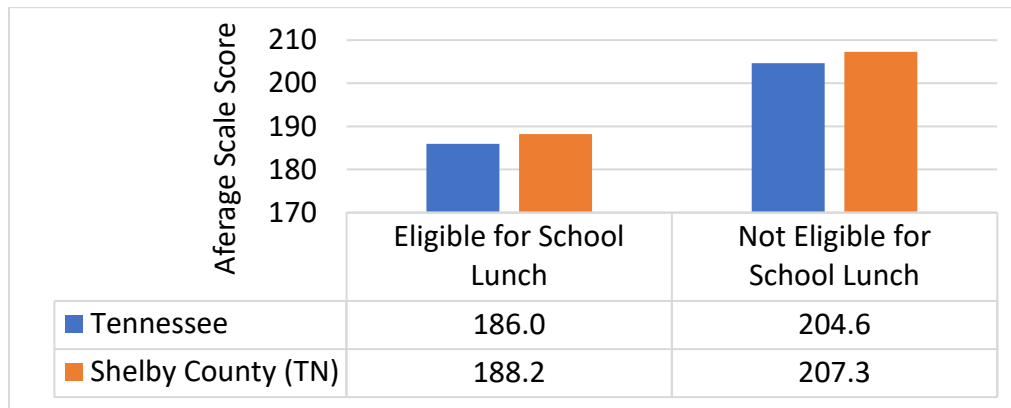|	Eligible for School Lunch	Not Eligible for School Lunch
■ Tennessee	186.0	204.6
■ Shelby County (TN)	188.2	207.3

Exhibit 23. Average Eighth Grade Reading Scale Scores for Black Economically and Not Economically Disadvantaged Students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2022
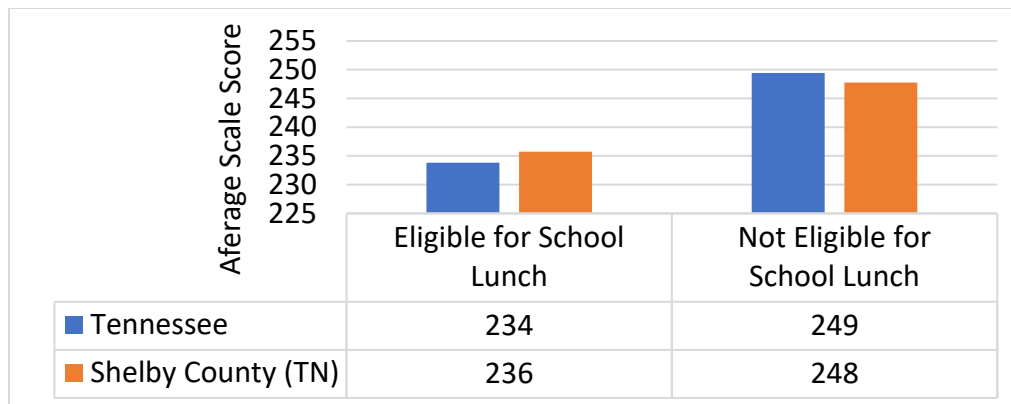

	Eligible for School Lunch	Not Eligible for School Lunch
■ Tennessee	234	249
■ Shelby County (TN)	236	248

Exhibit 24. Average Fourth Grade Mathematics Scale Scores for Black Economically and Not Economically Disadvantaged Students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2022

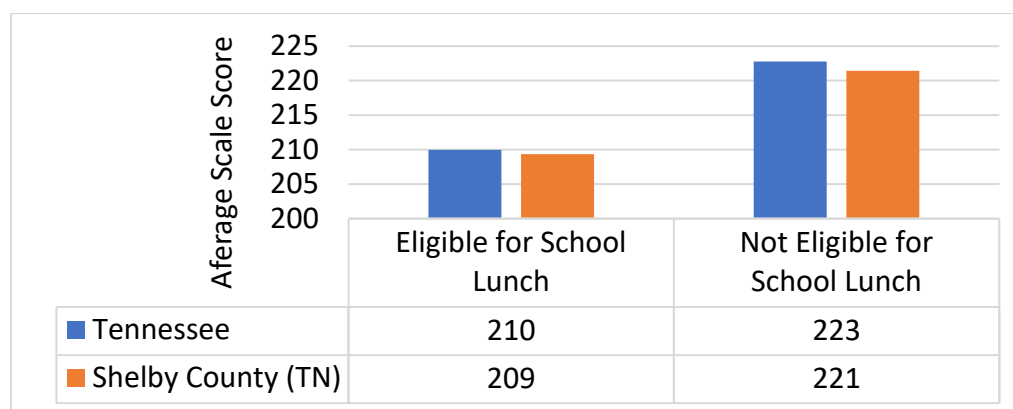|	Eligible for School Lunch	Not Eligible for School Lunch
■ Tennessee	210	223
■ Shelby County (TN)	209	221

Exhibit 25. Average Eighth Grade Mathematics Scale Scores for Black Economically and Not Economically Disadvantaged Students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2022

	Eligible for School Lunch	Not Eligible for School Lunch
■ Tennessee	242	258
■ Shelby County (TN)	243	252
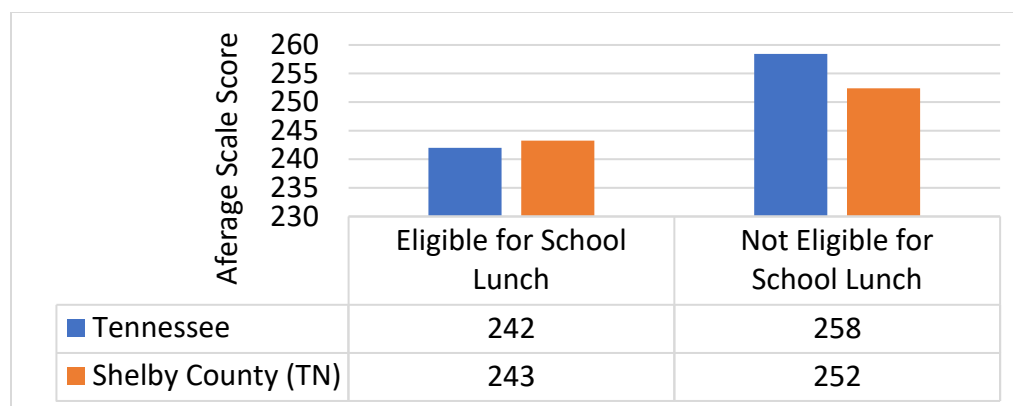
The data provided in this section illustrates that students across the district are not only making progress, but their performance relative to their peers when comparing similar student groups is already on par or better than students across the state of Tennessee. To be sure, the objective is to ensure that all students, independent of their racial, ethnic, and economic differences perform equally as well as their peers. However, the presumption that the quality of instruction in schools and classrooms across MSCS is inferior to the instruction provided in schools across the state is patently false. Are there opportunities for improvement in instruction and teaching practices, absolutely.

Consequently, the recommendations that follow focus on ensuring students in the district make outsized progress relative to their peers. The goal is to ensure that they have the same life outcome opportunities as their peers across the state and the nation that are not a reflection (mirrors) of their current circumstances, but rather, provide a view of the possibilities (windows) for their

future post-graduation. The recommendations here acknowledge the improvements that have been made and the current best practices in place, while focusing on enhancing the district's ability to better serve traditionally marginalized students who have persistently remained behind their peers with greater urgency.

Council of the Great City Schools Academic Key Performance Indicators

Appendix D provides a summary of the Memphis Shelby County School district's self-reported academic KPI[13] data compared to other CGCS districts nationwide.[14] Scores are presented for comparison purposes and to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvements.[15] Noteworthy MSCS KPI comparative data indicated that --

- o MSCS improvement resulted in the district being in the Best Quartile for Overall Performance in a number of significant categories such as the percentage of ninth grade students who failed one or more courses (12.6% in 2022-23), the percentage of ninth grade students with a B average GPA or better in all grade nine courses (35.5%) and the percentage of students completing Algebra I/Integrated Math by the end of ninth grade (89.2%);

- o MSCS was also Best in Quartile for Change in Performance between 2018-19 and 2022-13 in key areas such as ninth grade Algebra I Completion (increasing 7.9 percentage points), the percentage of students taking one or more AP courses for Black Females (increasing 2.9 percentage points) and Hispanic Males (increasing 4.3 percentage points) and Hispanic Females (increasing 4.0 percentage points);

- o Compared to their peers nationally, areas for improvement included areas such as the percentage of all AP exam scores that are three or higher and the four year cohort graduation rate.

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[13] A key performance indicator (KPI) is a type of performance measurement.
[14] CGCS must rely on the accuracy and consistency of the data reported by school districts when making comparisons.
[15] Source: Results from Fiscal Year 2022-2023, CGCS *Managing for Results* Publication, released October 2024.

Findings: Areas of Strength and Need

This management letter:

- Provides recommendations to organize and structure MSCS to improve student outcomes for students from traditionally marginalized populations noted earlier, and they are based on CGCS lessons learned from research and studies conducted on large school districts that have significantly improved student outcomes.

- Identifies strengths that the MSCS can draw on as it moves forward.

- Addresses systemic barriers to the coherence of guidance and the cohesion of the curriculum and organizational structure to support students and schools.

- Identifies overarching concerns with the current administrative structures and spans of control.

- Provides a high-level analysis of the MSCS's staffing levels.

- Identifies risk and related instructional, management, operations issues that surfaced during the CGCS Team's interviews with students and staff.

- Offers recommendations to support the MSCS in improving outcomes for students, increasing operational effectiveness and alignment across roles, establishing a more student—and school – centered structure to meet its strategic mission.

A. Commendations and Current Strengths Aligned with Improving Student Outcomes

- The Superintendent and senior leadership are passionate about the success of the students in Memphis Shelby County Schools. They are open to self-examination and feedback and are eager to learn how other districts have approached instructional challenges and accelerated student achievement. For example, a senior administrator specifically expressed an interest in tools other districts use to measure implementation and the impact of instruction and programs.

- There is shared optimism at all levels related to the Superintendent's vision, approach, and passion for student success. A senior leader summarized their perception of the Superintendent's communication to staff as "she is here with us, she cares, and when people see her doing something different and know they matter, they will do anything." Another senior leader referred to the *Hey Neighbor* program that includes senior cabinet members and administrators visible in the community, "knocking on doors and riding the bus" initiated by the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent to address chronic absenteeism as communicating the message to families that "someone cares."

- There is widespread appreciation that the Superintendent has been visible at schools and is prioritizing the elevation of student voice, providing them an active role in the district's improvement efforts. She has highlighted the need for culturally relevant text materials, particularly in English language arts and social studies.

- The Superintendent and senior leadership have engaged in community walks, school visits, and substitute teaching practices that ground their work in the experiences of the schools and the community. These activities have also added to their visibility outside the central office.

- To address a critical "leadership gap" and need for capacity building, a leadership development academy with five strands (e.g., Exploring Campus Leadership for Aspiring Principals) will launch this year.

- The need for instructional support at schools (i.e., provision of personnel and services closest to students) is a high priority for the Superintendent.

- A shared understanding exists among district staff and community members that literacy must be an urgent priority at all levels and across content areas. The transition report specifically elevates literacy and provides leverage for the district's K-12 literacy initiative. The Superintendent has launched a "back to basics" approach to instruction to support the literacy focus this year.

- Extended learning programs offer before- and after-school tutoring with approximately 10,000 students currently participating. This high dosage tutoring program is based on a learning acceleration model rather than remediation.

- The district has experienced notable growth in their English learner and newcomer populations for several years. Currently, there are two newcomer centers to serve recent arrivals. There is a concerted effort to grow the infrastructure needed to more effectively serve these families. While a pull-out model is widely used for English language development/English as a Second language instruction, grade-level content is addressed and the core materials (i.e., *Wonders, SAVVAS/myPerspectives)* are used. Available supports include the provision of some wraparound mental health services and collaborations with community partners (e.g., United Way) to address the specific needs of newcomer students and their families. Town Hall meetings known as "Multicultural Huddles" for newcomer families and families where the parents are limited English speakers provide information about the school system as well as community resources. Additionally, the district offers a heritage language program at one elementary school.

- The critical role of professional learning for staff is acknowledged across levels. SUPE Network leaders have designed training that provides grade- and course-specific opportunities to collaboratively explore and implement the new lesson planning framework. These leaders are also engaged in the design of cohesive Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT) and principal coaching models. Other examples of collaborative

professional learning include Algebra teachers across the system recently coming together to unpack the depth and complexity of selected standards, develop "I can" statements, and explore the flow of a lesson plan that addressed these standards; the participation of the Early Literacy Manager in LETRS training; the potential provision of Science of Reading training to all early literacy teachers; and the weekly touchpoint sessions for instructional coaches facilitated by Network Leaders and/or the Curriculum & Instruction department.

- There is an emerging practice of collegial school site visits/observations among select principals.

- The district's commitment to engage with and support the Memphis Shelby County community at large is evidenced by the social studies department which has created a toolkit for teachers to support relevant and respectful class discussion and highlight the impact of local African American community members.

- Multiple community service and faith-based entities and institutions of higher learning look forward to continuing and expanding their current collaboration with the district. A district administrator stated that "we have some really great partners."

- Parents/guardians are eager to partner with principals, teachers, and other staff to support their children's educational experience. They are adept at and committed to actively monitoring their students' academic progress using the district's adopted Power School tool.

- Family engagement efforts are prioritized across levels and departments. For example, all Early Childhood and Head Start centers have a family engagement liaison. In a unique approach to further encourage and facilitate participation in district events, parent family liaisons serve as "greeters" at Board of Education meetings. These parent volunteers are able to provide on the spot resource information and guidance. A parent portal, *Legacy University*, informs families of community resources and engagement opportunities.

- The district, the superintendent, and the Memphis Shelby County Education Association, the professional organization representing district educators, appear to have forged a strong partnership focused on staff and student needs. The Association leaders expressed that they appreciate "that Dr. Feagins talks to teachers directly."

B. Areas of Need

Governance, Leadership, and Coherence

Overarching issues in the MSCS's governance, leadership, and coherence practices that surfaced during the CGCS Team's interviews with staff members included –

● The Board of Education is not organized around a student outcomes focused model and has yet to clarify the district's direction or expectations for the newly appointed Superintendent and her leadership team. Consequently, the process of developing a district strategic plan addressing Board-adopted student outcome goals that reflect inclusive input and lays out specific goals, objectives, and benchmarks was not found. In fact, a search on the district's website for goals resulted in no identification of Board expectations that have been set for improving student outcomes. Further inquiry resulted in the identification of two documents: *Destination 2025* and *Reimagining 901*. The first had 10-year goals that were set in 2015 and the second had strategic priorities and goals that were not specific to what students should know and be able to do. The urgent need for a unifying long-term comprehensive strategic plan was described by a stakeholder as "we cannot, as a community, continue to do hard resets."

● An expressed long-standing culture of "sweep it under the rug" when a problem arises, or success is not met inhibits an effective continuous improvement cycle.

● Network Leaders lack a common and consistent approach to setting goals, identifying objectives, action planning, and accountability measures to guide their work supporting schools across the district. The absence of a district strategic plan is a root cause; however, there is no evidence of an established process for them to work together in concert with the Superintendent to develop and level set expectations and accountability measures.

● Despite strong recommendations from the CGCS (see *Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively: Guidance for School Districts*) and others, the MSCS Board of Education approved the addition of 1,296 new staff positions using the temporary funds from federal ESSER appropriations. Consequently, the new superintendent faced the need to immediately address significant staffing and budget adjustments in the first six months of her tenure when the temporary funds expired. The Board's decision to add staff positions has had a significant impact on the perception of the new superintendent's capabilities as difficult decisions regarding staffing were needed. The Board has deflected criticism that should be owned by the Board, and not by the new superintendent.

● The Superintendent recently implemented a central office reorganization that included repositioning many central office staff to school site-based assignments and shifting resources closer to the classroom as budget adjustments were necessary with ESSER funds coming to an end. The (unintended) consequences of this new strategy have significantly reduced central office coherence and capacity to develop, implement, and support systemic instructional initiatives. The extent of reassignments and dismantling of some central departments was evidenced by an administrator's lament that "significant

institutional knowledge has been lost." Another experienced administrator characterized the magnitude of the shifts as "like starting in a new school district." The new instructional paradigm is further addressed in the Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development section of this report.

● While acknowledging the complexities of organizational change, the perceived magnitude of central office reassignments (with many administrators new to their position and/or area of supervision) and consolidation of leadership responsibilities and supervision, senior leaders and administrators expressed feeling stressed, overwhelmed, and without adequate support and resources to be successful. A senior administrator lamented a "leadership gap" across departments and levels. For example, there is no system in place to build network administrators' capacity to lead schools and address the myriad needs within their supervision assignments. The team heard comments such as "we are building the plane as we are flying it," "the organizational structure is still not functional," and "what we need is stabilization."

● The current school supervision assignment structure (IGNITE, SOAR, SUPE) has led to an unequal distribution of human capital resources across the district, causing significant discrepancies in the level of support schools receive and Network Administrators' quotient (e.g., one network leader oversees 90 high-need schools) of supervision responsibilities. The sheer number of schools assigned to each Network Administrator precludes effective supervision and support.

● High level central office staff have responsibility for major central office departments and schools. This organizational structure is likely to impede appropriate support for central office functions or schools and is untenable in the long-term.

● The distinction between the roles of the network leader and the network advisor is unclear and inconsistent across networks.

● To increase the proximity of resources (i.e., human capital) to the school sites, multiple central office departments and services have been eliminated or significantly depleted, rendering the remaining staff ineffective. Multiple department and content leads expressed dismay at the number of staff reassigned away from central support teams and consequently, their inability to provide adequate support to schools and address professional learning needs. The lack of content expertise formerly provided by the Curriculum & Instruction department was of primary concern to the school site administrators, one of whom stated, "You cannot have student growth if you have teachers who do not know the content and pedagogy."

● Although principals expressed appreciation for additional coaches and specialists at their sites, they noted that the lack of clear direction and adequate training for these individuals have limited their effectiveness. Principals and site administrators repeatedly expressed concern that many centralized academic and operational support/resources (e.g., Threat Assessment Team) are no longer available to them and that there are not enough personnel or expertise at the school level to address their needs. One administrator expressed it this way: "the calvary is not coming."

- The need and requests for additional comprehensive wraparound services were voiced by school officials, parents, and students. Chronic absenteeism, unhoused students, and mental health were identified as systemic concerns impacting students' well-being and ability to learn.

Curriculum and Instruction

- Coaches and teachers across all core content areas appear to have limited knowledge and understanding of the structure and content of the Tennessee Academic Standards or depth of knowledge construct. Consequently, instructional rigor frequently addresses recall and/or discrete skill levels only.

- There is no district vision or framework (e.g., content and instructional training, exemplars of student work, protocols for formal instructional rounds) that describes what students should know and be able to do nor how teachers should provide effective instruction. The *Wonders* teacher's guide is referred to as the instructional framework. A newly implemented centralized "focus of the month" has been identified as the initial step in creating an instructional vision; however, such a focus is a strategy and not a vision of high-quality instruction.

- The identified five high-impact strategies which constitute a lesson plan construct have replaced a comprehensive evidence-based instructional framework that addresses multiple strategies, instructional moves, and guidance for addressing the needs of struggling students. This shift provides less structure and support for instructional coherence when strengthening the coherence was observed as a need.

- The district-wide focus on literacy is severely hampered by a systemic lack of understanding of the components of reading: both word recognition, oral language, and language comprehension (i.e., both components of Scarborough's Reading Rope that result in skilled reading). Without a shared definition and vision of effective reading instruction, the potential success of the literacy initiative efforts is minimal.

- Multiple administrators, parents, and students spoke of the need to develop and implement "engagement strategies" so that students can "see themselves in the curriculum." The two literacy programs (*Wonders* and *SAVVAS*) have not been reviewed with a culturally responsive lens nor have more diverse texts been incorporated into the core instructional program. The team heard that the Superintendent has supported the purchase of culturally relevant reading materials which is a first step to moving to an inclusive, curious, and engaging educational experience for students.

- The district mandate to implement the *Wonders* and *SAVVAS/myPerspectives* programs with fidelity holds promise for equitable instruction across school sites and the potential for consistent and targeted professional learning opportunities; however, the *Wonders* program and a district-created standards crosswalk document have been conflated with a district literacy or English language arts curriculum. The district-held belief that the

inclusion of *Wonders* on the state-approved list of materials means that it is a comprehensive (stand-alone) "curriculum" has precluded the identification of gaps (e.g., foundational skills) within each program and the development of additional resources to support those gaps. There is a lack of a cohesive vision and explanation grounded in the Science of Reading research aligned to these resources. This may explain why both educators and stakeholders expressed a lack of confidence in the efficacy of the *Wonders* program.

- There is little to no evidence of oral language instruction and the role of building background knowledge to support literacy instruction.

- Multiple students who were interviewed reported that their classroom instruction is off-grade level and not challenging. These students referenced teachers' belief that students have not yet recovered from the learning loss incurred during the pandemic and are thus not ready for grade-level content.

- The recent reorganization that placed the literacy office/department outside the Curriculum and Instruction office structure has already led to confusion of roles and messaging, and duplication of efforts despite the respective leads' stated efforts to collaborate. One administrator characterized the new/current structure as "we are working together to reimagine how we work together." The team wonders how this separation of offices aligns to and supports the identified focus on literacy across the content areas.

- The singular focus on literacy has relegated math instruction to a distant second core content area as evidenced by the lack of a clear vision for math instruction and curriculum office leadership to support math instruction. At the time of the SST visit, there was a math manager on the professional learning department organizational chart, but the position was vacant. It was unclear how that position interfaces with the curriculum office. The team was told that the only reported professional learning guidance provided to math teachers was "to follow the textbook."

- There has been inconsistent messaging via district-level documents addressing instructional guidance for teachers (e.g., performance-based objectives referenced in math documents, leveled readers recommendation in the K-5 English language arts framework).

- The urgent need to address low student achievement is illustrated by multiple parents' voiced fear that their children's lack of literacy proficiency has put them on the "school to prison pathway."

- The team heard that the kindergarten readiness rate for students with prior pre-K experience is 42% and 37% for those with no prior experience. The assessment tool, *Brigance Early Childhood Inventory*, is not considered rigorous and often used to identify students for exceptional student services, which makes the readiness data even more concerning.

- There was little evidence that strategies beyond mandatory state monitoring are in place to mitigate the percentage of students moving between grade levels unprepared for the coming school year.

- Multiple stakeholders (parents/guardians and students) cited an urgent need for curriculum-embedded social emotional learning and expanded school mental health programs beyond occasional large group presentations. The team also heard references to the "insensitivity of teachers" and the need to bring together students for peer support.

Professional Learning

- The team was told that over 1,000 teachers in the district are on the state's permit pathway and are currently not fully certified instructors. The current circumstance magnifies the need for extensive support, coaching, and professional development for instructors.

- The district's current structure for professional development is not designed or implemented as an ongoing cycle of differentiated learning that includes reflection, job-embedded practice, feedback, or coaching.

- There is an emerging conundrum between the central mandate for all schools to implement the same prescriptive literacy program and the wide autonomy given to sites and the ability to provide aligned assessment, professional learning, and coaching. The design of, and responsibility for, professional learning has been "pushed to the sites" in conjunction with the reorganization of the central office, leading to widely varying content, frequency, and efficacy. The responsibility to teach teachers the complexity of the standards, build content knowledge and pedagogical skills now falls to the site administrator or an instructional coach who may or may not have the understanding, time, or skills to provide that professional learning.

- The role of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) coaches and their training to drive data analysis and site planning to improve instructional outcomes were unclear. The team heard that the site PLC coaches often oversee family events, Title I activities, and assessments. One educator wondered, "do we want a school system or a system of schools?"

- While there is a stated reliance on a PLC structure as the primary site-based planning and assessment mechanism, there is considerable variance in the implementation and minimal training/guidance for the PLC coaches and teachers provided.

- While literacy instruction is anchored by the adopted textbook programs, the Science of Reading is referred to as the district foundation for evidence-based instruction. Yet, there has been very little professional learning for teachers, administrators, and cabinet members beyond the state-mandated course. There were reports that even this minimal training has not been completed by many classroom teachers. The team also heard that a coach has recently been hired by the literacy lead who may provide this training in the future.

- The role of the professional learning office is unclear and isolated from other curricular departments. The current model of "train the trainers" (i.e., coaches and principals rather than trainers having direct contact with teachers) has created layers of "trickle down" instructional messaging that is diluted, inconsistent, and removed from the classroom.

- Some structures exist that create weekly or monthly touchpoints and training opportunities among and within networks and the central office, but they are not systematic nor sufficient in depth to meet the professional learning needs of teachers, coaches, or administrators.

- There is no comprehensive framework that articulates the role of instructional and PLC coaches and network advisors and identifies which coaching activities will have the greatest impact on teacher practice and student learning. Most coaches are "generalists" without specific content expertise and are often "repurposed", including serving as substitute teachers, depending on site staffing needs.

- Due to the recent central office reorganization and a significant lack of educator retention at the site level, many of the instructional and PLC coaches are new to their position and do not have a toolbox to support the art of coaching. Weekly professional learning sessions are provided to the instructional coaches, but the PLC coaches are not included. Additionally, expectations and duties of these coaches vary widely across networks and sites.

- There is widespread belief that teachers are not equipped to implement the *Wonders* or *SAVVAS/myPerspectives* programs with efficacy. The initial fragmented implementation of *Wonders* did not include fully developed professional learning for teachers. Teachers who provide instruction for students with disabilities and English learners were not included in the initial professional learning or planning with general education teachers. Subsequently, the new singular use mandate with the elimination of any other supplemental resources has not systemically or systematically addressed teachers' unfamiliarity with or gaps in knowledge of the program that might impact implementation.

- New teachers in the 2024-25 school year did not receive centralized training/professional learning during the preceding summer, contributing to the number of teachers with limited to no content knowledge or pedagogical content knowledge.

Assessment and Accountability

- The absence of a historical culture of data-driven decision making will severely limit the district's ability to measure the impact of newly implemented instructional initiatives (e.g., focus on and fidelity to the literacy resources, high impact strategies). The team did not hear a clear message of the role or use of diagnostic, formative, benchmark/interim, and summative assessment data other than references to i-Ready literacy assessments. Principals shared that they are now responsible for creating their own assessments which

introduces variation in the quality of assessments provided and comparing information across schools to identify and replicate best practices difficult.

- Protocols for looking at student work were previously used to norm and calibrate expectations for students' academic performance and define success; however, strict adherence to the literacy programs (i.e., *Wonders, SAVVAS/myPerspectives*) is the only current measure of student performance as "teachers are not ready for further steps with the new changes." Without clearly specified and calibrated expectations, there are no measures to inform instruction or address/differentiate student needs.

- The team heard that two critical resources, a vendor assessment platform (*Mastery Connect)* and short-cycle assessments developed by the district Curriculum and Instruction department, are no longer available to teachers. While teachers continue to have access to choose items from several item banks, the lack of common interim (other than state mandated summative) assessments preclude benchmarking across classrooms and sites. Without common embedded measures/protocols, teachers and administrators cannot develop a comprehensive picture of student achievement, trends, systemic gaps, or allow for identification of "pockets of excellence" that can be scaled to a "district of excellence."

- Schools are grappling with the lack of a comprehensive short-cycle assessment plan with the abandonment of common district-created tools. This type of assessment measures student understanding of a specific content or skill within a short period of time, allowing teachers to adjust their instruction immediately. The team heard that short-cycle literacy assessment work to support the new focus does not fall under the literacy office and is yet to be assigned to a lead/department.

- There is an urgent need to create/adopt measures and metrics to assess the impact of the new coaching/professional learning structures as well as the focus on literacy across the content areas. The literacy office has provided limited training on specific classroom "look-fors" to principals who are then responsible for sharing the information at the site level. There is an expectation that administrators use the *Tennessee Instructional Practice Guide (IPG)* to support classroom instruction observations but little/varying accountability and no protocols other than the ACE days (a 5–10-minute conversation each principal has with the Superintendent) exist to systematically collect and analyze the data needed to inform professional learning needs, identify trends, and scale best practices.

- Title I "monitors" work with schools to ensure program expenditures and activities at sites are aligned to the "right work," however, the *School Improvement Plan (SIP)* appears to function as a compliance document with no evidence of data monitoring or just-in-time adjustments. The Superintendent has asked the Federal Programs Director for the plans, but no further communication has happened.

- The Office of Research, Accountability, and Management has a minimal role in helping principals understand and use their data, addressing primarily graduation requirements

and rates. The Office is not placed on the organizational chart in a manner that elevates the importance of understanding district data to inform high level decision-making.

Response to Intervention (RTI2) and Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

The district is implementing the Tennessee model of RTI-A (academic support) and RTI-B (behavior support) to match instruction and intervention to student needs. Both models are supported by high-quality Tier 1 core instruction and guided by ongoing data-based decision making. A few school sites in the district are experimenting with the more comprehensive MTSS model.

- The district RTI-A leadership office is currently staffed by one person who coordinates with the RTI-B lead. Previously, the academic leadership team consisted of 18 educators. District support for implementing the RTI model has been severely curtailed for the current academic year (e.g., rather than a comprehensive implementation guide, piecemeal just-in-time information has been provided to sites).

- The CGCS team did not hear from any site-based personnel of a functioning RTI leadership team, reference to a decision-making tree structure, or other RTI strategies.

- There is an overrepresentation of students identified as needing Tier 2 and Tier 3 support and intervention. The previous year's district RTI leadership, as part of their state training, identified ineffective Tier 1 instruction as a primary root cause of over-identification. The district's Tier 1 core instruction is currently defined as a focus on literacy with identified high-impact strategies. Without a well-developed curriculum and guiding framework to delineate what good instruction looks like, fidelity to the model is constrained.

- Academic intervention is at the individual school's discretion and mostly limited to tutoring, consisting primarily of more *i-Ready* usage without differentiation.

- The current data collection and analysis protocols are insufficient to measure the impact of intervention efforts. There appears to be no standardized process for making data-based decisions within the RTI structure other than the use of *Aimsweb* for progress monitoring after the initial screening.

- Universal RTI-A screening is limited to *i-Ready* assessments at the K-8 level. The state's Early Warning System is used, as required, at the high school level. Both assessment structures provide limited information to respond to students' needs.

Special Populations and Struggling Students

- There is a long-standing culture of defaulting to a pull-out model of instruction for students with disabilities, English learners, and gifted and talented students rather than co-teaching and differentiation within the mainstream classroom. The team did not hear of an overarching strategy or instructional guidance to create access to the core instructional

program for students with disabilities or English learners other than pull-out or an emerging co-teaching model. The CLUE enrichment program for K to second grade students (those reading two or more grade levels above) relies on a pull-out model rather than an inclusive "talent development" approach for all students that would support and increase the number of students not traditionally identified for gifted programs.

- It is unclear for how long and at what proficiency levels English learners participate in a pull-out model at the elementary level (placement and exit criteria) or how they have daily access to grade-level, core instruction.

- There is little support for Spanish heritage language programs (the vast majority of ELs in the district speak Spanish) that would minimize the achievement gaps between English learner and native English students by providing EL students access to grade-level content in both languages. Evidence-based research reports consistently show that these programs develop the cognitive and problem-solving skills of both native English speakers and English language learners and foster cultural understanding.

- While the district has implemented an extensive tutoring program for struggling students, it is unclear how individualized the support is (all participants engage with online *i-Ready* sessions) or how progress is monitored.

- Teachers of students with disabilities and English learners appear to have limited and haphazard opportunities to participate in academic planning and team structures and professional development alongside regular education teachers.

- There is a need for a system of behavioral support and training for teachers. The team heard that there are offices/support personnel at both the district and site levels but little collaboration or communication between them.

Recommendations, Proposals, and Next Steps

There is a demonstrable sense of urgency shared by district staff and stakeholders to accelerate student achievement and build a school system that responds to the needs of the Memphis and Shelby County communities. This is commendable but may foster a temptation to move through these proposals as quickly as possible; however, many of these recommendations involve transformational change: large in scale and scope and must be considered within the sea of change the district is currently experiencing. Some of the recommended next steps may be addressed in tandem and/or are described in detail as supporting another proposal. Do not let urgency be the enemy of purposeful, strategic, high-quality planning to implement the recommendations that follow. Pay attention to the pace of change management – the district has recently experienced multiple changes in leadership and methodologies. The overarching goal should be to build trust within divisions, departments, and schools across the district. It will be critical to communicate the rationale for change and remain focused on and align all actions to clearly identified goals.

Governance, Leadership, and Coherence

- The Council has recently released a *Leadership Transition Guide* that offers communication exemplars and "tried-and-true strategies" from experts and member districts that can be leveraged as the new Memphis Shelby County Schools Superintendent continues to develop relationships, build trust, and support students' academic and personal success.

- The Superintendent's entry plan and transition report have established and communicated a vision for her leadership. As delineated in the report, the district should now be engaged in phase three: the development of "a comprehensive three- to five-year strategic plan outlining the district's future direction." It is critical that a shared (between the Board of Education and the Superintendent) long-range vision statement and goals be articulated and communicated across the district prior to that the planning so that the development of a strategic plan is done with the "end in mind." The vision and strategic plan are companion works where the vision identifies the "what" and "why" and the strategic plan defines the "how." CGCS can connect the school board members with colleagues across the country who have engaged in this process who may provide guidance and a roadmap for the work Memphis Shelby County should undertake – beginning with the school board identifying district goals and superintendent guardrails.

- The development of a strategic plan should be a thoughtful, inclusive, and a collaborative process that aligns resources and actions and is understood by the community and all key stakeholders. Rushing the process threatens the viability of, and buy-in for, the resulting plan. In tandem with this emerging work, it is critical that the Superintendent and senior cabinet members codify the literacy focus with immediate short-term initiatives/goals anchored in a theory of action. (Also see specific recommendations to develop a district literacy plan in the Curriculum & Instruction section). While the district has identified a singular initiative, literacy across content areas, the rationale ("why") appears to lack student achievement data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability, and language background. The data would allow the district to identify what the barriers and challenges are ("root cause analysis") and strategically identify resources and actions steps accordingly. The move to a single resource, the core *Wonders* and *SAVVAS/myPerspectives* programs, without identifying other instructional root causes (i.e., a lack of oral language and foundational skills instruction) represents an incomplete theory of action. Foundational research-based strategies and internal accountability design as part of a theory of action process are attached to this report. *(Appendix E: Theory of Action Guidance; Appendix F: Theory of Action Roadmap Guidance Graphic & Planner)*

- Using the Superintendent's new learning, having deepened her knowledge of the district's strengths and challenges, it is recommended she intensely review the master organizational chart, especially focusing on the academic departments, and strategically realign responsibilities, reposition resources, and backfill vacant positions. The use of available resources aligned to priorities should be reassessed. Consider sharing a draft of the realigned organization chart (see Exhibits 26 and 27) and gathering feedback from select stakeholders (e.g., senior staff, principals) prior to implementation.

- Realign central office roles so that senior cabinet members (e.g., Deputy Superintendent of Education Services) do not have the additional responsibilities of direct school supervision.

- Exhibit 26 illustrates the potential reorganization of the academic units to realign the school support under the Deputy Superintendent of Schools and the academic support under the Deputy Superintendents of Educational Services.

    o The proposed organizational exemplar suggests two departments in the Education Services Division organized around the Assistant Superintendent of Academics and the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services.

    o All the schools in the district (including the Memphis Virtual School, Charter/Accelerated Schools, and others) in the proposed realignment are (as equally as possible – including A, B, C, D, and F schools) divided among the network leaders. In the CGCS' experience, dividing schools with lower academic experience allows the district team to provide greater support and resources to schools and students in need.

    o To address the untenable supervision responsibilities of the current Network Leaders, consider the ratio of schools, realign schools in networks to balance the supervision, and minimize the number of schools each person oversees and supports.

    o The Deputy Superintendent of Schools and the Deputy Superintendent of Educational Services would be tasked with working closely together to ensure that all of the schools, school leaders, and teachers get the academic support that they need to improve student outcomes and ensure that the curriculum and instruction vision for the district is implemented with fidelity.

Exhibit 26. Proposed Realignment of Academic and School Support Under the Deputy Superintendent of Education Services and Deputy Superintendent of Schools
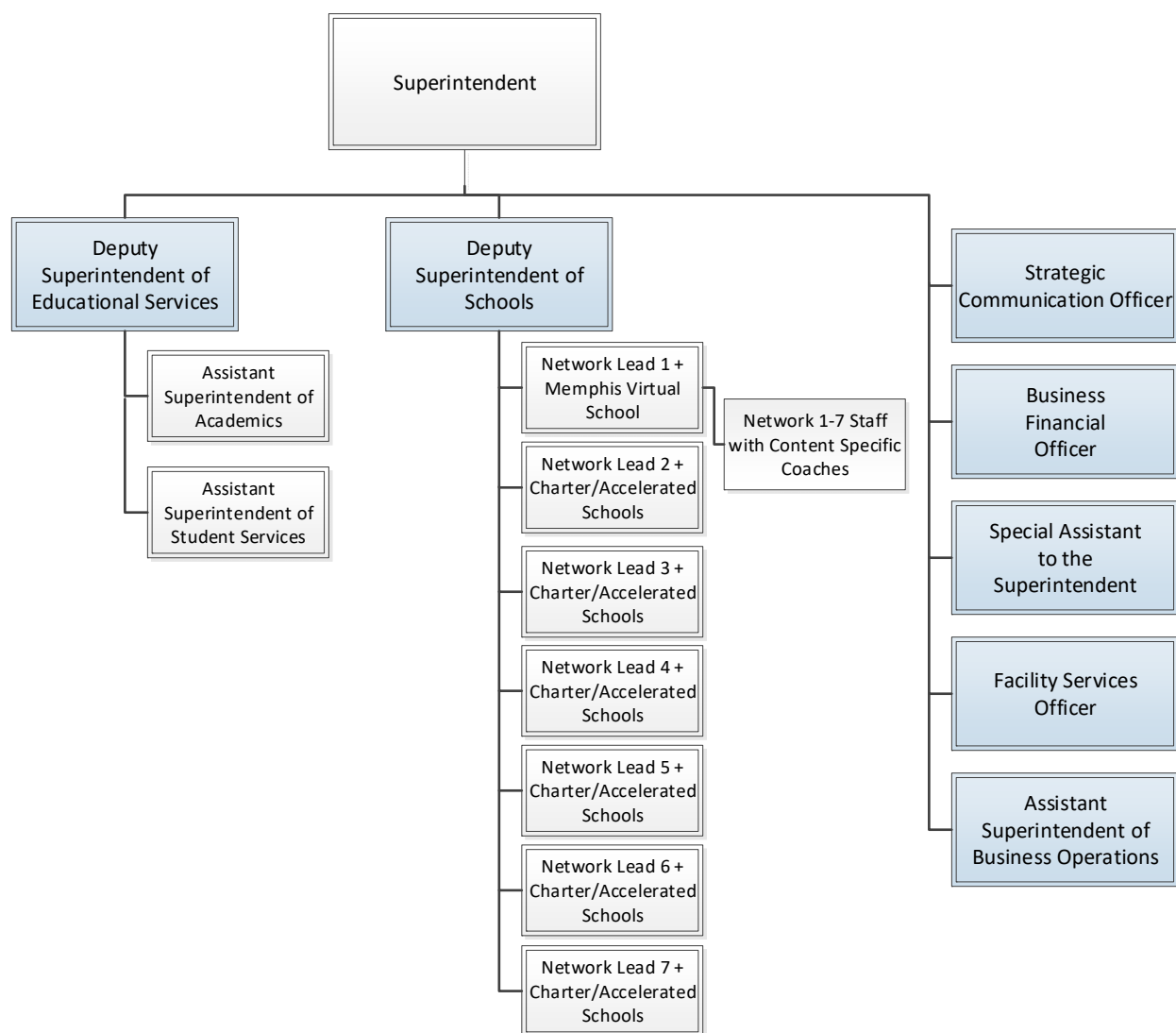
- Consider the role, guidance, and support that an effectively functioning central office can provide to sites; address gaps such as the lack of a Math Lead. Consider organizing central office departments within divisions based on their function (e.g., literacy department under the Curriculum & Instruction umbrella). While prioritizing support closest to the classroom (i.e., the recent deployment of central office administrators and coaches to school sites) is critical, the lack of content-specific tools (e.g., short-term and interim assessments) and aligned professional development dampens effective instruction. It is unrealistic to expect "generalists" or those with site responsibilities to develop and provide teachers and administrators in a large district such as MSCS with the research-based resources and common assessments that support a strong curriculum and instructional framework.

- As exemplified in Exhibit 27, reassign all academic support duties to the Deputy Superintendent of Educational Services under two divisions – Academics and Student Services.

    o Duties other than direct school support in the current Transformation Office (e.g., the JROTC program, Early College) should be reassigned to the Deputy Superintendent of Educational Services.

    o Strengthen the literacy and mathematics educational support to schools by tasking four literacy and four mathematics (two elementary and two secondary for each subject) directors with developing and training network content coaches on the district's curriculum and instruction expectations.

    o Task the network content coaches with co-development of the district's curriculum expectations and providing differentiated training based on the level of understanding needed to implement the desired instructional delivery to principals (lowest level of understanding), school-based coaches, PLC coaches, and groups of teachers (highest level of understand).

    o For students, and in coordination with Human Resources for teachers and staff, expand the Office of Student Wellness to address the many concerns voiced around student and staff mental health. Create structures that promote collaboration between this office and Curriculum and Instruction to embed social-emotional learning into the curriculum.

- Clearly define site autonomy (what is "tight" and what is "loose") other than strict fidelity to the literacy programs. For example, the reliance on the PLC structure, site-based instructional coaches, and principal-led professional development are identified as the site infrastructure yet there is wide variance in the implementation and content of support each provides. These are each important resources that should be more clearly delineated in the district's theory of action plan. As a senior administrator observed, "It is important to be somewhat aligned before we get into nuanced decisions."

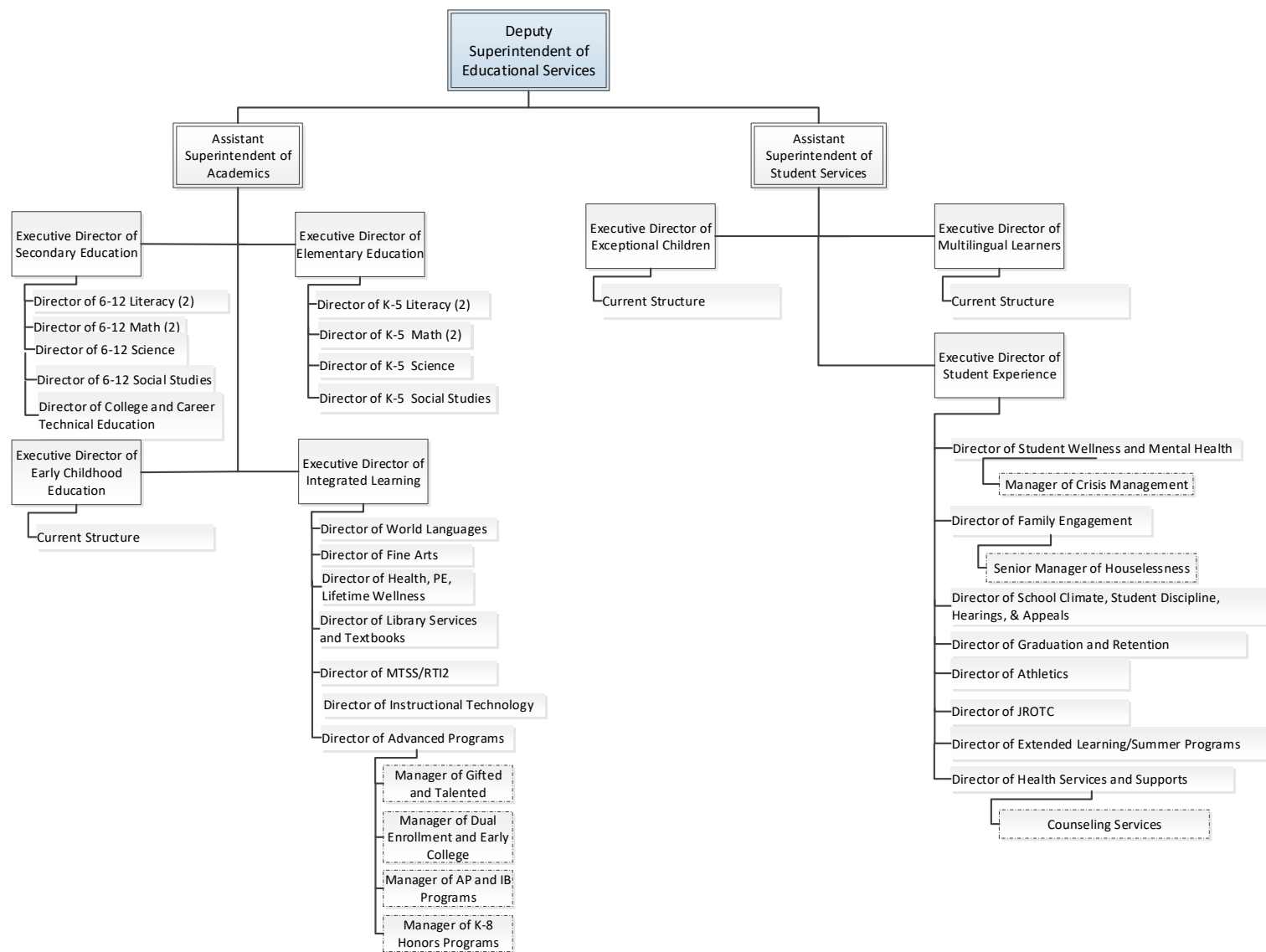**Exhibit 27. Proposed Realignment of Academic Support Under the Deputy Superintendent of Education Services**

Deputy Superintendent of Educational Services

- Assistant Superintendent of Academics
  - Executive Director of Secondary Education
    - Director of 6-12 Literacy (2)
    - Director of 6-12 Math (2)
    - Director of 6-12 Science
    - Director of 6-12 Social Studies
    - Director of College and Career Technical Education
  - Executive Director of Early Childhood Education
    - Current Structure
  - Executive Director of Elementary Education
    - Director of K-5 Literacy (2)
    - Director of K-5 Math (2)
    - Director of K-5 Science
    - Director of K-5 Social Studies
  - Executive Director of Integrated Learning
    - Director of World Languages
    - Director of Fine Arts
    - Director of Health, PE, Lifetime Wellness
    - Director of Library Services and Textbooks
    - Director of MTSS/RTI2
    - Director of Instructional Technology
    - Director of Advanced Programs
      - Manager of Gifted and Talented
      - Manager of Dual Enrollment and Early College
      - Manager of AP and IB Programs
      - Manager of K-8 Honors Programs

- Assistant Superintendent of Student Services
  - Executive Director of Exceptional Children
    - Current Structure
  - Executive Director of Multilingual Learners
    - Current Structure
  - Executive Director of Student Experience
    - Director of Student Wellness and Mental Health
      - Manager of Crisis Management
    - Director of Family Engagement
      - Senior Manager of Houselessness
    - Director of School Climate, Student Discipline, Hearings, & Appeals
    - Director of Graduation and Retention
    - Director of Athletics
    - Director of JROTC
    - Director of Extended Learning/Summer Programs
    - Director of Health Services and Supports
      - Counseling Services

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Curriculum and Instruction

The current stipulation and singular focus that teachers use the district-adopted literacy materials *(Wonders and SAVVAS/myPerspectives)* infers that the instructional materials *are* the curriculum and instructional framework. The team heard from multiple administrators and coaches references to each program as the "curriculum." Excerpts from the Council's publication, *Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum*, more comprehensively defines all the components of a curriculum and provides systematic guidance for identifying and establishing a "central guide for teachers and all instructional personnel about what is essential to teach and how deeply to teach it throughout the district so that every child has access to the same rigorous academic experiences and instructional and emotional supports in meeting academic standards." A curriculum also includes the analysis of data-based trends in unfinished learning and how to address those gaps within grade-level instruction. It also provides guidance for all instructional staff who support and supervise teaching and student learning. The publication further explains that "the district curriculum is not a textbook, a set of materials or a digital system, however it does identify and connect educators to the resources the district requires."

The team also heard references to a "back to the basics" approach as guiding the academic program this year. The team interprets this to indicate a move away from interventions that many districts across the nation have identified to address learning loss to focusing on high-quality Tier 1 instruction. Focusing on Tier 1 instruction will minimize the need for specialized Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. Such an approach should include data-driven decisions, standards-based instruction, and differentiated support via acceleration, not remediation.

The development and adoption of a curriculum and instructional framework are a long-term multi-year endeavor. Given the degree of instructional autonomy at sites, consider what the system is ready and eager to receive (e.g., explanation of standards, pacing guides, sample units of study). Provide multiple opportunities for feedback during the development process from all instructional staff.

Recognizing that (a) the current identification of literacy across core content areas as a districtwide focus and (b) the mandate to implement these instructional materials with fidelity are the instructional foundation for the 2024-2025 school year, a shift to standards-based conversations and professional learning would represent first steps in more clearly defining instructional expectations and what learning is essential for each grade level.

Literacy Instruction Do Now (Year 1):
(Illustrated as Appendix G: Sample Simplified Logic Model for Literacy 2024-25)

- Identify a literacy consultant steeped in the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy who can support district leadership and lead the initiative/focus on early literacy. The goal is to create a comprehensive district multi-year (TK-grade 12) literacy plan that addresses the needs of *all* students, provides a roadmap, and articulates specific goals and the steps that will be taken to achieve those goals.

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- Move from silos to systems. There must be authentic, actionable district level leadership collaboration. The district's current focus on TK-third grade foundational skills means that the Curriculum & Instruction (C&I) Office (ideally the Literacy department situated within C&I), the Elementary Level Office or Network Leaders, and the Assessment and Accountability Office must be "at the table" working in lockstep with the literacy consultant to develop and communicate:

  o a **shared vision for a common approach,** anchored in the Science of Reading research (i.e., Structured Literacy which emphasizes highly explicit and systematic teaching of both foundational skills and higher-level literacy skills based on Scarborough's Rope). While the initial focus may be on TK-third grade, the vision must describe a TK-grade 12 vision (i.e., what does effective literacy instruction look like at PreK-third grade, grades 4-5, grades 6-8, and high school) and address the unique needs of struggling early literacy and older readers. Consider reviewing and using a case study for TK-grade 3, *Shifting Early Literacy Practices: The Story of an Early Reading Pilot in San Antonio Public Schools*.

  o an **established goal(s)**, clearly establish SMART goals for student learning outcomes specifically cascaded from board established district goals that articulate specific population of students will progress in a specific subject from X in 2024 to Y by 2029 on the XXX assessment. Based on these goals, clearly articulate the strategies (the how) the district will undertake to accomplish the student outcomes.

  o a **districtwide implementation cycle** (3 times per year) that includes (1) teacher professional learning aligned to goals with clear expectations, (2) site Literacy Lead (e.g., instructional coach with structured literacy expertise) to support and coach on specific practices, (3) Curriculum & Instruction (with integrated Literacy Office) centrally-based leads to support site-based literacy coaches, (4) Site Leaders (Network Leads and principals) to monitor implementation, and (5) Use of an observational tool with explicit success criteria. *(Appendix H: Implementation Cycle for Foundational Reading Skills Exemplar; Appendix I: Implementation Cycle for Building Knowledge, Vocabulary, and Language; Appendix J: Early Reading Accelerators Instructional Practice Success Criteria TK-2 Exemplar)*

- Structure a central office literacy team now that will support the site literacy coaches next year– a sample structure used successfully implemented by a CGCS member district is illustrated in the Appendix cited below). This should be the core team that works with the consultant and develops/extends their expertise this first year under the direction of a senior administrator. This year, build/extend this team's structured literacy expertise: engage in new learning, attend trainings, leverage partnerships (Council of the Great City Schools, CGCS member districts, Student Achievement Partners, The Reading League, state reading organizations). They will be the "go-to" TK-third grade literacy experts and begin this summer and next year to provide differentiated professional learning for administrators, site coaches, and teachers. These coaches will be the link between central

office (i.e., Curriculum & Instruction) and site teachers and administrators. (*Appendix K: Literacy Implementation Structure graphic*)

- Identify an initial foundational reading skills assessment tool to be used by all TK-third grade teachers as an indicator of impact. As the literacy team continues their collaboration with the Assessment and Accountability team, this tool can be revised, updated, or replaced for succeeding years. Some CGCS member districts have created and piloted their own assessment tools that the district might want to explore and/or adopt.

- Address the lack of oral language development instruction in the early literacy program. Language skills and literacy achievement are highly correlated; research consistently demonstrates that the more children know about spoken language, the better equipped they are to succeed in reading and writing. A "language rich" classroom includes the use of precise and extended language (modeled and encouraged by the teacher), listening skills instruction (*The Listening Ladder*), explicit instruction in discussion skills ("W" words), peer discussions (with teacher scaffolds and feedback), and teacher read-alouds. While oral and academic language instruction and opportunities for expression are important for all learners, it is especially critical that students at-risk and English learner students hear (modeling) and participate in rich oral language activities.

Literacy Instruction Ongoing/Future Work

- Engage in a comprehensive review of the instructional gaps that exist in the *Wonders* and *SAVVAS/myPerspectives* programs (e.g., oral language development, foundational reading skills, the development of background knowledge, culturally appropriate texts, writing instruction). The team recognizes that the current school year is the first cycle of consistent implementation and expects that classroom observations and anticipated interim assessment results will provide future data to facilitate this process. As necessary, identify and provide supplemental materials to support the core program. Similar work has been done by other CGCS member districts who are using these materials which might orient and support the district's initial efforts and guide supplemental instruction. For example:

    o *Wonders*: one of these districts is currently using *Heggerty Phonemic Awareness* for TK/K for supplemental phonemic awareness instruction. Another district determined, after review, that the flow of phonics instruction in *Wonders* is too slow with too much review, specifically in first and second grades. To address this pacing concern, some sites are supplementing their instruction with the *University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) Foundations Manual,* including access to free *University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) Foundations Toolbox* resources that should be used in conjunction with the UFLI Foundations Manual

    o *SAVVAS/myPerspectives*: other districts using the program have identified the *Analyze Craft and Structure* and *Author Style* pages as most closely aligned to the rigor of the standards. Each skill associated with *Analyze Craft and Structure* has a *Reteach and Practice* page (online) that can be used to address gaps for students,

in small (not whole) group instruction. They have used the *Hook and Inspire* resources with success to build background knowledge and provide context, and make connections between the curriculum and students

- Identify/Develop interim assessments for grades three to twelve that address priority standards and include a performance task. These assessments should be common/standardized across schools and the data collected in a systematic process that measures the impact of instruction and inform planning.

- A critical future step should be a transition from the adherence and dependence of the *Wonders* and *SAVVAS/myPerspectives* programs to district-created scope and sequence and unit guides that integrate the core materials with supplemental guidance and more culturally relevant materials. The development and piloting of these guides will be a multi-year effort. (*Appendix L: Wonders Unit Planning Guide Exemplar with building knowledge in pink text, foundational reading skills in yellow text, writing instruction in green text; Appendix M: District of Columbia Public Schools Middle School Unit Planning Guide Exemplar).*

- Develop a professional learning calendar for TK-12 teachers, coaches, and administrators, with specific focus on fourth to twelfth grade core teachers and administrators (differentiated by role and subject), anchored in Structured Literacy to support the district focus on literacy across the lower and upper grades and content areas - and specifically address the needs of struggling older readers.

- In addition to the "do now" construct above (common approach, implementation goal, and implementation cycle), ensure that the following checklist items are considered:

  o the district's vision for literacy (e.g., "to develop independent and confident readers, writers, communicators, and thinkers by providing every student with authentic and rigorous learning experiences through a structured, culturally responsive, and evidence-based approach to literacy instruction").

  o the district's definitions of "literacy" and "reading" that are understood by all teachers and leaders in the district. (e.g., literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context; reading is **the process of extracting and constructing meaning** through interaction and involvement with written language).

  o the science of reading evidence-based research that explains how students learn to read and addresses phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, content and background knowledge development, and **comprehension** (*a recent publication*: *[Shifting Early Literacy Practices: The Story of an Early Reading Pilot in San Antonio Independent School District](#) supports evidence-based research practices in TK-3*).

o the connection between oral language and vocabulary development and the need for building background knowledge.

o the continuing development of skilled reading using Scarborough's Reading Rope to guide instruction.

o the unique needs of English learners, students with special needs, students in abject poverty, gifted learners, and other students.

o the needs of older struggling readers.

o core Tier 1 literacy instruction, supplemental and intervention instruction, comprehensive progress monitoring, and assessment.

o professional learning, differentiated by role, that includes all district instructional staff (e.g., what principals need to know to observe and assess instruction at their sites; how senior cabinet members communicate the district's focus and methodologies, teacher training that includes deliberate practice with feedback coaching).

o data-based decision making.

o community and family involvement.

o sustainability.

Other Curriculum & Instruction

- Consider reviving the practice of centrally identifying priority standards and/or providing timely guidance to address unfinished learning within the instructional units. This might also include the creation of a "decision tree" guidance structure to inform reading and math instruction. The Council's publication, [Addressing Unfinished Learning After COVID-19 Closures](#) provides specific guidance to support the district's focus on acceleration rather than remediation.

- Increase support for math instruction, TK-grade 12. Begin by staffing the math lead position in the Office of Curriculum & Instruction. Offer a program of math professional learning that supports teachers' content knowledge and math-specific instructional strategies. Build the math and other core subject matter staff to address the unique needs of elementary and secondary instructional content and practices.

- To promote positive mental health for students, embed social-emotional learning into the core curriculum. For technical guidance, see Part II: Key Feature 8 (pp. 74-78) in the Council publication, *Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum.* Additionally, a Council member district's history lesson plan exemplar with embedded social-emotional content is

included in this report. (Appendix N: Embedded Social Emotional Learning Exemplar) The Wonders Unit Planning Guide exemplar also contains multiple examples of embedded social emotional learning opportunities indicated as "T-SEL" (*Appendix L: The Wonders Unit Planning Guide Exemplar*).

- Begin to identify a shared district instructional framework that describes effective classroom expectations, practices, and elements of pedagogy for quality core instruction. This framework should describe research-based practices that can be observed and exemplify what classroom instruction should look like in every MSCS classroom. The district's identified high-priority strategies would be included within the planning component of such a framework which should also address curricula and other teaching practices that create learning environments that are standards-based, evidence-based, engaging, differentiated, culturally responsive, and data-driven. The framework should be developed collaboratively by teachers, coaches, and administrators from all content areas and grade levels as a content-agnostic document. A Council member district's equity- and asset-based instructional framework provides a detailed example of an instructional framework and may provide inspiration for conceptualizing how such a framework could support instruction in all MSCS classrooms. Aligned to this framework exemplar is an observation tool addressing several of the instructional practices. (*Appendix O: Instructional Framework Exemplar with Applied Observation Tool)*

- To support parents' ability to help their student(s) at home, consider adding the Council publications, [Parent Roadmaps,](#) to the district *Legacy University* site.

Professional Learning

There are acknowledged gaps in knowledge, skill, and experience within district leadership and schools due to myriad causes including teacher and administrator turnover, educator shortages, and a recent history of multiple reorganizations. Establishing and implementing a coherent program of adult learning to support students would reflect the district's commitment and sense of urgency and is a critical lever to improving student outcomes. The Council's publication, *[Advancing Instruction and Leadership in the Nation's Great City Schools: A Framework for Developing, Implementing and Sustaining High-Quality Professional Development](#),* details a core set of effective criteria for what high-quality professional development entails. The document also includes annotated exemplars from member districts around the country. Also provided by the Council are monthly Collaborative Role-Alike (peer learning) interactive sessions for English language arts, math, science, and history central office leads that focus on common problems of practice. Contact Denise Walston, CGCS Chief of Curriculum (dwalston@cgcs.org) or Robin Hall, CGCS Chief of Schools (rhall@cgcs.org) for more information.

- Strategically place the Professional Learning/Development office within the Curriculum and Instruction department under the supervision of a new Chief Academic Officer to more effectively align the professional learning needs of teachers and administrators (i.e., district curricula and pedagogy) to the learning outcomes of students. (*Note: the Human Resources Department should take responsibility for ensuring that ALL staff in the district*

are connected to professional learning and growth opportunities in every department – including academics)

- Design and implement all professional development aligned to a cycle of ongoing learning/continuous improvement model that is driven by data, allows for differentiation (e.g., what principals need to know to effectively observe instruction, but not what they need to know to serve as "trainers" in a train the trainer model), and includes time and opportunities for collaborative learning and reflection, job-embedded practice with immediate feedback and coaching, and a process to monitor and adjust practices. To ensure equity across classrooms and schools, active participation in professional development should not be optional. *(Appendix P: Professional Development as a Cycle of Ongoing Learning)*

- Provide professional learning directly to teachers through coaches or others with specific content expertise and training to create common knowledge, skills, and expectations across sites, avoiding the "train the trainers" pipeline leaks and dilution. Teachers are the human capital resource closest to the students and have the greatest impact on student achievement. Providing teachers with resources (tools and training) increases their efficacy and may support district retention efforts. Principals should also receive training aligned to that of the teachers, while differentiating for their coaching and supervisory roles.

- Define the role of the site-based instructional coaches as supportive of district-identified priority strategies and professional learning endeavors. While it is imperative that coaching and professional learning needs be identified and supported at the site level, the content should be in service of the district foci and strategies. Centrally design and deliver professional development addressing content-specific knowledge and pedagogical skills for all coaches. Coherence and fidelity to an instructional framework provides equitable classroom experiences and opportunities for learning across the district. When foundational high-quality core instruction is securely implemented, innovation and site-specific initiatives are then complementary rather than distracting or usurping.

- Develop guidance for a common Professional Learning Community (PLC) structure that includes planning, looking at and assessing the quality of student work, and data discussions. (*Appendix Q: Collaborative Professional Development Structures*)

- Identify accountability metrics/tools for both instructional and PLC coaches to measure impact and inform strategies at the site level. Consider both quantitative and qualitative measures and tools such as surveys, daily activity logs, and observations in addition to student data.

- To address the identified "leadership gap", prioritize the development and sustainability of a new leadership development academy to prepare future principals and assistant principals to effectively lead schools.

- Consider an ongoing, just-in-time professional learning and support program for new principals such as mentor or paired principals. The new leadership development academy might also consider monthly "just-in-time" information sessions for first year (and perhaps, second year) principals.

- To address identified needs for intensive learning for new teachers, develop a strategic pedagogical and content training program as both onboarding and sustaining. Leverage higher education community partners to provide support to these teachers, especially those not yet qualified or permitted. Consider "just-in-time" quarterly or monthly information deployment during PLC time for new teachers as well.

Assessment and Accountability

- Develop a district observation protocol (instructional rounds) based on identified priorities or universally adopt the state *Instructional Practice Guide (IPG)* and establish a regular cycle of instructional observations that include both site and district staff. Clearly communicate the expectation that all principals use the observation tool on a regular basis. The data should be used and shared as a primary measure of instructional quality and professional learning implementation and impact. The Council can provide member district examples of observation tools and protocols that would support these efforts.

- Establish a shared understanding of diagnostic, formative, interim (short cycle), and summative assessment terminology and the role each plays in the district curricula. For example:

  o Screener: assessment before instruction to inform teachers where to begin and differentiate instruction and flag at-risk students.

  o Diagnostic: assessment given at any time to identify a student's current level of achievement of particular academic standards the student has or has not yet achieved.

  o Formative: ongoing use of assessment tools and processes that are embedded in instruction and used by teachers and students to provide timely feedback during instruction.

  o Interim: assessment that is given at regular and specified intervals, designed to evaluate a student's knowledge and skill relative to a specific set of academic standards, producing results that can be aggregated to inform teachers, site and district administrators.

  o Summative: a standardized test that measures the level of performance a student has achieved in the core curriculum areas, providing systems level data.

- Identify common standards-based benchmark/interim/short-cycle assessment tools to measure progress, determine curriculum and instruction impact, and identify instructional needs.

- Training in assessment literacy should be included as a component of instruction for all instructional staff. Consider including/amplifying data literacy professional learning for site administrators and instructional and PLC coaches to support data-driven decision making.

- Develop a protocol and/or platform to collect and analyze short-cycle assessment data at both the school and district levels.

- Explore the use of a more rigorous early childhood/Pre-K observational assessment tool aligned to early learning standards.

- Realign the duties and responsibilities of Research, Accountability, and Management to focus on the most impactful (select no more than three to five) contracts related to student achievement KPIs and place more emphasis on how this office and role can support schools to improve student achievement. Providing technical guidance to curriculum staff as they develop short-cycle assessments and participating in data literacy training are two examples of potential collaborations that directly impact student achievement efforts.

- Clarify and/or codify the use of the school improvement plan (SIP) as a "living document" that is formally and regularly reviewed and revised based on current data and appropriately allocates and aligns budget and resources to meet student outcome goals.

- Develop a digital technology plan to address student reported instances of broken and/or insufficient laptops, lack of student access to online search tools, and a home usage policy. Budget and plan for maintenance and repair/replace cycles. CGCS can connect staff to districts that have successfully and cost effectively implemented such programs.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and RTI2

- Provide additional central office support to the Program Director of RTI2 under the supervision of the Deputy Superintendent, Educational Services. The lack of or uneven implementation at school sites is widespread and not meeting the expressed (by principals, teachers, parents, and students) and immediate need for academic, attendance, and behavior supports at sites.

- Provide opportunities for the RTI2 Program Director to work alongside instructional staff to define and support high-quality Tier 1 instruction. This should include participation in site observations for feedback and planning.

- Establish and train district and school level leadership teams to guide and support RTI-A and RTI-B site-level implementation. The central office team should clearly communicate with sites and delineate the components of the state-approved RTI-A and RTI-B programs,

including the definition of and criteria for Tiers 1-3 instruction, with a focus on high-quality core curriculum, progress monitoring, evidenced-based interventions, and effective collaboration.

- Encourage and provide support to select schools which have indicated interest in exploring a more comprehensive multi-tiered system of support model.

- Provide additional guidance and resources for site intervention/tutoring to supplement the use of *i-Ready* as the default response.

- Incorporate the use of interim/short-cycle assessment data (as such tools are deployed by the Curriculum & Instruction office) to more accurately identify students' academic skills, knowledge, and needs.

- Expand the centralized crisis intervention and threat assessment team programs so that sites (principals, teachers, and students) have access to immediate support when needed. These teams must be comprised of specially trained personnel who are well-versed in effective communication and culturally responsive strategies.

- Explore additional opportunities to provide more wraparound services by partnering with community organizations. The team heard a desire to partner with the district from multiple community organizations, summed up by one community leader as "Memphis as a community is unique; with the right leader we will all come together."

Special Populations and Struggling Students

- Prioritize the development of a strong co-teaching model and identification of effective differentiation strategies to minimize relegating students with disabilities and English learners to a pull-out setting that limits or eliminates their access to grade-level content.

- To support the district's move toward inclusion and co-teaching models for students with disabilities and mainstream core instruction for English learners, deploy an instructional framework that provides scaffolds and supports such as [Universal Design for Learning (UDL)](#).

- Include all teachers of students with disabilities and English learners in core professional learning opportunities so that they can support their students' access to grade-level content and materials. Provide training during which general and special education teachers participate together on co-teaching and UDL strategies. Ensure central office staff with leadership responsibilities for these areas collaborate, from start to deployment, on the development of the professional learning opportunities.

- The Council's publications*, [A Framework for Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction for English Learners: Instructional Practice and Materials Considerations](#) and [Connecting 3Ls to English Language Development Standards and Frameworks](#)* offer research-based strategies to accelerate English learner's language acquisition within the core classroom

setting. Also, the Council's publication, *Supporting English Learners in the COVID-19 Crisis* (pp. 32-34) provides a graphic representation of the priority education experiences for ELs that can be used to support and augment inclusive instruction.

- Consider community interest in additional heritage language sites to address the Superintendent's vision of all students graduating with bilingual skills. A heritage language program can also support bilingual students' proficiency in their home language and provide opportunities for knowledge transfer and increased cultural understanding.

- Explore models of inclusive enrichment/gifted instruction (as opposed to a pull-out model) that are designed to build talent and provide access to non-identified students. Many districts have deployed gifted learning instructional time to all K-second grade students before transitioning to a pull-out model in upper grades so that they can provide more depth and complexity in instruction and cultivate gifted behaviors (e.g., creativity, leadership) within their core instruction.

Synopsis

The Council publication, Mirrors or Windows, addresses the vexing question of how do large city public schools overcome the effects of poverty and other barriers. The findings, consistent across case study districts that experienced success in overcoming barriers, included leadership uniquely focused on student instruction, high academic standards and well-defined instructional guidance and support, strategies aimed at increasing the capacity of teachers and leaders, cohesion and differentiation of professional learning, and strong accountability systems. These critical levers are those specifically addressed in this report. The report also notes the critical importance of consistent district leadership and the role that school boards play in suppressing improvements in student outcomes.

The Memphis Shelby County Schools district has several essential requisites in place to support the Superintendent's goal to accelerate student achievement with a focus on early literacy. The passion and determination of educators across the system to make a difference in the everyday lives and future of their students is genuine and heartwarming. At the same time, there are structural and instructional factors impeding the academic performance of students in the district.

First, the ability to successfully serve a diverse student body with more than 106,000 students, the majority of whom are considered economically disadvantaged, has been hindered by a recent legacy of leadership and organizational change. The turnover in the superintendency, the lack of clear district student outcome goals set by the school board, and other key governance strategies (e.g., monitoring the district progress toward SMART goals) that research has shown are directly associated with district academic improvement has kept student outcomes consistently low and stable for decades.

Second, the "newness" and reduction of many senior cabinet and department administrator assignments have contributed to the lack of a cohesive, coherent, and collaborative organizational structure. The absence of a readily referenced strategic plan whose development was characterized as "on the cusp" while not unexpected with the arrival/transition to a new Superintendent, has contributed to a sense of "building the airplane while flying it."

Third, the district is relying on the adopted English language arts/literacy programs, *Wonders* and *SAVVAS/myPerspectives* as the default curriculum without addressing standards-based instruction or considering gaps in these programs that might not support a comprehensive literacy instructional framework.

Fourth, without an instructional practice framework or district-wide vision of what instruction should look like, access to Tier 1 content via differentiation and support is not consistently and equitably provided to students across the district. The lack of defined, evidenced-based instructional strategies precludes differentiated instruction for English learners and struggling students. In addition, the lack of a comprehensive professional development program and the absence of clarity and uneven implementation of the new site-based coaching structure have impeded the delivery of rigorous grade-level instructional content.

Fifth, the absence of a common assessment and monitoring program limits the identification of trends and data-based decision making to inform instruction and measure the impact of instructional programs.

These factors represent systemic concerns that the district can address in short- and long-term steps to move closer to their stated desire for student achievement supported by "effective teachers, leaders, and staff all committed to excellence."

The district administration should start by collaboratively engaging in the systematic development student outcome goals by the board and superintendent and of a theory of action tied to their literacy initiative that clearly identifies action steps, roles and responsibilities, and progress monitoring metrics. Corresponding budget allocations and supplemental resources should support the action steps. A similar theory of action addressing math instruction is needed. A realignment of central office staffing and responsibilities should be of immediate concern to support the implementation.

As the administration addresses reorganization and coherence issues, they will also need to prioritize working on the curriculum and a scope and sequence of instruction that is standards-aligned and supported, not driven, by the adopted textbooks and instructional materials. The district may opt to develop curriculum documents that include a description of instruction that addresses planning, engagement, differentiation, and assessment or create separate written guidance as an instructional framework.

It is clear that the district and community are committed to their students' success and well-being. The team heard widespread enthusiasm for and confidence in the new Superintendent's ability to collaboratively lead the district towards excellence. It is our hope that the Council has provided a blueprint for Memphis Shelby County Schools' future. The Council stands ready to help leadership undertake any necessary actions as they move forward.

Linked Publications and Resources

100-Day Entry Plan

Legacy Legends

Leadership Transition Guide

Vision and Strategic Plan Development Process

Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

Addressing Unfinished Learning After COVID-19 Closures

Supporting Excellence: A Framework for Developing, Implementing and Sustaining a High-Quality District Curriculum

Curriculum Quality Rubric: An Assessment Tool for Districts

Advancing Instruction and Leadership in the Nation's Great City Schools: A Framework for Developing, Implementing and Sustaining High-Quality Professional Development

Parent Roadmaps

Shifting Early Literacy Practices: The Story of an Early Reading Pilot in San Antonio Independent School District

A Framework for Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction for English Learners: Instructional Practice and Materials Considerations

Connecting 3Ls to English Language Development Standards and Frameworks

Supporting English Learners in the COVID-19 Crisis

Mirrors or Windows

Appendices

APPENDIX A: STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM

Dr. Raymond Hart, Executive Director
The Council of the Great City Schools

Dr. Hart has more than 30 years of experience in research and evaluation and formerly served as the Director of Research for the Council before becoming the current Executive Director. His work has spanned policy areas such as post-secondary success and college readiness, professional learning communities and school improvement, teacher effectiveness and value-added analysis, early childhood education, and adult and workforce literacy. He has worked with clients from several federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of State, the National Science Foundation, and many state and local departments of education.

Dr. Hart recently led the Analytical Technical Support Task Force for the Regional Educational Library – Mid Atlantic. He served as the Executive Director of Research, Planning, and Accountability for Atlanta Public Schools, President and CEO of RS Hart and Partners, which is an evaluation and assessment consulting firm, and an Assistant Professor of Research, Measurement, and Statistics at Georgia State University. Prior to his work as a consultant, he served as the Director of the Bureau of Research Training and Services at Kent State University. His career began in 1989 as a program director for African American, Hispanic, and Native American students in Engineering and Science.

Dr. Hart holds a Ph.D. in Evaluation and Measurement from Kent State University, a M.Ed. with a focus on Curriculum and Instruction – Educational Research from Cleveland State University, and a bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Denise Walston, Chief of Curriculum/Director of Mathematics
The Council of the Great City Schools

Denise works with the Council to provide high leverage support on implementation of college- and career-ready standards for the four core content areas in urban school districts.

Ms. Walston retired from Norfolk Public Schools as the Senior Coordinator of K-12 Mathematics. Her responsibilities included the development of a K-12 mathematics curriculum; providing job-embedded professional development; leverage resources to provide quality professional development for teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators. During her tenure, Norfolk Public Schools embarked on an Algebra for ALL initiative which resulted in more than 50% of students completing algebra by the end of grade eight while simultaneously improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps in mathematics. She was an active member of several statewide committees that assisted in the development of Virginia's statewide mathematics specialist program. She has served in several leadership positions in mathematics education, including board member for the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1st Vice-President of the National Council for Mathematics Supervision, President of the Virginia Council for Mathematics Supervision, and a board member for the Virginia Mathematics and Science Coalition. She currently serves on the board of *Student Achievement Partners*, *Illustrative*

Mathematics, and an advisor to *Just Equations*. She has also served as an adjunct instructor for The University of Virginia, Old Dominion University, and Norfolk State University.

Ms. Walston received her B.A. degree from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro in mathematics and history, her M.Ed. in mathematics education from Old Dominion University, and has completed additional study at The College of William and Mary and at the Woodrow Wilson Institute (Princeton University).

Dr. Kathryn Shuler, Chief Schools Officer
Orange County Public Schools

Dr. Shuler has served Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) for over 30 years in various roles as a classroom teacher, administrative dean, assistant principal, associate superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, and now Chief Schools Officer. She has extensive experience overseeing curriculum and digital learning, student and health services, multilingual, professional learning, and federal programs. In her current role, Dr. Shuler is responsible for providing oversight and direction for the efficient operations and academic performance through developing leadership capacity in one of the largest districts in the nation. She is a current member of the Chancellor's Leadership Academy, Superintendent's Cabinet, YMCA Metro Board of Directors, the Ginsburg Institute for Health Equity, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, the OCPS foundation board, and former member of the Holocaust Visitors' task force. In addition, she previously served as the Regional Executive Director for the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of School Improvement, overseeing district improvement efforts among 7 school districts in the state of Florida.

Her most notable accomplishments include leading a school in reform from a school letter grade of "F" to "A" (making 100% AYP), named Central Floridian of the Week, and the Just Read Florida Elementary Literacy Leader of the Year. As the associate superintendent, School Transformation Officer, 20 of the schools served improved 838 percentage points under her supervision as opposed to a decline of 929 percentage points the previous year. In addition, she led the initiative to launch the district's first Parent Academy, which supports parent advocacy and learning, serving over 25,000 parents and community members to date.

Dr. Shuler received her doctorate in Educational Leadership from National Louis University and her M.ED. in Education from Nova Southeastern University. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education from Stetson University.

Dr. Aliya Washington Smith, Director of Elementary Literacy
Metro Nashville Public Schools

Aliya Smith began her teaching career in 1999 at Alex Green Elementary after earning her undergraduate degree from Fisk University. Over the past 24 years, she has continually advanced her education, obtaining a master's degree from Butler University, an EL Certification from Lipscomb University, and both an Ed.S. and Ed.D. in Educational Administration from Trevecca University.

Throughout her tenure with Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), Aliya has held various roles, including classroom teacher, interventionist, reading specialist, literacy coach, and district lead literacy coach. Her dedication to improving literacy outcomes has led her to serve on numerous state and local committees. She has also presented at various local and national conferences on topics such as evidence-based literacy instruction, literacy leadership, and high-quality instructional materials.

As the Director of Elementary Literacy at MNPS, Aliya spearheaded the implementation of high-quality instructional materials, resulting in historic academic gains in literacy for three consecutive years. She continues to serve in this role, driving forward the district's literacy initiatives.

Pamela Seki, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Development (retired), Long Beach Unified School District

Pamela Seki served as Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Development for the Long Beach Unified School District. She is an equity- and system-centered leader with 35+ years of experience in urban K-12 and adult education. In her role as Assistant Superintendent, she supervised all curriculum content areas and services. She also directed English Learner Services, Bilingual and Migrant Education, Specialized Programs, Career Education/Linked Learning, and Teacher Induction & Certification for the district.

She has designed and implemented comprehensive professional learning guidance for teachers, leaders, and classified staff at the local and national levels. As the author/recipient of two innovative professional learning grants funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, she developed and implemented asynchronous, personalized professional learning platforms for teachers and administrators and established professional learning communities exploring positive deviance in teacher practices.

Ms. Seki has collaborated with and advised districts in California and across states on improvement strategies, including English language arts, English language development, and math instruction, and educational policy with a focus on community engagement. She served at the state level addressing curriculum policy as founding member and Chair of the California Office to Reform Education (CORE), leading the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in the state's large urban districts.

Ms. Seki earned a B.A. in Spanish at California State University, Long Beach with a minor in English; a M.Ed. in Educational Leadership, and Administrator/Leadership Certification at the University of La Verne. She also studied contemporary Mexican literature at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

APPENDIX B: INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

Dr. Marie Feagins, Superintendent
Dr. Angela Whitelaw, Deputy Superintendent of Education Services
Tito Langston, Assistant Superintendent of Business Operations
Dr. Roderick Richmond, Transformation Officer of Student Services
Dr. Jared Myracle, Executive Director of Literacy
Dr. Janice Tankson, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Amy Maples, Executive Director-Curriculum & Instruction
Dr. Emily Vuoso, Program Director RTI2-Curriculum & Instruction
Joyce Harrison, ELA Manager-Literacy Office
Tiffany Boyle, ELA Manager-Literacy Office
Carol Richardson, Executive Director-Office of Multilingual Learners
Delicia Roberts, Gifted Advisor-Office of Exceptional Education
Deborah Jeffries Marshall, Instructional Technology Advisory- Office of Exceptional Education
Symentra Matthews, Regional Manager CLUEH- Office of Exceptional Education
Dr. Tiffany Luckett, Executive Director- Office of Exceptional Education
Heba Sammour, Manager Early Literacy-Literacy Office
Dr. Divalyn Gordan, Executive Director-Early Childhood
Dr. Detris Crane, Head Start Director-Early Childhood
Anntriniece Napper, President-Memphis Shelby County Educators Association
Elizabeth Marble, President-UA
Dr. Rosalind Stevenson, Director-Family Engagement
Leslie Knighten, Interim Business Financial Officer
Felicia Freeney, Director-Office of Business Finance
Derrick Morris, Director-Federal Programs
William White, Director II-Office of Strategy & Innovation
Eric Hosman, Director-Office of Strategy & Innovation
Terilyn McChriston, Science Manager-Curriculum & Instruction
Dr. Sonya Porter, Humanities Manager-Curriculum & Instruction
Stephanie McClan, Director-Extended Learning Programs
Rachel Addison, Executive Director-Performance & Leadership Development
Dr. Terrence Brittenum, Network Leader (7)-Office of School Transformation
Alisha Kiner, Network Leader (5)-Office of School Transformation
Dr. Debra Fox, Network Leader (5)-Office of School Transformation
Jason Calhoun, Network Advisor (5)-Office of School Transformation
Norie Cotton, Network Advisor (3)-Office of Schools
Nikesha Selmon, Network Advisor (2)-Office of Schools
Angela Williams, Network Advisor (4)-Office of School Transformation
Elaine Evans, Network Advisor (1)-Office of Education Services

Dr. Sonia Barber, Network Advisor (1)-Office of Education Services
Dr. Ingrid Mitchell, Network Advisor (6)-Office of School Transformation
Daniel Jack, Director-Leadership Pathways
Reneeka Beller, Parent
Ashley Neal, Parent
Reniseal Brown, Parent
Gabrielle Barber, Parent
Irene Ford, Parent
Brittany Johnson, Parent
Amber Huett-Garcia, Member-Board of Education
Tanya Oliver, Student-G.W. Carver High School
Marrisa McCall, Student-Hollis F. Price Middle College High School
Kaleb Gaither, Student-Downtown Elementary School
Tyler Farris, Student-Downtown Elementary School
Sullivan Young, Student-Maxine Smith STEAM Academy
Chayse Hawkins, Student-Bellevue Middle School
America Rodriguez, Student- Bellevue Middle School
Layla Genus, Student-Maxine Smith STEAM Academy
Andrew Ellis, Student-Middle College
Geneva Gordan, Manager-Performance & Leadership
Jason Carr, Principal-Treadwell Elementary School
John Bush, Principal-Southwind High School
Pamela McKinley, Principal-East High School
Tina Smith, Principal-Cherokee Elementary School
Ashley Edwards, Principal-Lucy Elementary School
Christopher Murrah, Principal-Kate Bond Middle School
Tommy Elliot, Principal-Whitehouse Elementary School
Deartis Barber, III, Principal-Grandview Heights Middle School
Lakeisha Hayword, Principal-Craigmont Middle School
Brittany Brooks, Principal-Keystone Elementary School
Frederick White, Principal-Bellevue Middle School
Wynn Earle, Jr., Principal, Kingsbury Elementary School
Christopher Newsom, Principal-E.E. Jeter School
Lashinda Hughes, Principal-Oak Forest Elementary School
Versey Hill, Teacher-Germantown High School
Mary West, Teacher-Cordova Elementary School
Toria Randle, Teacher-Whitehaven Elementary School
Donna Nanney, Teacher-White Station Middle School
Aleshia Dennis, Teacher-Trezevant High School
Khaly Thiam, Teacher-Melrose High School

Roslyn Johnson-Craig, Teacher-Sheffield Elementary School
Sheila Tagavilla, Teacher-Douglass K-8 School
Ricky Franklin, Sr., Teacher-Double Tree Elementary School
Gregory Cofield, Educational Assistant
Whitney Delaney, Specialized Educational Assistant
Constance Bibbs, Specialized Educational Assistant
Christopher Davis, President-Lemoyne-Owen College
Blair Taylor, President-Memphis Tomorrow
Brian McLaughlin, Chief Operating Officer-YMCA Memphis & Mid-South
Sam O'Bryant, Chief Executive Officer-Literacy Mid-South
Dr. Canidra McGuire, Clinical Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership-University of Memphis

APPENDIX C: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

100-Day Entry Plan
Legacy Legends – Transition Team Report
Back to the Basics: Curriculum and Instruction Expectations for 2024-2025
Back to the Basics FAQ 2024-25
Master Organizational Chart
Response to Instruction and Intervention for Behavior Framework
High-Impact Strategies
Grade 2 Unit Internalization and Weekly Lesson Guide
Literacy-Based Classroom Daily Planning Guide
5th Grade Unit 1 Wonders Map 2025-25
Math Unit 1 Internalization and Weekly Lesson Guide 2024-25
2022-2023 Discipline by Demographics
2022-2023 OSS by Days
2022-2023 Student Enrollment Demographics
Els by Grade and Proficiency
Els with Disabilities
ESL Org Charts
Title III Expenditure Details 2024
Title III Expenditure Details 2023
Title III Expenditure Details 2022
Title III Monitoring Report
English as a Second Language Interpretation & Translation
English as a Second Language Compliance Monitoring & Support
English as a Second Language Instructional Support
Department of Exceptional Education Organization Chart SY24
SPED Data 2022-2023
Exceptional Education: A Place to Communicate, Collaborate, and Change
HR Jobs
Shelby County Board of Education Board Policies #5002, 5005-6, 5013-14, 5022
Shelby County Board of Education Theory of Action for Change
Memphis-Shelby County Schools LEAD Academy
Literacy Mid-South SY 2023-24 Impact Report
Literacy Mid-South 2023 Annual Report
50 Years Leading in Literacy (Literacy Mid-South)

APPENDIX D: MEMPHIS SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS 2022-23 ACADEMIC KPI HIGHLIGHTS

Percentage of Ninth Grade Students Who Failed One or More Core Courses
    Best Quartile for Overall Performance
        All Students - 12.6%
        Black Males – 15.2%
        Black Females – 11.5%
        Hispanic Males – 12.6%
        Hispanic Females – 9.3%
        Free or Reduced Priced Lunch Students – 15.8%
        Students with Disabilities – 14.4%
        English Language Learners – 11.3%

Percentage of Ninth Grade Students with B Average GPA or Better in All Grade Nine Courses
    Best Quartile for Overall Performance (2022-23)
        Black Males – 35.5%
        Black Females – 48.9%
        Hispanic Males – 44.0%
        Hispanic Females – 57.4%
        Students with Disabilities – 35.2%
    Best Quartile for Change in Performance (2018-19 to 2022-23)
        All Students - 10.9 Percentage Point Change
        Black Males – 13.3 Percentage Point Change
        Black Females – 8.8 Percentage Point Change
        Hispanic Males – 16.4 Percentage Point Change
        Hispanic Females – 10.2 Percentage Point Change
        Students with Disabilities – 17.9 Percentage Point Change
        English Language Learners – 15.8 Percentage Point Change

Percentage of Students Who Completed Algebra I/Integrated Math by the End of Ninth Grade
    Best Quartile for Overall Performance (2022-23)
        All Students – 89.2%
        Black Males – 90%
        Black Females – 91.7%
        Hispanic Males – 84.1%
        Hispanic Females – 90.5%
        Free or Reduced Priced Lunch Students – 90%
        Students with Disabilities – 93%
        English Language Learners – 75.3%
    Best Quartile for Change in Performance (2018-19 to 2022-23)
        All Students – 7.9 Percentage Point Change
        Black Males – 13.2 Percentage Point Change
        Students with Disabilities – 24 Percentage Point Change

Percentage of Students Who Took One or More AP Courses
    Best Quartile for Change in Performance (2018-19 to 2022-23)
        Black Females – 2.9 Percentage Point Change
        Hispanic Males – 4.3 Percentage Point Change
        Hispanic Females – 4.0 Percentage Point Change

Percentage of All AP Exam Scores That Were Three or Higher
    Best Quartile for Overall Performance (2022-23)

     Free or Reduced Priced Lunch Students – 80.2%
     English Language Learners – 56.6%
    Best Quartile for Change in Performance (2018-19 to 2022-23)
     English Language Learners – 13.3 Percentage Point Change
Four Year Cohort Graduation Rate
    Best Quartile for Change in Performance (2018-19 to 2022-23)
     Students with Disabilities – 16.8 Percentage Point Change

Percentage of Students with Out-of-School Suspensions
    Best Quartile for Change in Performance (2018-19 to 2022-23)
     All Students – -2.7 Percentage Point Change
     Black Males – -4.6 Percentage Point Change
     Black Females – -1.8 Percentage Point Change
     Hispanic Males – -1.3 Percentage Point Change
     Hispanic Females – 0 Percentage Point Change
     Students with Disabilities – - 5.3 Percentage Point Change
     English Language Learners – -1.4 Percentage Point Change
Number of Instructional Days Missed Due to Out-of-School Suspensions per 100 Students
    Best Quartile for Change in Performance (2018-19 to 2022-23)
     All Students – -12.4 Percentage Point Change
     Black Males – -22.5 Percentage Point Change
     Black Females – -7.1 Percentage Point Change
     Hispanic Males – -3.7 Percentage Point Change
     Students with Disabilities – -28.4 Percentage Point Change
     English Language Learners – -5.2 Percentage Point Change

Areas of Improvement

Pre-K Enrollment as a Percent of Kindergarten Enrollment for Students
    All Students – - 8.1 Percentage Point Change
    Meaningful declines for all subgroups.
Percentage of Students Who Took One or More AP Courses
    All Students – 11.6%
    Black Males – 7.1%
    Black Females – 11.2%
    Hispanic Males – 10.6%
    Hispanic Females – 14.2%
    Free and Reduced Priced Lunch Students – 7.6%
    Students with Disabilities – 2.1%
    English Language Learners – 3%
Percentage of All AP Exam Scores That Were Three or Higher
    All Students – 36.6^
    Black Males – 22.1%
    Black Females – 20.5%
    Hispanic Males – 35.7%
    Hispanic Females – 31.5%
Four Year Cohort Graduation Rate
    All Students – 81.5%
    Hispanic Males – 68.3%

Hispanic Females – 77.5%
Free or Reduced Priced Lunch Students – 79.7%
English Language Learners – 56.9%

APPENDIX E: THEORY OF ACTION GUIDANCE

What Is a Theory of Action and Why Do We Need One?
Adapted from Harriett Rasmussen for Principal Supervisors

A wise colleague once noted that even the most researched strategy is no better than your best bet.

However certain you may be, you will not truly know if it works until you try it. So, until it is proven – in your context, and with your teachers and leaders – it is still at best (or worst) a guess. A theory.

Another wise colleague noted that there is nothing as practical as a good theory!

This is the first point: that strategy is a guess, and that there is some theory behind a decision to use one particular strategy over another. Having a theory of action that accompanies a strategy requires that you have articulated a rationale behind the strategy.

It makes good sense to think through a decision to choose one action over another, and even better sense to make this thinking public. This thinking, your rationale, is, in short, your theory of action.

For example, why do you think that having more frequent and more planned sessions with principals will help the quality of your feedback? Why do you think that sharpening your coaching skills with principals will help you have better conversations?

A theory of action is, at its core, a simple IF, THEN statement. IF I have more frequent and focused sessions with principals, THEN principal practices will improve. IF I hone my own coaching skills, THEN principal practice will improve.

But do you note something amiss with these statements? They are pretty general and there is not really any linkage between the IF statement and the THEN conclusion. For example, it is a pretty big leap to imagine that just by increasing the time principal supervisors meet with principals, principal learning will increase or if principal supervisors improve their coaching skills, principal practice will improve. And yet this theory is in play in settings.
This is the second point about a theory of action: its power lies within the specificity of thought, in the explicit reasoning that calls attention to essential steps and checkpoints. If this is left unstated, it is far too easy to just put a new strategy into place and, during implementation, miss critical elements that will render a good idea, such as engaging in more robust classroom observation, a success or failure when it comes to impacting student learning.

Here is how a more explicit theory of action related to supporting principals might look: IF I ... dedicate focused, planned time to work with principals we will develop a more trusting relationship and be able to learn from each other; and if I sharpen my coaching skills (asking vs. telling) I will better understand the various ways principals are thinking about identifying and solving problems of student learning , how they are acting on the feedback they receive,

and how they coach and work with teachers THEN principals will better understand, plan for and enact ways of working with teachers that engage them in deeper thinking and reflection about their practice and the impact on

teaching and learning Then teachers will be able to reflect on and articulate their strengths, challenges and learning goals and make changes in their practice to increase impact on student learning experiences.

So that students ...

What this example shows is that any strategy is a sequence of strategic actions, and that each action must have an associated rationale (or theory).

Why is this important? Because if you are not clear on what each element is intended to produce, you will not be able to test whether your theory was correct, and it is entirely possible that you will get down the road and decide

that your strategy is not having the desired effect.

While it may be that the strategy was ineffective, it is just as possible that one element was not implemented quite the way you expected, or that you needed to tweak something in the middle.

But a theory of action that specifies what is expected to happen establishes a clear path toward the goal of impacting student learning. It becomes a set of checkpoints to make sure that the expected outcomes are realized at each step along the way.

This is the third point and perhaps the most important: strategies, because they are best bets, need to have regular and specific checkpoints so that you are able to test the theory behind the actions as they are underway. A sequential theory of action, as in the example above, offers proof points that can suggest whether or not you are on the right track. Theories of

action should be written in pencil. If it is doing its job, your theory of action will be revised and adapted to reflect your learning as you follow the predicted and actual events of implementing your learning.

So, what is a theory of action? Your best thinking made explicit. Your rationale for choosing one strategy over another. Your predicted course of action with identified checkpoints and evidence that it is working, or not.

Why do you need one? Because even the best ideas can fall flat when we enter that perilous place called implementation. And our students rely on our diligence to make sure that our best bets are working for them.

Adapted from Harriette Thurber Rasmussen, What's a Theory of Action and Why Do We Need One? https://www.htrconsulting.org. 2020-06-18.

APPENDIX F: THEORY OF ACTION ROADMAP GUIDANCE GRAPHIC & PLANNING TOOL

1. Develop a theory of action to guide the work of the district teams in support of schools and student outcomes

Student Outcomes	→	Teachers' Levers	→	Principals' Levers	→	District Teams' Levers

Throughline →
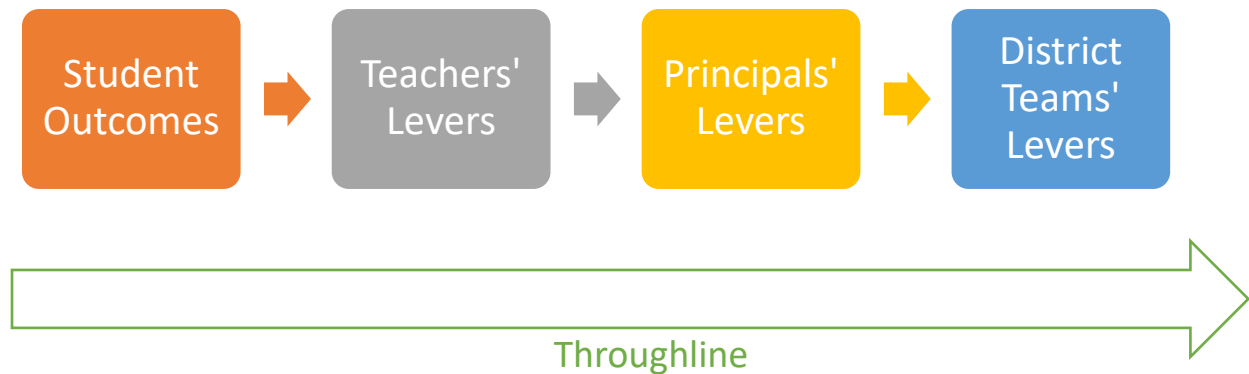
Student Outcome Goal #1:	Teacher Lever #1:	Principal Lever #1:	District Team Lever #1:
Student Outcome Goal #2:	Teacher Lever #2:	Principal Lever #2:	District Team Lever #2:
Student Outcome Goal #3:	Teacher Lever #3:	Principal Lever #3:	District Team Lever #3:

2. Develop evidence of success

What will success look like? What will students, teachers, leaders, principal and district teams be saying and doing at the close of this cycle if students are making progress with the identified Student Outcome Goals?

Student Outcomes	→	Teachers' Practice	→	Principals' Practices'	→	District Teams' Practice

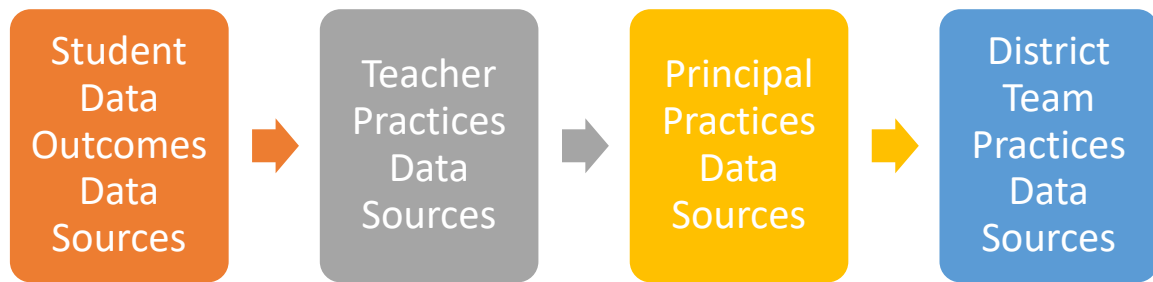| Student Outcome #1:	Teachers' Practice #1:	Principals' Practice #1:	District Teams' Practice #1:
Student Outcome #2:	Teachers' Practice #2:	Principals'Practice#2:	District Teams' Practice #2:
Student Outcome #3:	Teachers' Practice #3:	Principals' Practice #3:	District Teams' Practice #3:

3. Determine how success will be measured

How will success be measured? What qualitative and quantitative sources of data do we plan to collect throughout the cycle to show impact?

Student Data Outcomes Data Sources	Teacher Practices Data Sources	Principal Practices Data Sources	District Team Practices Data Sources
Student Outcomes Data Source #1:	**Teachers' Practice Data Source #1:**	**Principals' Practice Data Source #1:**	**District Teams' Practice Data Source #1:**
Student Outcomes Data Source #2:	**Teachers' Practice Data Source #2:**	**Principals' Practice Data Source #2:**	**District Teams' Practice Data Source #2:**
Student Outcomes Data Source#3:	**Teachers' Practice Data Source #3:**	**Principals' Practice Data Source #3:**	**District Teams' Practice Data Source #3**

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE SIMPLIFIED LOGIC MODEL
LITERACY INITIATIVE 2024-25

Inputs

- Reposition Literacy Office within Instruction & Curriculum
- Bring in structured literacy specialist/consultant
- Identify (central office) **literacy leads and t**rain them in structured liteacy components and strategies and the art of coaching
- Re-envision the role of the site instructional coach and PLC coach
- Include Research & Accountability in instructional planning

Activities

- Develop shared literacy vision and common understanding of structured literacy (Science of Reading including Scarborough's Rope)) among all central office instructional staff and site principals
- Rstructure and define the role of generalist instuctional coach to literacy coach (may be the former or a newly identified coach with literacy background)
- Cleary delineate the role of the site PLC coach: to work collaboratively with the site literacy coach on plannning & data decision making, and
- Collaborate with the Resrach & Accountability Office to provide summer training in data literacy for PLC coaches
- Develop plan for site implementation that includes identification of a literacy coach at each site and a summer training calendar and share with network leads, advisors, & princiapls
- In collaboration with Research & Accontability, identify initial short-cycle/interim benchmark assessment for 2025-26 school year

Outputs

- All central office staff are able to communicate vision and approach to raising student literacy achievement
- A cadre of centralized literacy lead specialists are equipped to lead and operationalize to sites the literacy initiative for the 2025-26 school year
- Site Principal is able to focus on instructional rounds and feedback while site literacy coach provides teacher training
- There is a trained literacy coach assigned to each site for the 2025-26 school year
- There is a PLC coach at each site prepared to support teachers to plan and make just-in-time data-based instructional decisions for the 2025-26 school year

APPENDIX H: IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE FOR FOUNDATIONAL READING SKILLS EXEMPLAR

Implementation Plan – Cycle 1
Foundational Reading Skills

Stage 3 - Cycle 1 K-2 Literacy (September - January)
Implementation Plan - What activities will take place to move us toward our goals?

Training	Teacher Expectations	Site Lead Expectation	OCIPD ELA Coach	Organizational Support (IIC, Principal, Principal Sup)
September - November QCI #1 **Implementation Goal:** *All K-2 teachers at the site will be effectively teaching all components of the Daily Decoding Routine following the District Scope and Sequence.* ☑ FRS Observation Too...	Implement the DDR • Post schedules to reflect a 30-min daily decoding routine (DDR) • Plan and deliver daily, 30-minute explicit and systematic **foundational skills** lessons following the District Scope and sequence • Collect anecdotal evidence (dictation data)	Support effective implementation of DDR • Visit classrooms during DDR to determine appropriate coaching moves • Provide coaching moves to move from presence of each component to quality of components • Meet with grade level teams to revisit goals, monitor progress and discuss next steps • Meet with admin to debrief new learning and determine support	Support Site Lit Lead • Plan and deliver QCI #1 and site lead monthly meetings • Visit schools to get to know teachers and check in on Site Leads • Calibrate with Site Leads on DDR implementation • Differentiate coaching support • Collect and monitor implementation data and student data	Advocate, facilitate, and support implementation of *Daily Decoding Routine* • Grade Level/Staff Meetings • Continuous Learning and Collaboration (LACOE) • Release time for Peer observation, planning • Data Analysis • Recognize and share successes • Ensure resources are available • Incorporate into the ILW

Excellence and Equity

OCIPD

APPENDIX I: IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE FOR BUILDING KNOWLEDGE, VOCABULARY, AND LANGUAGE EXEMPLAR

Building Knowledge & Language

Stage 3 - Cycle 2 K-2 Literacy (February - June)
Implementation Plan - What activities will take place to move us toward our goals?

Training	Teacher Expectations	Site Lead Expectation	OCIPD ELA Coach	Organizational Support (IIC, Principal, Principal Sup)
February - March Content Session #2 **Implementation Goal:** *All K-2 teachers will plan and implement the Building Knowledge and Vocabulary component of the ELA Unit Guides to build knowledge, vocabulary, and language about the world.* Building Knowledge Observational Tool - DRAFT	Continue practices from Cycle 1 **AND** Implement **Building Knowledge and Vocabulary** • Create a daily schedule to reflect a 30-45 min block of Building Knowledge and Vocabulary • Plan and deliver the Building Knowledge and Vocabulary component of the ELA/SLA Unit Guides • Provide opportunities for students to make meaning and share their understanding through quick write/draw and collaborative meaning making	Continue support of effective **Foundational Reading Skills** Development **AND** • Meet with Grade Level teams to analyze FRSA data - Cycle 2 Support the implementation of **Building Knowledge and Vocabulary:** • Collaborate with teachers to ensure daily schedules reflect 30-45 minute block of Building Knowledge and Vocabulary • Collaborate with grade level teams to plan lessons aligned to the Building Knowledge and Vocabulary • Collaborate with grade level teams to backwards plan a quick write to determine success criteria	Continue support of Site Lead in implementation of **Foundational Reading Skills** Development **AND** Support the implementation of **Building Knowledge and Vocabulary:** • Plan and deliver Content Session #2 and site lead monthly meetings • Schedule 1:1 meetings with Site Lit Leads to determine support and next steps • Support grade level meetings • Observe classroom implementation of Building Knowledge	Advocate, facilitate, and support implementation of **Daily Decoding Routine and Building Knowledge and Vocabulary** • Check in with Site Lead around the learning from Content Session #2 • Visit classrooms • Grade Level/Staff Meetings • Continuous Learning and Collaboration (LACOE) • Release time for Peer observation, planning • Data Analysis - Cycle 2 FRSA • Recognize and share successes

Excellence and Equity

OCIPD

APPENDIX J: EARLY READING ACCELERATORS INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE SUCCESS CRITERIA TK-2 EXEMPLAR

OFFICE OF
CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
LONG BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Early Reading Accelerators – Instructional Practice Success Criteria TK-2

Foundational Reading Skills – Teacher-Directed Whole Group Instruction		
Quality Indicator	**Success Criteria**	**Notes**
Systematic and Explicit	• Aligned to LBUSD Scope and Sequence • Follows the structure of the Daily Decoding Routine (K-2) • Orthographically mapping HFW (Heart words), Structural Analysis, Fluency	Scope and Sequence: Kinder: English Spanish 1st: English Spanish 2nd: English Spanish
Teacher Clarity	• Articulation of learning target/success criteria • Clear and accurate teacher pronunciation of sounds and explanation of rules for sound-spelling patterns	
Effective Pacing	• "Perky" pace with planned opportunities for students to practice targeted skills through reading, writing, speaking, and/or listening	
Meaning Making (when appropriate)	• Unfamiliar words are connected to student-friendly definitions • Use of newly decoded/blended words in meaningful sentences	
Engaging/Child Friendly	• High energy activities with movement, songs, and chants	
Formative Assessment	• Use of a data collection system for anecdotal notes • Monitoring students' manipulation and blending of sounds, decoding skills with decodable text, encoding through dictation	Sample Recording Sheet

Getting Reading Right Big Ideas at a Glance

Foundational Reading Skills – Teacher–Directed Whole Group Instruction		
Quality Indicator	**Success Criteria**	**Notes**
	• On-the-spot feedback offering corrections or confirmations • Use of scaffolds to support grade-level tasks based on observations	

Foundational Reading Skills – Small Group Instruction and Robust Practice		
Quality Indicator	**Success Criteria**	**Notes**
Data-Driven Small Group Instruction	• Homogeneous skill-based instruction aligned to grade level standards • Temporary, flexible, and regularly reconfigured groups based on ongoing assessment and observation data (e.g., dictation, FRSA, anecdotal evidence) • Elements of the Daily Decoding Routine • Decodable text matches skill addressed • Students engaged in productive struggle with multiple opportunities to apply the skill • Teacher prompts students to use strategies that support orthographic mapping (e.g., look at the word, slide through each sound, try a different sound, break the word into parts) • Collecting formative data	
Collaborative and Independent Practice	• Students working independently or **heterogeneously** on engaging, differentiated grade-level tasks in and out of context • FRS Practice: ○ Fluency (fluency passages, decodable passages, readers theater,	

Getting Reading Right Big Ideas at a Glance

	poetry)
	
	  ○ Word Work (games, Word Work Activity cards)
	
	● FRS Application to Building Knowledge and Vocabulary:
	
	  ○ Reading (decodable text, Wonders Leveled Readers, texts aligned to weekly concept, Wonders Reading Activity Cards, Amplify Science, Social Studies Impact)
	  ○ Writing (inquiry/research)
	
	● Computer Time (i-Ready, McGraw Hill, Newsela, LBUSD digital databases)	

Building Knowledge and Language		
Quality Indicator	**Success Criteria**	**Notes**
Text Complexity	● Text used for instruction is appropriately complex for the grade level and text(s) read aloud are far more complex than students can read on their own ● Text(s) exhibit exceptional craft with rich vocabulary and language demands (levels of meaning, structure, language, knowledge demands)	
Knowledge Building	● Text(s) used are intentionally sequenced and connected to the unit essential question, concepts, and topics ● Students share explanations and understanding to make connections to the unit topic/conceptual understanding ● Students talk and ask questions about each other's thinking, in order to clarify or improve their understanding of topic under study	
Standards-Aligned Rigorous Questions and Tasks	● Intentionally sequenced to build knowledge and conceptual understanding ● Address the text by attending to its particular qualitative features, its meaning/purpose and/or language, structure(s), or knowledge demands. ● Require students to use evidence from the text to demonstrate understanding and to support their ideas about the text. ● Attend to the words (academic vocabulary), phrases, and sentences within the	

Getting Reading Right Big Ideas at a Glance

Building Knowledge and Language		
Quality Indicator	**Success Criteria**	**Notes**
	text.	
Use of Textual Evidence	• Students provide text evidence to support their ideas and when appropriate refine their oral and/ or written responses • Use of evidence is expressed through a variety of means (e.g., drawing, writing, dramatic play, speaking)	
Culturally Sustaining	• Students share and draw connections (orally and/or in writing) to life experiences connected to the knowledge being built • Students express how texts or topics impact their understanding of the world • Text(s) allow for students to leverage their diverse backgrounds and assets • Text(s) reflect and positively affirm the lives, languages, perspectives, and histories of all students. • Text(s) elevate the joy, resilience, or brilliance of people of color and historically marginalized communities	
Engaging	• Students show a sense of joy and excitement about learning and celebrate others' responses • Students take risks, share developing thinking, and learn from approximations, mistakes, and errors • Students talk, ask questions, and push each others thinking to improve their understanding • Students engage in the majority of the work of the lesson and are supported in productive struggle	
Language Development (includes integrated and designated ELD)	• Students engage fully in speaking and writing as they process and explain; leveraging their home language as needed • Students utilize tools to access the content and make meaning through anchor	

Getting Reading Right Big Ideas at a Glance

Building Knowledge and Language		
Quality Indicator	**Success Criteria**	**Notes**
	charts, sentence frames, Thinking Maps, use of visuals • Explicitly attends to vocabulary, syntax, and/or language development through the content of the lesson • Students connect literacy skills and content for meaning making • Students make use of text/topic-based vocabulary in discussion and writing • Students develop academic language and literacy skills through content • Explicit expectations for both expressive (writing & speaking) and receptive (listening & reading) communication to engage with the content of the lesson	

Getting Reading Right Big Ideas at a Glance

APPENDIX K: LITERACY IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE GRAPHIC

Implementation Structure

- All schools in a cohort grouping (e.g., 5 sites per cohort)
- Each cohort has a designated Literacy Team Lead
- All schools have a designated Site Literacy Coach

Literacy Team Lead

Site Literacy Coach

TK-2 Teachers
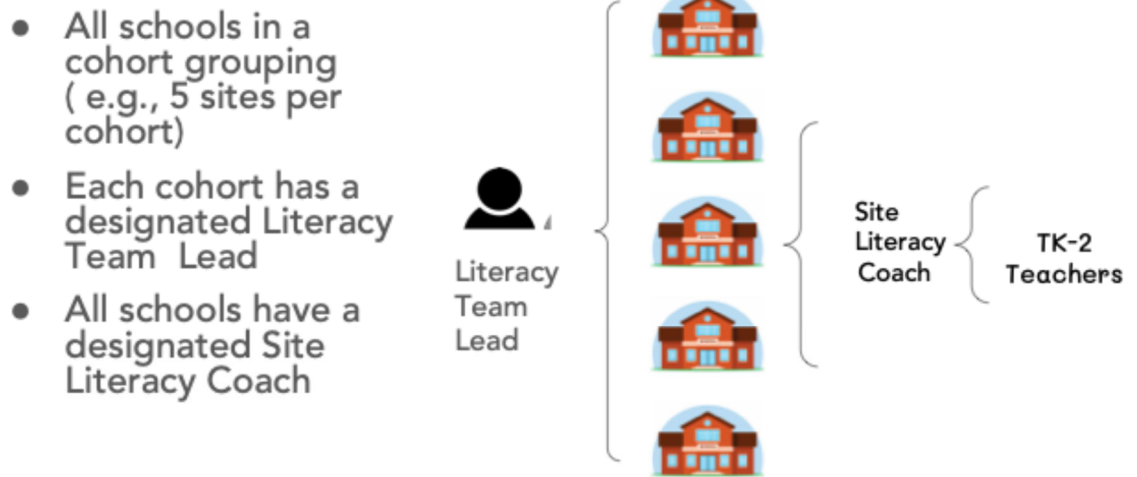
APPENDIX L: *WONDERS* UNIT PLANNING GUIDE EXEMPLAR

LBUSD *Wonders* Unit 4 Week 3   Gr. 2 ELA

Building Knowledge & Language
◎Big Idea Essential Question: *How do different environments make the world an interesting place?*
Overarching Concept: Diversity

Week 3
◎Weekly Essential Question: *How are kids around the world different?*
Adjusted EQ: How are kids from different cultures similar? (use this EQ for this week of learning)
Weekly Concept Focus: traditions

Build Background/Concept	Comprehension Through Close Reading and Use of Evidence	Build Knowledge/Volume of Reading
(Video, short article, art piece, podcasts) Introduce EQ through activities & discussion • culturally responsive lesson "Before Reading" Introduce Weekly Vocabulary A Routine for Teaching Vocabulary - LACOE • Slide Deck Key Vocabulary: common, costume, customs, favorite, parades, surrounded, travels, wonder	**Close Reading:** Dear Primo: A Letter to My Cousin (Wonders Anthology) Happy New Year (Wonders Shared Read) (Culturally Responsive Instructional Lesson) ♥ *EQUITY NOTE: McGraw-Hill has created a set of targeted and meaningful culturally responsive lessons for key weeks and anchor texts from the Wonders literacy program to assist in efforts to create classroom environments that value equity, inclusion, diversity, social justice, and anti-racism.* **Weekly Planning Tool**	*(Video, short article, art piece, podcasts)* Games Around the World (Wonders Paired Text) Magic in Mooncakes - video Mid-Autumn Traditions - Moon Cakes (Newsela) Build Background - texts and videos to support the concept Social Studies Core Alignment

1

🌍 **Family and Community Communication Notes:**
As you prepare for this week of instruction, you may wish to communicate out to families and communities (e.g. parent/guardian letter) that students will begin to understand how people from different cultures and similar and different

💜Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a scaffold that is necessary for some learners, but beneficial to all. In centering our diverse learners, first determine their strengths and assets. Then identify the barriers to the standard addressed in the lesson to provide access using the UDL ID Barrier Chart or the UDL ELA/ELD Resource Guide.

Day 1	
Concept Mapping To support growing the concepts across the unit, use a divided Circle Map. 📢 *Coach's Note:* *In support of our multilingual learners , use the ELLevation platform to identify your students' level of support needed based on their ELPAC levels. Provide multilingual (EL) students with additional integrated language support through the use of text-specific questioning (see EL sidebar) and effective scaffolds (i.e., Thinking Maps, sentence frames, ELLevation activities).*	🌱 T-SEL Welcoming/Inclusion Activity: Teacher Created **Building the Concept** Big Idea: *How do different environments make the world an interesting place?* Essential Question: (use the adjusted EQ for this week of learning) *How are kids from different cultures similar?* Define the Concept: "This week will think about the concepts of traditions. A tradition is a belief or activity that has been passed down in the family. For example, your family might have a tradition that when you turn 10 you have a special party. They might do that because one of your parents had that happen for them because it happened for their parents. A tradition is passed down through a family," Engage: Use the culturally responsive lesson "Before Reading" activity with children. Guiding Questions link to Concept: • How does the concept of similarities show up in this activity? • What is important to learn after participating in this activity? Vocabulary Development common, costume, customs, favorite, parades, surrounded, travels, wonder **Introduce the Skill** Supporting the Skill: Introduce the Skill: Directly teach the skill this week: • **Compare and Contrast:** authors use compare and contrast in text to help us make meaning by showing how things are similar and different.

2

	• Review the Thinking Map/Graphic Organizer you will use to support meaning making while reading the texts this week. **Formative Assessment Opportunities** **Quick Write** Why is it important to learn about other traditions and cultures?
Day 2 📣 Coach's Note: In support of our multilingual learners, please continue to monitor your identified learners. Provide adjustments to the frequency in opportunities to understand how the English language works by: Multiple opportunities to speak with others Removal of sentence frames to assess language use SEE Wonders Designated ELD Support, Differentiated Support, and ELLevation Find the Fib [ELLEVATION] Use this activity for an engaging way to encourage children to seek evidence.	**Vocabulary Development** common, costume, customs, favorite, parades, surrounded, travels, wonder Vocabulary Strategies The vocabulary strategy this week is **similes** on page T214. Directly teach this skill prior to applying it across the week. Use the texts to practice the skill. **Making Meaning through Complex Text** Close Reading Routine: "Dear Primo: A Letter to My Cousin" *Start the reading by going to page 364 (T2250) and reading about the author. It is important to set children up continuing to think of similarities and this will help them see that the purpose of the author was just this.* **Notice & Wonder Routine** [ELLEVATION] First Read/Notice and Wonder • What do you notice? (elements of informational text; patterns) • What are you wondering? (confused; questions about elements of story/text) Anthology Text Dependent/Factual Questions: • Where does Charlie live? Where does Carlitos live? • Look at the illustrations on page 325-353. How do the pictures teach you about the cousins? • On pages 358-359, how are the charros and the break-dancers similar? **Formative Assessment Opportunities** Collaborative Conversation for Meaning Making Talk about 2 ways the boys are similar and 2 ways they are different.

3

LBUSD Unit 4 Week 3   Gr. 2 ELA

Day 3	Vocabulary Development
📢 *Coach's Note: In support of our multilingual learners, think about the intensity and rigor of the scaffolds. Based on monitoring consider:* • *Increasing the vocabulary included in the sentence frames* • *Increasing the expectations to use complete sentences that are more complex* • *SEE Wonders Designated ELD Support, Differentiated Support, and ELLevation*	common, costume, customs, favorite, parades, surrounded, travels, wonder Application of Vocabulary Strategy: Simile **Making Meaning through Complex Text** Close Reading Routine/Second Read: "Dear Primo: A Letter to My Cousin" Text Dependent/Analytical Questions: • How does learning about Carlitos' life impact Charlie? • What is the value of learning about other people's lives? Supporting the Skill: Deepen Understanding Use a Thinking Map or graphic organizer to support students with the skill compare & contrast. • Use sentence frames and transition words to support students into production in speaking and/or writing **Formative Assessment Opportunities** Quick Write Write about the different traditions and customs that Carlitos and Charlie participate in.
Day 4	Vocabulary Development
📢 *Coach's Note: In support of our multilingual learners, provide multiple opportunities and structures for student output in discussion and writing. Actively monitor the use of language based on the scaffolds provided throughout instruction.*	Transfer of Vocabulary Strategy as appropriate **Making Meaning through Complex Text** Shared Read: Happy New Year • Read text: Whole Group Text Dependent/Factual Questions: • How was the family surrounded by fun? • How are Chinese New Year and New Year's Eve different? • What did the author think was the most important similarity in the holidays? Supporting the Skill: Application of the Skill

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	• Invite students to work in small groups, pairs, or independently to apply the skill to the shared read text • Provide as much or as little scaffold as needed to support students into success **Formative Assessment Opportunities** **Collaborative Conversation for Meaning Making** How does the concept of traditions help you understand more about your family and friends? ♥ Watch the videos We Are Much More Similar than We Are Different & We're More Alike Than Different. Engage in a discussion based on what the children are noticing and wondering

Day 5
Integrate/Collaborative Conversation
 	
📢 *Coach's Note: In support of our multilingual learners, provide multiple opportunities and structures for student output in discussion and writing. Actively monitor the use of language based on the scaffolds provided throughout instruction.*
 	
Use one of the images from the culturally responsive lesson to engage in a Hanging Hashtag strategy
ELLEVATION
	Vocabulary Development
	Use the vocabulary words taught so far to engage in a game/activity.
	
	Making Meaning through Complex Text/Integrate
	Volume of Reading -
	Text: Games Around the World
	Set up for **partner or independent** reading:
	• As you read, keep in mind:
	   ○ EQ: How are kids from different cultures similar?
	   ○ Concept: tradition
	   ○ Weekly Skill Focus: compare and contrast
	
	Engage students in a whole group collaborative conversation using the following guided questions:
	• How does this story connect to traditions?
	• Which games are similar across the world? How does this make you think of "A Letter for Primo"?
	
	Formative Assessment Opportunities
	Quick Write
	Write: How are kids from different cultures similar?
	
	🌱 T-SEL Optimistic Closure: Teacher Created

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LBUSD Unit 4 Week 3   Gr. 2 ELA

Foundational Skills (Phonological Awareness, Phonics, HFW, Fluency)			
Plan explicit and systematic instruction using the Decoding Routine template. You will meet the needs of individual students during small group instruction.			
Daily Direct Instruction and Robust Practice 45-60 minutes Total This includes direct instruction and workshop. Decoding Routine Template FRS Scope and Sequence with Rules			
Daily Routine	Skills of the Week	Resources to Support Planning and Instruction	Supports for Multilingual Learners
Phonological Awareness: 5-10 min • Rhyming • Syllables • Onset and Rime • Phonemic Awareness	Rhyme, Initial Sound Substitution, Blending	FRS Evidence of Learning Data Sheet-Unit 4	📣 *Coach's Note:* • *Have an awareness of the language proficiency levels of your students* • *Consider using word cards in lieu of slides to make activity interactive* • *When possible, connect student's primary language to transferable sounds in English* • *When applicable, for high utility words, use picture supports* • *For students whose primary language is Spanish, name out words that have cognates - words that are the same in English* • *Use sidebars in TE for EL support ideas* • *Support students in mouth position and articulation*
Spiral Review: 3-5 min	Review Letter/Sound Deck Choose words based on data		
New Teaching/Blending: 6-8 min • Teach new sound • Model • Engage	Teach /or/ or, ore, oar & /ar/ ar	Day 1 Day 2 Day 3 Day 4 Day 5	
Word/Sentence Dictation: 5 min	mart, more, tar, soar, born, port (2-4 words to review previously taught spelling patterns) Everyone will stay warm if we stand together. Certain people may have a problem with that song.	Use white board for quick check	
Connected Text: 5-8 min	Application of Skill	Decodable Book: Unit 4	

(left side vertical label: Direct Instruction)

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LBUSD Unit 4 Week 3   Gr. 2 ELA

			"Our Life/Our World" Dora Can Soar! and Corn Planter Fluency 5 Day Routine Decodable Routine Protocol	
High Frequency Words: 3-5 min		ago, carry, certain, everyone, heavy, outside, people, problem, together, warm	HFW Heart Word Strategy Heart Word Cards	
Structural Analysis: 5 min 3 days a week		Irregular Plurals	Your Turn Practice Book	

	Structure	**Suggested Activities**	**Resources**	**Support for Multilingual Learners**
Workshop Application/Review	**Small Group Instruction** Use of data/ FRS Evidence of Learning Data Sheet-Unit 4 to guide/determine instruction	FRS Review/Preview Decodable Text Decodable Passages ELD - Designated Fluency	Teacher Resource Book (sorts, picture cards, decodable passages) Decodable Routine Protocol Decodable Book: Unit 4 "Our Life/Our World" Wonders Passages Dora Can Soar! Corn Planter	📢 *Coach's Note:* • *Choose several keywords to create picture cards with focus on language building* • *Provide students primary language support* • *Pair students based on adjacent proficiency levels*
	Collaborative Practice (mixed ability groups)	HFW Practice Phonics/Word Work Decodable Readers - Buddy Reading Workstation Activity Cards ELLevation Activities Fluency Connected Texts	Florida Center for Reading Research UFLI Foundations Decodable Text Guide Download the Printable Word Work Mat Workstation Activity Cards **Newsela Article** Mid-Autumn Traditions - Moon Cakes	

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LBUSD Unit 4 Week 3   Gr. 2 ELA

The genre writing instruction is to support the structure and strategies necessary to be successful on the end of unit Performance Task.Grade 2 Narrative Rubric

Week at a Glance

Skills of the Week
Narrative/Fictional Writing:
- Building Capacity of the Genre & Success Criteria
  - Modeled/Shared Opinion Writing Based in Text
- Responding to Student Needs:
  - Mini-lesson: Using anchor text for setting and details

Language/Grammar:
- Irregular Verbs
- Book Titles

Additional Writing Resources:
- Model of proficiency
- Student Checklist
- Writing Workshop Posters
- The Camping Trip
- Instructional Guidance and Resources for Cursive (new)
  - Grade 2 Penmanship
  - Grade 2 students can begin to be introduced to cursive writing in the latter part of the year. This addition to the curriculum aims to develop foundational skills in practical handwriting, preparing students for continued success in Grade 3.
  - Fundations Writing Paper Resources

Mentor Text Ideas:
- Tudley Didn't Know (Epic)
- Little Frog and the Spring Polliwogs (Epic)
- Louie and Snippy Save the Sea (Epic)
- Little Flap Learns to Fly (Shared Read Unit 1 week 1)
- Help! A Story of Friendship (Close Read Unit 1 week 1)
- Not Norman A Goldfish Story (Close Read Unit 1 week 3)
- A Visit to the Desert (Shared Read Unit 2 week 1)
- Mr. Putter and Tabby See the Stars (Unit 3 Close Read week 2)
- Choose your own

Instructional Guidance
This resource supports a 3 day 45-60 min instructional approach of genre writing. Teachers can modify as needed.

45-60 minutes
Responding to Student Needs

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Precise Nouns, Unique Adjectives, and Strong Verbs

Writers and readers call this **Descriptive Language.**

- Create a Tree Map with a picture at the top and the following headings: adjectives, nouns, and verbs.
- Have students look at the picture at the top and to name the nouns/things that they see. Remind students to be as precise as possible.
- For example, instead of the word "animal," the students should respond with "squirrel monkey".
- Record student responses under the appropriate branch of the Tree Map. For each precise noun, create a Bubble Map and ask students to think of as many adjectives as they can to describe the noun.
- Lead the students in selecting the most "unique" adjective to describe the particular noun. Record the responses.
- Ask students to think of strong verbs that could be used with the nouns and adjectives and that demonstrates an action clearly. Record student responses.
- Model creating strong descriptive sentences using the information from the Tree Map.
- Provide a different picture and ask the students to work in pairs to create a Tree Map with good descriptive language and create a strong descriptive sentence.

Building Capacity of the Genre & Success Criteria

<u>Continue Writing a fictional/imagined narrative</u> (Parrot Visits Rain Forest)

- Follow the "I do, you do" process to develop the prompt from last week. Review the story elements on Tree Map that was completed last week.
- Allow students to orally rehearse individually, in pairs, and in groups
- Model drafting the Fictional/Imaginative Narrative and then allow time for students to write their own Fictional Narrative piece.

Grammar

Irregular Verbs, Book Titles (Days 1-5) p. T201, T218-219, T227, T239

⭐ *Coach's Note: Grammar instruction to support quality writing is ideal. Opportunities for students to try new grammar learning in their own writing helps them see its value immediately and allows practice in context. In support of how language works, planning additional designated small group instruction to support multilingual learners in these skills is important.*

- Grammar Handbook p.474 in Reading/Writing Workshop
- Wonders Grammar Practice Reproducibles
- Interactive Games & Activities: Designated EL Instruction
- Explain to students that they will be learning about irregular verbs (See Grammar Handbook in Reading/Writing Workshop).
- Divided Circle Map to: define and provide examples of irregular verbs (*Irregular verbs have different forms in the past tense – not -ed endings: go, do, say, tell, see*).

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- Frame the Circle Map: So what did we learn about irregular verbs? So why is this important?

45-60 minutes
Responding to Student Needs
Teacher created based on student need

Building Capacity of the Genre & Success Criteria
- Continue the work from yesterday and allow students time to finish writing their fictional narrative pieces.

Grammar
Irregular Verbs, Book Titles (Days 1-5) p. T201, T218-219, T227, T239
- Support in identifying irregular verbs (See examples in Grammar Practice Book p.86, 90)
- Have students work in pairs or small groups to write complete sentences using irregular verbs.
- Create a bridge map to review the different irregular verbs

45-60 minutes
Responding to Student Needs
Teacher created based on student need

Building Capacity of the Genre & Success Criteria
- Continue the work from yesterday and allow students time to finish writing their fictional narrative pieces.
- Once students have finished writing, have them share their stories with others.

Grammar
Irregular Verbs, Book Titles (Days 1-5) p. T201, T218-219, T227, T239
- Introduce the punctuation when writing a book title. Show or write the example on p.T227. Then have the students work in pairs or groups to complete the guided practice on p. T227.
- Remind students to think about how they should check their writing for skills taught, such as verb tenses and punctuation specific to letter writing.
- Have students complete a page from Wonders Grammar Practice Reproducibles for formative assessment.

11

Unit 4:
Community and Connections

UNIT OF STUDY FROM
DCPS
MIDDLE SCHOOL
CURRICULUM

ELA 8
Unit 4 Overview

Unit Learning Trajectory	This unit will challenge students to explore the concept of community and how the life experiences of individuals connect to form a community. Through a thorough study of fiction and non-fiction texts, students will come to understand that community is comprised of both physical and nonphysical elements. They will also reflect on and discuss the ideas that (1) the life experiences of individuals impact a community, (2) community includes both topography and humanity, and (3) empathy for and understanding of others is essential for a community's survival. After gaining a thorough understanding of community, students will transform into social activists as they investigate ways to enact positive change in their communities. Students will read the novel, *145th Street Short Stories*, by Walter Dean Myers, to explore how stories of individual human experiences connect all of humanity. Each focal passage from *145th Street Short Stories* is included in a thematic text set with other prose and/or poetry that explore various aspects of the human condition. These text sets allow students to delve deeper into examining how community impacts individuals and how the emotions and experiences of individuals connect to impact a community. They include poetry, informational texts, short stories, and an audio clip. This unit will also challenge students to continually make text-to-text connections as they read the combination of texts. Further, this unit's Cornerstone provides students with the opportunity to take a critical look at their own communities and develop and implement a grassroots campaign to address an area of concern. Students reflecting on themselves as evolving writers is another vital component of this unit. In addition to crafting two original pieces of writing, students will revisit one of their writings from a previous unit to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. Through this process, students will (1) gain insight about who they are as writers and (2) refine their writing skills. Students will demonstrate mastery of speaking and listening skills during the Cornerstone experience, where students will develop grassroots campaigns, workshop the campaigns for feedback, and present their campaigns to their peers. The unit is organized into 6 phases that guide teaching about community, from the discussion of how the experiences of individuals create community to how students can become agents of change in their own communities.
Essential Questions	• How am I impacted by my community? • How can I impact my community? • How does an author use the story of an individual to connect all of humanity? • How does reflection and revision improve my writing and my confidence in my writing?
Enduring Understandings	• The life experiences of individuals impact a community. • Empathy for and understanding of others is essential for a community's survival. • Youth have ability to be positive change agents in their community.

	Reading: Literature	Reading: Informational Texts	Writing	Speaking & Listening	Language
Recurring Common Core State Standards (CCSS)	RL.8.4, RL.8.10	RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.4, RI.8.10	W.8.4, W.8.5, W.8.6, W.8.9, W.8.10	SL.8.1, SL.8.6	L.8.2c, L.8.4, L.8.5, L.8.6
Unit 4 Focal Standards	RL.8.4, RL.8.5, RL.8.9	RI.8.4, RI.8.5	W.8.1, W.8.2, W.8.3, W.8.4, W.8.5	SL.8.4, SL.8.5, SL.8.6	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.5

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Unit 4:
Community and Connections

Unit Sequence
And Assessments

These pages provide a summary of the skills and Common Core standards students should master in order to be prepared to perform the writing task that follows. There is a writing prompt that follows each "Phase" of the unit, and each writing prompt will help prepare students for success on the PARCC test at the end of the year.

● Assessments   ● Cornerstone

● Close Reading   ● Anchor Text

● Flexible Instruction

Instructional Phases

Phase 1, Reflective Writing and Revisions
See Canvas Module 4.1
Approximately 4 Days

Students will be able to...
- Provide students with the time and space to be reflective about writing (W.8.5)
- Reflect on previous writing to determine weaknesses and areas of growth in one's own writing (W.8.5)
- Utilize guidance and support from peers and teachers to strengthen writing by revising, editing, and rewriting (W.8.5, W.8.4)
- Construct metacognitive essay that details growth as a writer over the 2018-2019 school year (W.8.4)

Phase 1 Assessment Prompt: Being a Reflective Writer
Reflection is an important part of writing. It is necessary to improve your writing and become a more confident writer. Throughout the school year, you have written argumentative, explanatory, and narrative texts.
Tasks
1. Select one of the essays you composed. Reread the essay and reflect on the feedback from your teacher and peers. Using the feedback, revise the selected essay. Your new essay will demonstrate that you have overcome any writing challenges in your initial essay including development of ideas, organization, spelling, and grammar.
2. In a well-organized essay, explain how you have developed as a writer over the course of the school year. Your essay should address:
   - -weaknesses you overcame as a writer this year
   - your current strengths as a writer
   - the activities, discussions, and/or peer and teacher feedback that changed you as a writer
   - aspects of your current writing you like best

Phase 2, Introducing the Unit: What is Community?
See Canvas Module 4.2
Approximately 4 Days

Texts: "I've heard said" by Julia Alvarez, "Those Who Don't" from The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros , "Race is a Social Concept, Not a Scientific One" By Michael Hadjiargyrou
Students will be able to...
- Read and analyze multiple texts that introduce the unit topics and themes (RL.8.2)
- Read and analyze how an informational text (op-ed) reveals connections between people, ideas, and/or events to introduce the unit topics and themes (RI.8.3)
- Analyze how the author develops the central idea over the course of a nonfiction text (RI.8.2)
- Identify text structures of a poem and narrative text (RL.8.5)
- Identify the structure of a specific paragraph in an informational text. (RI.8.5)
- Label the role of each sentence within a paragraph (RI.8.5)

Phase 2 Assessment Prompt: Select one text and respond to the following questions. How does the author convey their understanding of community? How does the text structure contribute to the meaning of the text?

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Unit 4:
Community and Connections

Phase 3, Anchor Text & Required Supporting Texts: *145th Street Short Stories*

See Canvas Modules 4.3-4.10
Approximately 25 Days

Texts: *145th Street Shorts* by Walter Dean Myers & Text Sets

Students will be able to...
- Explain how the structure of two texts are the same and different from each other (RL.8.5)
- Analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style (RL.8.5)
- Select sentence(s) from a single paragraph and explain how this excerpt develops understanding of a key concept (RI.8.5)
- Analyze in detail the structure of a specific excerpt of a text, explaining the role of particular sentences or lines in developing and refining a key concept or central idea (RI.8.5)
- Closely read a text stopping to synthesize central ideas through stop and jots, turn and talks and annotations, summary, etc. (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RI.8.1, RI.8.2)
- Analyze how a theme or central idea is developed during the course of a text, including its relationship to key character(s), setting, and plot. (RL.8.2)
- Analyze use of figurative language to create meaning and develop tone (RL.8.4, L.8.5)
- Analyze the impact of an author's word choice on meaning and tone (RL.8.4, RI.8.4, L.8.5)
- Analyze how incidents in a story drive the action, develop character, or prompt a decision (RL.8.3)
- Analyze how the author develops the central idea over the course of a nonfiction text (RI.8.2)
- Analyze in detail the structure of a specific excerpt of a text, explaining the role of particular sentences or lines in developing and refining a key concept or central idea (RI.8.5)
- Draft a brief-constructed response analyzing text structure (W.8.2.A-F, W.8.4, W.8.9)
- Outline and draft a narrative using narrative techniques such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection (W.8.3)

Phase 3 Assessment Prompt: Think about the people and experiences that connect to make your community. Using the structure and style of Walter Dean Myers' *145th Street Short Stories*, write a story that narrates an individual's experience on your street. The narrative that you construct can be real or fictitious. Your story should also capture one the topics and/or themes discussed during the reading of *145th Street Short Stories*.

Phase 4, Close Reading Module

See Canvas Module 4.11
Approximately 3 Days

Texts: *Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change* by Shawn Ginwright, Pedro Noguera, and Julio Cammarota

Students will be able to...
- Closely read a text stopping to synthesize central ideas through stop and jots, turn and talks and annotations, summary, etc. (RI.8.1, RI.8.2)
- Define and understand unknown words in context to better comprehend texts. (L.8.4)

Phase 4 Assessment Prompt: Explain the importance of young people being viewed as individuals who "produce knowledge to transform their world" in a positive way by adults. Support your response with evidence from the text.

Phase 5, Writing Feedback & Revision

See Canvas Module 4.12
Approximately 2 Days

Texts:

Students will be able to:
- Evaluate performance on Unit Test and/or curricular assessments, write to reflect on their own personal growth, skills and knowledge, and to set a goal for the next writing score.

Phase 6 Assessment Guidance: After assessing the constructed response with the PARCC rubric, teachers provide feedback to students. Students will reflect in writing, reread text, revise and rewrite. Utilize the *Writing Revolution* guidance for writing in Unit 3 with specific student writing needs. Following revision, students should compare and contrast initial response with revision. Recognize and celebrate proficient responses, individually or collectively, as appropriate.

Phase 6, PARCC

Approximately 6 Days

Students will be able to:

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- Respond to common-core aligned multiple choice and drag and drop questions
- Construct evidence-based written responses.

Unit 4:
Community and Connections

Unit Texts

Overview

Students will read the texts listed below during this unit. Optional texts are highlighted in yellow; all other texts listed on this page are required reading for students. Teachers may utilize the optional texts to further enhance this unit if time permits.

Common Core Band Lexile Text Difficulty Ranges for Grades 6-8: 955L-1155L

Text	Instructional Use	Source
Anchor Text(s)		
149th Street: Short Stories by Walter Dean Myers	Anchor Text	Print
Informational Text		
"Race is a Social Concept, Not a Scientific One" By Michael Hadjiargyrou	Introducing the Unit	Canvas
"The Child's View of Working Parent" from *Fortune* by Cora Daniels	Supporting the Anchor Text	Canvas
Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change by Shawn Ginwright, Pedro Noguera, and Julio Cammarota	Close Reading Module	Canvas
Poetry and Fiction Texts		
"I've heard said" by Julia Alvarez	Introducing the Unit	Canvas
"Human Family" by Maya Angelou	Supporting the Anchor Text	Canvas
"Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden	Supporting the Anchor Text	Canvas
"The World Is Not a Pleasant Place to Be" by Nikki Giovanni	Supporting the Anchor Text	Canvas
"Vade Mecum" by Billy Collins	Supporting the Anchor Text	Canvas
	Supporting the Anchor Text	Canvas
"Those Who Don't" from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros	Introducing the Unit	Canvas
"Papa Wakes Up Tired in the Dark" from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros	Supporting the Anchor Text	Canvas
"Salvador Late or Early" from *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* by Sandra Cisneros	Supporting the Anchor Text	Canvas
"Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes" from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros	Supporting the Anchor Text	Canvas
The Parable of the Good Samaritan	Supporting the Anchor Text	Canvas
Audio/Visual Texts		
NPR's Morning Edition "Good Samaritan"	Supporting the Anchor Text	Link

The Role of Varied "Leveled" Texts and Potential Suggestions

The Power of Text Sets: An easy, research based and fun way to become a strong reader

What is a text set? Text sets are intentionally grouped sets of texts and media resources focused on a specific topic designed to help all learners build background knowledge and vocabulary through a volume of reading on science, social studies, and other high-interest topics.

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APPENDIX N: EMBEDDED SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING LESSON EXEMPLAR

Long Beach Unified School District

Social Emotional Learning – Self-Management

Lesson Title: History-grounded Self-Calming Strategies to Manage Emotions
Grade level: Gr. 6-12
Lesson Length: 45-55 minutes

Lesson Plan
Prior Learning: Understanding of social emotional learning: five core competencies – self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills (see CASEL handout)
Learning Objective: Students will develop and demonstrate self-management skills, the ability to self-monitor and regulate emotions and develop positive behaviors related to school and life success
Student Expectations: Applies self-calming strategies; demonstrates understanding of managing emotions and behaviors through identification of coping skills such as calming down, walking away, and asking for help when they are overwhelmed by strong emotions.
Guiding Questions: 1. What are some strong emotions that people feel? (happiness, anger, excitement, frustration, impatience, sadness, fear etc.) 2. Is it good to keep all your emotions on the inside? Why or why not? 3. Why do you think it might be hard to talk about our emotions? 4. What self-calming strategies can you use to mitigate or work through your emotions? 5. Who can you turn to for help with managing strong emotions?? (family, friends, school counselor, trusted adult)

Vocabulary	
Essential: • emotion – a strong feeling (e.g. excitement) • self-management – management of or by oneself; taking responsibility for one's own behavior or well-being • self-calming – the act of soothing oneself • coping – to manage with success	**Supporting:** • behavior – the way in which a person acts in response to a particular situation • mitigate – make less severe, serious, or painful

Teacher Preparation
• 📢 EL/ML support: Write essential vocabulary (with definitions) and guiding questions on whiteboard or chart tablet or post/email students • Provide paper copies or digital access to the student handout below (Answer key follows) • Watch "Hakuna Matata" video from Disney's The Lion King • Read/analyze the quote from Djedkhonsefanhk's Moral Self Portrait printed in *Maat, the Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics* • Label chart tablet, whiteboard, or poster: Self-Calming Strategies • Remind students to capture their thinking on their handouts

Activities
Warm Up (whole group): 1. Brainstorm the types of emotions people experience 2. Share the focus of the lesson – learning objective and student expectations

NAME _____ DATE _____ PERIOD _____

3. 📢 EL/ML support: Introduce vocabulary words and review definitions
4. Review guiding questions
5. Identify strong emotions and invite students to brainstorm a list of how those emotions can cause problems if left unaddressed

Discussion (whole group):
1. Watch "Hakuna Matata" (Set up ahead of time to avoid ads)
2. Discuss what emotions was Simba (the lion cub) feeling initially? What kinds of actions did he and his friends take to improve Simba's emotional state?
3. Invite students to participate in a whole group discussion of guiding question #2 (Is it good to keep all your emotions on the inside? Why or why not?)
4. Repeat this activity with guiding question #3 (Why do you think it might be hard to talk about our emotions?)

Skill Practice (whole group):
1. Read the statement from Djedkhonsefanhk's Moral Self Portrait.
2. Invite students to think-pair-share or "Think-pair-write-share" about what the statement means, and what that statement teaches us about Self-Management
3. Ask students to compare and contrast the statement from Djedkhonsefanhk's Moral Self Portrait with "Hakuna Matata"
4. Ask students to list examples of what these two sources teach us about remaining in control when we feel emotional. Have students share with a partner, then share with the class.
5. Pose guiding question #4 (What self-calming strategies can you use to mitigate, or work through, your emotions?)
6. Direct students to use the "define in context" thinking map on Self Management and ask them to write down 3-4 self-calming strategies they can utilize to cope with strong emotions.
7. Students share thoughts with the whole group.
   a. Listening students can put a checkmark by ideas they already have written down
   b. Students write down new ideas from their classmates in a different color (or they can put a star by new ideas)
8. Ask students to reflect on guiding question 5 (Who can you turn to for help with managing strong emotions?? (family, friends, school counselor, trusted adult)). Students should add this to their map.

Wrap Up

Wrap Up (whole group discussion):
1. Review lesson learning objective, student expectations, and guiding questions
2. Invite students to think about "what they learned from the lesson today" and ask several students to share with the whole group
3. Invite students to discuss self-calming strategies they will use in the future in stressful situations to effectively manage strong emotions like fear

Checking for Understanding (evaluation)

- Check for understanding periodically throughout the lesson, providing guidance as necessary
- Monitor student engagement and active participation of each and every student
- Exit ticket: Have students complete this statement on the bottom of their handout:

_____ is a useful Self-Management strategy I can use when I'm feeling _____ in order to help me _____. Using this technique, will also help my class by _____.

NAME _____ DATE _____ PERIOD _____

Add to the definition of Self Management by writing down some strategies you can use to handle your emotions.

Self-Management

management of or by oneself; taking responsibility for one's own behavior or well-being

Complete this statement:

_____ is a useful Self-Management strategy I can use when I'm feeling

_____ in order to help me _____.

Using this technique, will also help my class by _____.

NAME _____ DATE _____ PERIOD _____

Self Management: Taking responsibility for one's own behavior or well-being

What actions did Timon (the meerkat) and Pumba (the warthog) take to help Simba (the lion cub) cope with his feelings?

- They used humor

- Music/singing

- Dance/Exercise

- Pumba shared about his struggles

- Motivational quotes "Hakuna Matata" (Swahili for no worries/problems) encouraged Pumba to accept how his body is and functions--things that were out of his control, This understanding helped him be happy.

- They were supportive of one another

This is an excerpt fromfrom Djedkhonsefanhk's moral self-portrait. He was an Ancient Egyptian who served under Aman Re and other Egyptian leaders.

From Djedkhonsefanhk's moral self-portrait...

"I kept my mouth clean
of harming one who harmed me,
My patience turned my enemies
into associates,
I controlled my mouth
and was skilled at responding...
I caused them all to greet me
for my excellence,
...and saying of me:
An offspring of his father,
A divine descendant of his mother.
No one spoke evil of my parents
because of me."

What do you think this statement means?

What does it teach us about Self-Management?

Compare and Contrast the strategies or ideas you observed about shifting your emotional state. Add boxes to the thinking map as you see fit.

Incorporates physical techniques (exercise or movement) to change your emotional state

positive messages

Staying calm builds relationships instead of creating enemies

Hakuna Matata

We are capable of managing our own emotions

Djedkhonsefanhk's Moral Self Portrait

Others will appreciate our ability to maintain control

Shows that humor can also help break us out of negative emotions

Controlling our emotions reflects well upon our family

NAME _____ DATE _____ PERIOD _____

Add to the definition of Self Management by writing down some strategies you can use to handle your emotions.

Mindful breathing

Counting to 10

exercise

Talking with a friend or trusted adult

meditating

Self-Management

management of or by oneself; taking responsibility for one's own behavior or well-being

Listening to music

Think before I speak or act

Find a solution to the problem

Reflect on my strengths

Focus on what I can control

Set goals

Complete this statement:

_____ is a useful Self-Management strategy I can use when I'm feeling

_____ in order to help me _____.

Using this technique, will also help my class by _____.

APPENDIX O: INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK EXEMPLAR AND TOOL

2022
Understandings & Expectations
♦ ♦ ♦ AT A GLANCE ♦ ♦ ♦

Understanding 1: Planning Standards-Aligned Content

Purposeful planning, through an asset-based lens, provides access to standards-based grade-level content while acknowledging student profiles and needs.

Practice 1: Plan a unit of standards-aligned content using district-adopted materials and curriculum guides.

Practice 2: Plan for differentiated instruction for all learners based on student readiness, learner profile and interest.

Practice 3: Plan daily lessons that provide access to on-or-above-grade level content, including scaffolds and supports, while maintaining the rigor of the standard.

Understanding 2: Equitable Instruction

Equitable instruction ensures that all students can engage in learning experiences that build knowledge and skills leading to conceptual understanding of content, transfer to new contexts and the building of critical consciousness.

Practice 1: Deliver lessons and facilitate experiences guided by clear learning intentions.

Practice 2: Provide opportunities for students to build conceptual understanding that leads to knowledge transfer.

Practice 3: Help students achieve an in-depth understanding of the world and build critical consciousness.

Understanding 3: Student Engagement

Purposeful engagement increases student motivation, interest and meaning-making to develop a deeper understanding of content.

Practice 1: Create the social and emotional conditions to cultivate high levels of student motivation and interest.

Practice 2: Use active participation strategies to provide varied opportunities for students to interact with and reflect on the content.

Practice 3: Promote collaborative meaning-making through academic discourse.

Understanding 4: Evidence of Student Learning

Formative and summative assessment data used to monitor and adjust instruction provides feedback, motivates the learner and leads to student mastery.

Practice 1: Use formative evidence drawn from the student's knowledge, understanding and skills to inform teaching. (Assessment for Learning).

Practice 2: Use summative evidence of student learning to assess growth toward mastery of standards. (Assessment of Learning)

Practice 3: Guide students to assess and monitor their own learning. (Assessment as Learning)

Understanding 5: Collective Efficacy

Effective instructional teams (any team that meets regularly for the purpose of learning together to increase student achievement) embody a culture of collective efficacy and believe that their combined actions will move students towards equitable access and mastery.

Practice 1: Establish the conditions, structures and purpose for working and planning as a collaborative learning team.

Practice 2: Create learning cycles where teams analyze data, set goals, research and learn best practices, implement new learning, and reflect on implementation to plan the next steps.

Practice 3: Embody the belief that the collective responsibility for the success of all students lies with the team, and therefore, all members are accountable.

Understanding 6: Equitable and Inclusive Learning Environment

Equity-centered classrooms affirm student identities, cultivate a sense of belonging and develop student agency in safe learning environments where students thrive.

Practice 1: Create a student-centered physical environment that affirms student identities and promotes academic support.

Practice 2: Co-create a safe and welcoming community that centers caring relationships by valuing diversity, trust and respectful communication.

Practice 3: Communicate and model high expectations aligned to the belief that all students can achieve high levels of success if given the necessary support, regardless of identity and past performance.

LONG BEACH
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Excellence & Equity

U1 Understanding 1: Planning Standards-Aligned Content

Purposeful planning, through an asset-based lens, provides access to standards-based grade-level content while acknowledging student profiles and needs.

Practice 1: Plan a unit of standards-aligned content using district-adopted materials and curriculum guides.

- Co-plan units in vertical and/or grade-level teams that support all students' access to and mastery of grade-level content.
- Engage in standards studies including a task analysis of the standards within each unit.
- Design instruction using LBUSD Best Instructional Practices (i.e. Math, ELA, HSS, Science, FRS).
- Arrange curricula into developmental progressions of subject matter to facilitate students' content learning and language acquisition.
- Integrate real-world applications of content standards into unit plans.

Practice 2: Plan for differentiated instruction for all learners based on student readiness, learner profile and interest.

- Gather multiple forms of data to create a robust student profile inclusive of language, culture, social-emotional and academic readiness that inform the instructional plan.
- Differentiate the content, process, product and/or learning environment to ensure all students achieve success.
- Incorporate student interests into the curriculum by providing opportunities for students to choose or propose their own ideas about the process, content and product while ensuring it remains aligned with the learning intention.

Practice 3: Plan daily lessons that provide access to on-or-above-grade level content, including scaffolds and supports, while maintaining the rigor of the standard.

- Develop lessons using complex texts and tasks, and planning for strategic support as students engage in productive struggle.
- Anticipate common misconceptions and supports that students may need to access and engage with the complex text and task.
- Plan daily supports for English learners to access the content and extend opportunities to interact in meaningful ways, understand "how language works," and address foundational skill gaps through integrated and designated English Language Development.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

U2

Understanding 2: Equitable Instruction

Equitable instruction ensures that all students can engage in learning experiences that build knowledge and skills leading to conceptual understanding of content, transfer to new contexts and the building of critical consciousness.

Practice 1: Deliver lessons and facilitate experiences guided by clear learning intentions.

◆ Communicate or assist students in uncovering the learning intentions (i.e. content being learned, success criteria, relevance).

◆ Provide explanations of how learning intentions fit within the learning progression and new contexts.

◆ Refer to learning intentions and success criteria throughout the lesson, encouraging students to monitor their own progress.

Practice 2: Provide opportunities for students to build conceptual understanding that leads to knowledge transfer.

◆ Use content, which includes the topics, facts and skills related to a discipline, to investigate relationships among concepts.

◆ Require students to analyze varied points of view and perspectives to explore or reflect on their own thinking.

◆ Develop a progression of questions, from factual to conceptual, to engage students in analytical and evaluative thinking.

◆ Guide students to create connections between and among concepts, and refine those connections through further questioning and analysis.

◆ Design new contexts and situations for students to transfer their conceptual understanding.

Practice 3: Help students achieve an in-depth understanding of the world and build critical consciousness.

◆ Integrate current, local, social, economic and political events into the curriculum to foster students' civic responsibility and agency.

◆ Encourage students to identify and examine social and political issues that pertain to the discipline which they are learning.

◆ Engage students in critically analyzing how language is used in relationship to power structures.

◆ Examine complex issues, such as inequity, bias and discrimination, and encourage students to propose solutions.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

U3 Understanding 3: Student Engagement

Purposeful engagement increases student motivation, interest and meaning-making to develop a deeper understanding of content.

Practice 1: Create the social and emotional conditions to cultivate high levels of student motivation and interest.

◆ Begin each learning experience with a welcoming and inclusive activity/routine that builds community or connects to the work ahead.

◆ Allow students to share different perspectives and ensure all student voices are heard and valued.

◆ Build on students' assets to connect what they already know to new content.

◆ Encourage interactions that affirm identity, increase a sense of belonging and build agency.

Practice 2: Use active participation strategies to provide varied opportunities for students to interact with and reflect on the content.

◆ Use interactive strategies, such as jigsaw, four corners, gallery walk, give one/get one/move on, etc., that allow student movement and processing of the content.

◆ Embed strategies throughout the learning experience, such as brain breaks and transition techniques, to regain focus and enhance creativity.

◆ Design experiences that optimize student output, allowing them to describe their thinking to others orally, visually and in writing, within each lesson.

◆ Facilitate opportunities that maximize the number of students responding simultaneously (e.g. wait-time, whiteboards, think-pair-share).

Practice 3: Promote collaborative meaning-making through academic discourse.

◆ Ask rigorous and discussion-worthy questions that require students to share, discuss and challenge one another's thinking.

◆ Allow students to collaborate with other students often to discuss the learning, communicate ideas and support a point of view.

◆ Listen carefully to determine students' conceptual understanding of content.

◆ Elicit and sequence responses strategically for small or whole group discussions.

◆ Position students as authors of ideas who must critique and challenge others' ideas while extending and justifying their own thoughts.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

U4 Understanding 4: Evidence of Student Learning

Formative and summative assessment data used to monitor and adjust instruction provides feedback, motivates the learner and leads to student mastery.

Practice 1: Use formative evidence drawn from students' knowledge, understanding, and skills to inform teaching. (Assessment for Learning)

◆ Elicit and gather evidence of student learning at strategic points during instruction (i.e. directions, procedures, process, questions and content).

◆ Use multiple approaches that require students to consistently explain and justify their thinking and reasoning to monitor students' understanding.

◆ Respond to evidence of student learning to plan next instructional steps including differentiated scaffolds.

Practice 2: Use summative evidence of student learning to assess growth toward mastery of standards. (Assessment of Learning)

◆ Communicate a view of learning in which assessment helps students learn better, rather than just achieve a better mark.

◆ Accurately interpret assessment data for all students, including those with special needs, English learners at various language acquisition levels and other historically underrepresented groups, to design personalized goals and interventions.

◆ Use summative data to determine the impact of Tier I instruction.

◆ Draw on multiple data sources to design and implement equitable grading practices that reflect student progress.

Practice 3: Guide students to assess and monitor their own learning. (Assessment as Learning)

◆ Co-construct learning goals using multiple data points to encourage student reflection, growth and development.

◆ Craft feedback that is focused and related to the learning intentions.

◆ Expect students to act on feedback that moves their learning forward to allow for the revision and resubmission of work.

◆ Provide multiple opportunities for students to provide peer support and interact as instructional resources for one another.

◆ Share timely, understandable and respectful information about student progress and achievement with students and caregivers.

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U5 — Understanding 5: Collective Efficacy

Effective instructional teams (any team that meets regularly for the purpose of learning together to increase student achievement) embody a culture of collective efficacy and believe that their combined actions will move students towards equitable access and mastery.

Practice 1: Establish the conditions, structures and purpose for working and planning as a collaborative learning team.

- Co-create team structures by establishing norms and roles, and using agendas and collaborative protocols.
- Develop team collaboration through productive debates, working constructively on issues until they are resolved.
- Communicate in open and balanced ways while ensuring contributions from members are recognized and utilized.
- Accept that discomfort is at the root of all growth and learning and explore strategies to manage the discomfort.
- Share classroom experiences and instructional expertise to enhance team productivity, development and mutual respect among the team.
- Deepen the understanding of how personal experiences fit into the larger school context of power and privilege while considering missing perspectives.

Practice 2: Create learning cycles where teams analyze data, set goals, research and learn best practices, implement new learning, and reflect on implementation to plan the next steps.

- Examine multiple forms of data, including analysis of inequities, to better understand the current state.
- Identify common learning goals for students based on prioritized data that focuses on historically underrepresented groups, and create related team learning goal(s) focused on student achievement of goals.
- Learn new knowledge and skills, reflect on established best practices and develop team plans to implement common instructional practices.
- Apply the acquired learning related to common instructional practice in the classrooms while engaging in ongoing team feedback to monitor and adjust implementation.
- Reflect on the effectiveness of common instructional practice, using several forms of evidence, to plan for the next team learning cycle and to scale successful practices school-wide and beyond.

Practice 3: Embody the belief that the collective responsibility for the success of all students lies with the team, and therefore, all members are accountable.

- Collaborate with colleagues, administrators, parents/guardians and educational professionals to ensure the success of historically underrepresented groups.
- Prioritize the best interests of students, especially when making difficult decisions.
- Increase the interdependence around common priorities, transparency of practice and the co-construction of curriculum as a result of continued success.
- Encourage team members to implement new learning while holding each other accountable for the decisions made by the team.
- Attribute student success to collective team actions propelling the expectation that continued gains are attainable.

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U6 Understanding 6: Equitable and Inclusive Learning Environment

Equity-centered classrooms affirm student identities, cultivate a sense of belonging and develop student agency in safe learning environments where students thrive.

Practice 1: Create a student-centered physical environment that affirms student identities and promotes academic support.

◆ Display materials that honor students' communities and their many identities, including racial, gender, linguistic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

◆ Ensure learning spaces include student-accessible visuals, scaffolds, tools and resources that support the success of all students.

◆ Arrange the classroom to enhance discussion and interpersonal relationships between teacher and student, and among students.

◆ Display student work, instructional resources and learning intentions that are aligned to the standards and reflect high expectations.

Practice 2: Co-create a safe and welcoming community that centers caring relationships by valuing diversity, trust and respectful communication.

◆ Recognize, affirm and build on a student's cultural knowledge, skills and abilities as assets.

◆ Refer to students by their identified gender pronouns and name, and ensuring consistent use.

◆ Co-construct community agreements, norms, routines and procedures that guide respectful interactions.

◆ Model and maintain positive and productive relationships.

◆ Facilitate opportunities for students to learn about their own culture while developing competence in engaging with other cultures.

◆ Create academic safety by encouraging risk-taking (i.e. normalize challenges by framing them as learning opportunities).

Practice 3: Communicate and model high expectations aligned to the belief that all students can achieve high levels of success if given the necessary support, regardless of identity and past performance.

◆ Engage in the ongoing reflection of personal cultural bias to examine the influence of how students experience high expectations and levels of success.

◆ Empower students through meaningful and relevant learning opportunities to develop agency and the belief that they can positively affect change through their voice and actions.

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Quality Core Instruction
Classroom Observation Tool
(Excerpted Components)

1. Level - Mark only one

    _____ Elementary TK-5

    _____ Middle School 6-8

    _____ High School 9-12

2. School Site - _____

3. Subject – Mark only one

    _____ ELA/English

    _____ Math

    _____ Science

    _____ History

    _____ Visual/Performing Arts

    _____ Health

    _____ Physical Education

    _____ World Language

    _____ Career/Technical Education/Elective

    _____ Special Education

4. Key Quality Core Instruction Components from *Quality Core Instructional Framework* – Check all that apply

   Student-centered, culturally relevant content?
   _____ Observed   _____ Not Observed
   Clear and explicit learning intention and success criteria?
   _____ Observed   _____ Not Observed

   Standards-aligned rigorous task?
   _____ Observed   _____ Not Observed

   Intentional and consistent engagement?
   _____ Observed   _____ Not Observed

Quality Core Instructional Look Fors – from *Quality Core Instructional Framework*

5. Student-Centered, Culturally Relevant Frame Look Fors – Check all that apply

   _____ The text and materials being used in the task reflect diversity and student interest/backgrounds

   _____ Text and materials maximize representation of underserved groups in the curriculum to expand narratives and disrupt stereotypes

   _____ Teacher customizes the lesson specifically to the students in the classroom by making explicit connections between the content, materials, and tasks to the students' interest, culture, language, prior knowledge and experience

6. Clear and Explicit Learning Intention and Success Criteria Look Fors – Check all that apply

   _____ Learning intention represents the day's teaching point with the learning progression of the standard

   _____ Teachers clearly communicate the learning intention and how it fits within the learning progression

   _____ Teachers communicate the success criteria for the lesson, making it clear what proficient work looks like

_____ The relevance is connected to students' background, interests, and identity

7. Standards-Aligned, Rigorous Task Look Fors from *Quality Core Instructional Framework* – Check all that apply

_____ Task is aligned to the knowledge, skills, and concepts of the standard, demonstrating high expectations for students

_____ Teachers create culturally relevant, rigorous (higher depth of knowledge DOK) tasks that connect directly to meaningful learning intentions and facilitate application of the success criteria

_____ Students engage in rigorous or higher-level thinking, applying the success criteria to meaningful, challenging tasks

_____ Students engage in productive struggle with rigorous content and concepts

_____ Students' proving behavior (oral, written and/or product) is at the cognitive demand of the grade level standard

8. Intentional and Consistent Engagement Look Fors from *Quality Core Instructional Framework* – check all that apply

_____ Teachers incorporates intentional behavioral, social-emotional, and cognitive engagement practices throughout the lesson and does not permit students to opt-out of learning

_____ Teachers design experiences that optimize student output, allowing them to describe their thinking to others orally, visually, and in writing within each lesson

_____ Students are doing the majority of the academic work of the lesson

_____ Students are engaged in multiple collaborative structures to develop meaning and understanding

_____ Students use academic talk structures and engage in opportunities to share, discuss, and challenge one another's' thinking

_____ Students engage in deep analytical and critical thinking experiences

9. Additional comments and/or notes:

APPENDIX P: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS A CYCLE OF ONGOING LEARNING
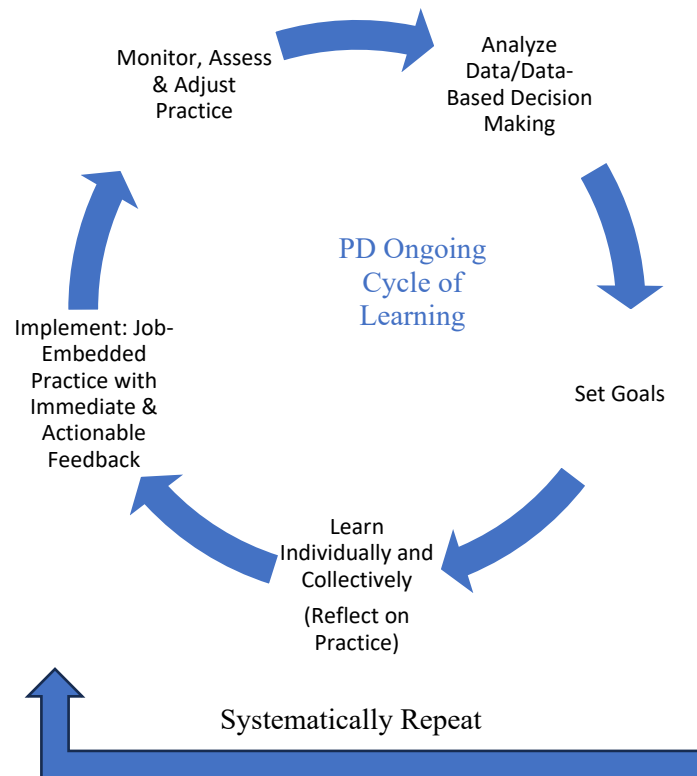
Monitor, Assess & Adjust Practice

Analyze Data/Data-Based Decision Making

PD Ongoing Cycle of Learning

Set Goals

Implement: Job-Embedded Practice with Immediate & Actionable Feedback

Learn Individually and Collectively (Reflect on Practice)

Systematically Repeat

APPENDIX Q: COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURES
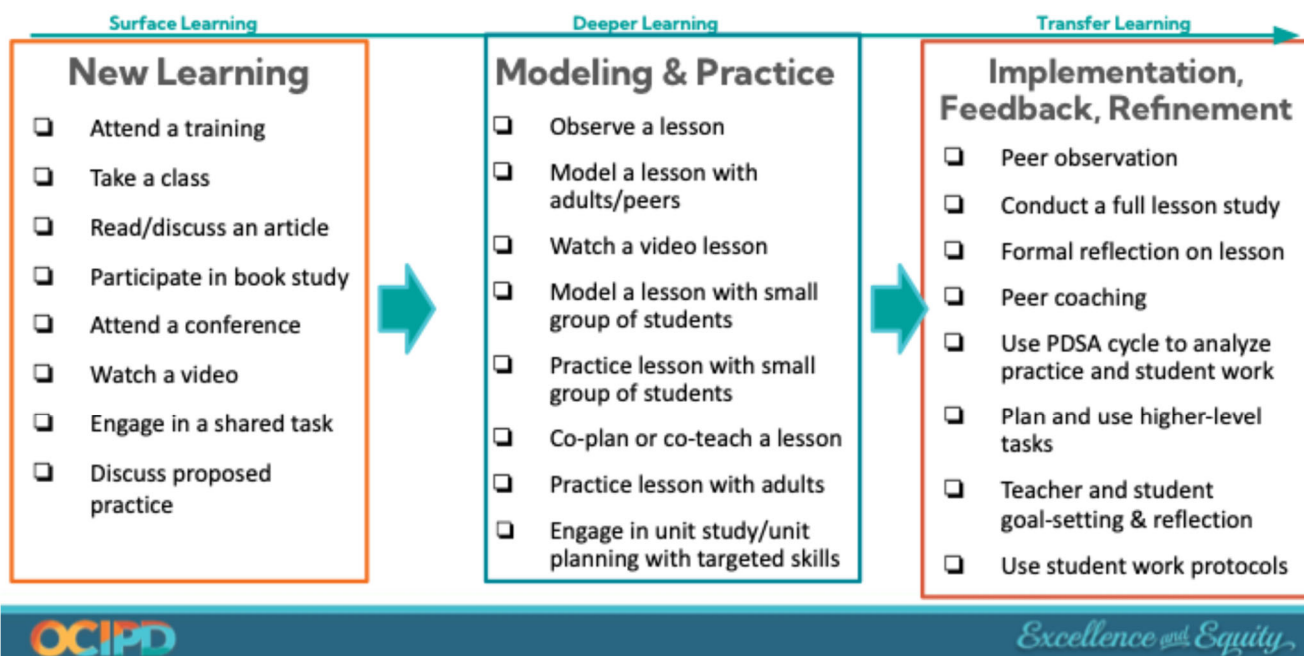
APPENDIX R: CGCS REVIEWS

City	Area	Year
Albuquerque		
	Facilities and Roofing	2003
	Human Resources	2003
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2005 & 2018
	Legal Services	2005
	Safety and Security	2007
	Research	2013
	Human Resources	2016
	Special Education	2018
Anchorage		
	Finance	2004
	Communications	2008
	Math Instruction	2010
	Food Services	2011
	Organizational Structure	2012
	Facilities Operations	2015
	Special Education	2015
	Human Resources	2016
	Benefits	2023
Atlanta		
	Facilities	2009
	Transportation	2010
	Classified Staffing	2019
	Teaching and Learning	2020
	Student Support Services	2021
Aurora		
	Information Technology	2019
	Curriculum and Instruction	2023
Austin		
	Special Education	2010
Baltimore		
	Information Technology	2011
Birmingham		
	Organizational Structure	2007
	Operations	2008

City	Area	Year
	Facilities	2010
	Human Resources	2014
	Financial Operations	2015
	Financial Operations	2024
Boston		
	Special Education	2009
	Curriculum & Instruction	2014
	Food Service	2014
	Facilities	2016
	Special Education	2022
	Safety and Security	2022
	Transportation	2022
	Human Resources	2024
Bridgeport		
	Transportation	2012
Broward County (FL)		
	Information Technology	2000
	Food Services	2009
	Transportation	2009
	Information Technology	2012
	Information Technology	2018
	Facilities Operations	2019
	Information Technology	2022
	Procurement and Warehousing	2024
Buffalo		
	Superintendent Support	2000
	Organizational Structure	2000
	Curriculum and Instruction	2000
	Personnel	2000
	Facilities and Operations	2000
	Communications	2000
	Finance	2000
	Finance II	2003
	Bilingual Education	2009
	Special Education	2014
	Facilities Operations	2019
Caddo Parish (LA)		
	Facilities	2004
Charleston		
	Special Education	2005

City	Area	Year
	Transportation	2014
	Finance	2019
Charlotte-Mecklenburg		
	Human Resources	2007
	Organizational Structure	2012
	Transportation	2013
	Information Technology	2022
Chicago		
	Warehouse Operations	2010
	Special Education I	2011
	Special Education II	2012
	Bilingual Education	2014
Christina (DE)		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007
Cincinnati		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Curriculum and Instruction	2009
	Special Education	2013
	Human Resources	2023
Clark County		
	Operations	2019
	Special Education	2019
Cleveland		
	Student Assignments	1999, 2000
	Transportation	2000
	Safety and Security	2000
	Facilities Financing	2000
	Facilities Operations	2000
	Transportation	2004
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Safety and Security	2007
	Safety and Security	2008
	Theme Schools	2009
	Special Education	2017
	Safety and Security	2023
	Information Technology	2024
Columbus		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Human Resources	2001
	Facilities Financing	2002

City	Area	Year
	Finance and Treasury	2003
	Budget	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Information Technology	2007
	Food Services	2007
	Human Resources	2020
	Transportation	2020
	Information Technology	2023
Dallas		
	Procurement	2007
	Staffing Levels	2009
	Staffing Levels	2016
Dayton		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Curriculum and Instruction	2001
	Finance	2001
	Communications	2002
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Budget	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
	Organizational Structure	2017
Denver		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Personnel	2001
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Bilingual Education	2006
	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
	Common Core Implementation	2014
Des Moines		
	Budget and Finance	2003
	Staffing Levels	2012
	Human Resources	2012
	Special Education	2015
	Bilingual Education	2015
Detroit		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2002
	Assessment	2002
	Communications	2002
	Curriculum and Assessment	2003
	Communications	2003

City	Area	Year
	Textbook Procurement	2004
	Food Services	2007
	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
	Facilities	2008
	Finance and Budget	2008
	Information Technology	2008
	Stimulus planning	2009
	Human Resources	2009
	Special Education	2018
Durham		
	Operations	2019
East Baton Rouge		
	Human Resources	2021
	Special Education	2022
	Bilingual Education	2022
El Paso		
	Information Technology	2019
Fresno		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2012
	Special Education	2018
	Special Education	2024
Guilford County		
	Bilingual Education	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2003
	Facilities	2004
	Human Resources	2007
	Transportation	2017
Hawaii		
	Financial Operations	2019
	Facilities	2019
	Organization	2024
Hillsborough County		
	Transportation	2005
	Procurement	2005
	Special Education	2012
	Transportation	2015
	Finance	2020
Houston		
	Facilities Operations	2010

City	Area	Year
	Capitol Program	2010
	Information Technology	2011
	Procurement	2011
	Finance	2021
	Safety and Security	2022
Indianapolis		
	Transportation	2007
	Information Technology	2010
	Finance and Budget	2013
	Finance	2018
Jackson (MS)		
	Bond Referendum	2006
	Communications	2009
	Curriculum and Instruction	2017
Jacksonville		
	Organization and Management	2002
	Operations	2002
	Human Resources	2002
	Finance	2002
	Information Technology	2002
	Finance	2006
	Facilities operations	2015
	Budget and Finance	2015
	Budget and Finance	2024
Kansas City		
	Human Resources	2005
	Information Technology	2005
	Finance	2005
	Operations	2005
	Purchasing	2006
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
	Program Implementation	2007
	Stimulus Planning	2009
	Human Resources	2016
	Transportation	2016
	Finance	2016
	Facilities	2016
	Curriculum and Instruction	2016
	Information Technology	2022
Little Rock		

City	Area	Year
	Curriculum and Instruction	2010
	Curriculum and Instruction	2023
Los Angeles		
	Budget and Finance	2002
	Organizational Structure	2005
	Finance	2005
	Information Technology	2005
	Human Resources	2005
	Business Services	2005
Louisville		
	Management Information	2005
	Staffing Levels	2009
	Organizational Structure	2018
Memphis Shelby County		
	Information Technology	2007
	Special Education	2015
	Food Services	2016
	Procurement	2016
	Curriculum and Instruction	2025
Miami-Dade County		
	Construction Management	2003
	Food Services	2009
	Transportation	2009
	Maintenance & Operations	2009
	Capital Projects	2009
	Information Technology	2013
Milwaukee		
	Research and Testing	1999
	Safety and Security	2000
	School Board Support	1999
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
	Alternative Education	2007
	Human Resources	2009
	Human Resources	2013
	Information Technology	2013
	Human Resources	2019
Minneapolis		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Finance	2004
	Federal Programs	2004

City	Area	Year
	Transportation	2016
	Organizational Structure	2016
Nashville		
	Food Service	2010
	Bilingual Education	2014
	Curriculum and Instruction	2016
Newark		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007
	Food Service	2008
New Orleans		
	Personnel	2001
	Transportation	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Hurricane Damage Assessment	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
New York City		
	Special Education	2008
Norfolk		
	Testing and Assessment	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2012
	Transportation	2018
	Finance	2018
	Facilities Operations	2018
Omaha		
	Buildings and Grounds Operations	2015
	Transportation	2016
Orange County		
	Information Technology	2010
Palm Beach County		
	Transportation	2015
	Safety & Security	2018
Philadelphia		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Food Service	2003
	Facilities	2003
	Transportation	2003
	Human Resources	2004
	Budget	2008

City	Area	Year
	Human Resource	2009
	Special Education	2009
	Transportation	2014
	Curriculum and Instruction	2019
	Organizational Structure	2023
	Transportation	2023
Pittsburgh		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Technology	2006
	Finance	2006
	Special Education	2009
	Organizational Structure	2016
	Business Services and Finance	2016
	Curriculum and Instruction	2016
	Research	2016
	Human Resources	2018
	Information Technology	2018
	Facilities Operations	2018
Portland		
	Finance and Budget	2010
	Procurement	2010
	Operations	2010
Prince George's County		
	Transportation	2012
Providence		
	Business Operations	2001
	MIS and Technology	2001
	Personnel	2001
	Human Resources	2007
	Special Education	2011
	Bilingual Education	2011
	Bilingual Education	2019
Puerto Rico		
	Hurricane Damage Assessment	2017
	Bilingual Education	2019
Reno		
	Facilities Management	2013
	Food Services	2013
	Purchasing	2013
	School Police	2013

City	Area	Year
	Transportation	2013
	Information Technology	2013
	Special Education	2023
Richmond		
	Transportation	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Special Education	2003
	Human Resources	2014
	Financial Operations	2018
Rochester		
	Finance and Technology	2003
	Transportation	2004
	Food Services	2004
	Special Education	2008
	Human Resources	2022
	Operations	2022
Sacramento		
	Special Education	2016
	Human Resources	2022
San Antonio		
	Facilities Operations	2017
	IT Operations	2017
	Transportation	2017
	Food Services	2017
	Human Resource	2018
San Diego		
	Finance	2006
	Food Service	2006
	Transportation	2007
	Procurement	2007
San Francisco		
	Technology	2001
St. Louis		
	Special Education	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
	Textbook Procurement	2004
	Human Resources	2005, 2022
	Transportation	2023

City	Area	Year
St. Paul		
	Special Education	2011
	Transportation	2011
	Organizational Structure	2017
Seattle		
	Human Resources	2008
	Budget and Finance	2008
	Information Technology	2008
	Bilingual Education	2008
	Transportation	2008
	Capital Projects	2008
	Maintenance and Operations	2008
	Procurement	2008
	Food Services	2008
	Capital Projects	2013
	Transportation	2019
Stockton		
	Special Education	2019
Toledo		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
Washington, D.C.		
	Finance and Procurement	1998
	Personnel	1998
	Communications	1998
	Transportation	1998
	Facilities Management	1998
	Special Education	1998
	Legal and General Counsel	1998
	MIS and Technology	1998
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Budget and Finance	2005
	Transportation	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007
	Common Core Implementation	2011
Wichita		
	Transportation	2009
	Information Technology	2017