



**Board of Directors' Work Session
October 5, 2023 at 6:30 PM
District Office, 210 N Park St.**

1. Call meeting to order
2. Flag salute
3. Modifications to the agenda
4. Approval of the agenda
5. Review community feedback from Board of Directors communication survey
6. Review community feedback from Board of Directors strategic planning priorities survey
7. Resolution for EP&O Levy to go before voters in February 2024
8. Summarize and organize CMSi curriculum audit report findings related to board responsibilities
9. Adjourn

Individuals with disabilities who may need a modification to participate in a meeting should contact the superintendent's office, at 509-685-6800, ext. 1002, no later than three days before a regular meeting and as soon as possible in advance of a special meeting so that special arrangements can be made.

Executive Summary



A CMSi Curriculum Audit™ of the Chewelah School District

September 2023

Jason Perrins
Superintendent

Chewelah School District
PO Box 47
Chewelah, WA 99109



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This Audit Report is comprised of two sections:

The **Executive Summary** provides an overview of the audit findings and recommendations in a short, graphic format.

The **Expanded Report** gives a more complete discussion of audit methodology and discusses the findings and recommendations at length. The Expanded Report also presents the extensive data analyzed and an explanation of what those data demonstrated in the context of the audit.

Chewelah School District Curriculum Audit by the numbers

Site Visit Date:
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interviews conducted with
staff, administrators, board
members, and parents



100+

documents
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survey responses from parents



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Introduction: The CMSi Curriculum Audit



This document constitutes the Executive Summary of a Curriculum Audit of the Chewelah School District in Chewelah, Washington. A Curriculum Audit is designed to reveal the extent to which leaders and personnel of a school district have developed and implemented a coordinated, valid, and comprehensive system to manage the design, development, implementation, evaluation, and support of curriculum. Curriculum is defined as the set of learnings students are expected to master over the course of their years in the district. The system to manage this curriculum, when implemented effectively and in alignment with the district’s vision for student engagement, will yield improved student learning and achievement over time if all its related processes and components are operating in coordination with one another. The effectiveness of curriculum management results as well in increased efficiency and assures district taxpayers that all fiscal support is optimized within the conditions under which the district functions.

District Background

Chewelah, WA is a small community in northeastern Washington that is just 70 miles from the Canadian border. The district has two

school campuses that serve just under 800 students and is a small-town community within minutes of the beautiful Colville National Forest. The district’s enrollment declined during Covid but rebounded slightly in 2023 and is expected to continue to increase with the employment growth the community expects over the next few years.

Chewelah’s students are a diverse group, and diversity is increasing. Just under two-thirds of Chewelah’s students are considered low-income; this percentage has remained stable over the last 8 years. Just over 17% of the district’s students have been identified as needing special education services and only a few students are identified as highly capable. The district is currently in a stable financial position with the ESSER funds received over the last several years and current leadership is focused on using the funding to improve the educational programming district-wide.

System Purpose for Conducting the Audit

The Chewelah School District Superintendent and Board of Education requested an audit to provide needed insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the system. The Superintendent

is in his third year and has been focused on beginning curriculum work and on improving planning and policy district-wide. The strategic planning initiative that district leaders engaged in was beneficial in bringing together stakeholders across the system and in improving dialogue among school personnel and community members. With the new strategic plan in place, district leaders requested auditors to give them additional feedback in how to best achieve the goal and priorities outlined in that plan.

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The Curriculum Audit™ has established itself as a process of integrity and candor in assessing public school districts. Over the last 40 years, it has become recognized internationally as an important, viable, and valid tool for the improvement of educational institutions and for the improvement of curriculum design and delivery.

The Curriculum Audit represents a “systems” approach to educational improvement; that is, it considers the system as a whole rather than a collection of separate, discrete parts. Auditors closely examine and evaluate the interrelationships of system departments, levels, and related processes to determine their impact on the overall quality of the organization in accomplishing its primary purpose of improving student learning.

The audit process was first developed by Dr. Fenwick W. English and implemented in 1979 in the Columbus Public School District in Columbus, Ohio. The audit is based upon generally-accepted concepts pertaining to effective instruction and curricular design and delivery, some of which have been popularly referred to as the “effective schools research.” An audit is an independent examination of four data sources: documents, interviews, online surveys, and site visits. These are gathered and triangulated to reveal the extent to which a school district is meeting its goals and objectives related to improving student learning and achievement. The process culminates in a comprehensive written report

to district leaders that summarizes district strengths, audit findings, and the auditors’ recommended actions for improvement.

Curriculum Audits have been performed in hundreds of school systems in more than 46 states, the District of Columbia, and several other countries, including Canada, Saudi Arabia, New Zealand, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Bermuda. Details about the methodology employed in the audit process and biographical information about the audit team are covered in the Appendices.

Audit Scope of Work

The audit’s scope is centered on curriculum and instruction, as well as any aspect of operations within a school system that enhances or hinders curriculum design and/or delivery. The audit is an intensive and focused “snapshot” evaluation of how well a school system such as Chewelah School District has been able to set valid directions for pupil accomplishment and well-being; concentrate its resources to accomplish those directions; and improve its performance, however contextually defined or measured, over time.



The Curriculum Audit does not examine any aspect of school system operations unless it pertains to the design and delivery of curriculum. For example, auditors would not examine the cafeteria function unless students were going hungry and were, therefore, unable to learn. In some cases, ancillary findings from a Curriculum Audit are so interconnected with the capability of a school system to attain its central objectives that they become major, interactive forces that, if not addressed, will severely compromise the ability of the school system to successfully meet student needs.

The Curriculum Audit centers its focus on the main business of schools: teaching, curriculum, and learning. Auditors use five focus areas against which to compare, verify, and comment upon a district's existing curricular management practices. The focus areas reflect a management system that is ideal, but not unattainable. They describe working characteristics that any complex work organization should possess in achieving stated organizational goals while being responsive to the unique needs of its clients.

A school system that is using its financial and human resources for the greatest benefit of its students is able to establish clear objectives, examine alternatives, select and implement alternatives, measure results as they develop against established objectives, and adjust its efforts so that it achieves its objectives.

The five focus areas employed in the CMSi Curriculum Audit™ are:

- 1 District Vision and Accountability:** The school district has a clear vision and demonstrates its control of resources, programs, and personnel.
- 2 Curriculum:** The school district has established clear and valid objectives for students and clientele.
- 3 Consistency and Equity:** The school district demonstrates internal consistency and rational equity in its program development and implementation.
- 4 Feedback:** The school district uses the results from district-designed or adopted assessments to adjust, improve, or terminate ineffective practices or programs.
- 5 Productivity:** The school district has improved its productivity and efficiency, particularly in the use of resources.

The auditors report where and how district practices, policies, and processes have met or not met the criteria and expectations related to each focus area and what specific action steps are recommended for revising areas needing improvement. These findings and their corresponding recommendations are presented in detail in the expanded report.



Chewelah School District Strengths

The Chewelah School District is a small, tight-knit community in northwestern Washington state that serves 792 students in grades K-12. The district has leaders who seek to improve student learning and most importantly, the district's performance against its peers across the state. With the strengths listed below, Chewelah School District is not only in a strong position to increase student achievement, but also to unite the community as a source of support and inspiration for what their children can accomplish.

- 1 Supportive Community**
- 2 Caring Professionals**
- 3 Stable Financial Position**
- 4 Unified Leadership**
- 5 Vibrant Location**

“I believe...if we work together as a team to develop, maintain, adjust, and hold people accountable for systems that are lacking, then we would be able to fix any issues we have as a building or as a district. That begins when teachers are not afraid and feel valued.” (Teacher)

1 Supportive Community

The community of Chewelah is like a village, small, tight-knit, and supportive of one another. In small communities, students are known and don't fall through the cracks; the potential for high achievement is greater in small, supportive communities than in large districts and schools.

2 Caring Professionals

All professionals in the Chewelah School District prioritize students and their learning. On the online survey, parents reported the care and dedication that teachers have toward their students and the strong commitment to student success.

3 Stable Financial Position

The district has carefully managed its financial resources and is in a strong, stable financial position. The superintendent is prioritizing professional development and student learning and resources have been allocated accordingly. ESSER funds and the district's financial management have enabled leaders to bring in training for teachers as well as send teachers to conferences out of state, something that has not happened for many years.

4 Unified Leadership

The School Board is comprised of natives and long-time residents who love the community and its future generations. They are supportive of the superintendent and embrace the need to focus on curriculum and building a strong, collaborative and supportive culture within the system. All leaders share a desire to serve Chewelah students with the most effective, engaging, and authentic learning experience any student could ask for.

5 Vibrant Location

Nestled at the entryway into the Colville National Forest but only 45 minutes from Spokane, Chewelah city leaders are tapping into the potential to draw both commuters as well as tourists to their lovely town. City leaders are working to attract both employers as well as tourists and to grow the opportunities for Chewelah residents.



Key Focus Areas

1

District Vision and Accountability: Vision is foundational for establishing a framework for all decision making throughout the district and for ensuring that those decisions move the district in a single direction toward its established mission and goals. These goals and expectations must be clearly defined in policy to establish the parameters within which decisions are made across the various levels, departments, and campuses/schools. A functional organizational structure is also needed to assure that all personnel have defined responsibilities that do not overlap and to assure accountability at all levels. Accountability is essential in coordinating efforts and supporting efficacy across the system.

2

Curriculum: Written curriculum, as the most critical tool to support high quality teaching and learning, not only defines high levels of student learning, but also supports teachers with suggestions on how to deliver differentiated, student-centered instruction that is responsive to students' needs, backgrounds, and perspectives. A strong curriculum assists teachers in meeting the needs of their students more effectively by prioritizing and defining essential learning targets in measurable terms and providing the formative assessment tools needed to diagnose and monitor student learning. Strong written curriculum also promotes equity by clarifying for teachers what on-level learning looks like.

3

Consistency and Equity: All students in the system should have equal access to programs and services. No student should be excluded from the regular classroom environment at rates that are not commensurate with their peers. Equity refers to students being treated in accordance with their need, rather than being treated the same as everyone else. Allocating resources and supports equitably is necessary if all students are to be equally successful academically. Under Consistency and Equity, auditors also examine the degree to which the educational program and its supporting programs, such as ELL, Special Education, or Gifted, are defined and implemented consistently across the system.

4

Feedback: Within the context of student learning expectations and a clear vision for how students should be engaged and demonstrate their learning in the classroom, having aligned assessments that measure progress and provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the system is of prime importance. The audit expects school systems to have common, aligned formative assessment tools that provide teachers and building leaders with clear and specific feedback regarding student progress and learning needs. A coordinated system must be in place for data to be collected, interpreted, and accessed by teachers so that they have valid information for planning instruction.

5

Productivity: When all aspects of system operations are functional and effective, productivity should be evident within existing financial constraints. Over time, as the system improves, and each department and school builds stronger components that work in coordination, leaders are able to allocate resources more effectively and adjust programming so that ineffective initiatives are terminated or modified in response to data. Support systems necessary for effective operations are clearly tied to district goals and vision, and district facilities are likewise supportive of the educational program.

What We Found

The following section presents a summary of the six key areas where there is the greatest need for improvement and growth in the Chewelah School District. These findings represent the five focus areas applied to the district for the Curriculum Audit™. The six findings are summarized here.

Finding 1: Chewelah School District has clear goals for system improvement and has engaged in collaborative planning. The auditors found that planning has resulted in defined priorities and goals that are central to district plans and initiatives, but visioning needs to be strengthened in policy and in the strategic plan to provide greater clarity and unity in its implementation. District leaders need to continue efforts to improve communication across the district and prioritize building a climate of trust and mutual respect among all stakeholders, but especially between district personnel and students' families.

[Weaknesses in the district?]

“Taking people serious, not ignoring their concerns, [and] communication.” (Parent)

Finding 2: Chewelah School District does not have a written plan that communicates expectations for the design, development, delivery, monitoring, evaluation, and revision of curriculum. Policy and plans include almost no reference to curriculum or any documents that serve as an instructional guide for teachers.

“Communication at CSD has increased immensely and is appreciated.” (Parent)

Despite the lack of written expectations, district leaders have begun work on prioritizing the content standards to create scope and sequence documents for every grade level and course.

However, the current scope of the written curriculum is not adequate to provide direction or promote internal consistency, and there is no consistent definition of curriculum in Chewelah. Most consider adopted, commercially produced resources to be curriculum, while others see it as something the district should create and provide that gives direction on how to use adopted resources effectively. Teachers are relying on their own resources to plan instruction.

“It would be beneficial for all students if the staff was able to collaborate across grade levels and buildings (campuses).” (Teacher)

Finding 3: Expectations for instructional delivery in Chewelah School District is not based on an instructional model driven by a central vision for student learning. The auditors did not see high student engagement, rigor, or differentiation in lessons in the context of a student-centered environment. Expectations for monitoring and supporting the delivery of curriculum are not clearly defined and instructional support is not sufficient to improve student learning. Administrators do not have adequate observation data to determine teachers' professional development needs. A comprehensive professional development plan does not yet exist in Chewelah, but is slated for summer 2023.

“Not every student learns the same so there has to be a way to have class be more engaging and get kids excited about learning.” (Parent)

Finding 4: Not all students have equal access to programs and services in the Chewelah School District, and coordination and articulation are not supported with a clearly defined curriculum.

The climate related to safety and discipline needs improvement. Parents reported inadequate safety precautions at the schools and noted they have had mixed experiences with leaders at the schools, particularly when sharing concerns. Discipline was noted by both parents and teachers as an area needing improvement and greater consistency. Expectations for special education services and the RtI model need to be clearly defined and monitored with greater fidelity across all classrooms.

“We need to create an environment that creates good citizens.” (Teacher)

Finding 5: Assessment has strong direction in policy and procedure, although implementation of these documents is not consistent. The district has reorganized to improve coordination of assessment in the district and is committing to increasing the use of assessment to inform teaching and learning in the classroom. Currently, use of data to inform teaching and learning is inconsistent. Teachers have no

curriculum or suggested resources to support them in scaffolding or differentiating instruction, and there was little differentiation observed in classrooms. Student achievement trends show little improvement over time for cohorts, and math performance lags consistently behind language arts. Student performance is typically below state averages.

Finding 6: The district is in a good financial position, but facilities need attention and budget decisions are not consistently tied to district priorities. Program-driven budgeting is needed to ensure maintaining a focus on goals when extra monies are not available.

“It would be nice to see more pride taken when it comes to the school building, some of the dilapidated signage, the parking lot and the unorganized/dated website.” (Parent)



“

[The strategic plan] was the best thing that could have happened in the district—that would unify everyone. That was a step in the right direction, towards unifying K-12. I think it’s huge. (District Personnel)

This school district has a very tight knit community, making the students with special needs more welcome than at a bigger school and not set apart. (District Personnel)

This district has some of the most welcoming and kind teachers. There is a willingness to try new ideas and develop new systems. (District Personnel)

More communication with the school would be amazing. Better conflict resolution with other students [would] be so great for the kids. Parents want to be involved, let us know how we can be. (Parent)

The teachers care about my children and want to help them succeed. (Parent)

We know that we are not holding each other accountable if we aren’t talking about kids. (District Personnel)

We talk about rigor, too—we just have some . . . teachers that really struggle. (District Personnel)

”

Key Recommendations

The Chewelah School District is a system committed to what's best for students. Leaders have a strong desire to make the district one of the best in the state and they appreciate the work that is needed to make that happen. Their priorities are set forth in the new Strategic Plan and student learning is at the forefront. The auditors have developed the following recommendations for actions that address the weaknesses or gaps identified in the findings. These four recommendations are presented here.

- 1 Revise the strategic plan to incorporate a vision for high level student learning, and define how that learning should be supported across all programs and services. Include in all definitions expectations for special programs and district culture and climate.
- 2 Develop a written plan that directs curriculum design, development, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation. Develop high quality curriculum that defines, paces, and prioritizes student learning and provides teachers with suggestions for how to teach it.
- 3 Establish an administrative structure focused on instructional leadership and curriculum delivery and finalize a plan for professional development that will support teachers in delivering curriculum with strategies and approaches that are congruent with the district's vision for student learning.
- 4 Continue with plans for policy development and revision and facilities improvements, and adopt performance-based budgeting to ensure there are adequate funds in the future to support the district goals and priorities.

Recommendations

The following are the summations of recommended actions to address the areas needing improvement in the findings section.

Chewelah School District Leaders have identified their top priorities within the Strategic Plan and the District Improvement Plan. District leaders commit to student learning, exceptional professionals, safe environments, dynamic programs, and program-designed facilities. All of these priorities represent a significant benefit to students, and all require substantial commitment. The auditors have identified in the findings those areas most needing improvement if learning is to increase, and a critical need to define a robust definition of what high level student learning looks like.

Recommendation 1 advocates revising the strategic plan and board policy to include this vision and the philosophical underpinnings that serve as its foundation as well as beliefs regarding effective learning environments, supported by research. Supporting instruction so that it more closely aligns with this vision will improve student learning and engagement and will also increase teacher effectiveness. This vision should be inclusive of all students and address managing behaviors and learning needs, so discipline and safety issues are simultaneously minimized and a safe environment is attained. The visioning should also address culture and climate throughout the system, including how families of students and the students themselves should experience Chewelah School District.

Recommendation 2 directs leaders to develop a plan and related policy and procedures for designing, developing, delivering, monitoring, and evaluating curriculum, and then continuing with the work already begun to develop a robust, student-centered curriculum that can support teachers in their instructional planning and delivery. The need for a strong curriculum is great; teachers have inadequate support and resources for planning instruction and are forced to rely on outside sources that may not align sufficiently with content standards or the district

vision and philosophy. This curriculum should be complete with aligned formative assessments that provide adequate feedback on student learning and give teachers clarity on what skills and concepts need further support.

Recommendation 3 proposes supporting instruction and the delivery of curriculum with monitoring, coaching, and professional development. The most effective professional development is embedded in the work teachers do every day, which is delivering instruction. Coaching and monitoring are a part of supporting instruction and also serve to provide embedded professional development, since the most learning occurs when teachers apply strategies and approaches they have been trained in. The auditors recommend using the PLC process to reflect on the results observed from applying these learnings during the delivery of curriculum, and give teachers an opportunity to discuss strengths and weaknesses in their instruction and formulate plans for improvement. This will both rejuvenate the educational program as well as develop exceptional professionals.

With the above actions in place related to recommendations 1-3, the auditors recommend careful management of resources to ensure that funds are not allocated for programs that are not effective. **Recommendation 4** lays out steps in using program-driven budgeting, a transparent and collaborative budget process that engages district stakeholders in using data to determine program allocations and to connect financial decision making to district priorities. Communicate the facility needs to the community and improve transparency in financial allocations to Chewelah stakeholders know exactly how and where levy funds will be used.

With dedication and the desire to make an impact in students' lives, the auditors are confident that implementing the action steps outlined in these recommendations will build an effective, student-centered, and sustainable system. Such a system will foster a collaborative, cohesive culture and serve to energize both students and staff, and make teaching and learning both authentic and engaging.



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Full Report



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The Full Report is the summative audit report and is comprised of two sections, the Executive Summary and the Expanded Report.

The Executive Summary serves as the Introduction to the Expanded Report, but also stands alone as a high-level synthesis of the strengths and weaknesses found in the school district and the actions needed to improve. These are presented in the Executive Summary in a more accessible format and are discussed in greater detail in the Expanded Report.

The Expanded Report details the data and analyses performed in drawing the conclusions presented in the Findings of the audit. The Expanded Report also provides background information regarding the methodology used, the rationale and research applied, and presents the detailed recommendations for improving system processes and, ultimately, student learning.

Sections of the Full Report are as follows:

Executive Summary (Introduction)

District Strengths
Key Findings
Recommendations

Expanded Report

Approach of the Audit
Findings
Recommendations
Appendices

Executive Summary



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5 Curriculum Process Underway

The district has begun a comprehensive process to develop written curriculum documents, involving all teachers. The process began with identifying essential standards and is continuing over the next several years, culminating in units of study with attached assessments that will support teachers in delivering high-level learning to Chewelah students. This commitment to writing curriculum is a vital part of improving the teaching and learning process and student achievement.

6 Vibrant Location

Nestled at the entryway into the Colville National Forest but only 45 minutes from Spokane, Chewelah city leaders are tapping into the potential to draw both commuters as well as tourists to their lovely town. City leaders are working to attract both employers as well as tourists and to grow the opportunities for Chewelah residents.



Key Focus Areas

1

District Vision and Accountability: Vision is foundational for establishing a framework for all decision making throughout the district and for ensuring that those decisions move the district in a single direction toward its established mission and goals. These goals and expectations must be clearly defined in policy to establish the parameters within which decisions are made across the various levels, departments, and campuses/schools. A functional organizational structure is also needed to assure that all personnel have defined responsibilities that do not overlap and to assure accountability at all levels. Accountability is essential in coordinating efforts and supporting efficacy across the system.

2

Curriculum: Written curriculum, as the most critical tool to support high quality teaching and learning, not only defines high levels of student learning, but also supports teachers with suggestions on how to deliver differentiated, student-centered instruction that is responsive to students' needs, backgrounds, and perspectives. A strong curriculum assists teachers in meeting the needs of their students more effectively by prioritizing and defining essential learning targets in measurable terms and providing the formative assessment tools needed to diagnose and monitor student learning. Strong written curriculum also promotes equity by clarifying for teachers what on-level learning looks like.

3

Consistency and Equity: All students in the system should have equal access to programs and services. No student should be excluded from the regular classroom environment at rates that are not commensurate with their peers. Equity refers to students being treated in accordance with their need, rather than being treated the same as everyone else. Allocating resources and supports equitably is necessary if all students are to be equally successful academically. Under Consistency and Equity, auditors also examine the degree to which the educational program and its supporting programs, such as ELL, Special Education, or Gifted, are defined and implemented consistently across the system.

4

Feedback: Within the context of student learning expectations and a clear vision for how students should be engaged and demonstrate their learning in the classroom, having aligned assessments that measure progress and provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the system is of prime importance. The audit expects school systems to have common, aligned formative assessment tools that provide teachers and building leaders with clear and specific feedback regarding student progress and learning needs. A coordinated system must be in place for data to be collected, interpreted, and accessed by teachers so that they have valid information for planning instruction.

5

Productivity: When all aspects of system operations are functional and effective, productivity should be evident within existing financial constraints. Over time, as the system improves, and each department and school builds stronger components that work in coordination, leaders are able to allocate resources more effectively and adjust programming so that ineffective initiatives are terminated or modified in response to data. Support systems necessary for effective operations are clearly tied to district goals and vision, and district facilities are likewise supportive of the educational program.

What We Found

The following section presents a summary of the six key areas where there is the greatest need for improvement and growth in the Chewelah School District. These findings represent the five focus areas applied to the district for the Curriculum Audit™. The six findings are summarized here.

Finding 1: Chewelah School District has clear goals for system improvement and has engaged in collaborative planning. The auditors found that planning has resulted in defined priorities and goals that are central to district plans and initiatives, but visioning needs to be strengthened in policy and in the strategic plan to provide greater clarity and unity in its implementation. District leaders need to continue efforts to improve communication across the district and prioritize building a climate of trust and mutual respect among all stakeholders, but especially between district personnel and students' families.

[Weaknesses in the district?]

“Taking people serious, not ignoring their concerns, [and] communication.” (Parent)

Finding 2: Chewelah School District does not have a written plan that communicates expectations for the design, development, delivery, monitoring, evaluation, and revision of curriculum. Policy and plans include almost no reference to curriculum or any documents that serve as an instructional guide for teachers.

“Communication at CSD has increased immensely and is appreciated.” (Parent)

Despite the lack of written expectations, district leaders have begun work on prioritizing the content standards to create scope and sequence documents for every grade level and course.

However, the current scope of the written curriculum is not adequate to provide direction or promote internal consistency, and there is no consistent definition of curriculum in Chewelah. Most consider adopted, commercially produced resources to be curriculum, while others see it as something the district should create and provide that gives direction on how to use adopted resources effectively. Teachers are relying on their own resources to plan instruction.

“It would be beneficial for all students if the staff was able to collaborate across grade levels and buildings (campuses).” (Teacher)

Finding 3: Expectations for instructional delivery in Chewelah School District is not based on an instructional model driven by a central vision for student learning. The auditors did not see high student engagement, rigor, or differentiation in lessons in the context of a student-centered environment. Expectations for monitoring and supporting the delivery of curriculum are not clearly defined and instructional support is not sufficient to improve student learning. Administrators do not have adequate observation data to determine teachers' professional development needs. A comprehensive professional development plan does not yet exist in Chewelah, but is slated for summer 2023.

“Not every student learns the same so there has to be a way to have class be more engaging and get kids excited about learning.” (Parent)

Finding 4: Not all students have equal access to programs and services in the Chewelah School District, and coordination and articulation are not supported with a clearly defined curriculum.

The climate related to safety and discipline needs improvement. Parents reported inadequate safety precautions at the schools and noted they have had mixed experiences with leaders at the schools, particularly when sharing concerns. Discipline was noted by both parents and teachers as an area needing improvement and greater consistency. Expectations for special education services and the MTSS model need to be clearly defined and monitored with greater fidelity across all classrooms.

“We need to create an environment that creates good citizens.” (Teacher)

Finding 5: Assessment has strong direction in policy and procedure, although implementation of these documents is not consistent. The district has reorganized to improve coordination of assessment in the district and is committing to increasing the use of assessment to inform teaching and learning in the classroom. Currently, use of data to inform teaching and learning is inconsistent. Teachers have no

curriculum or suggested resources to support them in scaffolding or differentiating instruction, and there was little differentiation observed in classrooms. Student achievement trends show little improvement over time for cohorts, and math performance lags consistently behind language arts. Student performance is typically below state averages.

Finding 6: The district is in a good financial position, but facilities need attention and budget decisions are not consistently tied to district priorities. Program-driven budgeting is needed to ensure maintaining a focus on goals when extra monies are not available.

“It would be nice to see more pride taken when it comes to the school building, some of the dilapidated signage, the parking lot and the unorganized/dated website.” (Parent)



“

[The strategic plan] was the best thing that could have happened in the district—that would unify everyone. That was a step in the right direction, towards unifying K-12. I think it’s huge. (District Personnel)

This school district has a very tight knit community, making the students with special needs more welcome than at a bigger school and not set apart. (District Personnel)

This district has some of the most welcoming and kind teachers. There is a willingness to try new ideas and develop new systems. (District Personnel)

More communication with the school would be amazing. Better conflict resolution with other students [would] be so great for the kids. Parents want to be involved, let us know how we can be. (Parent)

The teachers care about my children and want to help them succeed. (Parent)

We know that we are not holding each other accountable if we aren’t talking about kids. (District Personnel)

We talk about rigor, too—we just have some . . . teachers that really struggle. (District Personnel)

”

Key Recommendations

The Chewelah School District is a system committed to what's best for students. Leaders have a strong desire to make the district one of the best in the state and they appreciate the work that is needed to make that happen. Their priorities are set forth in the new Strategic Plan and student learning is at the forefront. The auditors have developed the following recommendations for actions that address the weaknesses or gaps identified in the findings. These four recommendations are presented here.

- 1 Revise the strategic plan to incorporate a vision for high level student learning, and define how that learning should be supported across all programs and services. Include in all definitions expectations for special programs and district culture and climate.
- 2 Develop a written plan that directs curriculum design, development, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation. Develop high quality curriculum that defines, paces, and prioritizes student learning and provides teachers with suggestions for how to teach it.
- 3 Establish an administrative structure focused on instructional leadership and curriculum delivery and finalize a plan for professional development that will support teachers in delivering curriculum with strategies and approaches that are congruent with the district's vision for student learning.
- 4 Continue with plans for policy development and revision and facilities improvements, and adopt performance-based budgeting to ensure there are adequate funds in the future to support the district goals and priorities.

Recommendations

The following are the summations of recommended actions to address the areas needing improvement in the findings section.

Chewelah School District Leaders have identified their top priorities within the Strategic Plan and the District Improvement Plan. District leaders commit to student learning, exceptional professionals, safe environments, dynamic programs, and program-designed facilities. All of these priorities represent a significant benefit to students, and all require substantial commitment. The auditors have identified in the findings those areas most needing improvement if learning is to increase, and a critical need to define a robust definition of what high level student learning looks like.

Recommendation 1 advocates revising the strategic plan and board policy to include this vision and the philosophical underpinnings that serve as its foundation as well as beliefs regarding effective learning environments, supported by research. Supporting instruction so that it more closely aligns with this vision will improve student learning and engagement and will also increase teacher effectiveness. This vision should be inclusive of all students and address managing behaviors and learning needs, so discipline and safety issues are simultaneously minimized and a safe environment is attained. The visioning should also address culture and climate throughout the system, including how families of students and the students themselves should experience Chewelah School District.

Recommendation 2 directs leaders to develop a plan and related policy and procedures for designing, developing, delivering, monitoring, and evaluating curriculum, and then continuing with the work already begun to develop a robust, student-centered curriculum that can support teachers in their instructional planning and delivery. The need for a strong curriculum is great; teachers have inadequate support and resources for planning instruction and are forced to rely on outside sources that may not align sufficiently with content standards or the district

vision and philosophy. This curriculum should be complete with aligned formative assessments that provide adequate feedback on student learning and give teachers clarity on what skills and concepts need further support.

Recommendation 3 proposes supporting instruction and the delivery of curriculum with monitoring, coaching, and professional development. The most effective professional development is embedded in the work teachers do every day, which is deliver instruction. Coaching and monitoring are a part of supporting instruction and also serve to provide embedded professional development, since the most learning occurs when teachers apply strategies and approaches they have been trained in. The auditors recommend using the PLC process to reflect on the results observed from applying these learnings during the delivery of curriculum, and give teachers an opportunity to discuss strengths and weaknesses in their instruction and formulate plans for improvement. This will both rejuvenate the educational program as well as develop exceptional professionals.

With the above actions in place related to recommendations 1-3, the auditors recommend careful management of resources to ensure that funds are not allocated for programs that are not effective. **Recommendation 4** lays out steps in using program-driven budgeting, a transparent and collaborative budget process that engages district stakeholders in using data to determine program allocations and to connect financial decision making to district priorities. Communicate the facility needs to the community and improve transparency in financial allocations to Chewelah stakeholders know exactly how and where levy funds will be used.

With dedication and the desire to make an impact in students' lives, the auditors are confident that implementing the action steps outlined in these recommendations will build an effective, student-centered, and sustainable system. Such a system will foster a collaborative, cohesive culture and serve to energize both students and staff, and make teaching and learning both authentic and engaging.



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Expanded Report



A CMSi Small School District Curriculum Audit™ of the Chewelah School District

September 2023

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CMSi Curriculum Audit™

Presented to:

Chewelah School District
Chewelah, Washington

Date Audit Presented:
September 2023

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 Finding 2: Chewelah School District does not have a written plan that directs the design, development, delivery, monitoring, evaluation, and revision of curriculum. The scope of the written curriculum is not adequate to support the alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum, and there is no consistent definition of what curriculum is in the district. Teachers are relying on their own resources to plan instruction. 21

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 Recommendation 1: Revise the strategic plan to reflect the district’s vision for student learning and engagement and the board’s beliefs about effective education and communicate these revisions widely. Revise local policy and in support of these expectations and include direction for how the vision and beliefs should be reflected across the district in the written curriculum

and in the culture and climate at central office and in schools. Ensure that the roles and responsibilities of all personnel align with these priorities, and staff the central office to support the necessary curriculum work. 85

Recommendation 2: Develop a plan for designing and developing curriculum that supports district expectations for what high-level learning looks like. The plan should build off of and continue efforts to prioritize standards and develop assessments so a high-quality curriculum is the result. Strong written curriculum is necessary to ensure that all teachers are delivering the most engaging and highest quality instruction. 89

Recommendation 3: Develop clear expectations for delivering the district curriculum and establish processes and procedures for training and supporting others in its delivery. Develop a teacher- and student-centered building culture that sets high expectations for teachers and students, holds everyone accountable, and that provides formative support and coaching through various means to make the vision for student engagement a reality. 97

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Approach

Central Question for the Audit

To what extent has the Chewelah School District established a coordinated, valid, and comprehensive system to manage the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of curriculum?

Focus Areas

The auditors have developed five focus areas based on feedback and data requested by district leaders. The Small School Audit follows the same procedures as the regular CMSi Curriculum Audit™, scaling the feedback to be commensurate with the capacity and size of the organization. The auditors therefore consider the same criteria and indicators of the original five focus areas but only focus on those most salient to improving student achievement in the district.

Following are the five areas, with the specific feedback requested:



District Vision and Accountability

The school district has a clear vision and demonstrates its control of resources, programs, and personnel.



Curriculum

The school district has established clear and valid objectives for students and clientele.



Consistency and Equity

The school district has demonstrated internal consistency and rational equity in its program development and implementation.



Feedback

The school district has used the results from district-designed or adopted assessments to adjust, improve, or terminate ineffective practices or programs.



Productivity

The school district has improved its productivity and efficiency, particularly in the use of resources.

The five focus areas and their indicators are presented in **Appendix D**.

District Background

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Findings

Finding 1: Chewelah School District has clear goals for system improvement and has engaged in collaborative planning. There are defined priorities central to district initiatives, but the vision for student learning and engagement needs strengthening in the strategic plan to provide focus for its implementation. District leaders need to continue efforts to improve communication across the district and prioritize building a climate of trust and mutual respect among all stakeholders.

In high performing school districts, leaders develop a shared vision with stakeholders for what high level student learning looks like, successfully communicate that vision to all personnel, students, and parents in the district, and effectively move the system towards making the vision reality. Relentlessly pursuing the vision is central to the mission and purpose of the system, and the measure of its effectiveness is the extent to which student learning has improved. Keeping the system united in pursuing improvement and in realizing the vision is critical, and requires aligning systems, processes, and responsibilities across the district so all are pursuing the same goals and in alignment with the district's vision. This unity and consistency is promoted by defining those expectations that apply to all within the system, without exception, so that those decision that are made by various stakeholders across schools and classrooms have flexibility without compromising unity. The prevailing climate across a system can greatly support or impede leaders' efforts to initiate new practices aimed at attaining goals for improving student learning. Lack of trust or fear, or simply the feeling of being unappreciated all contribute to a climate that undermines a system's cohesion and ability to sustain constancy of effort.

To determine the extent to which Chewelah School District has effective planning, adequate policy, and a functional, collaborative climate to guide and support decision making and to improve district performance, the auditors reviewed district documents and interviewed stakeholders, and administered an online survey to teachers, parents, and administrators.

Overall, the auditors found that extensive work has been done related to planning and revising board policy. The district has a comprehensive strategic plan, developed in 2022, with clear goals and priorities. The superintendent has initiated a cycle of policy review to update and revise existing policies. Currently, policy does not adequately communicate expectations related to curriculum design and delivery. The Strategic Plan, although strong, does not define the district's vision for high level, engaging student learning and does not define the philosophy and beliefs driving the goals and priorities the plan identifies. District leaders have strengthened communication and transparency across all levels of the system, but a climate of mistrust persists among personnel and the community, although many see improvement.

This finding has three sections in which district visioning, accountability, and climate are addressed:

1. Policy,
2. Planning and Visioning, and
3. District Climate

The following exhibit shows the Curriculum Management Improvement Model decision making matrix, which highlights those decisions and expectations that should be made at the district level and held consistent for everyone, and those decisions that can be left to the discretion of individual schools, as long as they align with the tightly-held expectations. For this model to function, the non-negotiable expectations for the district’s vision, beliefs, programs, curriculum, and even assessment, must be in place and defined in writing. Without such written direction, decisions may be made that are inconsistent with leaders’ intent or even be contrary to what leaders seek to accomplish. By that same token, schools require a certain level of flexibility in their decision-making so that student needs can be met most effectively.

Exhibit 1.1: Curriculum Management Improvement Model Decision-Making Matrix

CONSISTENT (Non-negotiable) <i>District Level</i>	FLEXIBLE (Aligned to the Tightly-held but Negotiable by School) <i>School/Classroom Level</i>
Ends (Curriculum and Aligned Assessments)	Means (Instruction and Programs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision, Mission (district, program-specific) • Goals (district goals, program goals) • Philosophy, Beliefs about education (district) • Priorities (district, program) • Standards, objectives for students • Curriculum—Outcomes/Student Expectations/ Objectives • Assessment—aligned to curriculum, criterion-based, benchmark, formative, and diagnostic (progress-monitoring, skill checks, performance-based) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiation of when students (individual and groups) get which standards/outcomes/student expectations/objectives • Processes, procedures • Instructional strategies • Resources, textbooks, etc. • Program implementation • Groupings • Staffing
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The auditors look for district leaders’ tightly-held expectations in board policy and in district plans. The auditors first reviewed and rated board policy, which is discussed in the next section.

Board Policy

The Chewelah Board of Education and Superintendent have been systematically reviewing, revising, and updating policy over the last two years. The auditors were provided with a detailed list of all policies reviewed, the changes made and decisions made regarding each, and any changes that were made to numbering. Board members reported reviewing between 6-10 policies at each meeting. The auditors found a few policies from the 1990s; more than two hundred policies have been updated since the superintendent began his tenure in 2021.

The auditors reviewed all board policies and procedures and rated them against the curriculum management improvement model (CMIM) criteria for quality policies. These criteria and their supporting characteristics are listed in full in **Appendix E**; however, in small school districts, the auditors only look to

see whether the overarching criteria for establishing tightly-held expectations across the district are met. The criteria are organized by the five focus areas and are presented in the following exhibit, along with the auditors’ determination if they were fully met, partially met, or not met. The policies and procedures that the auditors deemed relevant to the ratings are listed in the designated column. Policies that fully meet at least 70% of the criteria are considered adequate.

Exhibit 1.2: Characteristics of Good Policies/Procedures on Curriculum Management

Written Directive Statements—Policies/Procedures which...	Relevant Policy	Auditors’ Rating
Focus Area One: Provides for DISTRICT VISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY		
1.1 Philosophical statements of the district vision and instructional approach	1005, 2000, 2001	P
1.2 A taught and assessed curriculum that is aligned to the district’s written curriculum	2000, 2001, 2130; 2001P, 2130P	P
1.3 Board adoption of the written curriculum		
1.4 Accountability for the alignment of the written, taught, and tested (WTT) curriculum through a clearly defined organizational structure and corresponding roles and responsibilities	1005, 2000, 2001, 2004, 5220, 5240, 5220P	
1.5 Long-range, system-wide planning to accomplish the vision and mission of the system.	1005, 2004, 2005	P
Focus Area One Total Met		0
Focus Area One Total Percentage Met		0%
Focus Area Two: Provides for CURRICULUM		
2.1 Written curriculum that defines the content that must be learned and provides suggestions for how to support that learning in congruence with district vision.	2000, 2023	P
2.2 Periodic review/update of the curriculum and aligned resources and assessments	2020, 2020P	P
2.3 Textbook/resource alignment to curriculum and assessment	2020, 2020P	P
2.4 Content area emphasis		
2.5 Program integration and alignment to the district’s written curriculum	2023	
Focus Area Two Total Met		0
Focus Area Two Total Percentage Met		0%
Focus Area Three: Provides for CONSISTENCY AND EQUITY		
3.1 Delivery of the adopted district curriculum	2000	
3.2 Professional development for staff in the delivery of the district curriculum	5520	P
3.3 Monitoring, coaching, and supporting the delivery of the district curriculum	2000, 5520	
3.4 Student access to the curriculum, resources, programs, and services	2000, 2133, 2150, 2163, 3210	X
3.5 Equitable and bias-free educational environment	2020, 2133, 3210, 3211, 2020P, 3211P	X
Focus Area Three Total Met		2
Focus Area Three Total Percentage Met		40%

Written Directive Statements—Policies/Procedures which...	Relevant Policy	Auditors' Rating
Focus Area Four: Provides for FEEDBACK		
4.1 A comprehensive system to assess student learning, monitor progress, and diagnose student learning needs	2130, 2130P	P
4.2 A program assessment process	2130, 2130P	P
4.3 Use of data from assessments to determine effectiveness of instruction and programs	2130; 2130P	P
4.4 Reports to the board about program effectiveness	2130; 2130P	X
Focus Area Four Total Met		1
Focus Area Four Total Percentage Met		25%
Focus Area Five: Provides for PRODUCTIVITY		
5.1 Program-centered budgeting that is responsive to planning and system priorities		
5.2 Resource allocation tied to curriculum priorities		
5.3 Environment to support curriculum delivery		
5.4 Support systems focused on curriculum design and delivery		
5.5 Data-driven decisions for the purpose of increasing student learning	2001, 2005, 2130; 2001P	X
5.6 Change processes for long-term institutionalization of district priority goals	2004; 2130	P
Focus Area Five Total Met		1
Focus Area Five Total Percentage Met		16%
Overall Total Met	4/25	
Total Partially Met	11/25	
Overall Total Percentage Met	16%	
Key: X = Met, P = Partially Met, Blank = Not Met		
*Partial ratings are counted as not met when determining overall percentage of adequacy.		
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As can be seen in the exhibit, Chewelah policies and procedures partially met or met 16 of the 25 criteria and fully met 16%. The current policies do address the majority of areas related to curriculum design and delivery to some extent but are weakest in delineating the role and function of curriculum design and development and how curriculum is to be used to support high level learning in every classroom. Alignment of the written, taught, and tested is not explicitly required, although alignment of instructional resources with the standards and courses of the district is expected (*Policy and Procedure 2020*). The auditors will discuss each focus area below, to highlight the area of strength and weakness in current policies and procedures.

Focus Area One: Vision and Accountability

The auditors found some suggestion of the district’s philosophical approach in *Policy 2000*, which outlines the student learning goals for the district. This policy was recently updated in November of 2021 and addresses the core content all students are expected to master within a context of developing each child’s full potential, so they can become responsible and respectful global citizens. However, the only policy that provides a set of beliefs or philosophical statements that outline what district leaders believe about how best to accomplish these goals in the classroom setting is found in *Policy 2001, Assessment*. The vision statement in this policy is listed as draft, but it does specify beliefs and philosophical statements

related to assessment design and use. No policy explicitly requires a defined written curriculum beyond the content standards, nor that this curriculum should be adopted by the board. No policy outlines the district vision for what student engagement and instructional delivery should look like.

Several policies address responsibilities related to curriculum alignment, such as the *Assessment policy (2001)* and the policy that outlines the key functions of the board. No policy, however, is clear with respect to who is responsible for developing written curriculum and aligned assessments and implementing the same. There are two policies that address the development of goals for improvement: *Policies 2004 (Accountability Goals)* and *2005 (School Improvement Plans)*. Although both these policies require the adoption of improvement goals that meet the measures of the Washington School Improvement Framework, neither stipulates that these goals form the basis for a district-wide plan that outlines how the goals will be met. *Policy 2005* does address the development of school-based plans for accomplishing annual goals. Overall, the auditors found that several policies partially met the criteria related to focus area one, but no policies fully met the criteria.

Focus Area Two: Curriculum

The auditors found no policy that explicitly requires a specific written curriculum that defines, paces and sequences what student learning goals are, in alignment with the state learning standards, and provides suggestions for how to deliver it. Policy mentions the content standards, assessment, and having aligned instructional resources, but there the auditors found no mention of a curriculum. *Policy 2020* and its corresponding procedure do suggest a steps in a cycle of revision for courses and instructional resources and outlines roles and responsibilities in support of this cycle, which partially meets the criterion, but no timeline is attached to the steps and procedures. The auditors found no policy delineating whether a content area might receive added emphasis for curriculum revision as a result of low test scores or other student performance indicators. *Policy 2023, Program Evaluation*, does outline an expectation that programs be reviewed and evaluated for their alignment to the district's learning goals, but no mention is made of curriculum. The criterion was not met.

Overall, the auditors found that two of the five criteria related to curriculum were partially met.

Focus Area Three: Consistency and Equity

The auditors found no policy that requires the district's written curriculum, as the definition of student learning, to be delivered. *Policy 5520* does set forth expectations for professional development for all teachers, but the policy focuses more on strategies for instructional delivery than on effective delivery of the district curriculum. No policy was found that explicitly expects building leaders to monitor and support the delivery of the curriculum; policies only mention the requirement that instruction be aligned to the learning goals set forth by the state.

Policies 2000, 2133, 3210, and 3211 and *Procedures 2020 and 3211* all set forth an expectation that all students shall have equal access to educational programming and services and that equity should be maintained for students at all times. These policies also outline expectations for an equitable and bias-free educational environment, which resulted in these two criteria being fully met.

Focus Area Four: Feedback

Under this focus area, all criteria were either partially or fully met, in large part due to the recently updated policies on *Assessment (2001)* and *Program Evaluation (2130)*. These two policies outline expectations for the why and how of assessment, how to use the data and for what purposes, and even the philosophy underlying these expectations. The policies do stipulate that assessments will be used to assess student learning and monitor progress, and how the data are expected to be used, but in general terms that don't explicitly outline a process for formatively monitoring student progress and using the

data in designing and delivering instruction. The most important use of data happens at the classroom level; this expectation is communicated in policy, but how is not explicitly described, nor is there any requirement for a plan that outlines these processes at the school and classroom level. This policy and the policy on program evaluation do communicate the expectation that data be used to determine if students are learning and to evaluate the effectiveness of the overall program, but they do not mention using data to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction, per se.

The district does commit to evaluating programs, in *Policy 2130*, especially with respect to their alignment to the overall educational goals and standards. This is an expectation for the superintendent and a program evaluation report to the board is expected annually. This criterion was found to be met.

Overall, policies fully met 25% of the four criteria related to feedback.

Focus Area Five: Productivity

Under productivity, the auditors found that policies met or partially met the criteria related to data-driven decision making and establishing change processes for the long-term institutionalization of district goals. *Policies 2001, 2005, and 2130* all address using data to inform decisions related to programming and overall improvement. This criterion was considered met. *Policies 2004 and 2130* do address goal setting and managing change, but only generally, and the requirements for establishing processes and plans to explicitly accomplish goals are not adequate.

One of the six criteria for productivity was fully met.

The auditors found newer policies to be robust and the policy review process to be effective. District stakeholders and board members commented on the review and revision process and the focus this has been for the board:

- “Policy is a focus of the board, within the last two years. They had started before I came on board—some of the policies haven’t been revised since 1997.” (District Personnel)
- “The Board does a really nice job looking at policy. Probably...this current board does a better job consistently reviewing and updating policy than any job I’ve ever been in. They take the model policy and actually read it, modify it. We get to review it.” (District Personnel)
- “We do about 8-10 policies a board meeting. There is a policy tracker—it’s in there.” (Superintendent)

However, when asked if policies are being followed, responses were mixed. Almost all personnel attested to the greater focus and awareness given to policies now over three or more years ago. A few attested to referring to policy to guide decision making, while others indicated a persistent disconnect between the tightly-held expectations defined in district policy and what is actually happening at schools. Comments made during interviews and on the online survey included:

- “Historically, until the last couple of years, [policy was] ignored to some extent. [The superintendent] has shared with you the push to review policy. I think...there is still a disconnect. I think we are making strides—[but] that still is not done at a very comprehensive level.” (District Personnel)

- “I look at policy and procedures the most when there is an issue. I like to read it and keep up—I would say monthly, looking at it.” (District Personnel)
- “How do we balance everything that needs to be done? [There’s] still a disconnect between, ‘here’s what the policy says, here’s what procedure is, here’s what we’ve always done.’” (Parent)

In summary, policy revision has become a high priority for the superintendent and board. Policy is widely circulated and reviewed as part of the revision process and awareness of policy has been raised district-wide. However, consistent implementation of policy still lags behind its revision; accountability measures for following policy are not clearly defined and decision making at schools and in classrooms is not consistent with policy expectations. Policy is also weak in clarifying what curriculum is, why it’s important, what curriculum should look like and provide, and how it’s expected to be used.

Planning, Accountability, and Visioning

The auditors then reviewed planning in the district, to determine if planning is effective and if current plans are adequate in providing clarity around district priorities and expectations and in supporting cohesion and accountability across the district. Overall, the auditors found the district has engaged in strategic planning and has clear goals for student learning and system improvement. However, visioning is weak and there is inadequate clarity around the philosophy and beliefs driving district priorities and goals. The new strategic plan was developed with a collaborative process involving many stakeholders across the system and is a clear step in the right direction of improving trust and communication district-wide.

The auditors reviewed the district’s planning process and new strategic plan with the supporting district improvement plan and evaluated all against the criteria presented in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 1.3: CMIM Planning Criteria and Rating of District Strategic Plan

District Improvement or Strategic Planning Criteria	Auditors’ Rating
Planning Process:	
1. Directed by written expectations: The governing board has placed into policy the expectation that the superintendent and staff collectively discuss the future, and that this thinking should take some tangible form without prescribing a particular template, allowing for flexibility as needed.	
2. Responsive to vision: Leadership has implicit or explicit vision of the general direction in which the organization is going for improvement purposes. That vision emerges from having considered needs and the future changes required, within the context of the organization, and relevant to the teaching and learning process.	P
3. Based on data: Data are considered and inform the planning process, vision, and system directions/initiatives.	P
4. Drives daily decision making: Leadership makes day-to-day decisions regarding the implicit or explicit direction of the system and facilitates movement toward the planned direction.	P
5. Is emergent and fluid: Leadership adjusts to discrepancies between current status and desired status, facilitates movement toward the desired status, and is fluid in planning efforts (emergent in nature).	X
6. Is collaborative and coordinated: Staff are involved in a purposeful way throughout various aspects of the planning processes (in multiple capacities) and are aware of their role in implementing the district vision and direction (goals).	P

District Improvement or Strategic Planning Criteria	Auditors' Rating
Plan Quality and Alignment:	
7. Clear and measurable: The plan has focused goals that are clear and measurable, incorporate research, and are focused on the areas of greatest need.	X
8. Reasonable and feasible: The plan is reasonable; it has a feasible number of goals and objectives for the resources (financial, time, people) available. The number of strategies and supportive actions are also feasible in the time allotted.	X
9. Implementation strategies: The plan includes specific actions that, based on research, are likely to realize or accomplish the change needed. Actions are explicit; they are measurable and clearly support implementation.	P
10. Capacity building: The plan clearly delineates supports needed for actions or strategies to be implemented effectively and for the vision to be sustained, such as professional development, coaching, orientation, resources, etc.	P
11. Internal reliability and congruence: All goals and actions within the plan are congruent with one another and work in coordination to accomplish overarching goals.	X
Plan Implementation and Evaluation:	
12. Aligned professional development: Professional development endeavors are aligned to system planning goals and initiatives.	
13. Budget: Budget planning for change is done in concert with other planning, with goals and actions from those plans driving the budget planning.	X
14. Accountability: Each action/strategy is assigned to a specific person or department with a suggested timeline for completion.	P
15. Evaluation plan and implementation: There is a written plan to evaluate whether the objectives of the plan have been met (not to evaluate whether or not the activities have taken place). Evaluation components of plans are actions to be implemented; plans are evaluated for their effects or results, and they are then modified as needed. There is both frequent formative evaluation and annual summative evaluation, so that plans are revised as needed.	P
16. Monitoring: Systems are in place and are being implemented for assessing the status of activities, analyzing the results, and reporting the outcomes that take place as the plan is designed and implemented.	P
17. System-wide coordination of effort: There is evidence that all departments, campuses, and levels of the system are working in congruence toward the shared mission, vision, and goals of the district.	P
Total Fully Met	5/17
Total Partially Met	10/17
Percentage Fully Met	29%
Key: X = Met, P = Partially Met, Blank = Not Met	
*Partial ratings are counted as not met when determining overall percentage of adequacy.	
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From the information provided above, it can be seen that the district’s current planning processes and strategic plan partially or fully meet all but two of the planning and plan criteria. Four of the seventeen criteria were fully met. Planning is definitely active and ongoing and the plan is a step in the right direction of increasing consistency, building cohesion and collaboration district-wide, and improving student learning and district climate. Auditors mad the following observations while evaluating the district’s planning process and plans:

Criteria 1: Directed by written expectations

Despite the number of policies that require goals and improvement (see above), no policy requires a strategic or district-level improvement plan. No policy directs a planning process beyond formulating improvement goals and school improvement planning, nor does policy explicitly outline a collaborative process for deciding on priorities and formulating goals. This was considered not met.

Criteria 2: Responsive to vision

There is little in the *Strategic Plan* regarding vision. There are commitments and a “Chewelah Promise” that is more of a motto, “We teach to ready our younger generations.” There is no clarity in the plan regarding the shared vision, philosophy, and beliefs concerning how students should be engaged and learn in district classrooms, nor what the most effective teaching and learning look like. Data are referenced in the *District Improvement plan*, but it is not clear how data and research have explicitly informed the current district plan. This criterion was considered partially met, given the SWOT document (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) that recorded perceptions and current circumstances influencing district improvement efforts.

Criteria 3: Based on data

The district improvement plan references data, but this is limited. There is no mention of specific content areas or grade levels needing improvement, nor a clear academic focus for improvement efforts. A general desire to raise test scores is evident, but not clearly referenced in the planning documents and process.

Criteria 4: Drives daily decision making

There is evidence on the survey and from stakeholder comments that the new plan and the planning process have improved cohesion and collaboration across the district, but it is not clear that daily decision making at the building levels is now driven by the plan. Without a clear philosophy and beliefs with a strong vision for teaching and learning, there is insufficient clarity around what effective teaching and high-level learning look like. Without this clarity, building leaders have no vision around which to unify their building personnel.

Criteria 5: Is emergent and fluid

District leaders confirmed that the new plan is “in process,” and that input from the audit, student assessment data, and surveys will further inform its revision and the district’s improvement processes. The superintendent also indicated a desire to use audit feedback in planning revisions to the improvement plan actions, although this intent is not codified in writing. The criterion was considered met.

Criteria 6: Is collaborative and coordinated

There is evidence that staff and stakeholders across the district have been and continue to be involved in the planning process, although formal scheduled events to continue this were not evident. This criterion was partially met.

Criteria 7: Clear and measurable

The plan itself has clear and measurable goals that are focused on the areas of greatest need. There is no research mentioned, but the criterion is considered met.

Criteria 8: Reasonable and feasible

The number of goals and actions to meet each goal are reasonable and feasible for the size of the district. The timelines are manageable. This criterion was met.

Criteria 9: Implementation strategies

The actions for attaining each goal are specific but not clearly based on research and are not results-focused. The actions are not in response to clearly noted student data, such as the professional development goals, which are based on teacher survey data and not classroom observation or student performance data. Strategies related to student learning are not pedagogically focused, although the goal to develop scope and sequence documents is critically important. This criterion was found to be partially met.

Criteria 10: Capacity building

This was rated partially met due, in large part, to the inclusion of professional development planning as one of the actions in support of improving student learning. However, building capacity in staff for attaining the other goals is not explicitly noted in every case; there is mention of training CSD employees in crisis management and of educating the community regarding facility needs, but there is no gap analysis of what skills or understandings are needed to realize all the goals in the plan.

Criteria 11: Internal reliability and congruence

The plan is internally consistent and goals are congruent with one another, although increased coordination is possible between the various actions delineated in the improvement plan.

Criteria 12: Aligned professional development

Despite a professional development plan being noted as an action in the improvement plan, this criterion was not found to be met. Without such a plan in place and with no clarity around the substance and focus of professional development in the coming months, the auditors could not determine that this criterion is met.

Criteria 13: Budget

There were specific budgets in support of each action step noted and funds duly allocated and available. This criterion was met.

Criteria 14: Accountability

This criterion was found to be partially met. There are persons mentioned for each action that are responsible, but in almost every case, there is no single person accountable for assuring its implementation. Without this specificity, it is left to the superintendent or nobody to assure their completion. For greater clarity, although several people or even a committee may share in a responsibility for executing an action, one person should be responsible for monitoring its completion and reporting on its effectiveness. The organizational structure in Chewelah is sound; however, there is nobody besides the superintendent assigned to design, develop, and support the implementation of curriculum.

Criteria 15: Evaluation plan and implementation

There is a specific timeline for each action and expectations for implementation, but the system for reporting or evaluating progress is unclear. This criterion was found to be partially met.

Criteria 16: Monitoring

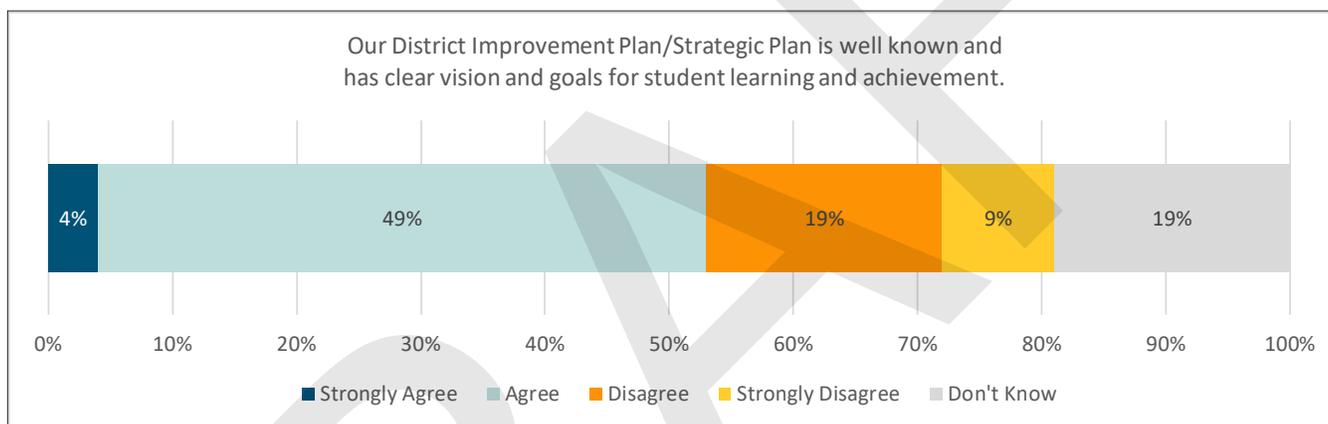
Monitoring is, like accountability, a shared responsibility. It is unclear if this all devolves to the superintendent or others who are named responsible for implementation.

Criteria 17: System-wide coordination of effort

This was only partially met. It is clear in the improvement plan that all departments and schools of the district are involved in implementing the actions in support of the district goals, but without a clear vision and philosophy for student learning driving all actions, this is only partially met.

Overall, the auditors determined that the strategic plan is a strong first step toward making lasting change in how Chewelah delivers teaching and learning to its students. However, not all are as aware of the plan or see it as relevant to their everyday job. When asked about the strategic plan on the survey, teachers had mixed responses. These are presented in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 1.4: Teacher Responses Regarding Strategic Plan



As can be seen in the exhibit, over half of the 47 staff members that responded to this statement agreed or strongly agreed, and about 28% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Almost one-fifth of the staff did not know.

During interviews, almost all attested to the important role the planning process played over the last two years, but most noted that the real work of sustaining the focus has begun. Comments included:

- “[The strategic plan] was the best thing that could have happened in the district—that would unify everyone. That was a step in the right direction, towards unifying K-12 . I think it’s huge.” (District Personnel)
- “[The strategic plan] really did give us direction—our district hasn’t done that for many years.” (District Personnel)
- “Currently, one strength is the district level strategic plan with focused goals. This is driving decisions at both the district and the building levels.” (District Personnel)
- “It’s a great plan; it’s going to make a big difference.” (Board Member)
- “This district had not had a strategic plan until last year, ever. They had statements—not lived statements. They got on a shelf.” (Board Member)

Other district personnel commented on the need to increase cohesion and sustain the focus and commitments:

- “I know the plan, but I don’t think everyone does or knows how it connects to them and their role in our school.”
- “[A] continued focus on these initiatives (in the strategic plan) is imperative. The district should limit any other new initiatives and focus on our current district and building goals.”

Another district personnel commented on the need to improve the vision in the plan, stating, “We have talked about this—our Strategic Planning visioning process—it is not a vision statement, it’s a mission statement. Every organization struggles with visioning—they haven’t had a lot of models.” A board member stated, “This district is about 20 years behind in a vision statement.”

In summary, the strategic plan is concise and feasible and has clear goals and was created using a strong collaborative process. However, the plan does not have sufficient focus on the pedagogical needs in the system and on the vision and beliefs to inform teaching and learning.

Accountability

In their review of district policies, planning, and job descriptions, the auditors determined that the organizational structure is sound but job descriptions are weak in assigning responsibility for curriculum design and delivery. Job descriptions were mostly outdated; the teacher job description is undated the principal and assistant principal job descriptions are 21 and 29 years old, respectively. There was mention of curricular responsibilities in the superintendent and principal job descriptions; the superintendent job description (2021) states the superintendent will require “district-wide use of an established curriculum” and will ensure that the “district curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs are designed to provide full access and opportunity to all students” The principal job description states that the principal “makes special assignments and schedules the development, revision, and evaluation of the curriculum.” The auditors noted that most job descriptions had the four main components (presented in the following exhibit), unless it was a job posting and not a full job description, as with the Teacher position.

Exhibit 1.5: Job Description Components

Job Description Components Expected
1. Qualifications, 2. Links to the chain of command, 3. Responsibilities/functions/duties of the job, and 4. Relationship to the curriculum/curriculum design, alignment, and delivery responsibilities.

The weakest component is for each position’s relationship to curriculum design, alignment, and delivery. The principal job description does not mention monitoring, coaching, or supporting curriculum delivery in congruence with instructional leadership. The assistant principal position does not mention curriculum at all, nor does the teacher job description. Accountability for curriculum design is weak and for delivery, was not present. There is confusion over who is responsible for developing, revising, and overseeing the design of curriculum.

District Climate

Issues of culture and climate are critical in supporting change and improvement within systems. Without the necessary climate of support, trust, and the assumption of positive intent, personnel may question their value and the meaningfulness of the work they do. After interviewing stakeholders and reviewing the survey comments, the auditors determined that climate issues are impeding the coordination of effort needed across all stakeholder groups to fully realize the district's goals to improve student learning. Concerns were expressed by district personnel and parents around accountability and follow-through.

- “[There is a] lack of procedures and systems, Staffing [is a weakness] (many people have multiple roles, [there are] hard to fill positions), [the] focus is too broad...staff culture is resistant.” (District Personnel)
- “[We need] stronger leadership, more cohesion.” (District Personnel)
- [Weaknesses?] “Accountability and communication.” (District Personnel)
- “Communication, accountability should be focused on.” (Parent)

There were many concerns expressed by district personnel about the need to improve communication; this was something mentioned more by elementary teachers than secondary. Sample comments include:

- [Weaknesses?] “Taking people serious, not ignoring their concerns, communication.”
- “Overall, lack of communication, support or appreciation is difficult to deal with in our building.”
- “Communication with employees, consistency and follow-through in student discipline (speaking for the elementary).”
- “[We need] continued focus at the board level on communication with all stakeholders including district staff. Making sure that the voice of employees is also valued and heard by administration will build trust.”
- [Weaknesses?] “Communication! Make decisions in a timely manner and communicate those decisions in a timely manner.”
- [Weaknesses?] “Communication to employees within the elementary building. When changes are made, people affected (staff and students) are not being given sufficient information.”

Other district personnel shared concerns of feeling that there is no support from their administrator or feeling isolated at their building.

- “Our building (Gess) does not have consistent support from our building administrator. Continued lack of communication from the top down in our building. No support or value given to teachers/paras. The administration does not promote a positive attitude toward staff or how hard they work. Our building teachers/paras work hard and well together but do not feel valued by our administrator in charge.”
- “Teachers do not get enough support from administration.”

There were also comments from district personnel about building more cohesion across the district and a more student-focused community. These comments included:

- “Continue to build a community centered on student learning, building student voice, and creating opportunities to provide Tier II interventions.”
- “As a small district, it would be nice to see more sharing of ideas, successes, and struggles across all three schools. Sometimes I think everyone is hyper-focused on their own school/program, and we lose sight of who we are as a whole.”

Summary

Overall, the auditors found a strong policy revision process in place, but policies are currently not adequate to direct curriculum design, development, and delivery. The strategic plan is a strong first step in building a more collaborative and supportive culture, but the current climate in the district does not reflect this culture and is not built on a foundation of trust and goodwill. More efforts to increase communication, particularly at the elementary level and between teachers and parents are needed.

Finding 2: Chewelah School District does not have a written plan that directs the design, development, delivery, monitoring, evaluation, and revision of curriculum. The scope of the written curriculum is not adequate to support the alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum, and there is no consistent definition of what curriculum is in the district. Teachers are relying on their own resources to plan instruction.

An effective school district ensures that there is written direction for what the curriculum should look like, procedures for its development, and expectations for its implementation, evaluation, and revision. These districts also ensure that every teacher has a curriculum guide for their respective subject(s) and grade level(s), to systematically guide decisions about teaching and learning. A quality written curriculum includes objectives, assessment tools, required prerequisite learning, and also suggests resources, instructional strategies and approaches, and student activities. When a written curriculum exists for each subject at each grade level, horizontal coordination within a grade level and vertical articulation from one grade level to the next is more feasible. These documents provide explicit direction for all district staff, improving internal consistency and providing support for the alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum. Student learning improves, because all district staff reference a common curriculum with delineated student objectives K-12 with a common system of assessment. A quality curriculum management plan and written curriculum serve as the foundation for a district to reach the core mission of improved student learning.

Auditors reviewed all board policy and the documents provided to determine the district’s direction for curriculum design and delivery, and to determine what exists for written curriculum. **Exhibit 2.1** lists the documents reviewed. The auditors also interviewed board members, district and school administrators, teachers, and parents and administered online surveys as well to gather perspectives on curriculum and its design or development.

Exhibit 2.1: District Documents Reviewed

Board Goals 2021-22	District Wide CTE Plan 2021-2024
Board Goals 2022-23	District Assessment Plan
Chewelah Board of Director Goals	Board Policies
Chewelah Superintendent Goals 2021-22	Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Chewelah Superintendent Goals 2022-23	District Improvement Plan
District Admin. Meeting Agendas	School Improvement Plans
CSD Strategic Plan Final Summary	Weekly Schedule Gess Elementary
Chewelah Strategic Planning Presentation	Jenkins Master Schedule 2022-23
Curriculum Adoption 2022-23	

The auditors did not find any board policies requiring any written direction for the processes related to curriculum design and development. Although *Policy: 2000, Instruction, Student Learning Goals* provides guidance on essential knowledge and skills, neither this policy nor any other directs any planning related to curriculum design and delivery, nor does any policy or procedure mention curriculum at all. *Policy: 2020, Instruction, Course Design, Selection and Adoption of Instructional Materials* and the procedures aligned to this policy does require a review cycle for “each content area to ensure course relevance;” however, policy is silent on the need for written curriculum for each subject at each grade level.

Overall, the auditors found no written direction for having a curriculum or developing, delivering, or monitoring it. The auditors also found that very little curriculum exists at all in Chewelah School District; the only content area/grade levels that had any type of curriculum document were first, third, and fourth grade social studies and seventh/eighth grade Washington History. These were limited to the standards, only. The scope of curriculum is inadequate to support effective teaching and high-level learning. The finding will address the current status of curriculum planning and processes, and curriculum scope in two separate sections.

Curriculum Management Plan

Although auditors found no plan directing curriculum design, development, and delivery, they did find evidence of curriculum development. District leaders engaged all teachers in the process of prioritizing their content standards as part of a year-long training with a consultant. This process is the first step in developing a comprehensive written curriculum, and every teacher has been involved in the process. Typically, the auditors rate any written direction for curriculum management against a set of criteria, but because no written direction or expectations were found, there was nothing to be rated. However, the following exhibit presents the 15 characteristics of a quality plan used to rate such written direction; it is provided here for district planning purposes.

Exhibit 2.2: Characteristics of a Quality Curriculum Management Plan

Characteristics:
1. Describes the district’s vision and philosophy for effective teaching and learning and a framework for the design of curriculum documents, including such directives regarding how content should be prioritized, bundled, and paced; direction on required components and format; and the integration of standards and research. The plan also directs the alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum; and specifies expectations for approaches used in delivering the curriculum and preferred activities for engaging students and practicing or demonstrating the content.
2. Presents the required format and components of all curriculum documents and assessments.
3. Specifies a format and structure for the curriculum so that it supports teachers’ differentiation of instructional approaches and their selection of student objectives at the right level of difficulty (flexible pacing within the year; this ensures that those students who need prerequisite concepts, knowledge, and skills are moved ahead at an accelerated pace, and that students who have already mastered the objectives are also moved ahead at a challenging pace).
4. Requires for every content area a focused set of precise student objectives/student expectations and standards that are reasonable in number so the student has adequate time to master the content.
5. Directs how state and national standards will be used in the curriculum. Specifies whether curriculum will be backloaded (derived from high-stakes tested learnings, deeply aligned), and/or frontloaded (which derives the curriculum from national, state, or local learnings), or both.
6. Directs that curriculum documents not only specify the content of the student objectives/student expectations, but also suggest multiple contexts and cognitive types.
7. Defines and directs all steps and stages of curriculum development, who is involved, sequence, and timelines.
8. Identifies the timing, scope, prioritization, and procedures for a periodic cycle of review of curriculum in all subject areas and at all grade levels.
9. Requires the design of a comprehensive staff development program linked to curriculum design and its delivery.
10. Presents procedures for monitoring the delivery of curriculum.

Characteristics:
11. Specifies the overall beliefs and procedures governing the assessment of curriculum effectiveness. This includes curriculum-based diagnostic assessments and rubrics (as needed). Such assessments direct instructional decisions regarding student progress in mastering prerequisite concepts, skills, knowledge, and long-term mastery of the learning.
12. Describes the procedures teachers and administrators will follow in using assessment data to strengthen the written curriculum and instructional decision making in classrooms.
13. Outlines procedures for conducting formative and summative evaluations of programs and their corresponding curriculum content.
14. Specifies the roles and responsibilities of the board, central office staff members, and school-based staff members in the design, development, and delivery of curriculum.
15. Establishes a communication plan for the process of curriculum design and delivery.
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The auditors found only two policies that have some direction for any aspect of curriculum management related to the 15 characteristics presented in the exhibit. These include *Policy 2000: Instruction, Student Learning Goals*, which suggests the district's vision and philosophy for effective teaching and learning is ensuring students "become responsible and respectful global citizens, to contribute to their economic well-being and that of their families and communities, to explore and understand different perspectives, and to enjoy productive and satisfying lives." Furthermore, this policy requires learning goals are "... placed within a context of a performance-based educational system in which high standards are set for all students." These statements align at least in part to Characteristic 1, "describes the district's vision and philosophy for effective teaching and learning." Additionally, *Policy 2001: Instruction, Assessment* expects curriculum, instruction, and assessment to align to district, state, and national standards, which meets the part of characteristic 5: "Directs how state and national standards will be used in the curriculum."

Auditors were provided curriculum documents, just containing social studies standards, for first, third, and fourth grades and a seventh/eighth grade history course, developed as part of the standards prioritization work. Additionally, some teams are engaged in conversations about vertical articulation with grade level teams above and below their own. The process of prioritizing standards and teachers meeting to vertically articulate them was mentioned during interviews. Comments included:

- "The process is we pick our priority standards in our teams. We worked as a team to identify our boulders, rocks, and butterflies. We vertically aligned our priority standards [with the grade level below and above our grade level]." (District personnel)
- "...all of our staff have done vertical alignment for language arts. [In] February [teams] decided what their priority standards were...in April did the same thing for math. Then, this month they are doing their vertical alignment [for math]. (District personnel)
- "[The] essential standards—work has been great. We all seem to be on the same page, think very similarly." (District personnel)
- "The alignment of the standards [work is a strength]. I think that's really going to have an impact on teacher efficacy." (District personnel)
- "Next year, we will work on curriculum maps. I'm asking teachers to have everything vertically aligned by the end of this year and then, have their units of study." (District personnel)

Auditors commend district personnel for beginning the hard work of writing curriculum for each subject at every grade level, especially since there is no plan or policy requiring anyone to do so. The work, however, is of the most vital importance, both in supporting teacher's instruction and in improving student learning and engagement.

To provide direction and ensure internal consistency to improve student learning, Chewelah School District would benefit from having a written plan that defines what curriculum is, the vision for student learning experiences the curriculum intends to support, curriculum's overall purpose, and lays out expectations for its design, development, delivery, implementation, evaluation, and revision. The auditors then examined what currently exists for curriculum in the district.

Scope of the Written Curriculum

Scope refers to the percentage of courses or content areas in the district that have a corresponding written curriculum. This written curriculum, adopted by the board, serves as a district's official curriculum, and ideally guides and supports teachers' instructional delivery. This official written curriculum supports vertical articulation from grade level to grade level, as well as horizontal coordination, or consistency, across grade levels. A written curriculum that adequately guides instruction also ensures that all students are accessing the necessary content at the appropriate time. This only happens with aligned instruction across the district. The consequences of no written curriculum can be inconsistent and varied levels of content and learning experiences delivered to students, which can then result in gaps in learning that increase over the years and yield lower student achievement.

Auditors expect to find written documents guiding instruction for 100% of the four core content areas—English language arts, math, science, and social studies—and 70% of the non-core content areas—K-6 specials and 7-12 electives. Auditors found written curriculum documents for 3% of all the districts' courses and content areas, overall. Three percent of the district's core courses have formal written curriculum (adopted by the board) and 0% of the district's non-core courses have formal written curriculum. Written curriculum documents were limited to social studies standards for first, third and fourth grades and a seventh/eighth grade history course. The auditors found that the scope of the written curriculum is inadequate to support teachers in their planning and delivery of effective, articulated, and coordinated instruction.

Scope of the Elementary Curriculum

The following exhibit presents the scope of the curriculum for grades kindergarten through sixth. Auditors reviewed the elementary school's master schedule to identify all the content areas and courses taught by grade level. Auditors then examined curriculum documents provided to determine whether each course has a corresponding written curriculum. If a content area is taught at a specific grade level, the cell is left white. If a content area is not taught at a specific grade level (because it was not found on the master schedule), the cell is shaded.

FINDINGS

The below exhibit summarizes the information found in **Appendix F**. If courses were offered in the grade level, but no corresponding curriculum was found, this is indicated by an O. If courses were offered in a grade level and had corresponding written curriculum, this is indicated by an X. If courses were not offered in a grade level, this is indicated by a shaded box.

Exhibit 2.3: Scope of Elementary Curriculum

Content Areas	Grade Level							Total Courses Offered	Total Courses with Written Curriculum	Percent of Courses with Written Curriculum
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6			
Core Content Area Courses										
English Language Arts	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	12	0	0%
Math	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	7	0	0%
Science		O	O	O	O	O	O	6	0	0%
Social Studies		X		X	X	O	O	5	3	60%
Totals (Core Courses)								30	3	10%
Non-Core Content Area Courses										
Music	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	8	0	0%
Physical Education	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	7	0	0%
Library	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	7	0	0%
SEL	O	O		O	O			4	0	0%
Study Hall							O	1	0	0%
Totals (Non-Core Courses)								27	0	0%
Totals (Core and Non-Core Courses)								57	3	5%
Key: X= Grades in which course was offered with written curriculum, O= Grades in which course was offered with no written curriculum, Shaded box= no course/content area taught for grade level										
Source: Elementary Master Schedule, Curriculum Adoption 2022-23										

The exhibit indicates 30 core content area courses are offered in the elementary school. As explained earlier in this finding, Chewelah teachers have begun the process of identifying priority standards. Auditors found three of these recently developed documents that define the priority standards for social studies and therefore, counted social studies as having three curriculum documents, although they are not completed unit plans. Of the 30 core courses, three have written curriculum, meaning 10% of the core courses have written curriculum. Twenty-seven non-core courses are taught in grades K-6, and auditors did not find written curriculum for any of the non-core courses. Chewelah's scope of curriculum is not adequate and does not meet the CMIM requirement of 100% of core courses and 70% of non-core courses having corresponding written curriculum.

Additionally, when reviewing the elementary school's master schedule, auditors did not find the same core courses offered at each grade level. For example, social studies and science were not listed as subjects taught in kindergarten; writing was not a subject found on the master schedule for first grade; and social studies was not found in the schedule for second grade. As students progress from grade level to grade level, these inconsistencies in the subjects taught may result in gaps in student learning.

Scope of the Junior High/High School Curriculum

The following exhibit displays the scope of the curriculum for grades seven through twelve. Auditors reviewed the junior high/high school’s master schedule to identify all courses taught for all content areas. Auditors then determined from the curriculum documents whether the courses have a corresponding written curriculum. If a written curriculum document was provided, this was indicated with an X found on the chart in **Appendix F**. If courses were not offered in a grade level, this is indicated by a shaded box.

Exhibit 2.4: Scope of the Junior High/High School Curriculum

Content Areas	Grade Level						Total Courses Offered	Total Courses with Written Curriculum	Percent of Courses with Written Curriculum
	7	8	9	10	11	12			
Core Content Area Courses									
English Language Arts	O	O	O	O	O	O	15	0	0%
Math	O	O	O	O	O	O	17	0	0%
Science	O	O	O	O	O	O	7	0	0%
Social Studies	X	X	O	O	O	O	5	1	20%
Totals (Core Courses)							44	1	2%
Non-Core Content Area Courses									
Health and Fitness	O	O	O	O	O	O	7	0	0%
Fine Arts	O	O	O	O	O	O	6	0	0%
Technology	O	O					1	0	0%
CTE			O	O	O	O	12	0	0%
General Electives	O	O	O	O	O	O	4	0	0%
Totals (Non-Core Courses)							30	0	0%
Totals (Core and Non-Core Courses)							74	1	1%
Key: X= Grades in which course was offered with written curriculum, O= Grades in which course was offered with no written curriculum, Shaded box= no course/content area taught for grade level									
Source: Secondary Master Schedule, Curriculum Adoption 2022-23									

The exhibit shows 44 core content area courses are offered in grades 7-12. Of those 44 core courses, one course has corresponding written curriculum, meaning 2% of core courses have written curriculum. Similar to the elementary school summary of core courses, this written curriculum found was for one social studies course, seventh/eighth grade Washington History. Thirty non-core courses are taught at the junior high/high school and auditors did not find written curriculum for any of the non-core courses. Chewelah’s scope of curriculum does not meet the CMIM requirement of 100% of core courses and 70% of non-core courses having corresponding written curriculum and was found to be inadequate.

The written curriculum documents provided for first, third, and fourth grade social studies and seventh/eighth grade Washington History varied in format and content. All the documents listed “boulders,” CSD’s word for priority standards. These documents did not contain any other elements deemed necessary for a comprehensive written curriculum.

Because of the incomplete nature of the newly developed curriculum, the auditors did not rate these few documents for its overall quality. However, to assist leaders in their planning future curriculum

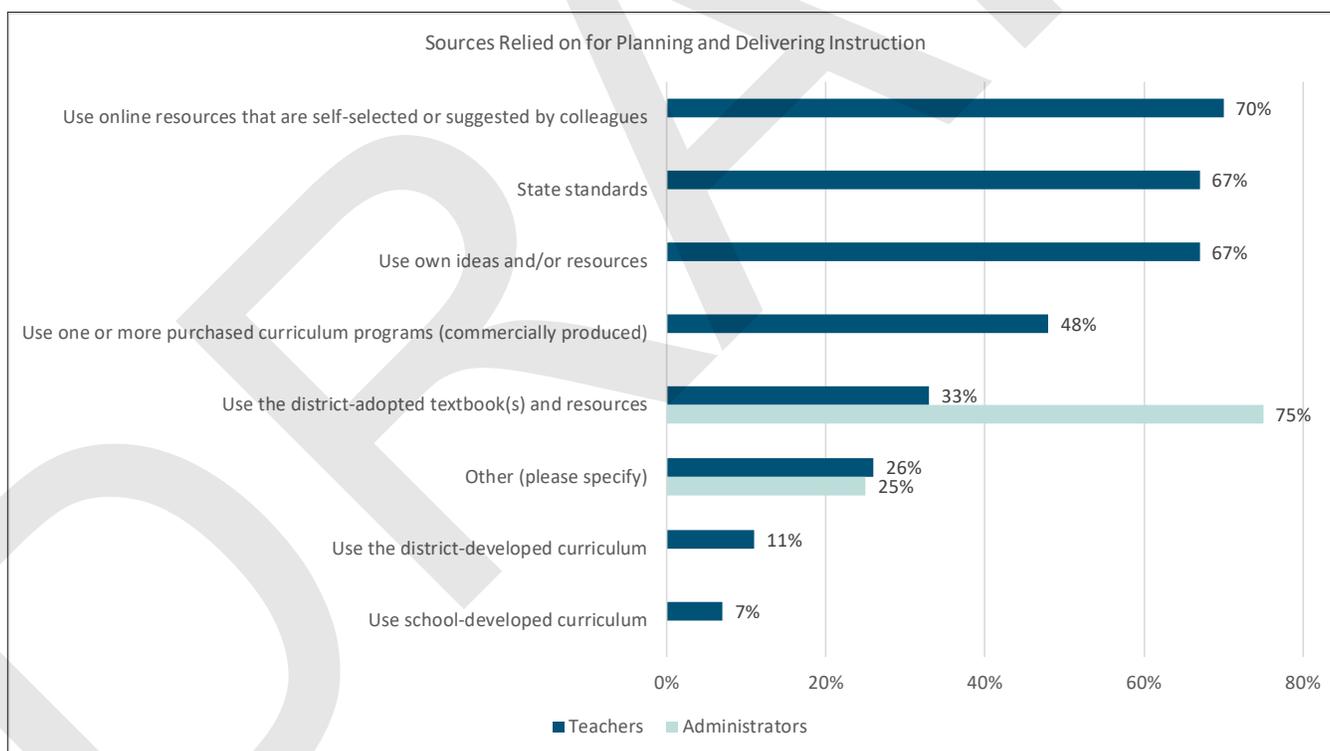
development, the full criteria for evaluating the presence of minimum components and other factors that are recommended for a high quality curriculum are presented in **Recommendation 2**.

Definition of Curriculum

A definition of written curriculum consistent across all district staff is critical to establishing what teachers should use to support and guide their instruction and to improving student learning. Auditors found a misunderstanding of what curriculum is exists across the district. Even district documents (policy, plans) do not define curriculum or mention its role in supporting student learning. Most consider adopted resources to be the curriculum. Only a few referenced a written guide based on the standards as curriculum. The CMIM considers curriculum to be a separate entity from the resources teachers should draw from to support student learning. The curriculum assists teachers by defining in clear, measurable terms the learning students are expected to master, what that learning looks like, prerequisites and assessments that are needed prior to or to measure the learning, and suggestions for how to deliver that learning.

Given the inconsistency in how teachers define curriculum, the auditors asked administrators and teachers to identify what sources teachers rely on most frequently when planning and delivering instruction. The exhibit below displays administrators’ and teachers’ responses.

Exhibit 2.5: Sources Relied on Most Frequently When Planning and Delivering Instruction



Source: Chewelah Teacher and Administrator Online Survey Responses

As can be seen in the exhibit, seventy-five percent of administrators reported that teachers use the district-adopted textbook(s) and resources most frequently when planning and delivering instruction. Twenty-five percent of administrators reported “other,” commenting that teachers use a variety of the sources listed. Seventy percent of teachers reported using self-selected or colleague-recommended online resources as the source most frequently used for instructional planning and delivery. Sixty-seven

percent of teachers chose their own ideas and/or resources and state standards as the next two most frequently used sources when planning and delivering instruction. Forty-eight percent of teachers reported using commercially produced and purchased curriculum programs as the source for planning lessons and delivering curriculum.

Respondents to the teacher online survey wrote:

- “I am not aware of any district developed curriculum.”
- “We don’t have district-developed curriculum.”
- “There is no district developed curriculum.”

Interview comments indicated most district staff defined curriculum as the purchased textbooks:

- “[Curriculum is] what is purchased by the school board to provide students opportunity to access to standards consistently across a grade level.” (District Personnel)
- “We start with the standards. That’s our driving force. Our curriculum is Wonders. Bridges for math. It’s a lot for brand new teachers.” (District Personnel)
- “I asked for a curriculum guide and I was told, everybody does their own thing here.” (Board Member)
- “Each teacher has their own [curriculum] and that’s not good.” (Board Member)

One teacher explained concerns with the focus on priority standards: “We have begun to identify our core standards, our crucial standards—I have some concerns that people think those are the only standards we need to teach.”

When the source of planning and delivering instruction varies from teacher to teacher, students’ equal access to learning is not adequately supported. Support for teachers in their most critical role as instructor is not sufficient. Additionally, without a shared definition of curriculum, teachers’ attention is focused on finding resources to use to teach students, which may in fact exacerbate gaps or a lack of alignment to the standards. Teachers’ attention is drawn away from planning high quality instruction, supporting students to master the required standards, and performing well on required assessments.

Finding Summary

Auditors did not find a cohesive written document, such as a plan or comprehensive procedure, outlining the district’s vision for instruction and the format and design of curriculum needed to support it. Nor was there any direction regarding processes needed for curriculum development, delivery, monitoring, evaluation, and revision. Without a plan directing all aspects of curriculum management, focus is potentially diverted from the most critical core responsibility of a school district: delivering student learning. A shared definition of curriculum does not exist in Chewelah; therefore, teachers rely on district-adopted textbooks, resources found online or recommended by colleagues, self-selected resources, or the state standards alone when planning and delivering instruction. Teachers put time and effort into finding resources instead of focusing on planning effective instruction that is engaging and responsive to student needs. Finally, the scope of the written curriculum is inadequate to direct effective lesson planning and curriculum delivery.

Finding 3: Curriculum delivery in Chewelah School District is not based on an instructional model focused on building student engagement, rigor, and differentiation in lessons set in a student-centered environment. Monitoring of instruction is not consistent, nor does it provide administrators with feedback regarding teachers' professional development needs. Professional development has not been a priority, historically, but is a priority for the strategic plan.

Effective school districts have a clear vision for student learning and engagement that is rooted in beliefs and a philosophical approach. This vision outlines for all stakeholders what expectations for student learning and engagement should look like and the teacher's ideal role in achieving that vision. This vision is supported by a framework of strategies that define what types of strategies and approaches are preferred, as they align with the vision, and also by an instructional model that defines for teachers how to use formative data for flexible groupings and in designing instruction, so students' needs are met and scaffolds can be implemented for their learning success. This model, along with the framework, are tightly-held aspects of the otherwise flexible process of instructional planning. Teachers need a great deal of flexibility at the daily level, in pacing and in selecting activities and approaches so they can respond to the needs of their students. However, allowing teachers complete autonomy over this process may result in instructional delivery that does not align with the district vision and defined beliefs. Therefore, defining district expectations while allowing for needed flexibility is key; such expectations are expected to be found in policy, procedures, and in district plans.

These clearly communicated expectations are important for school leaders, since they are part of the classroom walk-through process. These expectations, along with a protocol to follow when school leaders are observing classrooms, ensure consistency in delivery across the district. Instruction, monitoring, and professional development are connected. Monitoring instruction to support curriculum delivery and to ensure alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum is a key factor in assuring students' success in learning. It also results in feedback regarding the professional development teachers would benefit from most to improve student learning and engagement.

To determine Chewelah School District's expectations for instruction, monitoring, and professional development and to evaluate the degree to which expectations are met, the auditors visited classrooms; interviewed district administrators, teachers, board members, and parents; reviewed policy and district documents; and analyzed data collected via an online survey.

Overall, auditors found little written direction for curriculum delivery, monitoring instruction, and professional development. Clear expectations for instructional delivery and student engagement were not found. Classroom observations noted compliant students in classrooms completing seatwork. This individual work was not differentiated and required low levels of cognitive processing by students—remembering and understanding—as defined by Bloom's Taxonomy. Teachers were most frequently observed assisting students when students requested assistance. Monitoring of curriculum delivery is not a clear expectation and is inconsistently implemented. A comprehensive professional development plan was not found; however, district administrators are working on extensive professional development initiatives and a plan is the goal for 2023. This finding will address Instructional Delivery, Monitoring, and Professional Development in three separate sections.

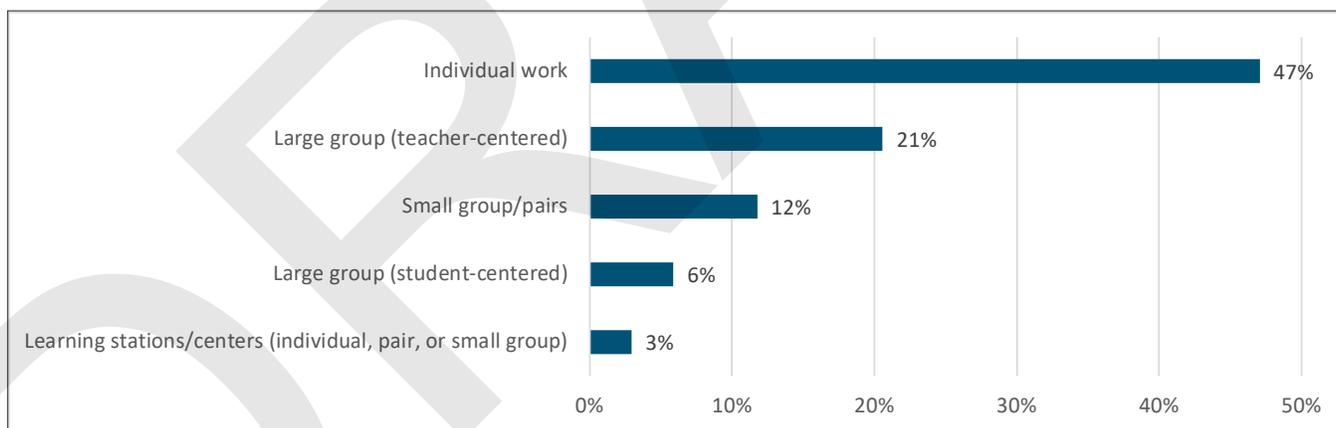
Instruction

Auditors reviewed board policy and job descriptions to find direction for instructional practices in Chewelah. There was no teacher job description and the only policy referencing instruction was *Policy 2000, Instruction: Student Learning Goals*, which defines the overarching purpose of instruction and requires that opportunities be provided for students to build essential knowledge and skills in reading, mathematics, critical thinking, and life skills. This policy states the student learning goals “...will be placed within a context of a performance-based educational system in which high standards are set for all students.” Furthermore, this policy asserts the responsibility of determining how instruction is provided to meet the outlined learning goals rests with the board and district administration. The auditors found no other guidelines for an instructional model, nor any district expectations for what student engagement and learning ideally looks like in Chewelah classrooms.

To determine what classroom instruction does look like, auditors visited as many classrooms as possible during their visits to the Elementary and Junior High/Senior High Schools. Auditors collected information on how students were grouped, what students were doing, and the level of student engagement—academically engaged, compliant, or off task. The dominant teacher activities and any research-based, effective instructional strategies were also noted. Auditors also collected data on cognition required from students and any evidence of differentiated instruction. The following exhibits communicate what was observed in classrooms.

The auditors visited more than 35 classrooms where regular instruction was taking place (with no substitute). The exhibit below displays the dominant student activity groupings observed. This refers to how students were grouped during instruction.

Exhibit 3.1: Dominant Student Activity Groupings

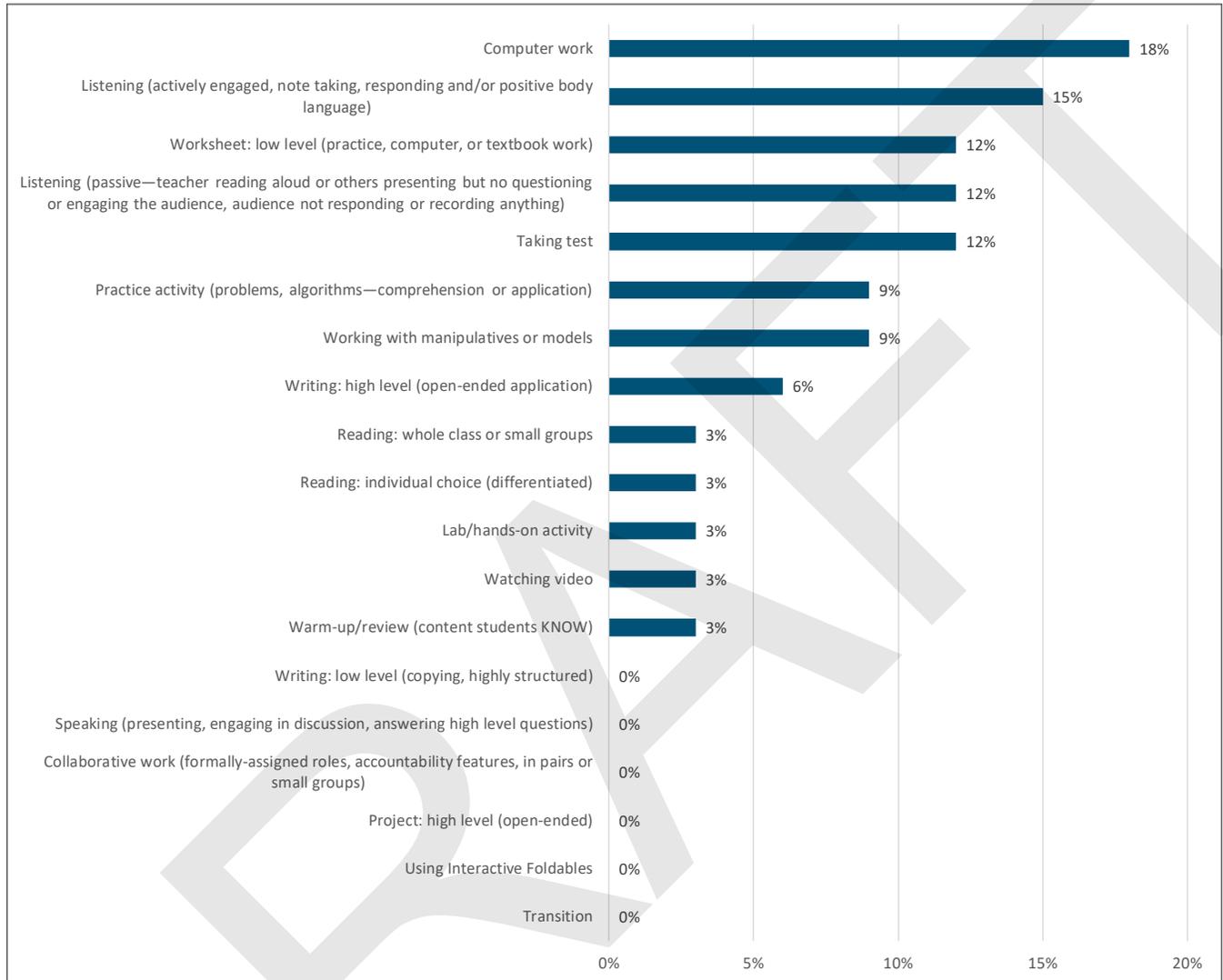


Source: Classroom Observations

The dominant student activity grouping was individual work. Individual work refers to students completing seatwork or worksheets individually without collaboration of peers. This grouping was observed in more than half of the classroom, 54%. The next most dominant student activity grouping was teacher-centered large group, 23%. This grouping refers to students as a whole class involved in a common activity, which includes activities like direct instruction, watching a video, and listening to a lecture. The next most common dominant student activity grouping was students working in small groups or in pairs, 13%.

The below presents the activities students were participating in during the classroom observation.

Exhibit 3.2: Dominant Student Activity

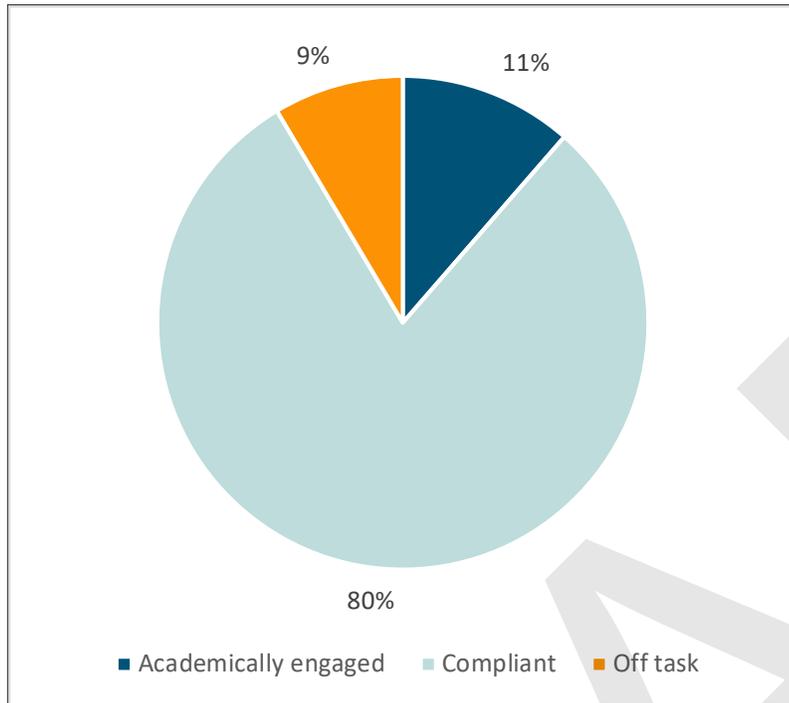


Source: Classroom Observations

Exhibit 3.2 indicates the most dominant student activity observed by auditors was computer work, 18%. Some examples of computer work included students working on “My Pathway” in iReady; taking an Accelerated Reader quiz; and completing a teacher-created worksheet on the computer. The next most dominant student activity observed in 15% of the classroom visited was students listening to the teacher or other students while actively involved in discussions. Three activities were each found in 12% of the classrooms visited—students completing a worksheet; students listening passively to the teacher; and students taking a test.

The below displays the engagement level of students in the activities presented in **Exhibit 3.2**.

Exhibit 3.3: Level of Engagement of Students during Classroom Observations

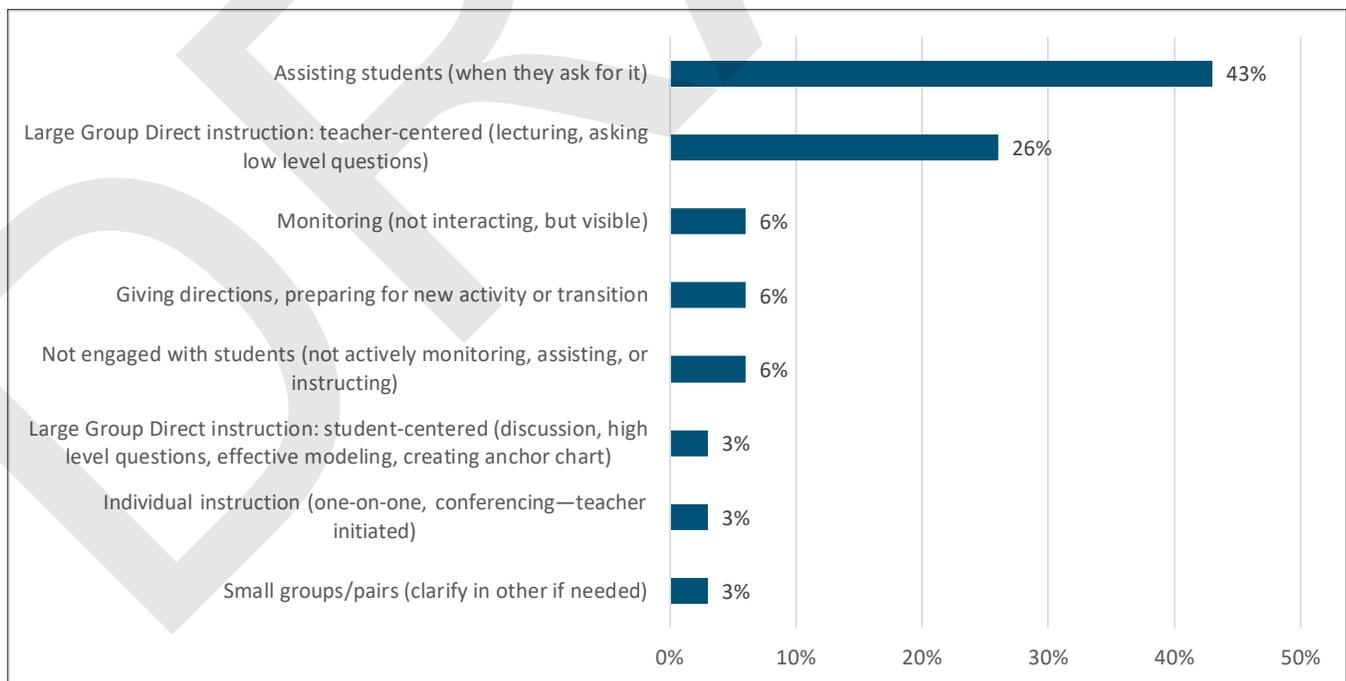


Eighty percent of students were compliant; 11% were academically engaged; and 9% were off task. Most off-task students were high school students using cell phones.

Source: Classroom Observations

The next exhibit presents what the teacher was doing during the classroom observations.

Exhibit 3.4: Dominant Teacher Instructional Activity

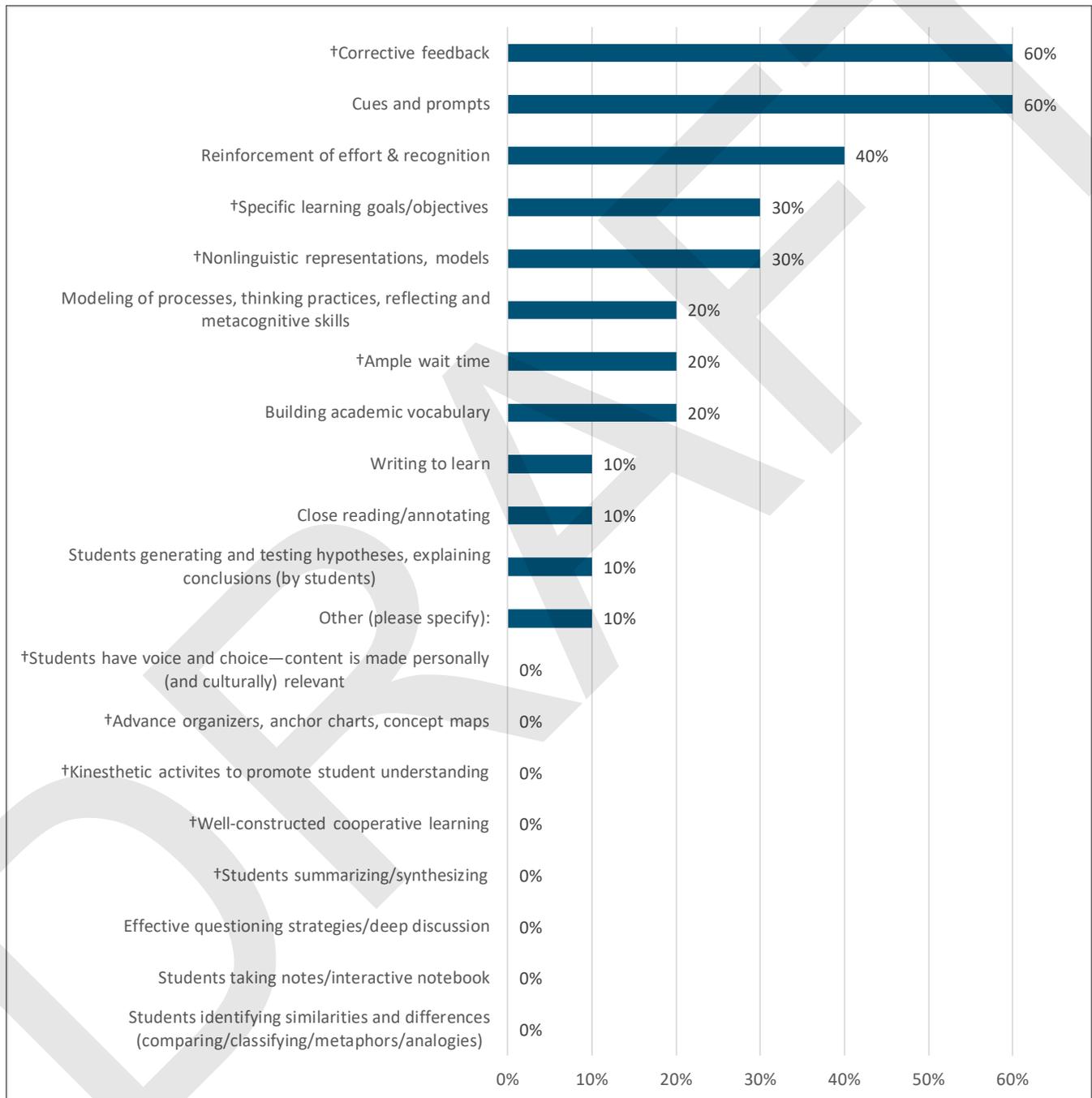


Source: Classroom Observations

In 43% of classrooms visited, teachers were assisting students when students requested assistance. The next most dominant teacher instructional activity was large group direct instruction observed in 26% of classrooms.

The following displays the effective instructional strategies observed in classrooms.

Exhibit 3.5: Effective Strategies Observed



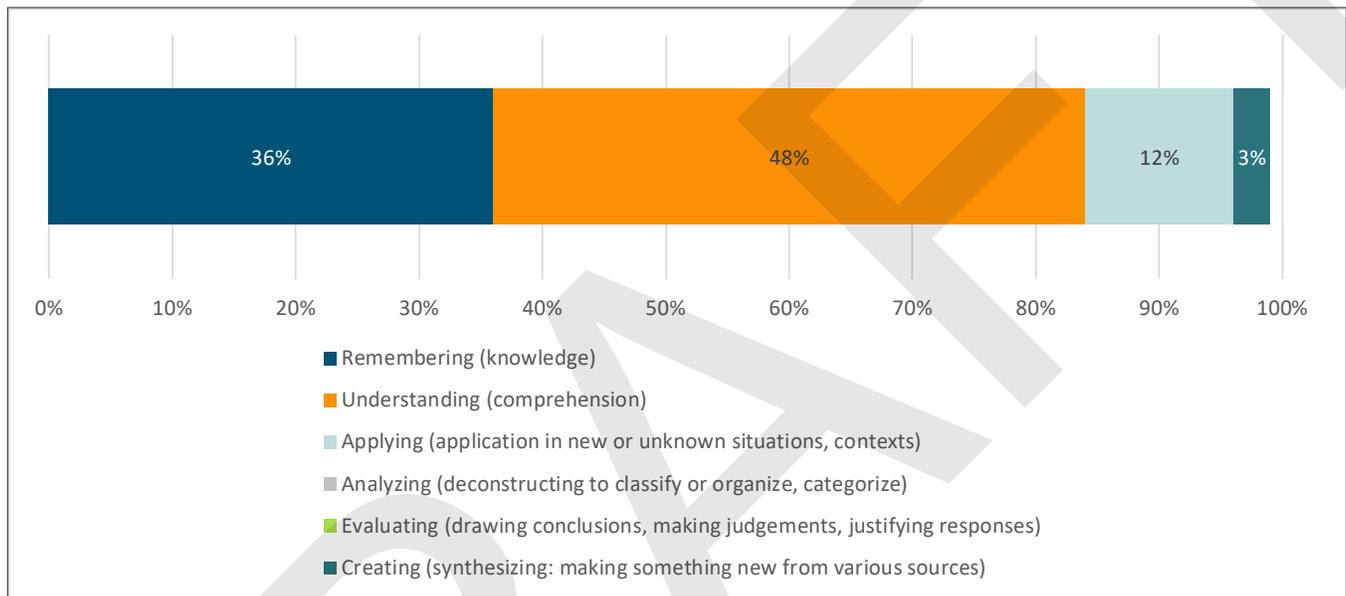
†= High-yield Instructional Strategy

Source: Classroom Observations

Corrective feedback and cues and prompts were the two most often observed effective instructional strategies. In 60% of classrooms teachers were observed providing feedback in an on-going basis, explaining why a students’ response was correct or incorrect, and providing cues and prompts to remind students of relevant information. In 40% of classrooms teachers reinforced students’ efforts and delivered praise. Teachers identified specific learning goals or objectives in 30% of classrooms.

The following exhibit indicates the cognitive process dimension observed in each classroom visited. Bloom’s Taxonomy was used to classify the cognitive process dimension observed—remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, or creating.

Exhibit 3.6: Cognitive Process Dimension



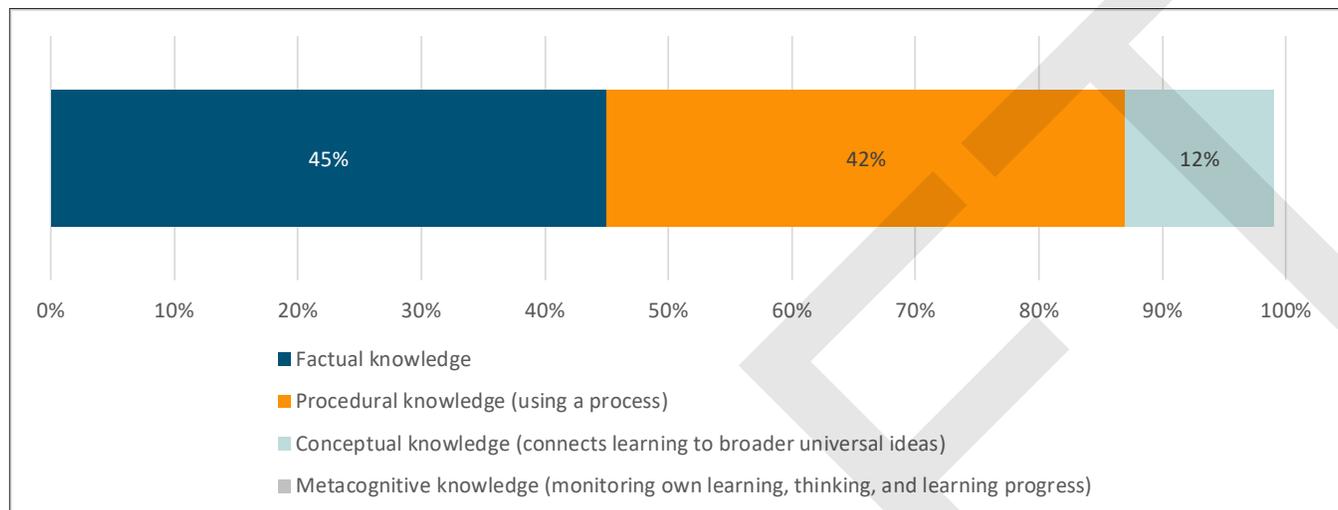
Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding
 Source: Classroom Observations

As displayed in the above exhibit, the most frequent cognitive process observed was understanding, in 49% of the classrooms. Remembering was the next most frequent cognitive process observed, in 39% of classrooms. In Bloom’s Taxonomy applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating are considered the more rigorous and demanding cognitive processes. Auditors did not gather evidence of students applying, analyzing, evaluating, or creating while visiting classrooms.

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The below presents the types of knowledge observed in the classrooms—factual, procedural, conceptual, or metacognitive knowledge.

Exhibit 3.7: Type of Knowledge Observed



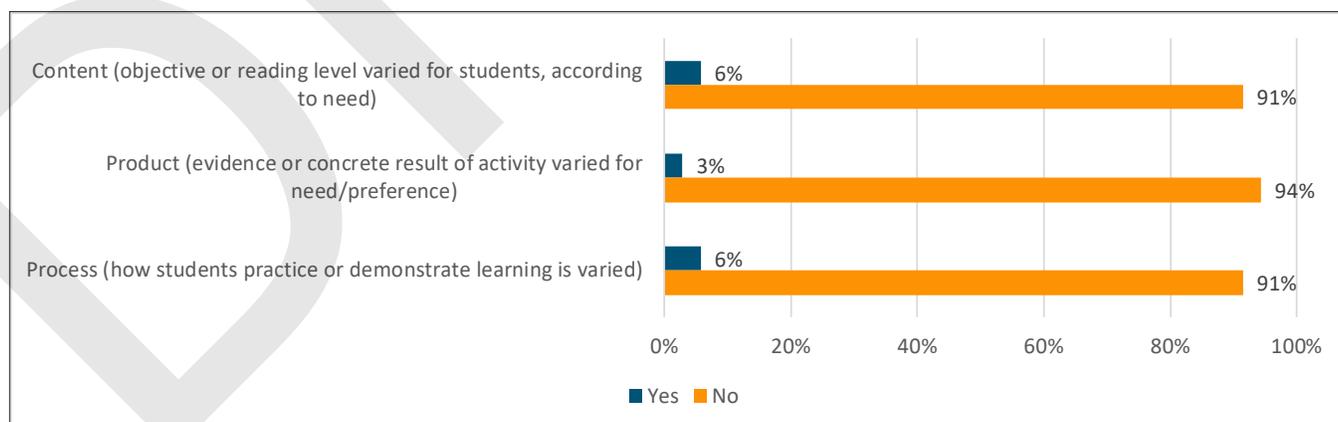
Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding

Source: Classroom Observations

Students were most often asked to recall factual knowledge, 46%. This was followed by students using procedural knowledge to complete tasks, 42% of the time. Conceptual knowledge, connecting learning to broader or universal ideas, was observed in 12% of the classrooms. Metacognitive knowledge requires students to reflect on thinking and monitor learning. For this to happen, students must know the concepts, skills, or knowledge expected for learning. Students were not observed engaging in metacognition.

The following displays evidence of differentiation. Auditors look for differentiation in process, product, and content. Differentiation in process refers to how students practice or demonstrate learning; differentiation in product refers to the evidence or concrete result of student learning; and differentiation in content refers to the objective or reading level of the task is at the correct level of difficulty to meet each students' learning needs.

Exhibit 3.8: Evidence of Differentiation

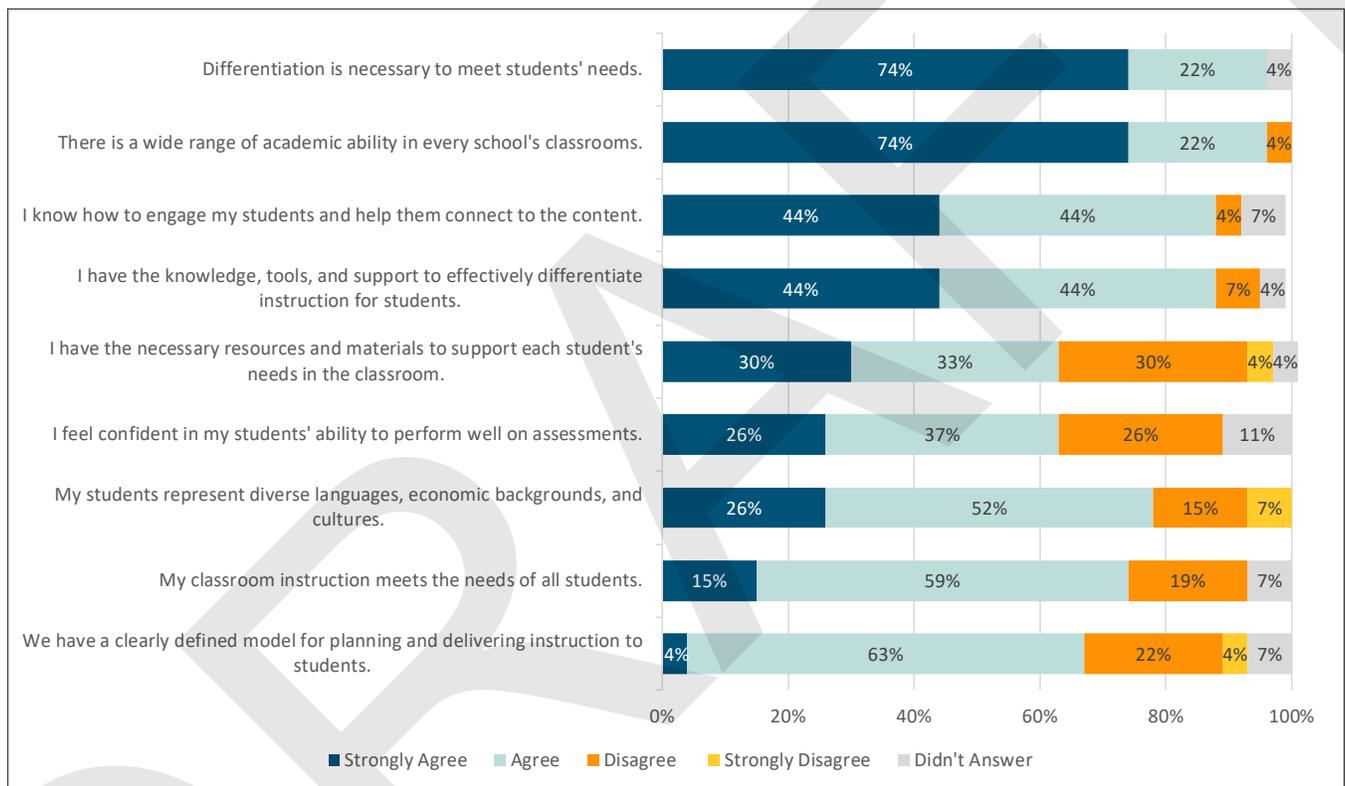


Source: Classroom Observations

Auditors saw differentiation of content and process in 6% of visited classrooms and differentiation of product in 3% of classrooms. Content and process were not differentiated in 91% of classrooms visited and product was not differentiated in 94% of classrooms visited.

Additional data about differentiated instruction was gathered via the online survey. Teachers were asked to indicate a level of agreement to statements regarding the existence of a clearly defined model for instructional planning and delivery; the range of student abilities and demographic diversity in classrooms; and teachers’ knowledge, training received, and resources and materials to support students’ differentiated needs. The following exhibit presents teachers’ level of agreement with each of these statements.

Exhibit 3.9: Teachers’ Perceptions of Student Needs and Classroom Differentiation

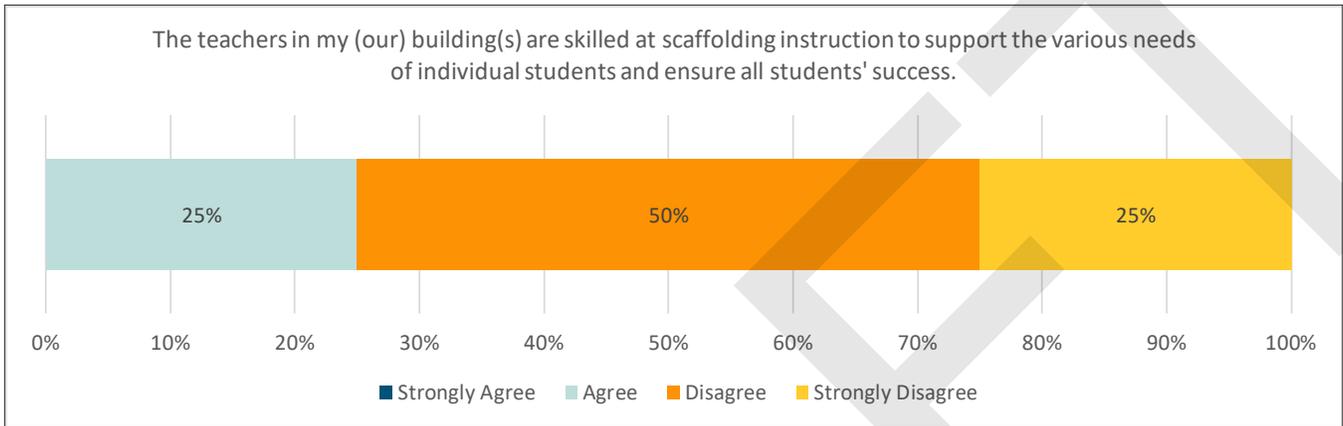


Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding
 Source: Teachers’ Online Survey

Almost all teacher respondents strongly agree or agree there is a wide range of academic ability in every classroom and differentiation is necessary to meet students’ needs, and an almost equally high number report having the knowledge, tools, and support to effectively differentiate instruction for students. However, almost 40% of teachers who responded to the survey reported not having the necessary resources and materials to support each student’s needs in the classroom, and 36% reported not having a clearly defined model for planning and delivering instruction. Responses were mixed regarding whether or not their classroom instruction meets the needs of all students, with the majority agreeing, but almost one-fourth of teachers disagreeing with this statement. Almost 35% of teachers disagreed with the statement that they felt confident in their students’ ability to perform well on assessments. Overall, teachers had mixed responses to differentiation and their ability to respond to and be effective in teaching their students.

The following exhibit presents administrators’ responses to the level at which teachers are skilled at scaffolding instruction to support the various needs of individual students and ensure all students’ success.

Exhibit 3.10: Building Leaders’ Perceptions of Teachers’ Skill at Scaffolding And Ensuring Student Success

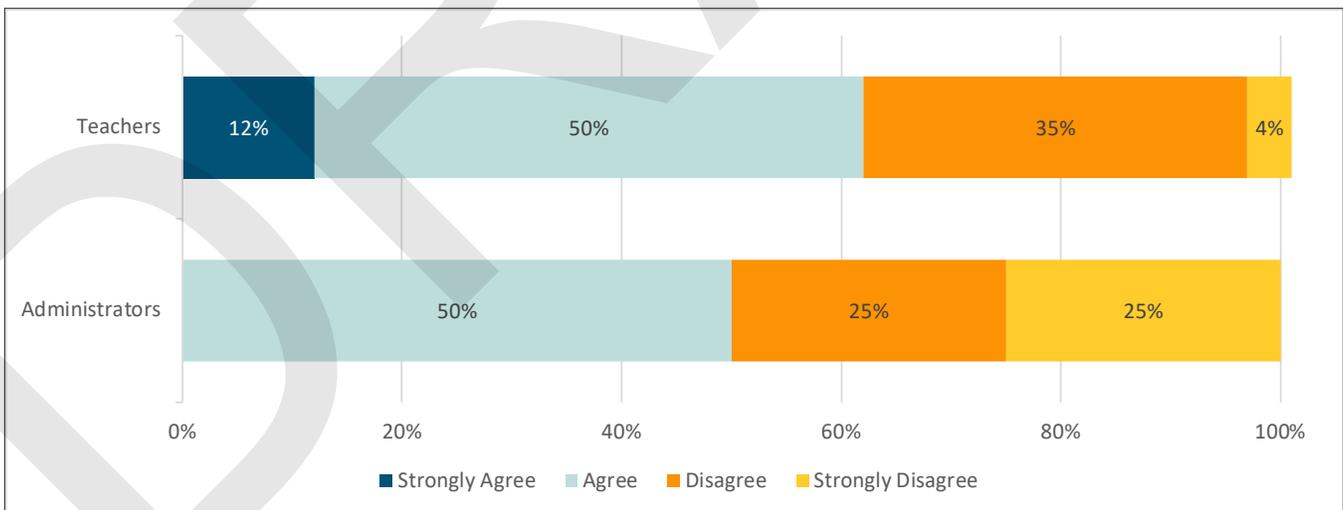


Source: Administrators’ Online Survey

As can be seen in the exhibit, Seventy-five percent of administrators strongly disagree or disagree teachers are skilled at scaffolding instruction to meet the various needs of individual students and ensure all students’ success.

The online survey asked administrators and teachers to strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement: the district has clear expectations regarding what effective instructional delivery and student engagement look like. The below displays administrators’ and teachers’ level of agreement with this statement.

Exhibit 3.11: Clarity of District Instructional Expectations



Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding

Source: Teachers’ and Administrators’ Online Survey

The exhibit indicates 50% of administrators and 39% of teachers disagree or strongly disagree clear expectations for effective instructional delivery and student engagement exist in the district.

Student engagement is a concern as evidenced by the lack of clear expectations, the observation data indicating students were academically engaged in only 11% of the classroom visited, as well as written comments on the survey and interview comments.

In the comment section of the parent survey, a parent wrote about the need for lessons to be more engaging, because individual students learn differently: “The curriculum and how the teachers actually teach their class [needs to be improved]. Not every student learns the same so there has to be a way to have class be more engaging and get kids excited about learning.”

A desire for improving student engagement and moving away from worksheets requiring lower levels of cognition to project-based learning was mentioned in interviews:

- “I’d like to see this district move into more engagement strategies having to do with project-based learning.” (District Personnel)
- “Three years ago, everything was paper and worksheet, worksheet, worksheet. Worksheets don’t grow dendrites.” (Board Member)
- “Bring in the REAL world—increase engagement.” (District Personnel)
- “You don’t have a problem engaging students in the arts, in band, in the performances. Science can be engaging. Some of our teachers struggle.” (District Personnel)
- I think [all teachers need to improve] engagement. I would like to see more project-based learning, but you need to be taught how to do that before you just launch into it.” (District Personnel)

The comments indicate a desire for engaging instruction in all subjects with a focus on project-based learning. This desire is more closely aligned to board policy requiring instruction rest in the context of performance-based instruction. In the absence of clear expectations for instructional delivery and student engagement, instruction in CSD was observed to lack rigor, leading to students compliantly completing individual work while teachers assisted. Without clear expectations for instructional delivery and student engagement, monitoring lacks focus and consistency. Auditors review findings related to monitoring in the next section.

Monitoring

Regular and ongoing classroom visits provide administrators the opportunity to observe instruction and student engagement. This allows administrators to ensure alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum and support teachers by determining professional development needs.

To determine the extent to which monitoring is an expectation and is implemented in Chewelah, auditors reviewed board policy, visited classrooms, conducted interviews of teachers and administrators, and administered an online survey.

Auditors did not find board policy directing the monitoring of classroom instruction, nor any requirements for monitoring in the principal job description. The policy regarding monitoring focuses on the monitoring of assessment.

The online survey asked teachers to indicate how frequently visits to classrooms occurred by distinct positions—daily or almost weekly, at least weekly, at least monthly, at least twice a year, or a rarely visit the classrooms. The below indicates survey responses.

Exhibit 3.12: Frequency of Visits to Classrooms

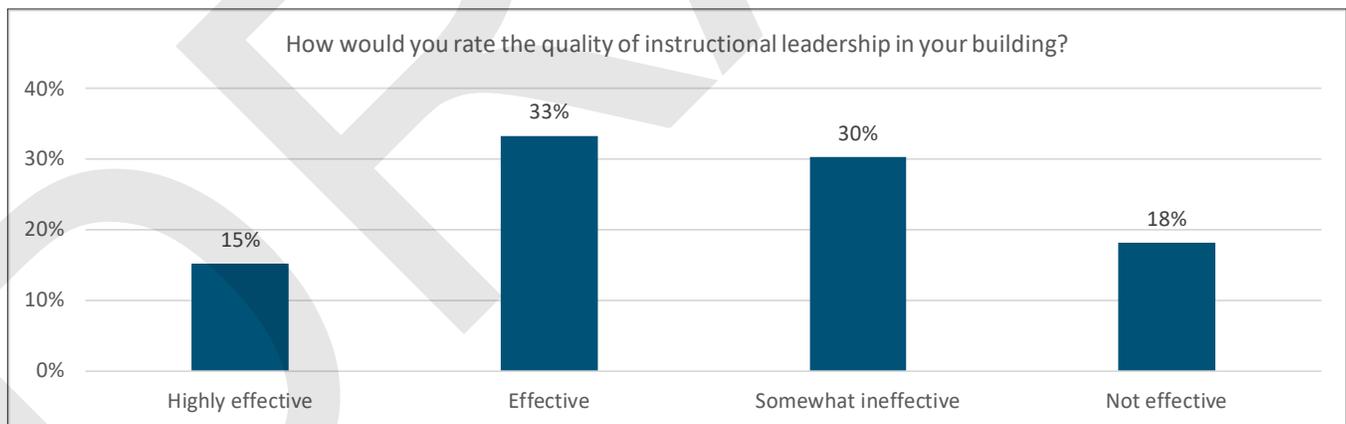


Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding
 Source: Teachers' Online Survey

Fifty-eight percent of teachers chose at least monthly and at least twice a year for the frequency of visits to classrooms by the principal. The assistant principal visits classrooms at least monthly according to 36% of the survey respondents. Twenty-seven percent of teachers selected district administrators visit the classrooms at least monthly.

The online survey also asked teachers about the quality of instructional leadership in their school. The following exhibit displays their responses.

Exhibit 3.13: Quality of Leadership



Source: Teachers' Online Survey

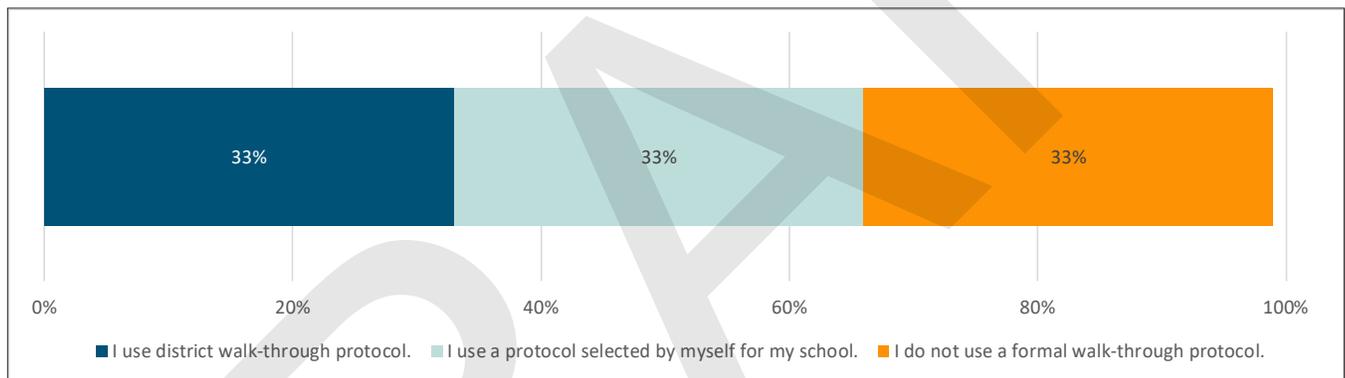
When asked about the instructional leadership in their building, teachers were quite divided in their responses. Of the 32 teachers who responded to the question, almost half (48%) reported the instructional leadership in their school to be highly effective or effective. A slightly greater percentage reported that the instructional leadership is only somewhat (30%) or not effective (18%). The survey data indicate principals visit classrooms inconsistently; however, most teachers who responded to the survey (75%; n=32) also reported finding the principal's feedback helpful.

On the survey and during interviews, there were comments related to instructional support in classrooms:

- “Really wish we had more administrators come to visit the classrooms more often.” (District Personnel)
- “We don’t have coaches or instructional support people.” (District Personnel)
- “[We need] building administration that supports staff and creates a positive school environment for staff/students. [A] building administrator that is present and visible in the building.” (District Personnel)
- “I don’t believe we have a collaborative culture where it is normal to have other people in your classroom (except for a 2x per year formal observation, and even drop-ins feel like I’m being evaluated), so it always feels like I’m going to be judged and found lacking.” (District Personnel)

The auditors asked building leaders about what protocol they use to monitor curriculum delivery. Administrators chose from a list including a district walk-through protocol, a self-selected protocol, or a formal walk-through protocol. Administrators’ responses are displayed in **Exhibit 3.14**.

Exhibit 3.14: Protocol Used to Monitor Curriculum Delivery



Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding

Source: Administrators’ Online Survey

The above indicates principals use a variety of protocols to monitor curriculum delivery—a district walk-through protocol, a self-selected protocol; and an informal walk-through protocol.

Effective monitoring requires a clearly defined written curriculum to set expectations for monitoring. Principals monitor classrooms through observations and other methods to ensure the written curriculum is taught, effective instructional strategies and approaches are used, students are engaged and learning the necessary concepts, skills, and knowledge. Overall, auditors found effective monitoring in Chewelah is hindered by the lack of a written curriculum, no defined expectations for monitoring, and inconsistent protocols.

Professional Development

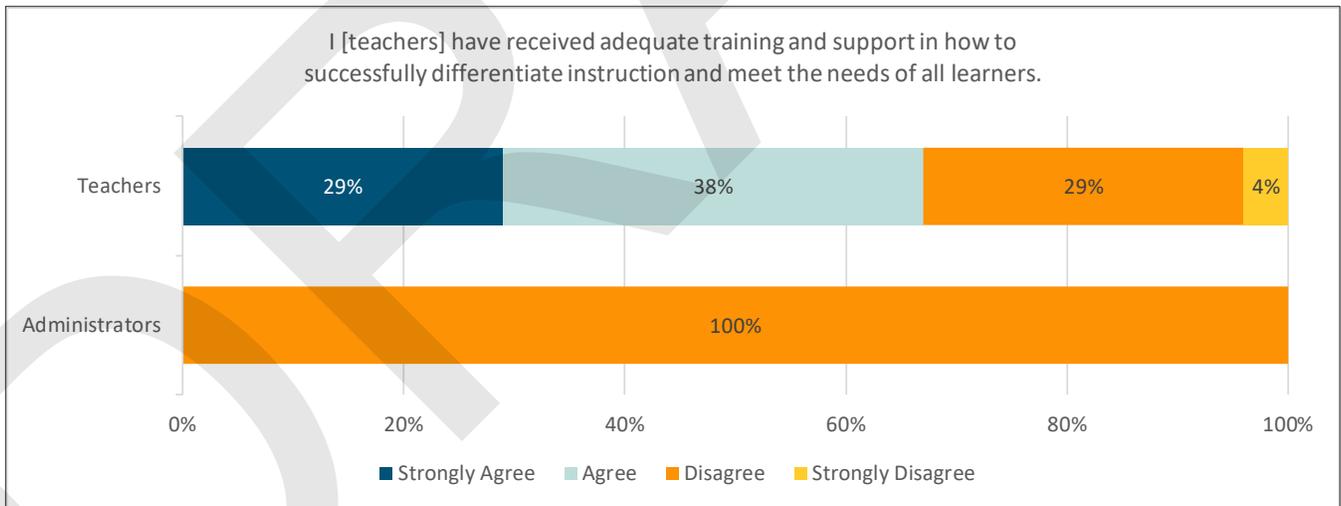
An effective monitoring system not only ensures alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum, but also supports teachers by identifying professional development needs with a focus on improving teachers’ delivery of the curriculum. Although auditors found no evidence of planning for professional development, Chewelah’s strategic plan prioritizes developing a professional development plan. This is intended for Summer of 2023. Additionally, the district is focused on building Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) through work with Solution Tree. This is seen as a strength as evidenced by survey comments:

- “The second strength is the support from the district level for the PLC at Work processes and professional development. This initiative is affecting our teacher collective efficacy and a strong focus on improving instruction and student learning centered around the four critical PLC questions.” (District Personnel)
- “[The] PLC Institute was excellent and greatly impacted my personal learning.” (District Personnel)

One teacher commented, “A lot of people are not current in pedagogy and science. So, they don’t know what they don’t know.” Classroom observations, student achievement trends, and responses to the online survey question about the adequacy of training in differentiated instruction evidence a need for CSD’ professional development to focus on differentiation.

The question asked administrators and teachers to indicate a level of agreement with the statement—teachers have received adequate training and support in how to successfully differentiate instruction and meet the needs of all learners. Responses are presented below.

Exhibit 3.15: Adequacy of Differentiated Instruction Training



Source: Teachers’ and Administrators’ Online Surveys

According to **Exhibit 3.15** 100% of administrators and 33% of teachers strongly disagree or disagree with the statement—teachers have received adequate training and support in how to successfully differentiate instruction and meet the needs of all learners. The survey comments written aligned to the responses:

- “I think all need this opportunity.” (District Personnel)
- “This is an area of needed improvement.” (District Personnel)

The survey responses and comments align to classroom observations and student achievement trends—there is a need for professional development in differentiated instruction.

Chewelah staff are highly engaged in the PLC professional development offered by Solution Tree. The lack of a comprehensive professional development plan and the need for professional development in differentiated instruction hinders improvements to instruction and therefore, student achievement. CSD understands the importance of professional development as evidenced by the statement about exceptional employees on the District Improvement Plan:

- “Our employees are our most important asset in achieving our purpose of student learning.” (District Personnel)

However, with no vision for instruction and student learning and engagement and with no instructional model, teachers and building leaders do not have clear direction for what instruction ideally should look like. The lack of a written curriculum also makes instructional planning difficult, since teachers have to determine both what to teach as well as make decisions regarding how with insufficient direction. Professional development is of critical importance; the development of a written curriculum and a clear vision for teaching and learning will be of invaluable assistance in this regard.

Finding Summary

Without clear expectations for instruction and student engagement, auditors found instruction lacked rigor and differentiation. Students compliantly completed individual work in most classroom observations. Principals feedback is found useful; however, classroom visits are inconsistent. A consistent monitoring protocol and expectations for monitoring curriculum delivery are needed. Although Chewelah lacks a professional development plan, district administrators and teachers are focused on building efficacy through the PLC work with Solution Tree. A need for adequate training in differentiated instruction was evidenced by classroom observations, student achievement trends, and online survey responses. Monitoring instruction informs professional development and therefore, is critical to improving instruction thereby improving student learning.

Finding 4: Not all students have equal access to programs and supports, and some students are over-represented in special education. Expectations for identifying and meeting student needs are not clearly defined in district policy, and procedures for establishing and managing behavior expectations are neither clearly defined nor consistent.

Instructional delivery that is effective requires from all personnel multiple skills and supports. District leaders must first define what effective instruction looks like. This should address not only how students should be engaged and the kind of work they should be assigned, but also how data should be used in planning student engagement and deciding on the supports needed. This must also include what expectations are for student learning and behaviors, and what every staff person's responsibilities are for managing and reinforcing those behavior expectations within a student-centered, positive context. Without a positive context for managing behavior, students' self-efficacy can be impacted and learning can decrease. Likewise, if behavior is not managed, students are distracted from learning or do not feel safe in their learning environment. Safety and feeling secure in the classroom is paramount; this includes both physical and emotional safety (see **Appendix G**). For student learning to be maximized, students also need to be cognitively challenged and see the connection between their learning and real life contexts, so learning is relevant and meaningful.

To determine what structures and expectations are in place for meeting all students' needs and for delivering learning and supports in a safe environment, the auditors examined policy and procedures to determine guidelines for programs, and for student behavior and managing the learning environment. They also reviewed any guidelines in place for identifying special needs, such as giftedness or learning disabilities, to determine what the expectations are for ensuring these needs are met. Overall, the auditors found that district personnel are under-identifying for giftedness, called HiCap (Highly Capable) and is over-identifying for special education, when compared to state averages. Male students and low-income students are over-identified for special education; and female students and low-income students are under-identified for the HiCap program, although trends in this regard varied somewhat. It must be noted that there were almost no HiCap students during the 2022-23 school year. Teachers shared multiple concerns about student behaviors and inconsistency in managing those behaviors, and parents shared many concerns over the management of students, safety issues, and climate, particularly students' experiences with classified support staff.

The auditors will address these issues in two sections: Program Access, and Discipline and Climate.

Program Access

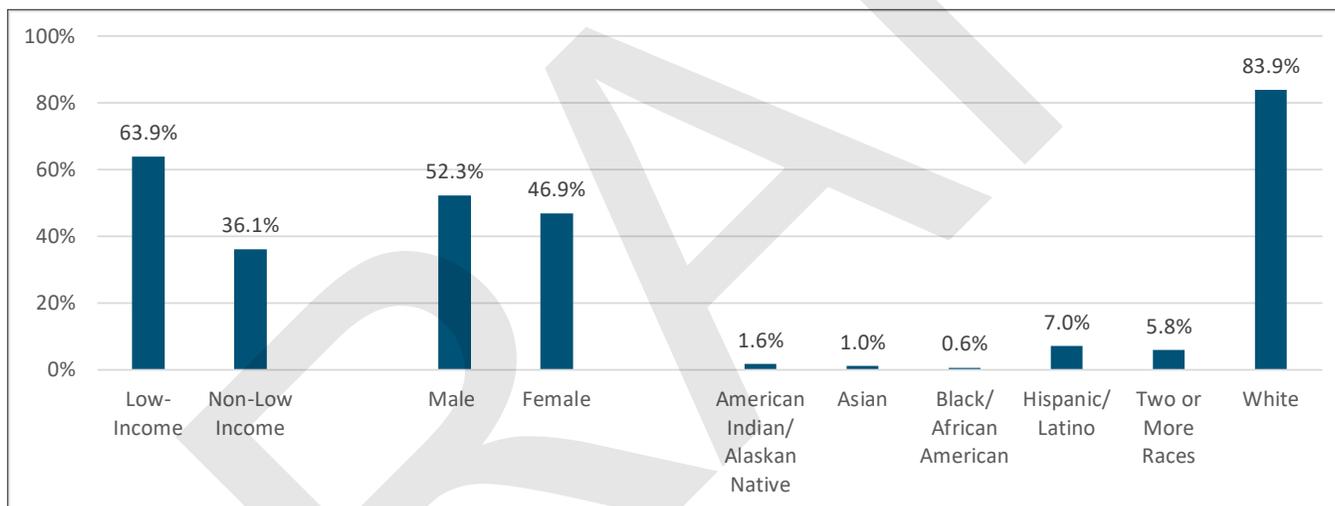
Student access to supports and services is an integral part of effective teaching and learning. All students must have equal access to identified supports to ensure that gaps or challenges in learning are addressed immediately and effectively. When students are over- or under-identified for such services, this may be due to mis-identification, which represents a misuse of district resources. When some students are over-identified for a specific support or service, this may be due to factors unrelated to learning issues and can even result in other students being denied access to those services and their learning needs remaining unmet. To determine whether all students have equal access, the auditors use a measure of proportionality in evaluated enrollment and identification of students for specific support programs, such as Highly Capable (HiCap) and special education (SPED). When a student group is disproportionately represented in any program, this is indicated by their enrollment in that program not matching their enrollment in the total population. A perfect match in enrollment is not necessarily the goal; the auditors look at the enrollments over time to determine if any pattern is evident, and if so, this may reveal a

weakness in the identification process or the misapplication of certain criteria. When demographic or physiological factors are predicting students’ disproportional enrollment in one program over others, it serves as a red flag, since the district should be equally effective with all of its students.

The auditors found that males are currently over-identified for both special education and HiCap, and low-income students are over-identified for SPED and under-identified for HiCap. The auditors found disproportional enrollment in SPED when examined by race/ethnicity, but this was not a consistent trend for any specific group. Disproportionality varied considerably over the last seven years for both SPED and HiCap programs. The auditors found that written direction for SPED identification and implementation is not clearly defined, staffing is a continuous challenge, and parents are not universally satisfied with their students’ services.

The auditors first looked at the district population as a whole. Chewelah School District serves a moderately diverse student population that is almost 84% White, almost 64% low income, and slightly more male than female. The following exhibit shows the enrollment of these different groups for the 2022-23 school year.

Exhibit 4.1: District Enrollment of Student Groups, 2022-23

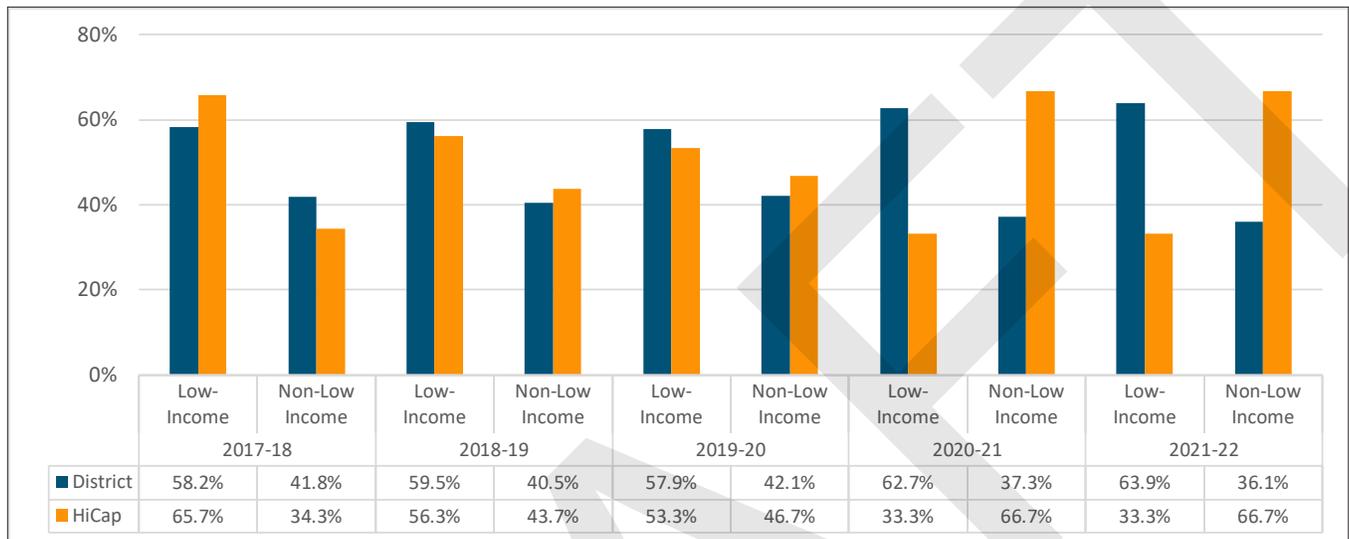


Source: OSPI website

As can be seen in the above exhibit, low-income students represent just under 2/3 of the total student population. Males represent a slightly higher percentage of students than females (52.3% compared) to 46.9%, and non-White students represent just over 16% of the student population, with Hispanic/Latino students representing the largest percentage, at 7%, and students of Two or More Races the next largest group, at 5.8%.

The auditors first looked at the HiCap program to see if student enrollment in that program was proportional with the district’s overall enrollment. The auditors did not find disproportionality by race/ethnicity. However, they did find disproportional enrollment for gender and income groups. The income data are presented in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 4.2: HiCap Enrollment by Income, 2017 to 2022



Source: District-provided data, OSPI website

As can be seen in the exhibit, low-income students are consistently underrepresented in the HiCap enrollments and have been over the last five years. The trend has not improved over time; in the last two years, the gap has widened as identification for this program has decreased. The district had no students identified as HiCap for the 2022-23 school year; there were only six students in 2021-22, or less than 1% of the total student population. The state, on average, has 7% of its students identified as gifted in the 2022-23 school year, and 6.5% the previous year.

The following exhibit presents HiCap data for gender groups.

Exhibit 4.3: HiCap Enrollment by Gender, 2017 to 2022

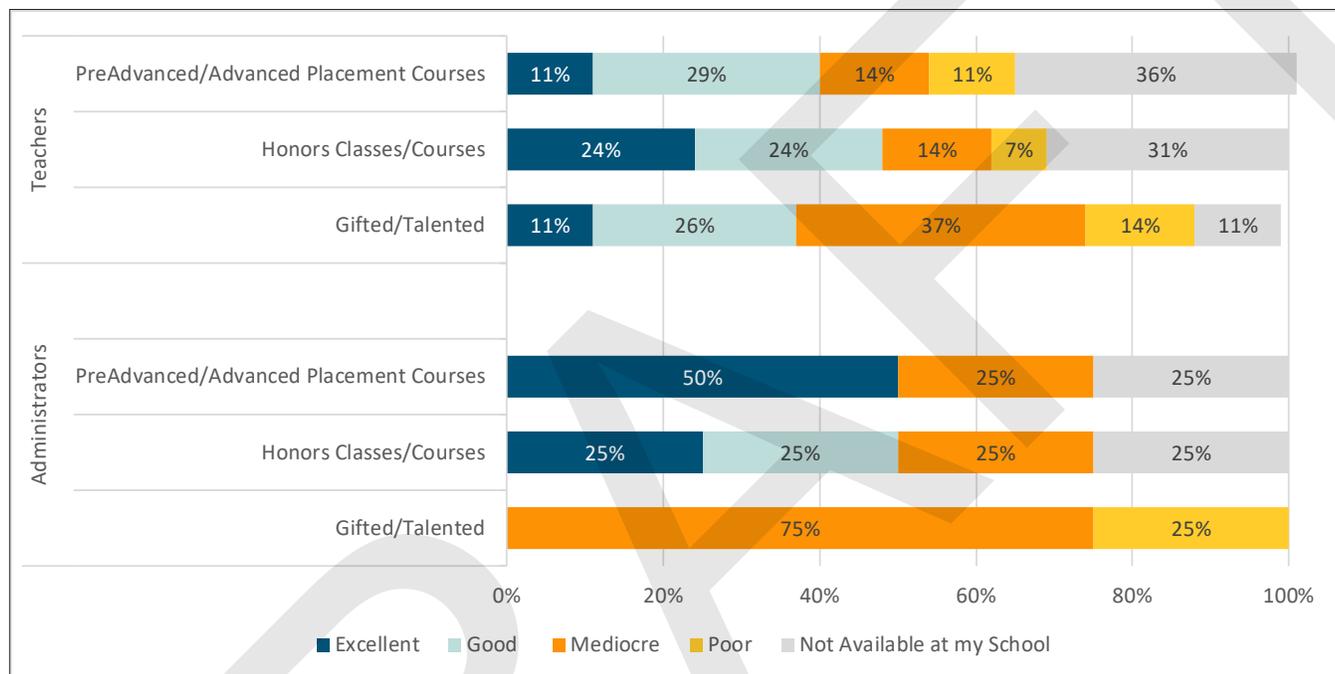


Source: District-provided data, OSPI website

As can be seen in the exhibit, males are over-represented in the program until 2020, when they were under-represented. This was also the case in 2021-22, although there were only 6 students enrolled in the program. The auditors found direction in policy and procedure (2190 and 2190P) for student identification and for program implementation, but did not see evidence of these guidelines in practice as no students were enrolled in the 2022-23 school year.

The following exhibit shows teacher and administrator perceptions of the programs for serving highly capable students. District personnel were asked to rate the programs from excellent to poor.

Exhibit 4.4: Special Programs Survey Responses from Teachers and Administrators



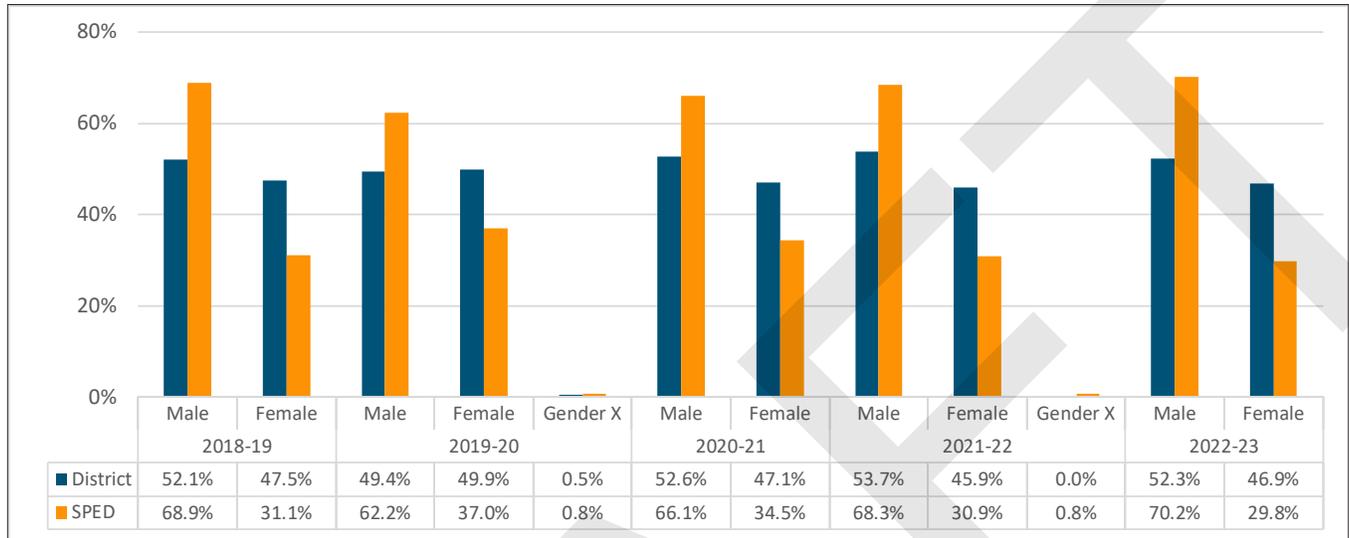
Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding
 Source: Teachers' and Administrators' Online Surveys

As can be seen in the exhibit, no administrators rated the HiCap program excellent or good, and 37% of teachers did. By contrast, 37% of the teachers who responded to the survey rated the HiCap program mediocre, as did 25% of administrators who responded to the survey. Fourteen percent of teachers rated it poor; none of the administrators did. The AP and PreAP programs were much more highly rated. Fifty percent of the administrators who responded to the survey rated them excellent and 11 percent of the teachers, as well. Almost 29% of teachers rated the AP programs good, and 14.29% of teachers rated them mediocre, as did 25% of the administrators who responded. Just under 11% of the teachers rated them poor. Of honors courses, about half of respondents rated them excellent or good, a smaller percentage rated them mediocre or poor, and almost one-third of teachers and one of the administrators reported not having them at their school.

Parents did not comment about HiCap programming, except one on the survey who mentioned they have, "another child [who] is super advanced and she is bored in class." There is a desire to increase services for these students but nothing formal is underway.

The auditors then examined enrollment in the special education program. Enrollment by gender is presented in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 4.5: Special Education Enrollment by Gender, 2018 to 2023

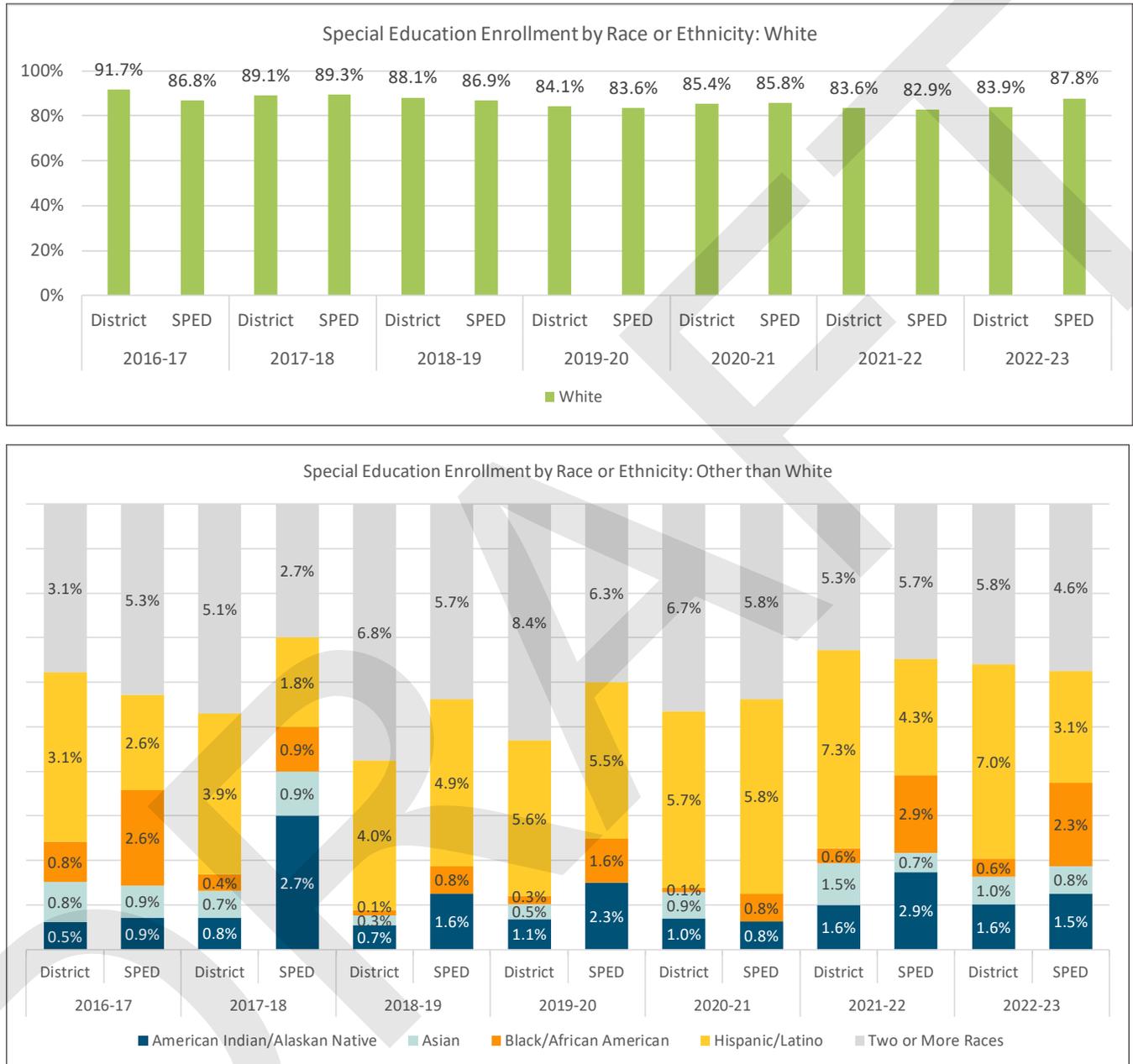


Source: District-provided data, OSPI website

As can be seen in the exhibit, males are over-represented of all students in special education every year over the last five years of data and female students are under-represented. This may represent issues with identification practices or with classroom expectations that are gender-based.

The following exhibit shows enrollment in special education by race or ethnicity.

Exhibit 4.6: SPED Enrollment by Race and/or Ethnicity, 2016 to 2023



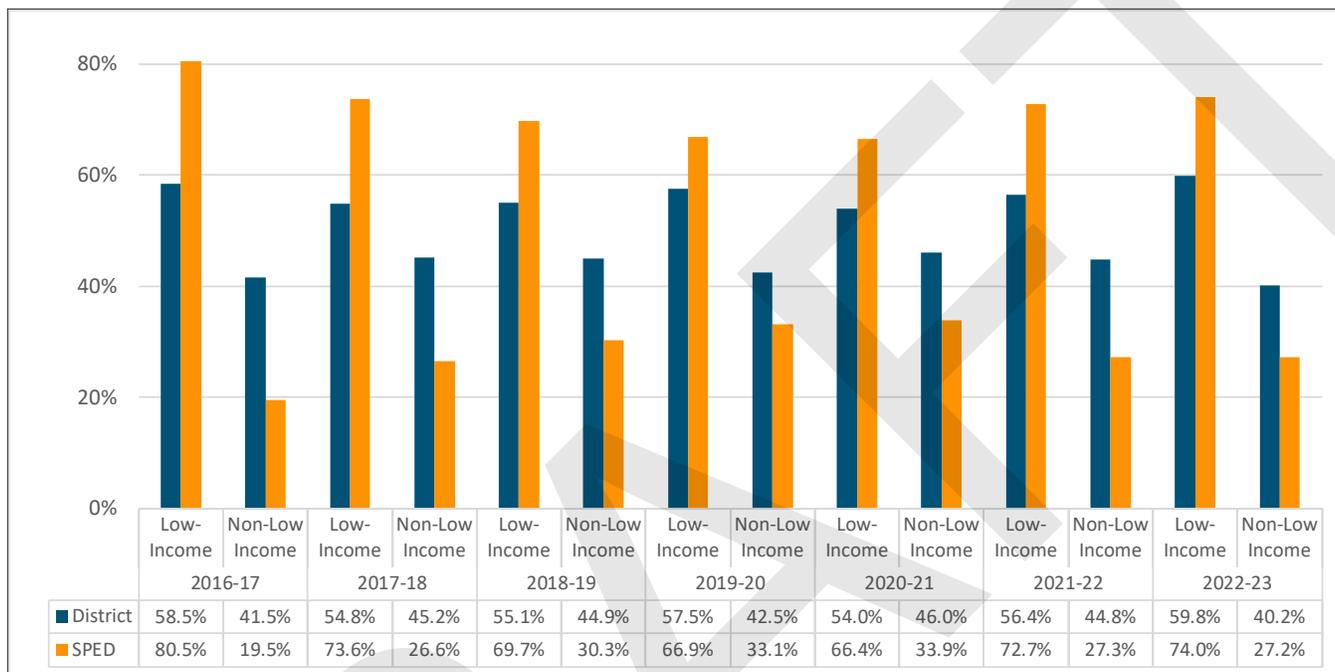
Source: District-provided data, OSPI website

As can be seen in the exhibit, there is some slight disproportionality in SPED enrollment by race or ethnicity when compared with the district’s overall enrollment. White students’ enrollment has been fairly proportional; White students’ SPED identification and enrollment slightly exceeded their representation in the regular population every year except 2017-18 and 2022-23. For the last two years, Hispanic/Latino students have been over-represented in Special Education; their enrollment in special education is twice their enrollment in the regular population in the 2022-23 school year. However, in other years, they have been under-represented in special education, with the exception of the 2017-18 school year. Black/African American students are consistently under-represented in special education, as are Asian students. Students of two or more races have been both under-represented as well as over-

represented in special education, depending on the year, and American Indian/Alaskan Native students are consistently under-represented. Overall, the auditors found no clear trend in over-identifying any specific ethnic group for special education services.

The following exhibit shows special education enrollment by income status.

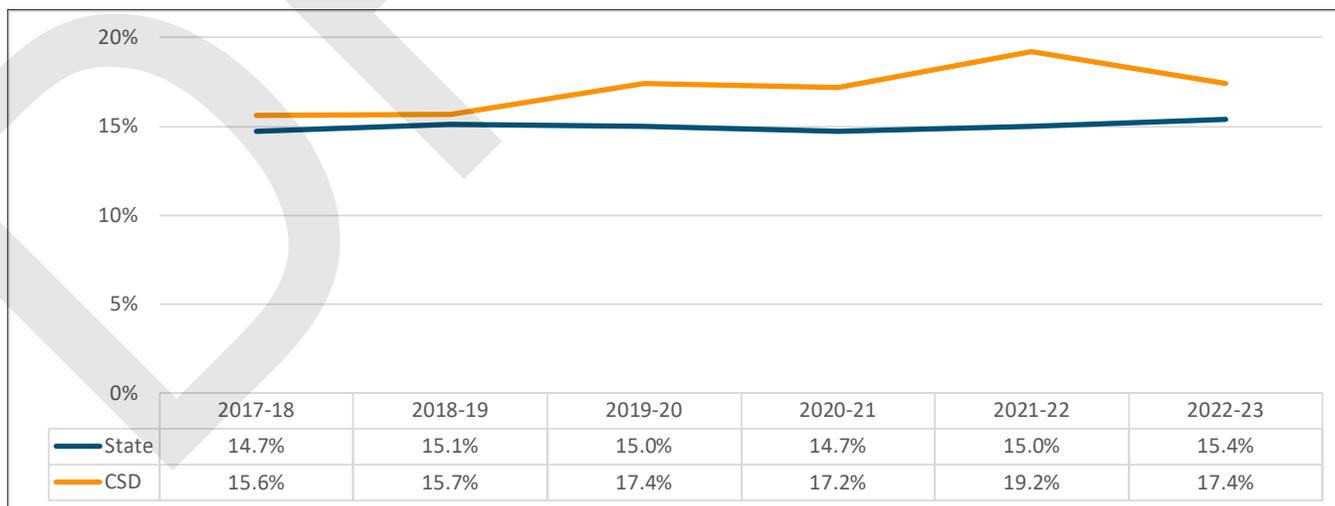
Exhibit 4.7: Special Education Enrollment by Income, 2016 to 2023



Source: District-provided data, OSPI website

As can be seen in the exhibit, students of low income are more likely to be identified as needing special education services as students who are not low-income. This trend is consistent over the seven years of data, although the disproportionality has not remained constant. It was greatest in 2016-17, narrowed considerably in 2019-20, and has increased somewhat over the last few years.

Exhibit 4.8: District Special Education Enrollment Compared with the State, 2017-2023

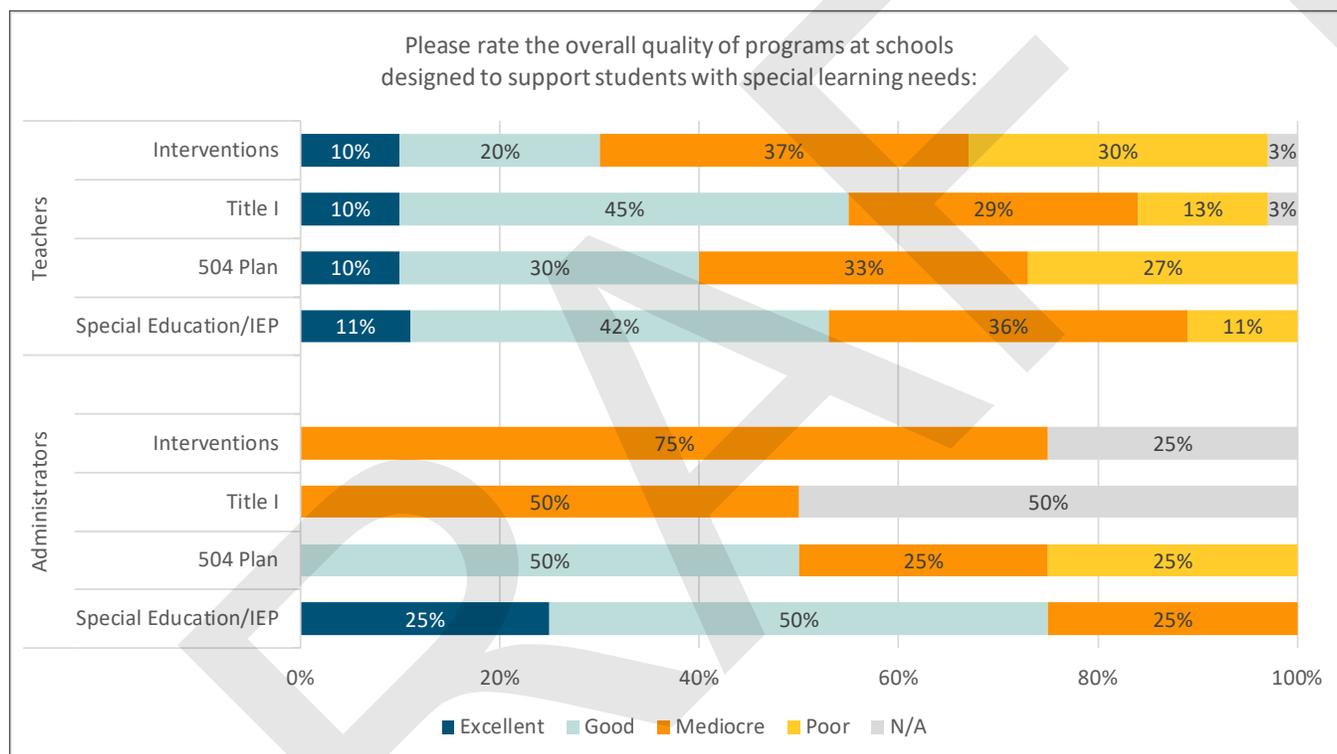


Source: District-provided data, OSPI website

As can be seen in the exhibit, Chewelah School District has consistently identified a higher percentage of students needing special education services than the state average, exceeding that average by four percentage points in 2021-22. The discrepancy narrowed again in 2022-23 to two percentage points.

Special education was a concern for parents and district personnel. Administrators shared that filling positions for para-educators is a challenge and parents shared frustrations about IEPs and 504 plans not being followed. The auditors did not find any clear expectations, in writing, for how special education programming would be implemented across all classrooms when IEP conditions don't apply, nor did the auditors find written guidelines for the identification process.

Exhibit 4.9: Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of Programs Serving Students with Special Needs



Source: Teachers' and Administrators' Online Surveys

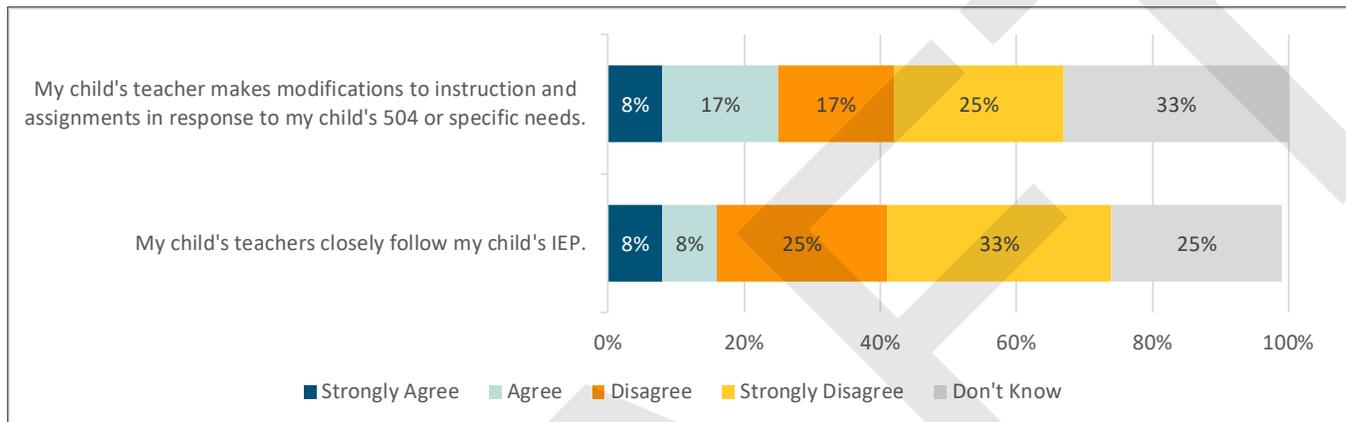
As can be seen in the exhibits, teachers were divided in their evaluation of Special education and 504 plan services, with about 55% seeing it as excellent or good and 45% as mediocre or poor. A higher percentage of teachers, 60%, rated the 504 programming as mediocre or poor, with 40% rating it good or excellent. Half of administrators rated special education as good and the remainder were split between excellent (25%) and mediocre (25%). The 504 program also rated lower; half of administrators rated it good and the remainder rated it mediocre (25%) or poor (25%).

Teachers also reported their perceptions of communication surrounding the needs of special education students or students with a 504 plan. Most teachers agreed there is a well-designed plan for supporting students with a disability, with about one-third disagreeing with this statement. Most teachers disagreed, however, that the RtI process is effective for learners who are struggling, and over one-fourth reported they didn't know, with 30% agreeing with the statement. Over half of teachers (56%) disagreed that

they are kept up to date regarding students with a 504 plan. Teachers were almost evenly split in their responses to the statement that they have had adequate training in working with students with learning disabilities.

Parents were asked about their perception of special education programming and support for students with a 504 Plan. Their responses are presented in the following exhibits.

Exhibit 4.10: Parent Perceptions of Special Education Services



Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding
 Source: Parents' Online Survey

As can be seen in the exhibits, the parents whose students have an IEP or 504 plan had varied responses to the statements. When asked if their child's teacher follows their child's IEP, more than 75% of the parents who responded (n=9) disagreed. When asked if their child's teacher makes modifications in response to their child's 504 or specific needs, more than 40% disagreed, and 25% agreed.

Parents shared concerns regarding their students' experiences in special education. These included concerns over lack of contact and communication and a failure to implement their child's IEP or respond to their child's needs:

- "[School admin] don't contact parents when there is an issue."
- "They are not able to capture the abilities of these kids that are not mainstream—none of the kids here ARE mainstream. They are from all over."
- "We have a problem with kids in SPED starting to disengage in 4th and 5th—and in 8th/9th they start with self-medication."
- "I have been emailed six different IEPs."
- "There's a difference in who gets the services."

Parents shared frustration over their child's 504 plan or IEP not being followed, and not having good communication with the school (see also **Finding 1**).

- "[Co-teaching] is done more in theory than in practice." (District Personnel)
- "[It's] a vastly different model (from one school to the next)—what I've seen happening—they go to 7th grade, and if they get stuck into the SPED math or ELA class, they are stuck there forever." (Parent)
- "[Here, the] model is...you only come to special ed if you have a disability and you come to sped and that's forever." (District Personnel)

- “At the gradeschool they are great—at the HS it’s like beating my head against the wall.” (Parent)
- “They get to MS and HS it’s just not the same. I have one going to MS—you have to really be on top of the teachers.” (Parent)

Among district personnel, there were concerns over the identification process, that the district is not identifying enough or that the process is limited to students with severe disabilities. Sample comments included:

- “I think we’re under-identifying. We have more needs. Most of us probably think we’re higher, they just don’t test the kids.”
- “I think we’re weak with our child find. I have a couple of students that pop into my head, that this year I’ve said, something else is going on.”

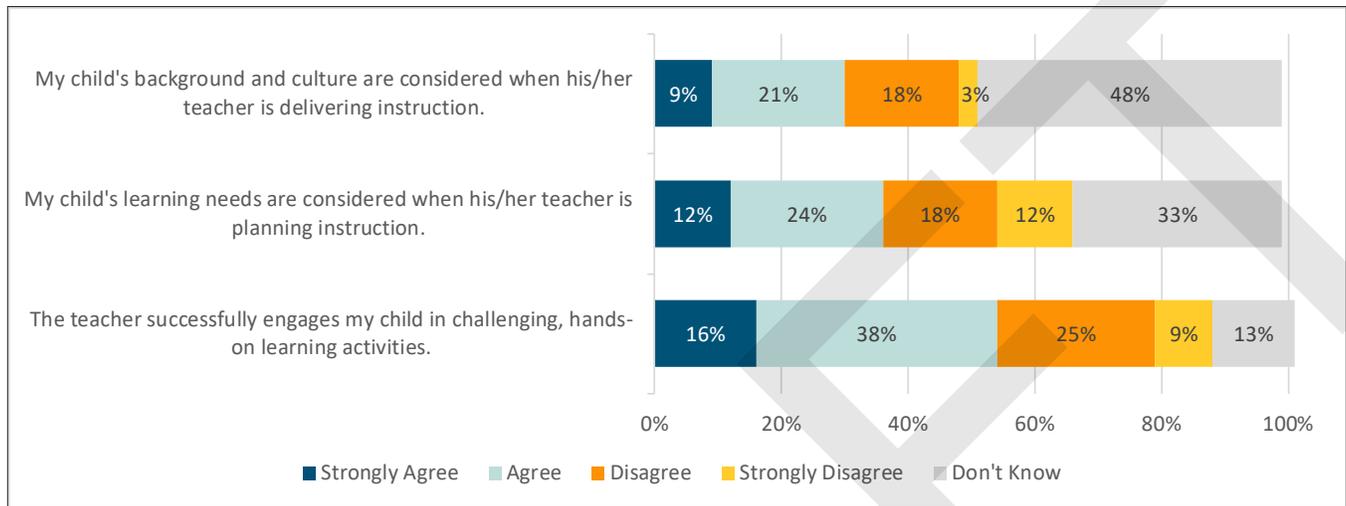
There were also comments from personnel regarding the need for more structures to better address the needs of all students, but in particular those with special needs. There were concerns over the lack of sufficient interventions and curriculum. These included:

- “In special education we need to identify curriculum—interventions. We need guidance documents that say—how do you access our behavior grid? We need those things to be built.” (District Personnel)
- “There are no lesson plans.” (District Personnel)
- “[Classroom] visits are all about: let’s look for engagement—[but] what do you see? [Teachers] monitoring.” (District Personnel)
- “I am not confident that many of our classroom teachers are able to differentiate that widely as they manage an already wide variety of learning and behavioral needs.” (District Personnel)
- “If we had a stronger tier I and II that would be beautiful.” (District Personnel)
- “[We need to] pull kids for shorter time—keep them in the classroom—doing co-teaching, not just limited to just our few kids.” (District Personnel)
- “Title I are using whatever [for interventions]. There is one Title teacher—she sees 20+ students a day as a full-time Title teacher. She does reading groups. As Tier III, our part of the triangle is too big and getting bigger.” (District Personnel)
- “We need to make sure first that Tier I and II are STRONG. When they bring kids for us to look at them, we need to see numbers.” (District personnel)

The auditors found strong written direction for implementing tiered instruction in the classroom in policy, but no clear procedures for how to implement this in the classroom, nor was there written clarity over where interventions are to be delivered. The state has a policy for full educational opportunity being assured for every child and the federal government recommends a least restrictive environment, but most students in Chewelah receive interventions outside of the classroom, with a Title I teacher or resource teacher. This is not considered the most effective means of providing educational supports or specially designed instruction (see **Appendix H**). Tier I and Tier II are ideally delivered exclusively in the regular classroom, and even Tier III can be in the classroom with the cooperation and support of a resource teacher in a co-teaching environment. However, using different models, scaffolds, and supports with flexible student groups is a critical part of making Tier I instruction effective.

Parents were asked about the instruction their child receives in the classroom, to determine their perceptions and experience. Their responses are presented in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 4.11: Parent Perceptions of the Nature of their Child’s Classroom Instruction



Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding
 Source: Parents’ Online Survey

Regarding whether or not their child receives challenging, hands-on learning, just over half of the parents who responded agreed while one-third disagreed. The remaining 13% did not know. Regarding whether the teacher considers their child’s learning needs when planning instruction, just over one-third agreed (36%) while 30% disagreed, and one-third reported they did not know. Parents had the lowest agreement to the statement their child’s background is taken into account; just 30% agreed while 21% disagreed and almost half of the parents who responded said they did not know.

There were concerns shared by parents regarding the lack of hands-on learning and engaging instruction in their child’s classroom. These comments included:

- “[I’m] very disappointed with the lack of hands-on learning in all levels.”
- “There are some teachers who do this and the kids love it.”
- “Teachers seems hands-off, not hands-on and assume students can be successful. It is not engaging.”
- “[There is] No practical learning like dealing with real life.”
- What needs improvement? “The curriculum and how the teachers actually teach their class. Not every student learns the same so there has to be a way to have class be more engaging and get kids excited about learning. . . . Teaching our students life-long skills like cooking or how credit works.”
- “Some of the teachers give way too many worksheets.”
- “I have no clue what is being taught to my child. What I know is from what my kids tell me.”

Other parents commented on the effectiveness of their child's classroom instruction:

- Strength? "Meeting the child where they are at academically."
- "The teachers and paraprofessionals work hard to make school special for my kids, above and beyond what is required."

Overall, there is insufficient clarity in written direction regarding how the RtI process should function in the regular classroom within the district's vision for effective, tiered instruction. Currently, instruction is teacher-dependent and inconsistent, more teacher-centered than student centered and parents do not report being consistently informed about their child's academic progress (see also **Findings 3** and **5**). A few parents also report their students are not engaged in class; they are bored or don't see connection to the real world in their learning. This disconnect can also lead to behavior issues (see following section).

The special education program is not consistently implemented K-12; there is insufficient written direction to guide program implementation, and there is reportedly a disconnect between the elementary and secondary campuses in the philosophy guiding program and service delivery. Interventions are not delivered as a part of the regular classroom instructional process, and support for different learning needs is not consistent across all classrooms.

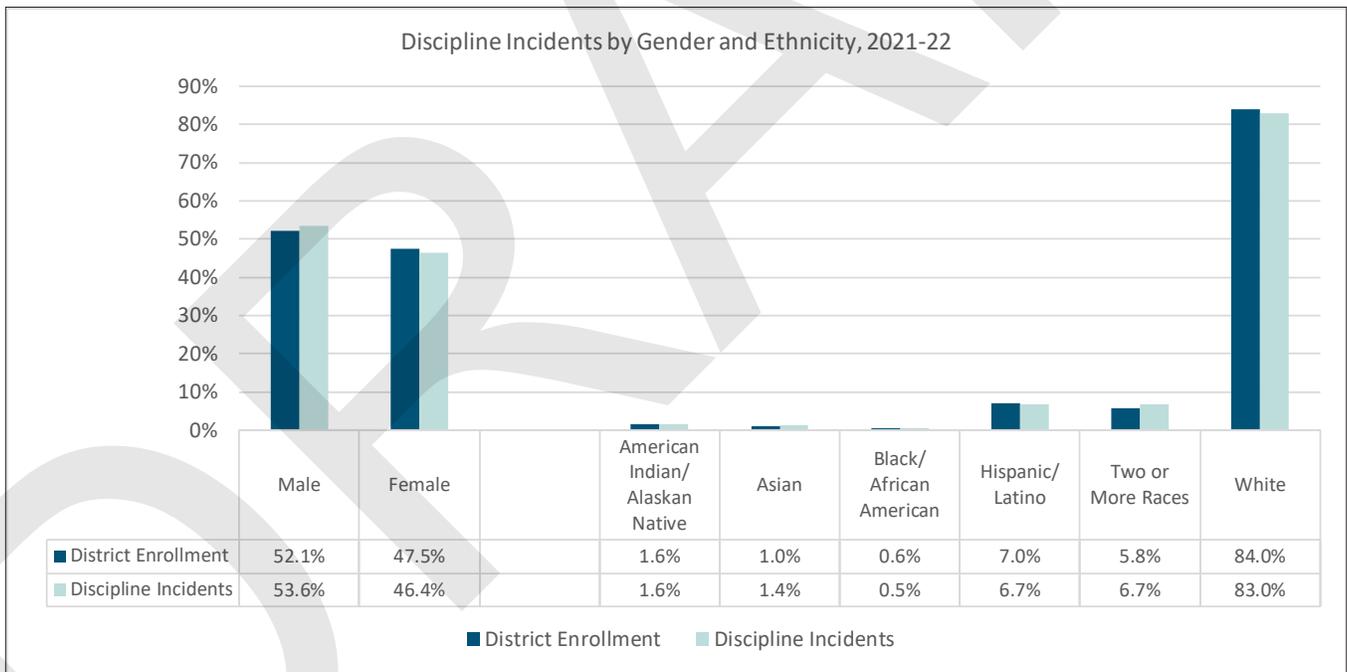
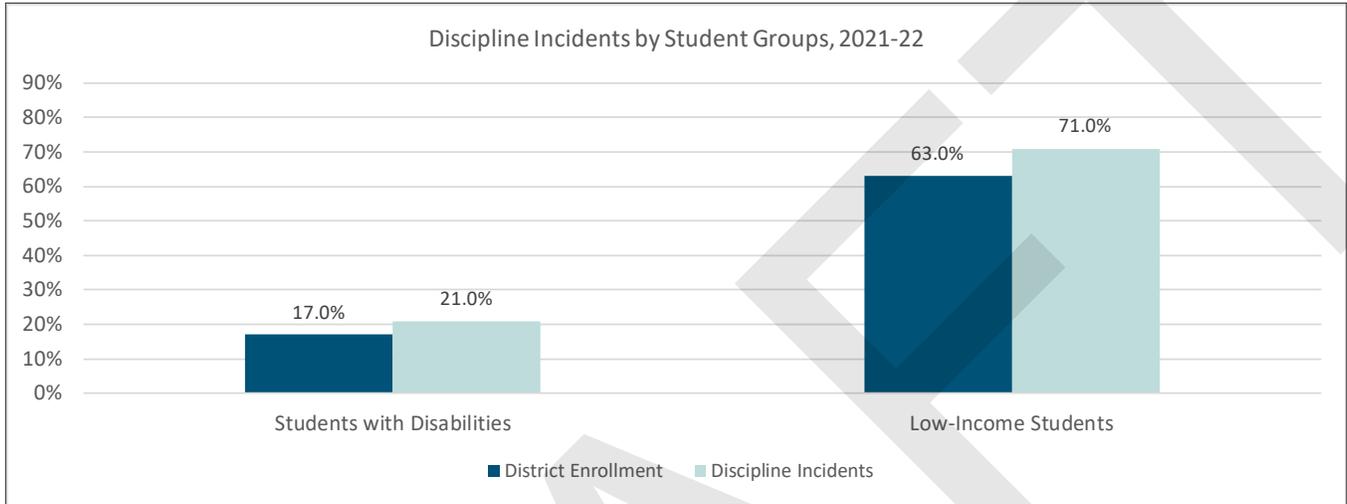
Discipline and Student Safety

The auditors also reviewed issues related to discipline, safety, and behavior management. Behavior was a concern shared by every stakeholder group, and parents also shared concerns over their children's safety. Bullying and emotional safety was also a concern, shared by parents from both building. The auditors learned there is a Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) model at the elementary, but did not find evidence of this at the secondary building. However, PBIS is only effective when it is clearly defined and consistently implemented, and the auditors did not find any written direction related to PBIS or other positive behavior supports in district or school documents.

Discipline policy (3241) expects each school to develop behavioral expectations for the building and to proactively teach those expectations across various school settings. There are additional expectations that there should be precise definitions of problem behaviors and behavioral violations to address differences in perceptions; also to identify a continuum of best practices for classroom-based responses to behavior problems. The auditors did not receive any documentation of this from either school. The Jenkins Staff handbook addresses discipline but only in the three-step response to behaviors when students need to be excused from the classroom. *Discipline procedure (3241)* outlines teachers' rights to exclude students from the classroom in case of behavior violations and outlines legal rights and responsibilities related to suspension and expulsion. In policy, it is stated that it is the intent to support students in meeting behavioral expectations and to keep them in the classroom as much as possible so learning is not impeded.

The auditors reviewed discipline data to determine if any student groups are recipients of disciplinary actions more than others. Overall, there was no clear trend by race/ethnicity, but males and low-income students are slightly over-represented in disciplinary actions. These data are presented in the following two exhibits.

Exhibit 4.12: Discipline Incidents by Income, Gender, and Ethnicity, 2021-22



Source: District-provided data, OSPI website

As can be seen in the two exhibits, low-income students are disciplined at a rate slightly higher than their enrollment, as are male students. Students of two or more races are also slightly over-represented. Other groups remained fairly proportional.

The auditors heard from both parents and district personnel about behavioral concerns at both buildings. These were expressed during interviews and on the surveys. Comments included:

- “More follow through on the consequences and discipline of these students. Keep the expectations high.” (District Personnel)
- “Behavior has been a struggle in the classrooms and there is not a system for this.” (District Personnel)
- “Discipline! Especially at the high school level. Holding children accountable and having appropriate expectations.” (District Personnel)
- “Get rid of cell phones in school! Have disciplinary action for swearing, disrespect, refusal to work and co only with teacher instruction, rough housing and violence, intolerance, rude comments to other students.” (Parent)
- “We need the schools to crack down on discipline! To be consistent and clear with expectations and consequences! We need the administrators to believe that these kids can achieve great things and push them to have goals and work towards those goals.” (Parent)
- “Discipline procedures are weak.” (District Personnel)

There were concerns about consistency in reinforcing and supporting behavior in school. Despite a commitment to PBIS in the elementary, some commented that it is not consistently followed through.

- “I don’t think we do what we say, here. We say we are a PBIS school. We have done lots of those things. [But we aren’t consistent].” (District Personnel)
- “We have lots of behavior stuff. We have a behavior classroom. We have all these little adjustments—brought in a VP. Are we looking at the process? We have the perception that nothing happens—staff have given up on writing referrals.” (District Personnel)
- “Consistency with discipline is hard—across the campus. Been here through a couple of different people—it’s the hardest time working with discipline with kids.” (District Personnel)
- “Why aren’t we following procedures—this is what I’m running into in this district. We aren’t following it or we don’t know it.” (Parent)
- “We post our wishes and desires on the wall. We build a rewards system. Do we really make the kids stick to that? We tell the kids we are going to walk quietly and respectfully in the halls—as soon as we teach it we don’t talk about it. We don’t follow through.” (District Personnel)
- “Here the philosophy is good, but procedures very very weak.” (District Personnel)
- “[There is a] lack of accountability—at the high school, they have none. It’s really unhealthy over there.” (District Personnel)
- “I write this referral and expect somebody else to deal with them. It’s not my problem. When we look at the number of referrals—well, no one is handling this.” (District Personnel)
- “Having more accountability, discipline is an issue in both schools.” (District Personnel)

A few confirmed that the elementary school is definitely working on the PBIS system. One staff members stated, “[We’ve] been working on the PBIS thing—being able to recognize students for character traits.”

Others mentioned needing more counseling for all children at both campuses, although the district has hired a mental health therapist. These comments included:

FINDINGS

- “[We need] more counseling services (one counselor is NOT enough).” (Parent)
- [We need] behavior supports and counseling services at the elementary level. Interventions to improve academic growth in the upper elementary grades.” (District Personnel)

A parent also stated, “Better conflict resolution with other students would be so great for the kids.”

The Chewelah School District has a student population that is high poverty and has many needs and challenges that contribute to behavior issues. Positive systems of support and behavior management can be effective, but engaging and challenging instruction is a critical part of this.

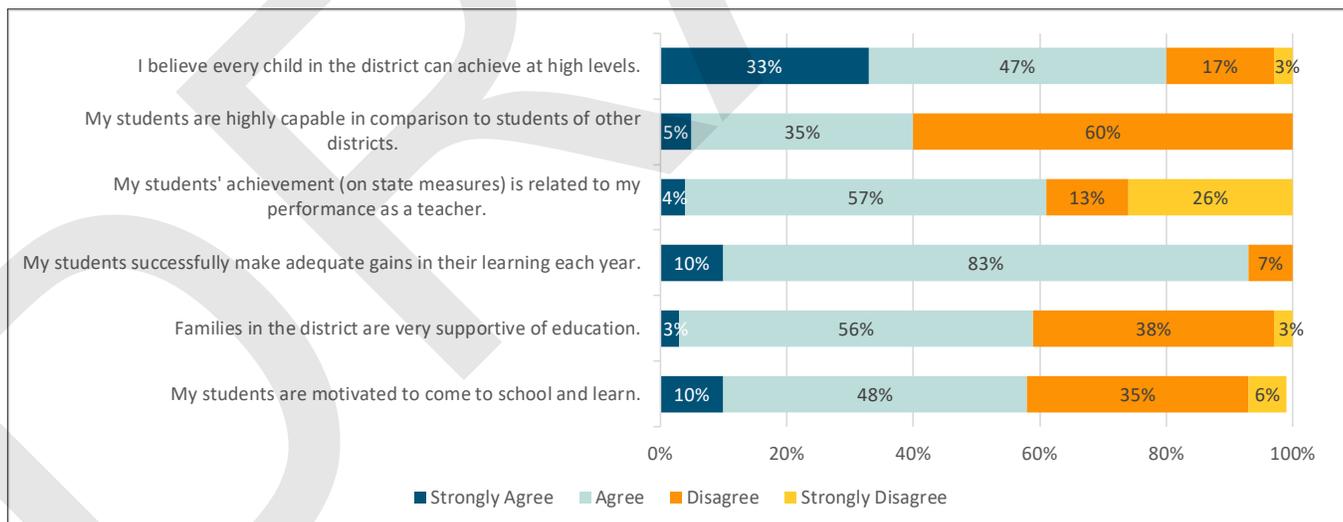
- “We have lot of very needy families who...have lots of abuse, drugs, etc.” (District Personnel)
- “I think our community is very needy. I’m not sure that [our admin] fully understands the depth of the need.” (District Personnel)
- “We have a high amount of CPS-involved kids.” How many homeless? “Quite a few. We need a full-time social worker.” (District Personnel)
- “We deal with kids with rough backgrounds—I would change that for them (the students).” (District Personnel)

The need and challenges in the community can present challenges in the classrooms as well and affect the learning process.

Teacher Expectations

The auditors also asked teachers and school leaders about behavior management and expectations, and students’ motivation to learn and family support. These responses are presented in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 4.13: Teacher Expectations



Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding

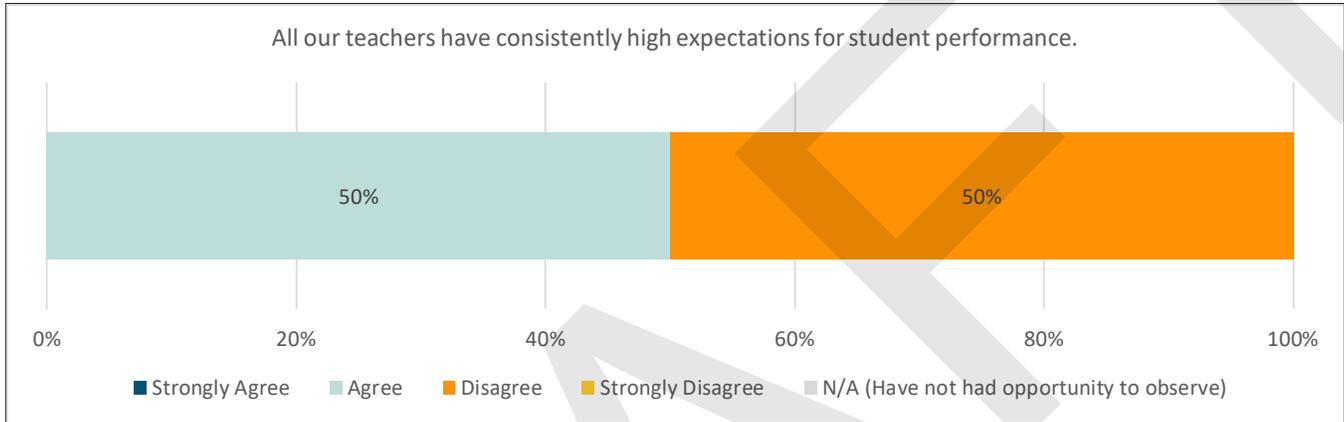
Source: Teachers’ Online Survey

As can be seen in the exhibit, when asked if their students are motivated to come to school and learn, over 56% of teachers agreed, but over 40% disagreed. Almost 60% of teachers agreed that families in the district are very supportive, but again 40% disagreed. A high percentage, more than 87%, agree that their students successfully make adequate gains in their learning each year, but just over one-fourth agreed that their students are highly capable compared to students of other districts. Forty percent

disagreed and one-third reported they did not know. However, when asked if students could achieve at high levels, more than three-fourths agreed and less than 20% disagreed. There was a great deal of frustration from teachers in survey comments regarding student behaviors. One commented, “very few students get engaged with learning. They are not interested in anything but being goofy kids. We can not get them engaged in anything but sitting and playing with anything they get their hands on.”

Administrators were split on whether or not their teachers have high expectations for students. Their responses are presented in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 4.14: Administrator Perceptions of Teacher Expectations



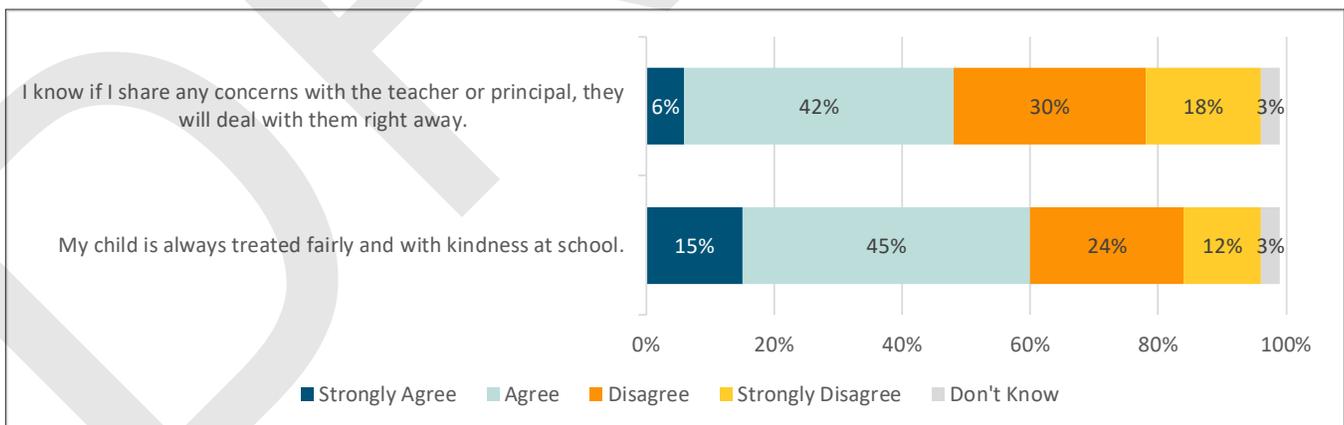
Source: Administrators’ Online Survey

Of the four administrators who responded, two agreed and two disagreed that teachers have high expectations for their students.

Parent Concerns and Survey Responses

The auditors then asked parents about their perceptions of the climate in the schools and about responses to any concerns they have shared. These responses are presented in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 4.15: Parent Perceptions of Climate and....?



Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding

Source: Parents’ Online Survey

FINDINGS

As can be seen in the exhibit, 60% of parents agreed that their child is treated fairly and with kindness at school, but 36% disagreed. To the statement that concerns shared with the teacher or principal will be dealt with right away, disagreement was even higher, just below 50%. Agreement was just over 48%. Parents shared concerns over how their children are treated, and some of these concerns were supported by staff comments as well. They usually focused on how support staff treat children, particularly in the lunch room. These comments included:

- “The paras harass the kid at lunchtime.” (Parent)
- “And our lunch lady is MEAN. And the lunch room is not a great place to be at either building.” (District Personnel)

Another parent shared about not feeling heard or affirmed when sharing concerns. To the question, What needs improvement? They responded: “Taking people serious[ly], not ignoring their concerns, communication, teachers caring about their students beyond a letter grade, teachers not shaming students, the district needs to step up student safety as their number one priority.” A few other parents shared concerns over safety, particularly the ease with which the building can be entered.

- “All three of my kids have talked about being bullied—at the JH/SH school. And nothing is done.”
- “It’s too easy to walk through the halls. I do know...safety is lacking. Training is lacking.”
- “I need my daughter to feel safe at school. I never thought I’d be contemplating homeschooling when I move to a small town for my children.”

Other parents shared frustration at not getting a response. A few sample comments included:

- “I do not get called back.”
- “If it’s an uncomfortable topic, you don’t get a response.”
- Concerns? “Not applying discipline in a timely fashion, do not notify parents of acting out behaviors.”

Overall, the auditors found some efforts to manage behavior at the elementary school, but did not find evidence of a cohesive, coordinated system to support positive behavior and keep students productively engaged. High engagement and positive relationships are the two most salient features of effective disciplinary systems, along with strong parent-school communication and ancillary supports, such as counseling and mental health interventions and resources. The district has started putting services in place, but behavior continues to be a major concern of both teachers and parents. There is not a perception that expectations and follow-through are consistent across all buildings. Parents have concerns over students’ safety and do not feel heard or that concerns receive a timely response.

Finding 5: Direction for assessment in the Chewelah School District is robust but is undermined by the lack of a written curriculum. Expectations for assessment practices found in policy and procedure are comprehensive not consistently followed. Achievement trends show Chewelah's students do not consistently outperform state peers.

An effective district ensures a comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation plan directs the selection, development, and use of student assessments to inform program, budget, curricular, and instructional decisions at the district, school, and classroom levels. This type of feedback ensures system accountability and internal consistency. Both formative and summative assessment data serves as the sources of feedback for district staff, families, and the community. Formative assessment data provide immediate information to teachers regarding a student's progress towards mastery of discrete objectives; teachers adjust instruction accordingly. Analyzing summative assessment data allow for identifying trends and making comparisons across the district, grade levels, and courses, informing program evaluation and budget priorities.

To determine the status of student assessment in Chewelah School District, auditors examined board policy, Washington State Smarter Balanced Assessment (WSBA) assessment data for school years 2017-2022, the district assessment plan, and other related district documents. Auditors interviewed board members, administrators, teachers, and parents regarding student assessment in the district. Additionally, administrator and teacher online survey data and responses were analyzed to gain insight into perceptions about assessment.

Auditors found Chewelah School District's board policy set robust direction for assessment; however, this clear direction was undermined by a lack of written curriculum. Additionally, the document referred to as the district assessment plan did not include the level of specificity needed to guide instructional decisions at the classroom level or for program evaluation and budget considerations at the school and district levels. Auditors found the scope of assessment unable to provide the immediate progress monitoring and diagnostic data needed to adjust instruction, revise curriculum, or evaluate programs accordingly. Use of assessment data to inform decisions at the district, school, and classroom level was inconsistent from classroom to classroom and school to school. Additionally, inconsistent achievement trends on state tests indicate a misalignment between the written, taught, and tested curriculum.

Assessment and Program Evaluation Plan

Chewelah's board policy set robust direction for assessment in the district. Auditors compared the assessment policies and the district's assessment plan to the CMIM expected characteristics of a comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation plan and rated each characteristic accordingly. The below describes the 16 characteristics of a comprehensive plan and is followed by an explanation of the auditors' rating of each characteristic.

Exhibit 5.1: Characteristics of a Comprehensive Student Assessment and Program Evaluation Plan

Characteristic (The plan...)	Rating
Vision/Philosophy	
1. Describes the philosophical framework for the design of the student assessment plan and directs both formative and summative assessment of the curriculum by course and grade in congruence with board policy. Expects ongoing formative and summative program evaluation; directs use of data to analyze group, school, program, and system student trends.	X
Assessment Design and Requirements	
2. Specifies the connection(s) among district, state, and national assessments.	P
3. Requires aligned student assessment examples and tools to be placed in curriculum and assessment documents.	X
4. Provides a list of student assessment and program evaluation tools, purposes, subjects, type of student tested, timelines, etc.	P
Assessment Procedures	
5. Includes an explicit set of formative and summative assessment procedures to carry out the expectations outlined in the plan and in board policy. Provides for regular formative and summative assessment at all levels of the system (organization, program, student).	P
6. Specifies the overall assessment and analysis procedures used to determine curriculum effectiveness.	P
7. Requires that formative, diagnostic assessment instruments that align to the district curriculum be administered to students frequently to give teachers information for instructional decision making. This includes using instruments that yield information regarding which students need which learner objectives to be at the appropriate level of difficulty (e.g., provides data for differentiated instruction).	P
8. Delineates responsibilities and procedures for monitoring the administration of the comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation plan and/or procedures.	X
9. Identifies and provides direction on the use of diverse assessment strategies for multiple purposes at all levels—district, program, school, and classroom—that are both formative and summative.	P
Data Availability, Analysis, and Use	
10. Directs the feedback process; assures the proper use of assessment data at all levels.	P
11. Provides for appropriate trainings for various audiences on assessment and the instructional use of assessment results.	
12. Specifies how equity issues will be identified and addressed using data sources; controls for possible bias.	
13. Specifies creation of an assessment data system that allows for the attribution of costs by program, permitting program evaluations to support program-based cost-benefit analyses.	
Program Evaluation	
14. Identifies the components of the student assessment system that will be included in program evaluation efforts and specifies how these data will be used to determine continuation, modification, or termination of a given program.	
Communication and Supporting Consistency	
15. Specifies the roles and responsibilities of the central office staff and school-based staff for assessing all students using designated assessment measures, and for analyzing test data.	
16. Establishes a process for communicating and training staff in the interpretation of results, changes in state and local student achievement tests, and new trends in the student assessment field.	
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Exhibit 5.1 shows five of the 16 characteristics or 31% of the characteristics were rated as fully met. Nine of the 16 characteristics were rated as partially met and two of the characteristics were not met. Chewelah’s direction for assessment is robust and needs only a few modifications for greater clarity. The district is taking steps to ensure the expectations presented in policy and planning documents are consistently followed by all staff in the district through work with Solution Tree in developing a written curriculum, including aligned assessments. These actions will greatly assist with monitoring and improving student learning. Details regarding auditors’ rating of each characteristic are provided below for district planning purposes.

Characteristic 1: Describes philosophical framework (Met)

Policy 2001, Instruction: Assessment describes the district’s philosophical framework for the design of the student assessment plan. This policy lists the district’s commitments to a comprehensive assessment system; the purposes of assessment; the expected components of quality assessment practices; the users of assessment information; and required federal, state, and district assessments.

Characteristic 2: Specifies connection(s) among district, state, and national assessments (Partially Met)

Policy 2001, Instruction: Assessment states assessment results reveal learning progress “...in alignment to Common Core, Next Gen Science, State, and local learning standards in all areas.” This policy includes a statement committing the district to “aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment to district, state, and national standards.” Although this policy acknowledges district, state, and national assessments, specifying the connection between these assessments is unclear.

Characteristic 3: Requires aligned student assessment examples and tools in curriculum and assessment documents (Met)

Policy 2001, Instruction: Assessment provides direction regarding aligned student assessment examples and tools in the district assessment plan:

- “Aligning learning goals to be assessed.”
- “AND connecting the written, taught, and tested curriculum into a coherent system.”

Characteristic 4: Provides a list of student assessments and program evaluation tools (Partially Met)

Policy 2001, Instruction: Assessment explains students’ learning progress is assessed through district developed and selected grade level and course assessment tools. This policy lists the state and federally required assessments and district assessments available. The district assessment plan outlines district and classroom teacher-supported assessments, listing the grade levels, specific assessment tools, and aligned content area. Neither policy nor the district assessment plan provide an explanation of the purpose of each assessment, the student subgroup the assessment is administered to, or the timeline for administration.

Characteristic 5: Includes an explicit set of formative and summative assessment procedures (Partially Met)

The expectation for use of formative and assessment data is outlined on the district assessment plan. This document explains assessments are used weekly to guide instruction; quarterly to measure and monitor growth; quarterly to review curriculum, academic programs, and MTSS; and annually to celebrate achievement and growth. *Policy 2001, Instruction: Assessment* also directs the use of formative and summative assessment data by students, staff, administrators, board, and community members to

improve learning. However, explicit procedures for carrying out formative and summative assessments at all levels of the system were not found.

Characteristic 6: Specific assessment and analysis procedures (Partially Met)

The expectation for use of formative and assessment data is outlined in *Policy 2001, Instruction: Assessment*. This policy explains how students, staff, administrators, parents and the community use assessment data. A commitment to making data driven decisions to improve learning and teaching is also stated in this policy. Auditors did not find documentation specifying the overall assessment and analysis procedures used to determine curriculum effectiveness.

Characteristic 7: Requires the frequent administration of formative and diagnostic assessments aligned to curriculum (Partially Met)

Policy 2001, Instruction: Assessment explains the purpose of assessment as informing decision making to improve learning and system accountability. Assessments expected to be administered are listed in this policy and the district assessment plan. These documents are silent on how the instruments will yield information to inform differentiated instruction.

Characteristic 8: Delineates responsibilities and procedures for monitoring administration of assessments and program evaluation (Met)

Policy 2130P, Instruction: Program Evaluation delineates the responsibilities, as well as the procedures, for reviewing the testing program yearly.

Characteristic 9: Identifies and provides direction for diverse assessment strategies (Partially Met)

Policy 2001, Instruction: Assessment identifies and provides direction for diverse assessment strategies used at the students, district, administrator, parents, and community level. This policy also expects a district assessment plan to outline “...the multi-uses of assessment by various audiences.” However, direction for the type of assessments—formative and summative—is unclear.

Characteristic 10: Directs the feedback process and ensures proper use of assessment data (Partially Met)

Policy 2001, Instruction: Assessment calls for an assessment plan to guide appropriate communication and use of data. Both this policy and the district assessment plan mention the importance of feedback to improving learning; however, neither of these documents provide direction for the feedback process.

Characteristic 11: Provides appropriate trainings (Met)

The district assessment plan states: “The CSD will provide students and teachers learning feedback tools with training necessary for effective academic interventions, student growth and achievement.” Furthermore, *Policy 2001, Instruction: Assessment* commits the district to professional development using data and research-based practices.

Characteristic 12: Specifies how equity issues will be identified and addressed (Partially Met)

Policy 2001, Instruction: Assessment lists expectations of an assessment plan. One of these expectations is “eliminating issues of equity and bias”. However, auditors did not identify direction for identifying addressing equity issues using sources of data nor for controlling for possible bias.

Characteristic 13: Specifies creation of an assessment data system to permit program evaluation (Not Met)

Although *Policy 2130, Instruction: Program Evaluation* includes a critical question regarding cost effectiveness and *Policy 2001, Instruction: Assessment* explains the importance of assessment data in making sound fiscal decisions, auditors did not find direction for the creation of an assessment data system allowing for the attribution of program costs.

Characteristic 14: Identifies the components included in program evaluations (Met)

Policy 2130, Instruction: Program Evaluation clearly explains the purpose of program evaluation and the critical questions asked when conducting an evaluation of programs.

Characteristic 15: Specifies roles and responsibilities (Partially Met)

Policy 2130P, Instruction: Program Evaluation specifies the role of the district office in relationship to assessing students and analyzing testing data. This procedure states the district office is responsible for ordering and distributing testing materials and administration instructions. The district office is also responsible for preparing report on test results for the "...board, instructional staff, parents/guardians and the general public." This procedure, however, does not specify the roles and responsibilities of school-based staff in assessing all students and analyzing test data.

Characteristic 16: Establishes a communication and training process for interpretation of results (Not Met)

Auditors did not find evidence of direction for establishing a process for communicating and training staff in the interpretation of results, changes in state and local student achievement tests, and new trends in the student assessment field.

Although board policy addressed the district's commitments to a comprehensive assessment system and called for evaluation of instructional programs, these expectations were not consistently implemented across the district. This inconsistent implementation coupled with a lack of written curriculum undermines the district's efforts to gather and use data to make curricular, instructional, and budget decisions.

Scope of Assessment

In **Finding 2** auditors shared evidence gathered on the scope of curriculum. Similarly, auditors present evidence about the scope of assessment—the percentage of courses or content areas with a corresponding assessment. The expectation is each course taught has a corresponding assessment administered to all students enrolled in the course. To determine the scope of assessment as adequate, auditors expect to find assessments exist for 100% of core content area courses and 70% of non-core courses.

The assessment plan provided to auditors listed the benchmark assessments and the names of instructional resources with embedded assessments for three of the four core content areas—math, English language arts, and science. The assigned grade levels for these assessments included kindergarten through grade 10. **Exhibits 5.2** and **5.3** reflect the information auditors gained from master schedules and the assessment plan provided.

Exhibit 5.2 displays the scope of assessment for grades kindergarten through sixth grade.

Exhibit 5.2: Scope of Assessment for Elementary

Course Title	Grade Level							Total Courses Taught	Total Courses Assessed	Percent of Courses Assessed
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6			
Core Content Area Courses										
English Language Arts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	12	12	
Math	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7	7	
Science		O	O	X	X	X	X	6	4	
Social Studies		O		O	O	O	O	5	0	
Total Core Courses Taught/Core Courses Assessed								30	23	
Percent of Core Courses Assessed									77%	
Non-Core Content Area Courses										
Music	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	7	0	
Band							O	2	0	
Physical Education	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	7	0	
Library	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	7	0	
SEL	O	O		O	O			4	0	
Study Hall							O	1	0	
Total Non-Core Courses Taught/Non-Core Courses Assessed								28	0	
Percent of Non-Core Courses Assessed									0%	
Key: X= Grades in which course was offered and assessed, O= Grades in which course was offered and not assessed, Shaded box= no course offered										
Source: Elementary Master Schedule and District Assessment Plan										

The above shows 77% of core courses at the elementary level have a corresponding assessment and no non-core courses have a corresponding assessment.

Exhibit 5.3 displays the scope of assessment for seventh through twelfth grades.

Exhibit 5.3: Scope of Assessment for Junior High/High School

Course Title	Grade Level						Total Courses Taught	Total Courses Assessed	Percent of Courses Assessed
	7	8	9	10	11	12			
Core Content Area Courses									
English Language Arts	X	X	X	X	O	O	15	11	
Math	X	X	X	X	O	O	17	15	
Science	X	X	X	X	O	O	7	5	
Social Studies	O	O	O	O	O	O	5	0	
Total Core Courses Taught/Core Courses Assessed							44	31	
								Percent of Core Courses Assessed	70%
Non-Core Content Area Courses									
Health and Fitness	O	O	O	O	O	O	7	0	
Fine Arts	O	O	O	O	O	O	6	0	
Technology	O	O					1	0	
CTE			O	O	O	O	12	0	
General Electives	O	O	O	O	O	O	4	0	
Total Non-Core Courses Taught/Non-Core Courses Assessed							30	0	
								Percent of Non-Core Courses Assessed	0%
Key: X= Grades in which course was offered and assessed, O= Grades in which course was offered and not assessed, Shaded box= no course offered									
Source: Secondary Master Schedule and District Assessment Plan									

Exhibit 5.3 displays 70% of core courses at the secondary level have a corresponding assessment and no non-core courses have a corresponding assessment.

Auditors found the scope of assessment in the Chewelah School District does not meet the CMIM requirements of 100% of core courses with corresponding assessments and 70% of non-core courses with corresponding assessments, although the scope of assessment is more complete than curriculum. This is largely due to the state assessments and the MAP assessments currently in use. However, the scope of assessment does not provide adequate formative feedback for teachers to plan and deliver differentiated instruction; for students and families to understand progress towards meeting standards; and for the district to evaluate programs and determine budget priorities

Use of Assessment

Data driven decision making rests on assessment data from valid and reliable formative and summative assessment tools. Students' results provide the necessary feedback to teachers, administrators, board members, students, and families on students' progress towards mastery learning. Analyzing formative assessment tools allows teachers to identify student learning needs at the objective level and plan differentiated instruction at the correct level of difficulty for individual students. Reporting this data to students and families is empowering, providing knowledge on learning strengths and areas of needed improvement. Analyzing formative and summative assessment data informs administrators and board members' decisions on all aspects of curriculum management. Without this information, teachers and administrators rely on gut instinct or past practice and students and families are unsure of where to place effort. The impact on student learning is unpredictable.

Auditors found limited evidence of teachers using assessments to inform instruction; this was more common in elementary. Auditors were told the high school algebra teachers use common formative assessments and the kindergarten teachers use ESGi, a progress monitoring tool, to inform instruction. A kindergarten teacher explained—"That's when ESGi comes in hand, because we decide what lessons to review. I like to organize my students. My group [of five students] is struggling and needs letter-sound help." The elementary school administrator mentioned having data teams prior to COVID and that a few teachers were asking about returning to this important practice. Others mentioned using assessment data to determine interventions: "About 3rd grade. If you don't meet standard on the state assessment, the following year you are provided interventions."

Chewelah staff know using data to make curricular and instructional decisions is an area of needed improvement as evidenced by the purchase of a data warehouse, which will be used by staff next school year, and from interview comments. Several mentioned the need for more assessment:

- "[We need] a lot more emphasis on classroom assessment. How do we know if they know how to do it or not?" (District Personnel)
- "We talk about ways to improve instruction. We had data teams. Our data teams were ingrained within our culture. COVID messed us up." (District Personnel)
- "If they really want to make an impact on student learning—having these deeper conversations on student data [are necessary]. Really focusing on student data and student learning." (District Personnel)

One administrator mentioned the challenge in getting everyone on the same page with using new assessment tools. "We are still learning those assessment systems. We've had trainings—it's been facilitated after school, not well attended."

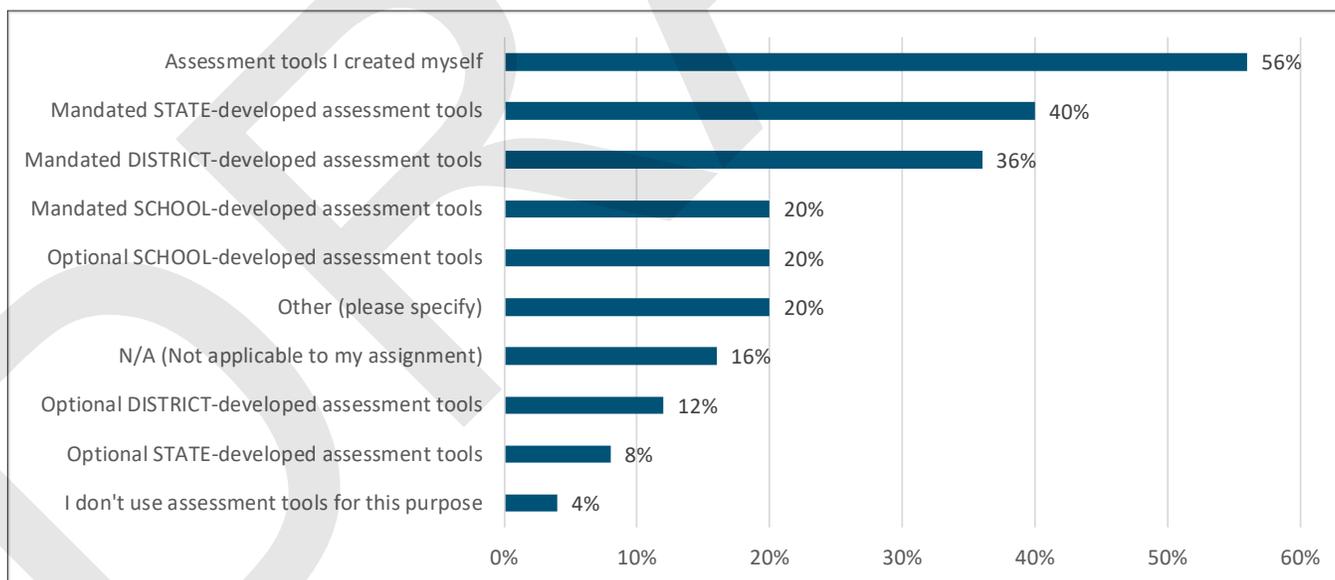
There were also comments about the impact the lack of curriculum has on developing and using assessments. This also includes the process for identifying essential standards, since without good data teachers reported feeling at a loss in identifying the most important standards. These comments included:

- “If you have nothing [to assess with] you have no idea if you are doing a good job. Without a viable and strong curriculum, you have no idea what they’re learning. How do you know if they’ve learned anything?” (District Personnel)
- “How do you decide on your essential standards if you don’t know what your students are having success on? And, we have had discussions in the past about our data—what does it need to be? Are [the standards] in our curriculum and are we teaching them well? It felt a little funny—just to identify our standards and we’ll get back to it.” (District Personnel)

There were also comments about the validity of the assessment tools currently in use in predicting performance on the state test. The auditors do know that the *MAP* is not aligned in context to the State of Washington’s Smarter Balance assessments, since the smarter balanced assessments require writing and different response types. One teacher commented on , “[Teachers] love math, think [students] are great at math. We take an end-of-unit assessment but their [state] scores are not [showing growth]. Even in class, [they] feel like, yes, we’re going to get this. How did this happen?? I feel some of it is the curriculum—the way they word things. There seems to be a lot more reading in the math now. That carries right over to the state assessment.”

The teacher online survey asked respondents to select all tools used in the classroom on an ongoing basis to assess student learning. Responses are presented below.

Exhibit 5.4: Assessment Tools Used in Classroom on Ongoing Basis



Source: Teacher Online Survey

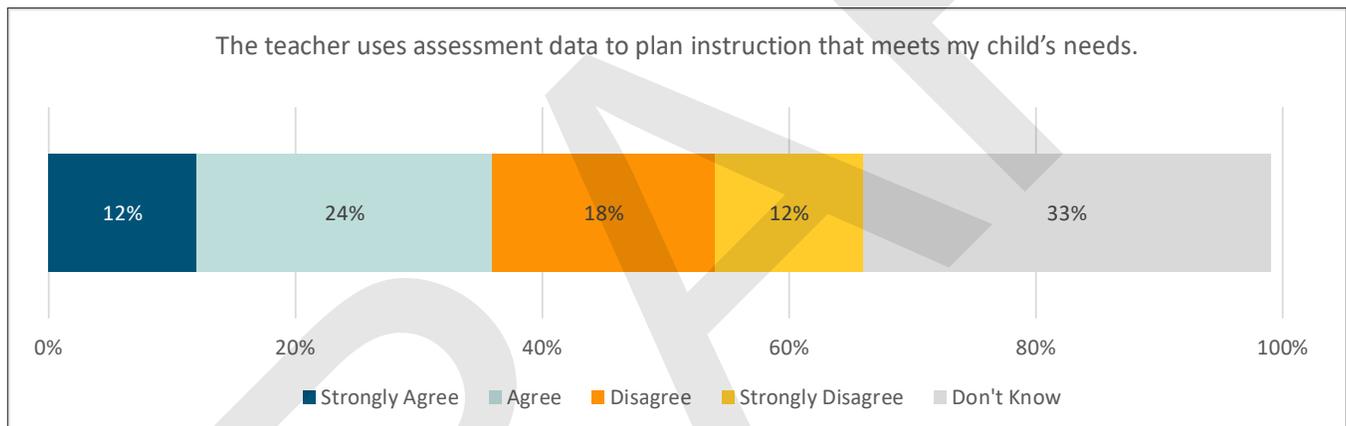
Exhibit 5.4 shows the three most frequently used tools to assess student learning are teacher-created assessment tools, 56%; mandated state-developed assessment tools, 40%; and mandated district-developed assessment tools, 36%. Those respondents choosing “other” listed:

- assessments embedded in district adopted curriculum
- monthly progress monitoring with curriculum based measures
- MAP

The use of “assessment tools I created myself” results in inconsistency from classroom to classroom and negatively impacts the feedback the system receives. Data-driven decision making at the school and district level are not possible.

The online survey asked parents to choose strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or don’t know in response to the statement—the teacher uses assessment data to plan instruction that meets my child’s needs. The below displays respondents’ choices.

Exhibit 5.5: Parents’ Perception of Use of Assessment Data



Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding
 Source: Parents’ Online Survey

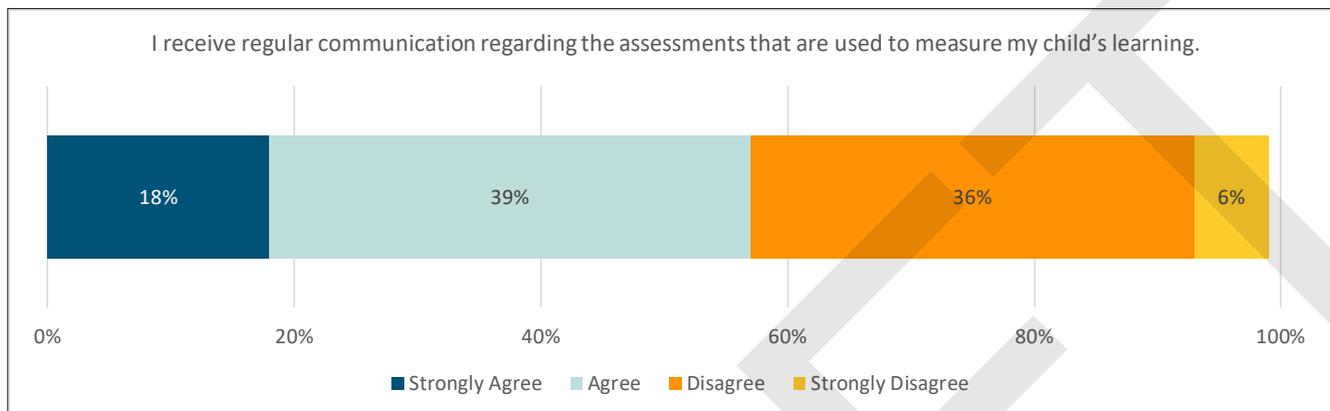
As seen in **Exhibit 5.5** 36% chose strongly agree or agree; 30% chose strongly disagree or disagree; and 33% chose “don’t know”. Respondents’ written comments included:

- I have not seen personal instruction be made for individual students to focus on what they specifically need based on where they are.
- My middle school student needs to be challenged.
- Maybe the elementary school does, but not the high school.
- Again, I have never seen what is being instructed in the classroom.

Using assessment data to inform instruction allows for differentiation, meeting a child’s learning needs. Reporting the assessment results to parents allows for engagement in a child’s learning and encourages input from parents both at home and about the instructional process.

Parents also asked if they agree that they receive regular communication regarding the assessments that are used to measure their child’s learning. The data is displayed in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 5.6: Regularly Informed about Child’s Learning Progress



Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding
 Source: Parents’ Online Survey

Exhibit 5.6 indicates 57% of parents strongly agree or agree and 42% of parents strongly disagree or disagree with the statement—I am regularly informed about the progress my child is making at school (in his/her learning). The percentage of parents agreeing with this statement is the majority; however, a majority by 15%. Written comments expressed concern about the reporting of student learning progress:

- “This is because of report cards.”
- “Some teachers do a better job than others. High school, I never hear from any teachers ever good or bad or indifferent.
- [I] assess progress from papers brought home but [I’m] not always clear on their value or what the scores mean.
- I get a report card once a quarter, usually, but there was only one conference.

Interview comments from a parent and a board member shared similar concerns:

- “I only get a report card.” (Parent)
- “Historically, no achievement data has been shared with the board.” (Board Member)

To make informed decisions driven by data, teachers, students, parents, and board members need ongoing information and access to data demonstrating students’ learning progress, data that explicitly tie to students’ learning goals.

Achievement Trends on State Tests

Both formative and summative assessment data provide insight into students' progress towards mastering standards and learning objectives. Whereas formative assessment data provides immediate feedback on individual student needs and gaps in learning, allowing teachers to differentiate instruction accordingly, summative assessment data provides feedback on a students' overall learning in a course unit or a content area. Summative data provides useful information to compare student performance across classrooms, schools, districts, and the state. Reviewing results and trends within summative data provided by the *Washington Smarter Balanced Assessment (WSBA)*, for example, enables a school district to adjust comprehensive curriculum and instructional planning, professional development, program evaluation, and budget considerations.

To determine student achievement trends, auditors reviewed board policy and analyzed Chewelah School District's student performance in English language arts and math on the *WSBA* for school years 2017-2022. Auditors compared CSD's achievement trends to the achievement trends of all Washington state students and followed the trajectory of a cohort of students from third grade to eighth grade, 2016-2022. Auditors used the "report card" data found on the Washington Office of Superintendent Public Instruction's website (<https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/100043>).

Auditors found from 2017-2022, Chewelah students in grades 3-8 and 10 performed at lower levels than state peers on the English language arts and math *WSBA* in more years than these students outperformed state peers. In the last two years of state testing data, 2021 and 2022, only CSD's grade 8 outperformed state peers on the English language arts *WSBA*.

Auditors also analyzed cohort data for third graders in 2016 through eighth grade in 2022. This cohort data indicates a downward trajectory for students in math overall beginning in fourth grade. ELA cohort data presents an inconsistent pattern with peaks in fourth, sixth, and eighth grades and dips in fifth and seventh grades. These inconsistent achievement trends, with an overall lower percentage of students meeting standards in comparison to state peers in 2021 and 2022 implies the written, taught, and tested curriculum is not aligned. Additionally, these achievement trends will make it difficult to reach the goal set in *Policy 2004, Instruction: Accountability Goals* by Spring 2027 90% of "...students eligible to be assessed will meet standard on the required state assessments."

Exhibit 5.7 displays CSD students’ performance in comparison to students in the state. The exhibit shows results on the *English Language Arts WSBA* for grades 3 through 6 for school years 2017-2022. Third grade results were not reported for 2021.

Exhibit 5.7: Student Performance in ELA, Grades 3-6, 2017 to 2022



*Grade 3 data not reported for 2020-21

Source: <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/100043>

Exhibit 5.7 indicates third and fourth grade students outperformed state peers in 2017 and 2018. Fifth and sixth grade students outperformed other students in the state in 2019.

State peers outperformed Chewelah’s third graders in 2019 and 2022; fourth graders in 2019, 2021, and 2022; fifth graders in 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2022; and sixth graders in 2017, 2021, and 2022. CSD’s achievement trends on the *English Language Arts WSBA*, therefore, shows decreases for all grades in 2021 and 2022 in comparison to state peers.

Exhibit 5.8 displays CSD students’ performance in comparison to students in the state. The exhibit shows results on the *Math WSBA* for grades 3 through 6 for school years 2017-2022. Third grade results were not reported for 2021.

Exhibit 5.8: Student Performance in Math, Grades 3-6, 2017 to 2022



*Grade 3 data not reported for 2020-21

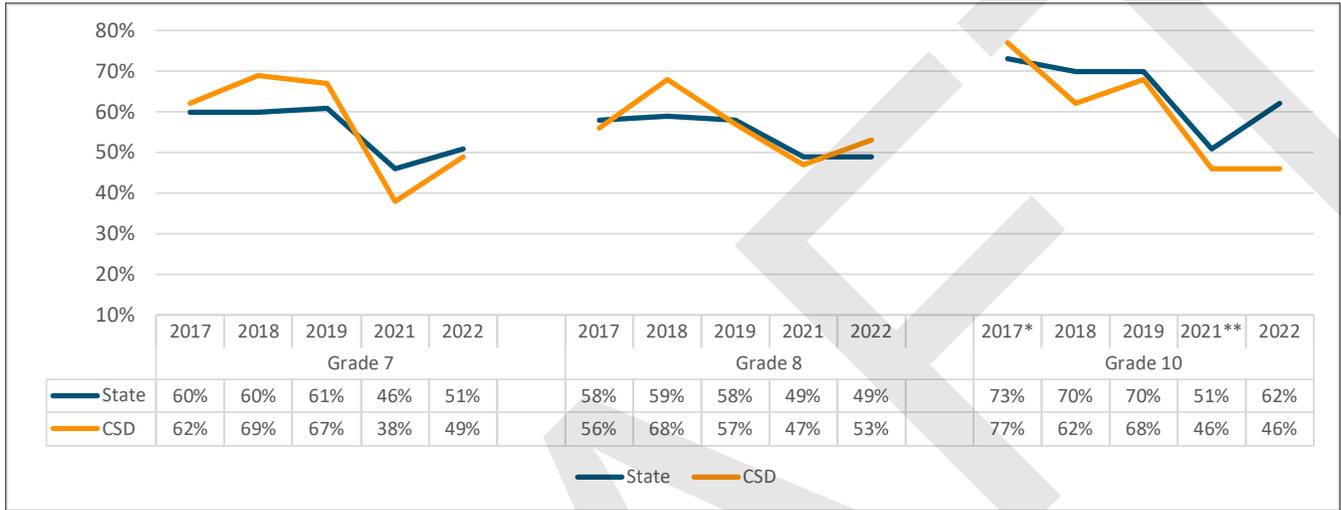
Source: <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/100043>

Exhibit 5.8 indicates the only years Chewelah students outperformed state peers were in 2017 when both third and fourth grade students scored higher than state peers and 2018 when fourth grade students scored higher than state peers.

State peers outperformed Chewelah’s third graders in 2019 and 2022; fourth graders in 2021 and 2022; fifth graders in all years, 2017-2022; and sixth graders in all years, 2017-2022, except for 2018 when 48% of sixth graders in the state and in CSD met standards. CSD’s achievement trends on the *Math WSBA*, therefore, shows decreases for all grades in 2021 and 2022 in comparison to state peers.

Exhibit 5.8 displays CSD students’ performance in comparison to students in the state. The exhibit shows results on the *English Language Arts WSBA* for grades seven, eight, and ten for school years 2017-2022. Please note in 2017 the *WSBA* was administered to eleventh graders, not tenth graders and in 2021 the *WSBA* was administered to ninth graders and eleventh graders. For these years, auditors reported the percentage of eleventh graders meeting standards; however, the below exhibit states Grade 10.

Exhibit 5.9: Student Performance in ELA, Grades 7, 8 and 10, 2017 to 2022



*2017 Grade 11, not Grade 10

**2021 Grade 11, not Grade 10 (Grade 9 also reported, but didn't include)

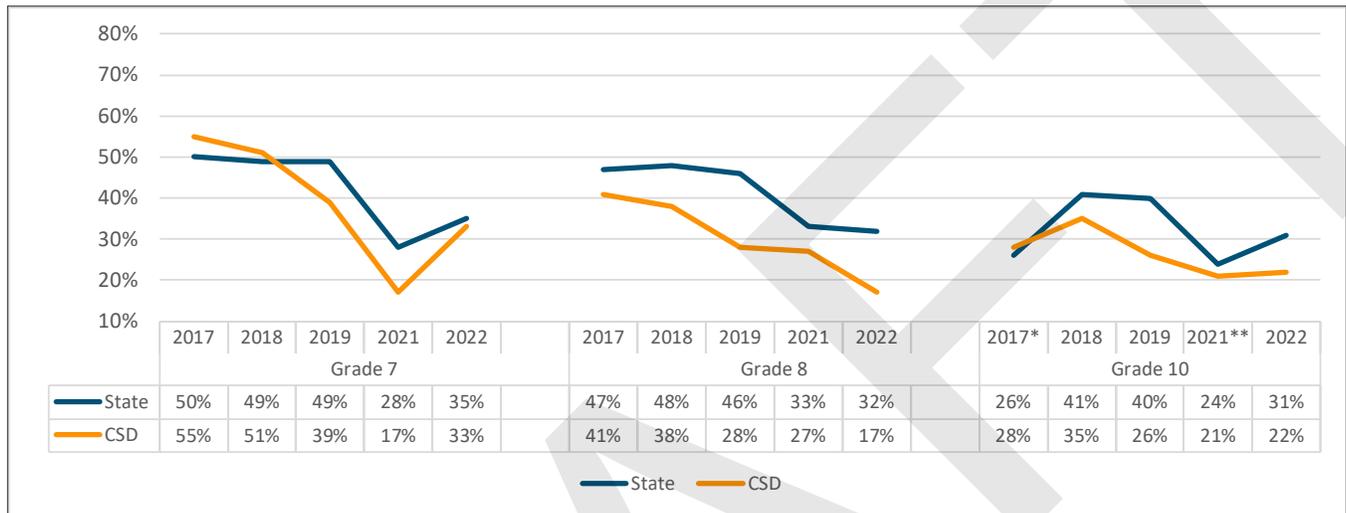
Source: <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/100043>

Exhibit 5.9 indicates seventh grade students outperformed state peers in 2017, 2018, and 2019; eighth grade students outperformed state peers in 2018 and 2022; tenth graders outperformed state peers in 2017.

State peers outperformed Chewelah’s seventh graders in 2021 and 2022 and eighth graders in 2017, 2019, and 2021. In 2018-2022, tenth graders met standards at a lower percentage than other students in the state.

Exhibit 5.10 displays CSD students’ performance in comparison to students in the state on the *Math WSBA* for grades seven, eight, and ten for school years 2017-2022. Please note in 2017 the *WSBA* was administered to eleventh graders, not tenth graders and in 2021 the *WSBA* was administered to ninth graders and eleventh graders. For these years, auditors reported the percentage of eleventh graders meeting standards; however, the below exhibit states Grade 10.

Exhibit 5.10: Student Performance in Math, Grades 7, 8 and 10, 2017 to 2022



*2017 Grade 11, not Grade 10

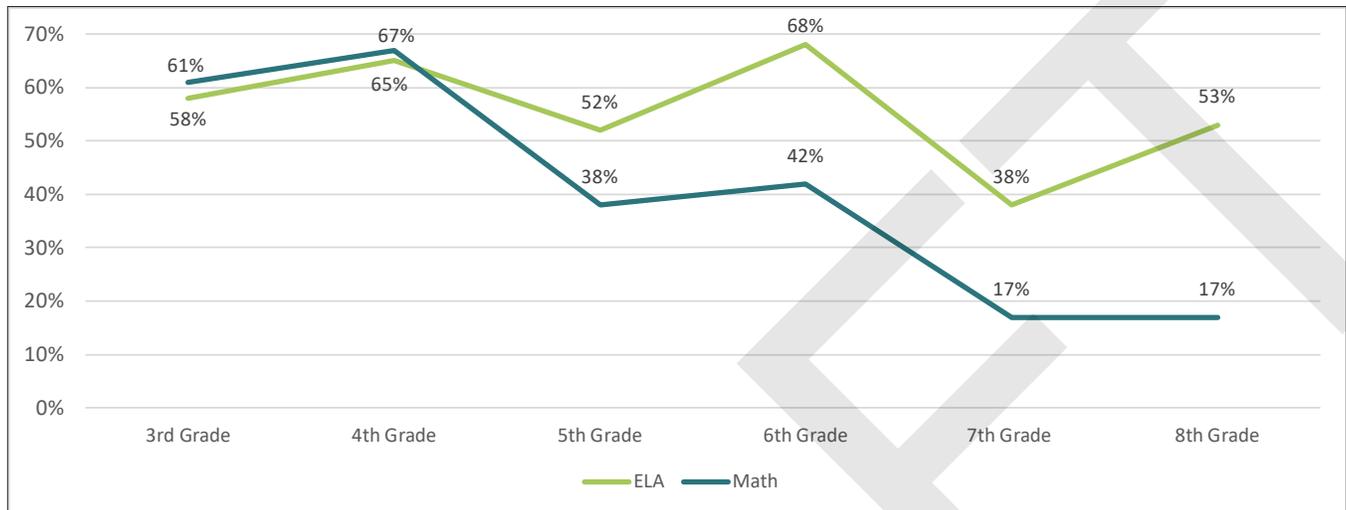
**2021 Grade 11, not Grade 10 (Grade 9 also reported, but didn't include)

Source: <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/100043>

Exhibit 5.10 indicates seventh grade students outperformed state peers in 2017 and 2018 and grade 10 students outperformed state peers in 2017. The percentage of students in grade 8 meeting standards in comparison to other grade 8 students in the state demonstrates a downward trajectory from 2017 to 2022.

Exhibit 5.11 presents cohort performance in ELA and Math on the *WSBA*. The data displayed is for the same group of students progressing from third to eighth grade, starting in 2016 and ending in 2022.

Exhibit 5.11: Cohort Performance, ELA & Math, Grades 3-8, 2016 to 2022



Source: <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/100043>

Exhibit 5.11 shows this cohort of students meeting standards at a higher percentage in English language arts in comparison to math except for third and fourth grades. When in third and fourth grades, this group of students performed at a higher level in math than ELA. A dip in performance in both ELA and math occurred in fifth grade and seventh grade for this cohort. An upward trajectory for ELA occurred in grade 8. The highest percentage of students meeting standards in math occurred for this group when in fourth grade and in ELA when in sixth grade.

Auditors found student achievement on the English language arts and math *WSBA* is inconsistent with Chewelah students performing at lower levels than state peers more often from 2017-2022. Cohort data indicates a downward trajectory for students in math overall beginning in fourth grade. ELA cohort data presents an inconsistent pattern with peaks in fourth, sixth, and eighth grades and dips in fifth and seventh grades.

Finding Summary

Direction for assessment and program evaluation is robust; however, needs modification to meet the 16 characteristics of a quality student assessment and program evaluation plan. Most importantly, a comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation system requires consistent implementation by all district staff to result in meaningful feedback for improved student learning. The scope of assessment does not provide useful information to teachers to adjust instruction at the individual student level nor does the scope of assessment provide the needed information to revise curriculum, evaluate programs, determine professional development needs, or prioritize budgets. The use of assessment data to make decisions at the classroom, school, and district levels is inconsistent due to most teachers relying on self-created assessments. Student achievement trends are also inconsistent with performance lower than state peers in 2021-22, except for eighth graders in ELA. Cohort data indicates a downward trajectory for students in math overall beginning in fourth grade and the pattern for cohort data in ELA includes peaks in fourth, sixth, and eighth grades and dips in fifth and seventh grades. Without alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum, coherence and continuity in learning does not exist and gaps in learning result.

Finding 6: The district’s financial standing is sound but the development and decision-making processes are not explicitly tied to student needs, curricular goals, strategic priorities, or assessment data, although district leaders do allocate funds based on goals and priorities. Facilities need updating for safety and to support the district’s goals.

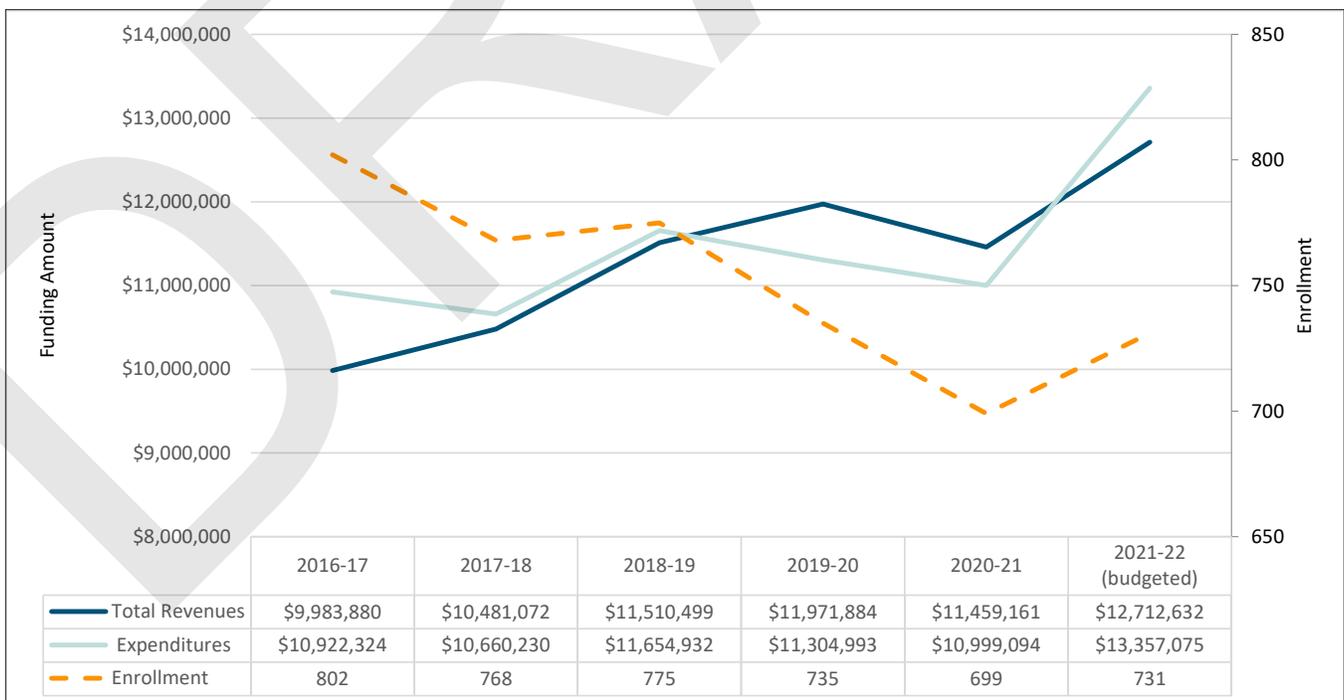
The budget is the major financial planning document for expressing in dollars the goals and priorities of the district and to keep the organization focused on productivity. As such, it needs to reflect a direct connection between the resources provided and the significance of the goals toward which those resources are directed. System-wide productivity is enhanced by budgetary decisions that assure adequate resources are supporting those programs and services that are needed to realize district goals reflect the district’s priorities. Facilities represent another essential resource for ensuring not only safety for all students, but also for supporting the educational program.

Without this systematic linkage, officials can easily be distracted from the system’s core purpose by external demands for resources and end up serving the students and community ineffectively, inequitably, or inconsistently.

The auditors reviewed policy for direction for budgeting, along with district documents and financial audits, as well as past budgets. Overall, policy meets state requirements, outlining board responsibilities for approving the budget and guidelines for fiscal management. However, policy does not require the budget to be responsive to district goals, nor does it stipulate that programs be evaluated for their effectiveness prior to approving their continuation. Policy does communicate the expectation that the district shall maintain a total fund balance each year that represents 7.75% of the district’s budgeted expenditures for that year.

The auditors reviewed the relationships between revenues and expenditures as well as the connections to student enrollment. The findings are shown in the following exhibit:

Exhibit 6.1: District Revenues and Expenditures with Enrollment



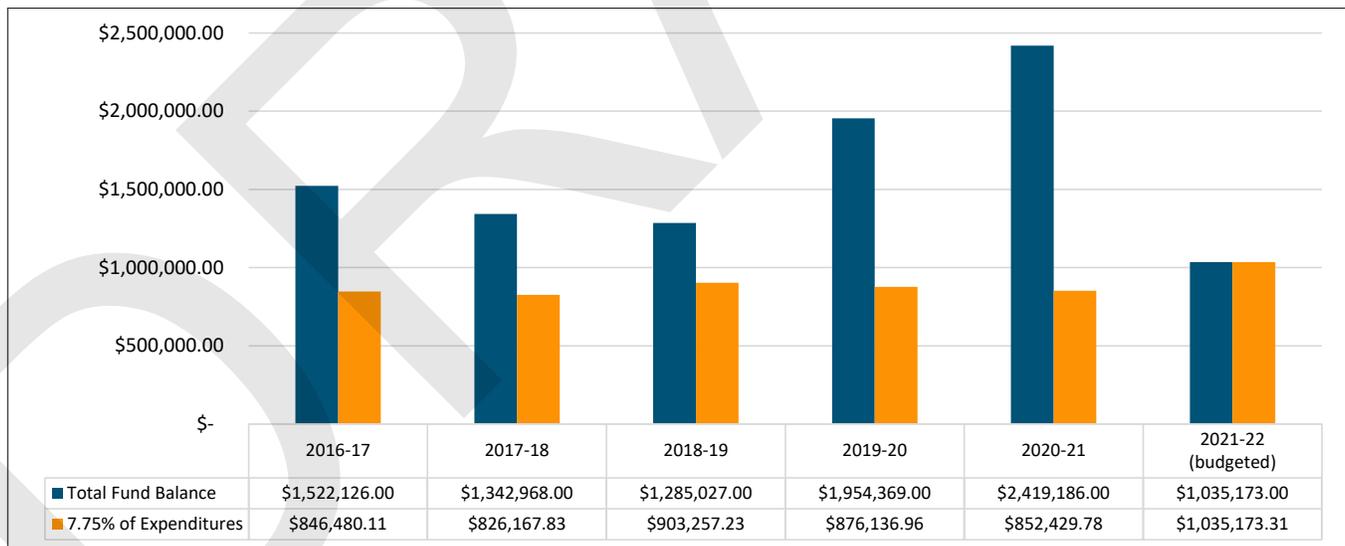
Source: District-provided data

Overall, the district has had a decline in enrollment, although enrollment in 2022-23 did rise to over 785. But for the years presented, enrollment declined. Revenues increased every year since 2016-17, with the exception of 2020-21, where they declined slightly. Expenditures have both decreased and increased, with a sharp budgeted increase in 2021-22. Expenditures in 2021-22 exceeded revenues due to a high total fund balance that remained from prior years when spending was below established thresholds (see Exhibit 5.2). The auditors did not receive a financial audit for 2021-22; they used budgeted figures for the revenues and expenditures presented in the exhibit. The district is in a position of solvency for the period presented.

The general role of a school board in the budget process should be to adopt policies that guide the district operations and budget activities at the program level. Boards have the responsibility to provide adequate oversight to assure that priorities and goals are clearly identified, based on data, and communicated system-wide prior to budget planning. A Board must then assure the public that financial resources are allocated so as to support the mission and declared priorities, educational goals, and identified needs. The auditors found that the Chewelah School District does not have policy to direct the budgeting process in this manner. There is an expectation for program evaluation, although there is policy and procedure directing program evaluation, but there is no policy or written direction for using data to evaluate, revise, or terminate programs and the funding used to support them.

In examining the financial history of the district, the auditors found that the district has consistently met the board goal of ending the year’s general fund balance at 7.75% of the total budget; in fact, spending has fallen below established thresholds, suggesting that leaders were not providing adequate resources to the district’s students. The total fund balances over the last several years are presented in the following exhibit:

Exhibit 6.2: Total Fund Balance vs. Intended Balance, 2016 to 2022



Source: District-provided data

As can be seen in the exhibit, district leaders were spending below the board’s stated goal of maintaining a fund balance of 7.75% of expenditures. Over the last five years, the district’s fund balance was often twice or even three times that amount. In 2021, expenditures did exceed revenues which brought the fund balance back into alignment with the board goal. As one staff member stated, “We do have a healthy fund balance. Our board goal is 7.75% at the end of the year. The last couple of years we’ve been significantly over that.”

Relationship of Budgeting and Chewelah School District Aims and Purposes

Although the auditors found nothing in written documents or policy regarding the linkages between budgeting practices and district priorities, the auditors did find evidence of these linkages in current practice. The district has a newly developed strategic plan and the goals of the plan are a focus for much of the expenditures the district is budgeting for this and for future school years, including significant increases in spending for professional development, curriculum development, and instructional resources.

The auditors found that the expenditure budget documents present little information regarding specific program activities. The budget practices and new budget committee described by board members is a step towards making financial management and budget allocations more transparent in the community, and participation in the committee is intended to be across all sectors of the community. However, this practice is not a written expectation. Current budget processes are described in the document, *Chewelah School District Budget Cycle*. This document simply outlines the timelines from December to July outlining key events that inform the budget-building process, beginning with the state’s proposed state budget announcement in December and concluding with the district’s budget presentation to the committee for adoption in July.

The auditors found that the district has a business manager to handle all bookkeeping and financial tasks in the district. The budget is a line-item budget that is based on prior years’ expenditures. Although there is some expectation of program evaluation in policy, the auditors did not find written expectations for, nor a current practice of using data to make decisions on maintaining, revising, or terminating programs and the funding they require.

For program-driven budget practices, the audit recommends the following criteria. The district had no written direction for any of these criteria, so the auditors did not evaluate the district’s approach; rather, the criteria are presented here for the district’s consideration.

Exhibit 6.3: Components of a Performance-Based Budget and Adequacy of Use in the Budget Development Process

Performance-Based Budget Criteria
1. Tangible, demonstrable connections are evident between assessment of operational curriculum effectiveness and allocations of resources.
2. Rank ordering of program components is provided to permit flexibility in budget expansion, reduction, or stabilization based on changing needs or priorities.
3. Each budget request or submittal shall be described so as to permit evaluation of consequences of funding or non-funding in terms of performance or results.
4. Cost benefits of components in curriculum programming are delineated in budget decision-making.
5. Budget requests compete for funding based upon evaluation of criticality of need and relationship to achievement of curriculum effectiveness.
6. Priorities in the budget are set by participation of key educational staff in the decision-making process. Teacher and principal suggestions and ideas for budget priorities are incorporated into the decision-making process as allocations are crafted.

During interviews, the auditors heard comments about the newly formed budget committee and the move to greater transparency, but much of the budget process is left in the hands of the superintendent. These comments included:

FINDINGS

- “The budget committee has administrators, representatives of teachers and classified staff, in fact, the union reps are on that committee. It’s completely transparent. That is something new. The budget committee has only existed for a year.” (Board Member)
- “The Board’s role is to approve the budgets. For the most part, we don’t get involved in the minutiae of the budget.” (Board Member)
- “My understanding is that Mr. Perrins develops the budget and the board approves.” (Board member)

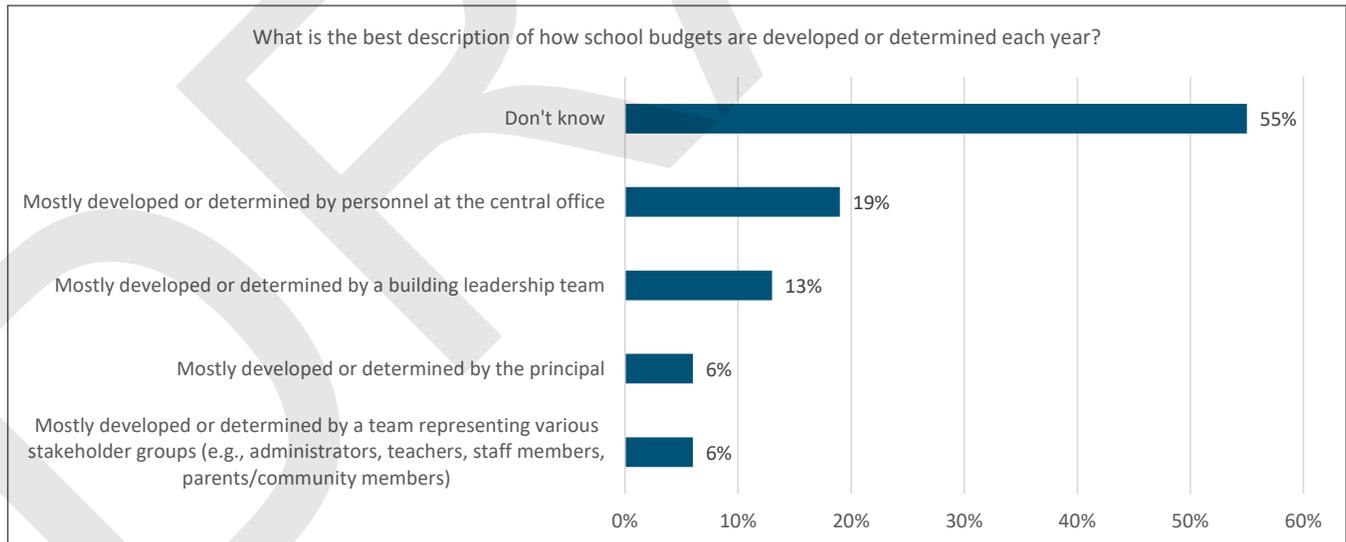
Others commented on the traditional process for creating next year’s budget, which largely relies on the year before, or prior expenditures:

- “We take supplies and services budgets and compare to previous years; make sure if we need to increase, decrease, pull revenue forecasts.” (District Personnel)
- “Typically my SPED revenues are under the expenditures.” (District Personnel)

There were also comments about the need to be more intentional and responsive in allocating resources. One teacher commented, “There isn’t a place for teachers to give feedback for student needs in the classroom. There are many items that the school has spent money on that never work and don’t help with student learning. There needs to be a place for teachers to help provide insights into needs for student learning.” Another shared that a weakness is “spending money where it is needed. The school needs to focus on student learning. I didn’t start the year with enough desks for my students. The curriculum adoption is taking too long; I still don’t have books for my classes.”

On the survey, teachers were asked to select the best description for how school budgets are developed or determined. Their responses are presented in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 6.4: Teacher Survey Responses



Source: Teachers' Online Survey

As can be seen in the exhibit, most teachers responded “don’t know” to the statements, while almost 20% selected developed or determined by personnel at the district office. Less than 15% perceive that the budget is developed by a building leadership team.

Overall, the Chewelah School District is financially solvent and is now meeting its goal of a 7.75% of expenditures total fund balance. Current spending is definitely driven by district goals and priorities, but there is no written direction for how the budget should be built, nor any expectations that the budget reflect district goals and priorities. The auditors found no written expectations that data should be used to determine the effectiveness of programs and ensure that funds are not allocated to support programs that are ineffective.

Facilities

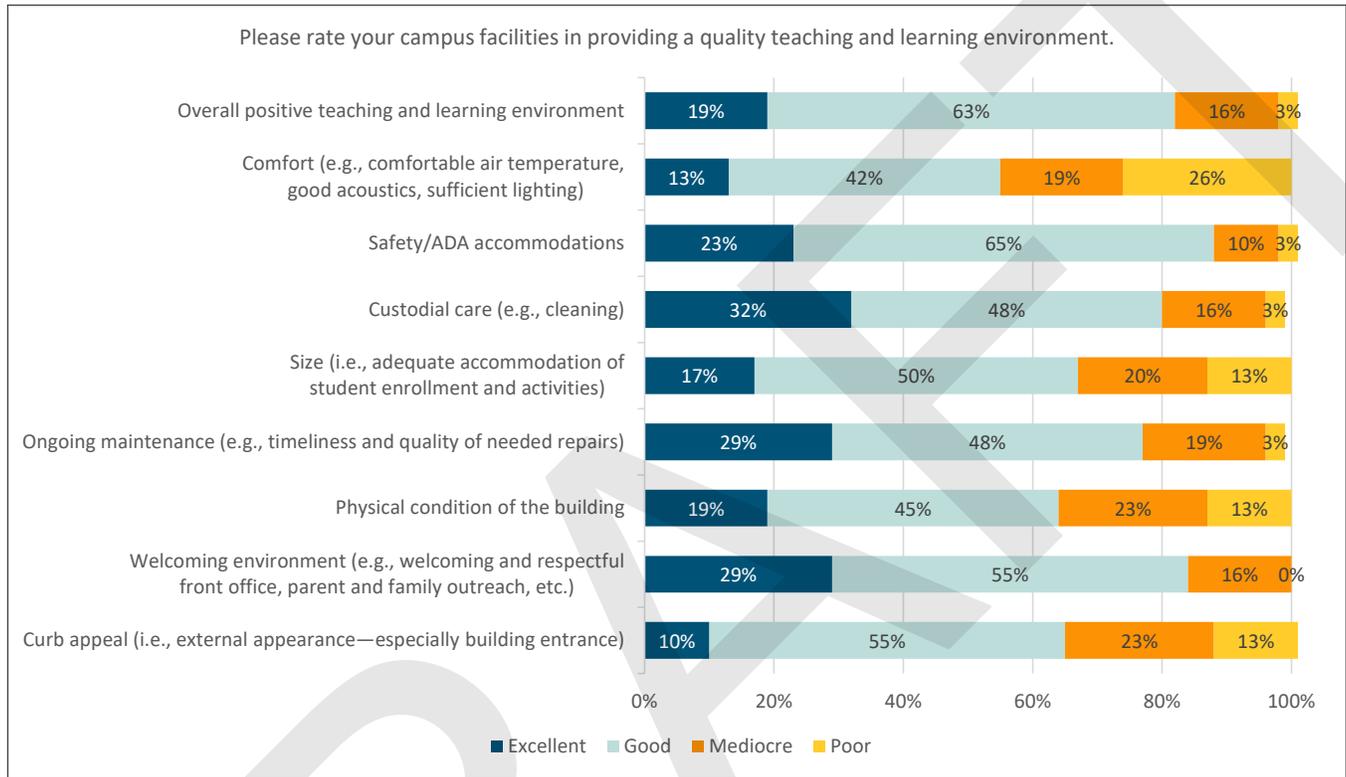
The auditors also reviewed facilities in the district. Facilities are a critical part of supporting whether or not students have access to the programming the district intends. An example is, if the district wishes to emphasize cooperative learning environments, space is needed to allow for small groups. Labs are needed for experiments with phenomena, and the demands of career and technical education are enormous.

The district closed a school within the last decade and moved junior high into the high school. This is a concern for many parents, but was a more cost effective decision. However, the current facilities are not adequate and need attention. There is a long-range facilities plan in place, as well as a facilities committee, which is made up of a broad base of stakeholders. This document outlines the tasks and areas that district leaders are attending to over the next several years, specifically. There is also a CTE plan that extends through 2024, but the auditors received no evidence that these goals had been met. The facilities plan identifies for each building the most critical needs to ensure that ADA and other program requirements are met, such as ADA upgrades. It also identifies other needs, such as water line replacements, sewer line, new entry doors, plumbing fixtures, and a drainage system. The high school is 47 years old and the elementary 39 years old. Several commented on the need for updates:

- What needs improvement? “Facilities.”
- I would love to see expansion and a separate building for the high schoolers. Honestly I realize we live in a small rural town but a lot of what I mentioned feels like a dated afterthought.
- It would be nice to see more pride taken when it comes to the school building, some of the dilapidated signage, the parking lot.
- What needs improvement? “More security provided by the district to protect the schools, teachers & students.”
- What needs improvement? “The security of the school is terrible. Until mid year the door was just left completely unlocked. Now they have a doorbell which students respond to and just open for anyone without asking any questions. There is no safety net.”

The auditors also observed inadequate safety measures and the dilapidated condition of the buildings. Classrooms are clean, but facilities need attention that will require more extensive funding. The auditors also asked personnel to rate their campus facilities in providing a quality teaching and learning environment. Their responses are displayed in the following exhibit.

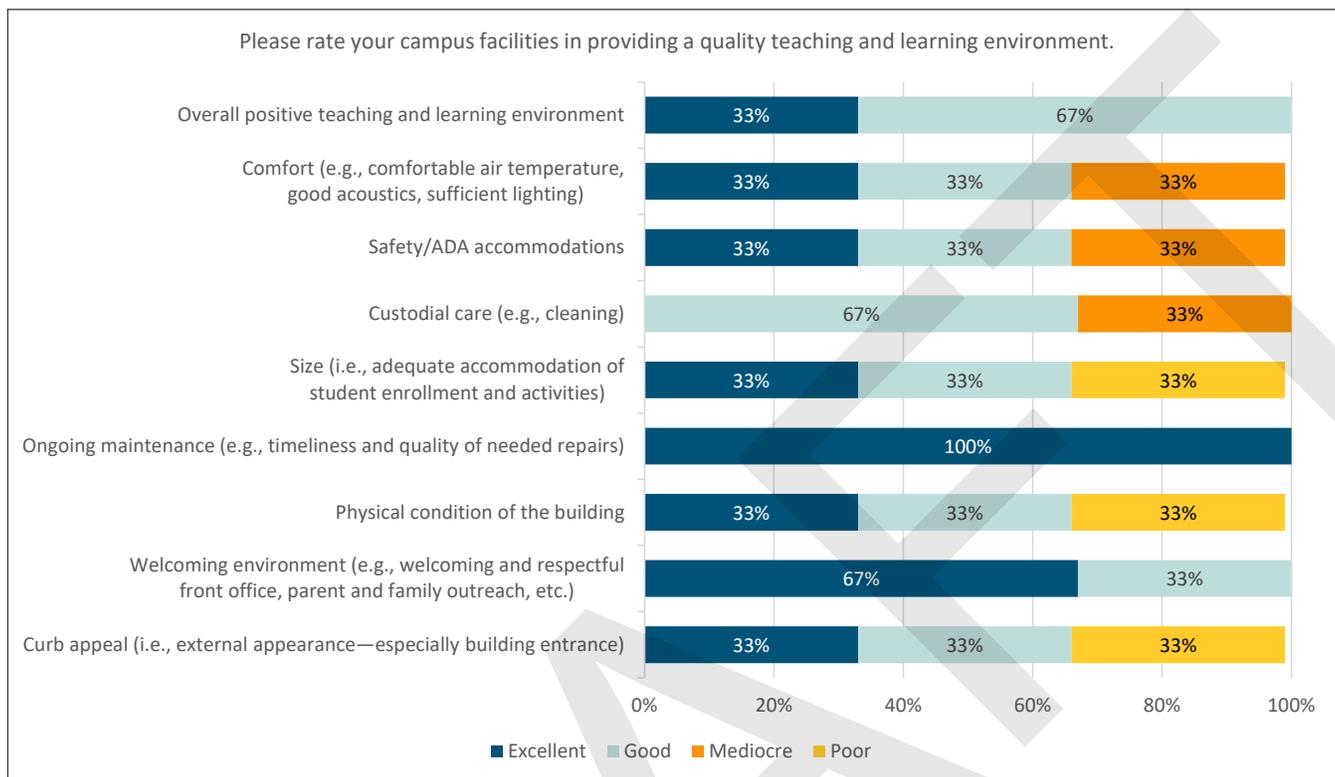
Exhibit 6.5: Personnel Responses Regarding Facility Adequacy



Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding
 Source: *Teachers' Online Survey*

Comfort had the lowest rating overall; 45% rated this mediocre or poor. Physical condition of the building, size, curb appeal, and ongoing maintenance had the lowest ratings, overall. Custodial care, Safety and ADA accommodations were the highest rated. Principals were asked to rate their building, as well. Their responses are in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 6.6: Administrator Responses Regarding Facility Adequacy



Note: Totals do not equal 100% due to rounding
 Source: Administrators' Online Survey

Size, Physical Condition, and Curb appeal all had the lowest ratings from administrators. Ongoing maintenance was the highest rated.

District personnel confirmed that the facilities needs are great but that planning is progressing well. They also reported that grants have been used to address some of the greatest needs. Comments included, "Facilities—comprehensive maintenance, long-range, and that's moving along pretty well. We've also been benefactors of some good state grants that have helped us immensely. We had a boiler at the high school 40 yrs. Old. The change over will happen this summer—we got a 3m grant. We don't have HVAC at the elementary school but we're working through the process now." Others commented that the district has never had plans for facilities issues, so the plans that have been developed over the last two years are a real strength. "There were no plans. There wasn't a facilities plan. Plans weren't written down, approved for anything. We've made great strides in that way."

However, the district must work to make the needs known to the community, as the future needs of the two aging buildings are great. The community must be aware what the schools need to do to adequately support not only current student learning, but also future student learning. This has been challenging in Chewelah. Comments regarding the resistance to a bond included;

- “This community has been good about supporting levies. We’ve done well with capital levies... bonds are a different story. You have to have a 60% majority to pass a bond. You have to pass a maintenance at 50%.”
- “I grew up around here. All growing up we didn’t pass a bond. We passed levies but not bonds. It’s a different percentage.”

Overall, the auditors determined that facilities in Chewelah need attention for district goals to be met. Several goals on the facilities plan require substantial funds that only come from bonds. The facilities plan is basic but addresses the most urgent needs; adding data and linking these with the strategic plan priorities and the vision will assist the district in aligning all efforts with the core mission of the system.

Recommendations

Based on the four streams of data derived from interviews, documents, online surveys, and site visits, the CMSi Curriculum Audit™ Team has developed a set of recommendations to address its findings under each of the focus areas of the audit.

The findings have been triangulated, i.e., multiple sources of data serve to support the auditors' conclusions. The recommendations in this section are representative of the auditors' best professional judgments regarding how to address the problems that surfaced in the audit.

The recommendations are presented in the order of their criticality for initiating system-wide improvements. The recommendations also recognize and differentiate between the policy and monitoring responsibilities of the board of directors and the operational and administrative duties of the superintendent of schools.

Where the CMSi audit team views a problem as wholly or partly a policy and monitoring matter, the recommendations are formulated for the board. Where the problem is distinctly an operational or administrative matter, the recommendations are directed to the superintendent of schools as the chief executive officer of the school system. In many cases, the CMSi audit team directs recommendations to both the board and the superintendent, because it is clear that policy and operations are related, and both entities are involved in a proposed change. In some cases, there are no recommendations to the superintendent when only policy is involved or none to the board when the recommendations deal only with administration.

Audit recommendations are presented as follows: The overarching goals for the board and/or the superintendent, followed by the specific objectives to carry out the overarching goals. The latter are designated "Governance Functions" and "Administrative Functions."

Recommendation 1: Revise the strategic plan to reflect the district's vision for student learning and engagement and the board's beliefs about effective education and communicate these revisions widely. Revise local policy and in support of these expectations and include direction for how the vision and beliefs should be reflected across the district in the written curriculum and in the culture and climate at central office and in schools. Ensure that the roles and responsibilities of all personnel align with these priorities, and staff the central office to support the necessary curriculum work.

Effectively educating students is a challenging responsibility in the best of circumstances. When working with diverse and economically disadvantaged populations, the challenges are multiplied. Poverty is a significant predictor of student performance in education (see **Appendix G**). To effectively meet the needs of economically disadvantaged students, the research is clear. Teaching must not only deliver learning that is on grade-level, but also that engages every student and challenges him or her, as well. Without the relevance and cognitive demand, learning is less meaningful and less likely to improve student achievement. Engagement and rigor must also be delivered in a caring and safe environment, so all students feel secure in taking risks during the learning process. The affective domain of the learning process cannot be overstated; research has shown that without a safe, caring environment, students do not learn effectively. Having high expectations for students that are reflected in the cognitive demand of their instruction is equally critical in improving learning and achievement, along with an attitude of refusing to accept less than success, no matter what.

While all these characteristics are important, they represent a belief system that even the most disadvantaged child has great potential and ability to learn and that they and their families are valued and respected clients of the system. The research bears this out; however, such beliefs are not shared by everyone. It is critical for district leaders to establish the system's vision and beliefs concerning what this effective instruction looks like, its characteristics, and the philosophical beliefs underlying that vision. In effective school districts, these expectations are expressed in policy and supported by goals and actions in district plans. These tightly-held beliefs, vision, and mission provide the framework within which departments, programs, and campuses operate. All decisions made by individual stakeholders in the system should align to these tightly-held expectations, so everyday actions and operations consistently reflect the philosophy and vision of the organization and its leaders. Such alignment throughout the system also supports maintaining a healthy, consistent, and positive goal-focused culture and climate.

Plans are those documents that outline clear goals that are intended to not only reflect the vision and mission of the system, but also support attaining them. A strategic plan is important to assuring constancy of effort and alignment of all initiatives. The most effective plans are those that are concise, clear, and measurable, so that accountability can be maintained. Without accountability, districts are less likely to make needed changes in congruence with system direction and goals.

In the Chewelah School District, there is a new strategic plan that outlines district goals and is manageable and feasible in scope. However, the goals and mission of the plan do not translate into any specific expectations for what the teaching and learning process should look like, nor is there any direction in policy for student engagement and support. There are no tightly-held statements concerning expectations for instructional delivery, no values or priorities for the engagement or level of cognitive demand that instruction should provide. Parents report that their children are not challenged and even bored in class (see **Finding 4**). Teaching is not engaging or consistently tied to real-world contexts (see **Finding 4**). The current administrative structure is very limited and the positions that exist have insufficient job descriptions. There is no position other than the superintendent to oversee the most critical aspect of design work, curriculum (see **Finding 1**).

The following recommended steps with detailed actions are recommended to district leaders to assist the Chewelah School District in improving student learning and achievement. Those actions needing to be addressed in policy are addressed to the Board of Education, while those needing to be addressed through planning and district operations are addressed to the Superintendent. Recommended actions all address the issues identified above.

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Chewelah School District Board of Education:

G.1.1: VISION. Revise the strategic plan to include district vision for teaching and learning, the beliefs and values that inform the vision, and list a series of characteristics (3-5) that should be observable in any classroom when visiting that would align to the vision and beliefs. These values should articulate beliefs around a culture that places parents and students at the center and that values students taking an active part in the learning process. Involve multiple stakeholders in this process and use research (see Appendices) for guidance.

Once the visioning process is complete, revise policy to establish the vision, philosophy and belief statements. Communicate the expectation of high respect for all stakeholders, especially for students and their families, that should characterize all interactions with students and their families, regardless of their background. Include in the belief statements the importance of a safe and supportive learning

environment. Include in belief statements expectations for a culture valuing respect for others and servant leadership.

Revise the mission statement to communicate that a comprehensive quality education is the responsibility of the system and will be ensured by all staff. Work to incorporate more active language to communicate the district's commitment to these values and the message that these values are non-negotiable.

These statements should form the basis for every single action, plan, goal, objective, and decision made in the district in the coming years. No decision should be made without first assuring its alignment with the beliefs, vision, and mission of the Board of Education. These beliefs and statements form the boundaries within which flexible decision making occurs—no exceptions. They are foundational to assuring safety, success, and a positive, high-level learning for every Chewelah student.

G.1.2: Community Outreach. In an effort to establish more positive relations with the Chewelah community, host School Board roundtable discussions in the community. These roundtable discussions are simply to listen to parent concerns and feedback. Parents shared concerns over not being heard; these roundtables are an effort to increase transparency and trust between district leaders and the community, and to initiate a culture of goodwill for everyone. Unity of purpose in serving the district's students is the goal, while maintaining individual perspectives and attitudes. This unity should help coalesce the district into a caring place to work and live.

G.1.3: STRATEGIC PLAN. Revise the Strategic Plan to reflect the changes outlined in **A.1.2**. Review suggested revisions to the plan submitted by the Superintendent and adopt as needed.

G.1.4: POLICY REVISION: Direct the Superintendent to revise policy to meet criteria presented in **Appendix E** and formally adopt, as needed. Give particular attention to developing policy around curriculum management: design, development, and delivery of curriculum.

Include the importance of rigor, or cognitive demand, in curriculum and instruction. Define rigor, citing research on its importance for economically disadvantaged students (see **Appendices L and N**). Specify that all instruction and student learning activities and assessment in the classroom must reflect high cognitive demand, which requires more open-ended thinking, varied response types, and incorporates students' voice and choice. See the revisions to this policy recommended to the Superintendent in **A.1.3**.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Chewelah School District Superintendent:

A.1.1: VISION. Work with the Board of Education and selected community representatives to revisit the vision, mission, and beliefs of the district, revising as recommended in **G.1.1**. Communicate to all stakeholders the tightly-held nature of these expectations and assure their integration into every plan and decision made in the district. Use research (see **Appendices L-N** in this report) as the foundation for these beliefs.

A.1.2: STRATEGIC PLAN. Revise the District Improvement Plan actions steps to be more focused on a shared vision and philosophy for student learning, and relevant to the curriculum work most needed across the system.

1. Connect the curriculum goal to more comprehensively address planning for curriculum design, development, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation.
2. Address the need for use of assessment as part of the instructional process.

3. Prioritize what training is most needed to build capacity in delivering the curriculum more effectively and ensure that the new vision, mission and beliefs are incorporated into the professional development initiatives.

A.1.3: POLICY. Revise and develop policies to meet the criteria of the exhibits in **Appendix E** and to more clearly reflect the revised vision and beliefs of the Board of Education that directly impact teaching and learning. Consider the needs of managing curriculum design and delivery long-term (see **Exhibit 2.1**) in developing this policy, and refer to Recommendation 2.

A.1.4: ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE. Add a Curriculum Director position, even half-time, to the central office that can focus on curriculum management responsibilities. This person should work directly with principals and schools to help facilitate the design and delivery of curriculum, and also support teaching and learning with locating and reviewing resources and materials for teachers.

A.1.5: JOB DESCRIPTIONS. Revise existing and develop job descriptions for the most important positions in the district: principal, teacher, curriculum director, assistant principal, and other teacher positions. Revise these to reflect their role in relationship to curriculum design and delivery, and specify how the decision making related to that position should reflect the district vision, mission, and philosophy.

A.1.6: CLIMATE: establish district “roundtables” with district stakeholders. With a member of the board, sit down every month and invite different representatives from the schools and community (small groups of 10 or less) to share concerns or thoughts about the education process. For the first year, use this time to simply listen and reflect back what they are sharing, affirming their statements and perceptions. The intent is to gather information and perceptions and improve relations between the district and the community, and between teachers and central office/admin.

Develop a process for sharing concerns for teachers and parents; this should be 100% confidential, but teachers must have an avenue to share concerns over issues with their direct supervisor, and parents need to feel heard and feel their concerns are being addressed. Establish a process for addressing concerns with the building leaders and use a process of mediation in situations where it’s warranted. The intent is to address issues with directness and transparency, to avoid misunderstanding and making assumptions that can undermine the district’s work and affect morale.

Survey parents and students annually about their perceptions of the district climate; share the results and revise the roundtable process to include serving in an advisory capacity, as well.

Conclusion: In summary, a renewed focus on the value and priority of students and their families and a deep level appreciation for teachers is crucial, along with clear vision, beliefs, values, and mission for student learning and engagement will help unify the district and keep the focus on what is most important: high-level student learning. This is learning that is delivered in a context that deeply respects, values and affirms each student’s background and perspectives and establishes relationships with families and the community. All aspects of the system and all operations are related to this central focus, either in defining the student learning, delivering it, or in supporting it in some fashion. The district must refresh its vision and communicate it widely, establishing a framework of tightly-held expectations that express the values and beliefs within which this work is expected to function. The district structure should then be re-aligned to better support the curriculum and instruction needed to make the vision a reality.

Recommendation 2: Develop a plan for designing and developing curriculum that supports district expectations for what high-level learning looks like. The plan should build off of and continue efforts to prioritize standards and develop assessments so a high-quality curriculum is the result. Strong written curriculum is necessary to ensure that all teachers are delivering the most engaging and highest quality instruction.

Curriculum management planning involves establishing tightly held expectations that give stakeholders clear direction for making decisions that align with district goals, priorities, and beliefs. Planning outlines the processes for ensuring that curriculum design, development, delivery, and assessment will cohesively function in order to achieve district goals for student learning. Without such a plan, teachers and school administrators are left to make decisions on their own with insufficient guidance for what high-level, effective student learning looks like, and these decisions may in fact work against the intended priorities of district leaders.

The plan by itself does not coordinate and align district initiatives and efforts on its own; it is the development of the plan that happens as a result of deep collaboration across stakeholders that ensures all have consistent understanding of the adopted mission, vision, philosophy, and beliefs of the district. This collaboration ensures all have agreed to the district priorities, are willing to undertake the necessary processes to ensure the priorities are met, and that all agree to being held accountable for making decisions that support and promote the priorities in every classroom. A visioning process was recommended in **Recommendation 1**; the auditors want this recommendation to serve as the impetus behind this plan that directs curriculum development in support of the vision, mission, and philosophies identified and codified as part of **Recommendation 1**.

In Chewelah School District, new leadership has brought in curriculum development and strategic planning, but alignment and consistency, as well as accountability, are still insufficient to ensure district goals and priorities are met. The current strategic plan has outlined the most important goals for the district, but there is insufficient clarity in the system of what high-level, student-centered instruction looks like. Without this clarity, the current efforts to develop a written curriculum will not affect current methods of instructional delivery. Consistency in instructional quality, curriculum and program access, and cognitively challenging and meaningful student work are inadequate (see **Findings 2 and 3**). There has been work to identify priority standards and an intent to develop assessment, but the lack of quality written curriculum and the past history of ineffective instructional support at the classroom level preventing the district from realizing improved student learning, as measured on state and other assessments. Additionally, delivery of instruction to students needing additional supports is ineffective and inconsistent (see **Finding 4**), and RtI is not clearly defined nor connected to a district vision for engaging and effective instruction.

When done in collaboration with school leaders and teachers, developing a curriculum management plan that outlines district priorities and expectations for the district's vision for high-level, student-centered learning, that establishes requirements for curriculum design, expectations for its development and delivery, and direction for evaluating its effectiveness will work to move the district rapidly towards attaining its goals. Central to this initiative is ensuring that what is tightly held is also monitored and that all will be held accountable for adhering to these expectations when making decisions regarding instructional delivery.

Exhibit R.2.1: Curriculum Management Improvement Model Decision-Making Matrix

CONSISTENT (Non-negotiable) <i>District Level</i>	FLEXIBLE (Aligned to the Tightly-held but Negotiable by School) <i>School/Classroom Level</i>
Ends (Curriculum and Aligned Assessments)	Means (Instruction and Programs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision, Mission (district, program-specific) • Goals (district goals, program goals) • Philosophy, Beliefs about education (district) • Priorities (district, program) • Standards, objectives for students • Curriculum—Outcomes/Student Expectations/Objectives • Assessment—aligned to curriculum, criterion-based, benchmark, formative, and diagnostic (progress-monitoring, skill checks, performance-based) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiation of when students (individual and groups) get which standards/outcomes/student expectations/objectives • Processes, procedures • Instructional strategies • Resources, textbooks, etc. • Program implementation • Groupings • Staffing
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The matrix presented in this exhibit (also presented in **Exhibit 1.1**) shows those decisions that must be made at the district level in collaboration with district and campus leaders. Once made, they must be consistent and common for all across the district; accountability for adhering to these expectations is essential to ensure goals and priorities are met. Once decided, having the tightly-held expectations gives those at schools the necessary latitude to make decisions that are best for the students on their campus, while maintaining alignment with the district vision and priorities. It is this structured flexibility that fosters responsiveness to student need, respects teacher autonomy, but also ensures alignment with district expectations. If accountability is not enforced, the system cannot hope to achieve its goals.

The curriculum management plan outlines the tightly-held expectations for the district’s educational program and its ancillary support programs, such as Response to Intervention (RtI), special education, and highly capable, and establishes the procedures for monitoring and supporting the implementation of these expectations. It also delineates the process for developing quality curriculum documents, guidelines for supporting its effective delivery, and the priorities in assessing its effectiveness. Recommended steps to develop the plan, curriculum and its aligned assessments are presented below, organized by those steps recommended to the Board of Education and those recommended to the District Administration, headed by the Superintendent. **Recommendation 3** addresses supporting delivery of the curriculum.

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Chewelah School District Board of Education:

G.2.1: Develop policy around curriculum design and delivery and ensure that the vision, mission, beliefs and philosophy that resulted from the Strategic Plan revision process are included.

G.2.2: When complete, adopt the district’s curriculum management plan and require reports from district administration regarding its implementation and the fidelity of school-level decision making with the priorities and expectations the plan delineates.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Chewelah School District Superintendent of Schools:

A.2.1: Develop a curriculum management plan that includes expectations for the following components and that meets all criteria presented in **Exhibit 2.2:**

- Vision and Philosophy for Student Learning and for Support Programs
- Curriculum Design: Structure, Format, and Components
- Curriculum Development: Steps, Process, Timeline, and Persons Responsible for Developing Written Curriculum
- Curriculum Delivery: Expectations for Delivering and Supporting the Delivery of Written Curriculum in Alignment with District Beliefs and Philosophy
- Curriculum Assessment and Evaluation
- Communication and Consistency

Each component will be discussed in a separate action step below. Specific criteria related to each component are presented in **Exhibit 2.2.**

A.2.2: Expectations and District Vision for Delivery: In collaboration with a number of stakeholders, inclusive of campus leaders, define the beliefs, philosophy, and vision for student learning in Sealy ISD. Review the research presented in the appendices of this report to inform these decisions, along with other key research regarding the importance of cognitive engagement and relevance in the learning process, and the futility of teaching the test. Develop clear statements that describe what such learning looks like in terms of student activity, assignments, and attitudes; and teacher behaviors and attitudes. These statements should be adopted into policy.

Include expectations regarding the following issues that were noted in the audit report; organize expectations to address weaknesses in student engagement, RtI delivery, rigor of student activity, and serving students with special needs:

1. Student access to programs and services (identification and support services)
2. Role of cognitive demand in all students' achievement and success
3. Importance of relevance and connections to real-world contexts throughout the learning process
4. Importance of voice and choice in making content meaningful and interesting
5. Using flexible student groupings to facilitate scaffolds, supports, and interventions
6. Role and importance of relentlessly high expectations for all learners—expectations that meet and exceed grade level standards.
7. Keeping the curriculum floor the test ceiling

These expectations that define district vision and philosophy are critical in establishing parameters for all decision making in the district across all classrooms. Having the vision described in terms that specify what student learning and classroom teaching should *look* like is critical in moving the district forward in improving student learning and achievement, and it clarifies for everyone the kind of activity building leaders should see when walking through classrooms and supporting the delivery of curriculum. These expectations also inform parents what to expect from their child's educational program.

A.2.3: Curriculum Design: Within the context of ongoing work around essential standards and assessments, establish requirements for the design of all curriculum documents and their aligned assessments and performance tasks. With these requirements, establish common expectations for the

structure, format, and components of the curriculum. Require all curriculum documents to have aligned formative assessment tools attached to every unit (curriculum bundles) that are performance-based and that align with the district vision and philosophy, and that meet and exceed the content, contexts, and cognitive demand of the state tests.

- A. **Curriculum Structure:** adopt a unit-based structure that allows for flexibility in pacing within units, but tightness in pacing across units, to ensure that all grade-level learning is delivered. For every unit, specify the amount of time the unit supports. For this time increment, lay out the student objectives that are priority for that increment of time, and then within the unit plan, lay out a progression of learning that paces, sequences, and condenses or collapses the supporting standards and objectives so that the priority objectives are assuredly met by all students. Control the sequence of learning PreK-12 to allow sufficient TIME for all students to be successful with on-level learning. Include other components in the curriculum to provide other critical information in addition to the unit plans: year-at-a glance documents, scope and sequence, appendices, and introductory information for every course/grade level content area. See **Appendix J** for more information about structure and what makes up a quality written curriculum.
- B. **Curriculum Format and Components:** require all curriculum documents to be developed in a manner that meets the needs of an inexperienced teacher. In conjunction with the tools listed in **Appendix J**, establish an expectation that the format for all curriculum documents will include:
 1. objectives,
 2. assessment,
 3. prerequisites, and
 4. suggestions for strategies,
 5. student activities, and
 6. the resources and materials needed to teach them.

Require the unit plan to define, sequence, pace, and prioritize the learning (the WHAT) that must be delivered within the established timeframe and to organize the components listed here in a sequence that aligns with a suggested learning progression of how instruction can best be delivered (the HOW).

A.2.4: Define the steps and processes to follow in developing the written curriculum documents that reflect the design requirements outlined in **A.2.3**. See the steps in developing curriculum in **Appendix J**. Use all the work teachers have completed as part of the standards prioritization; if working on assessments next, consider using assessments that are performance based and reflective of high cognitive engagement as a mechanism for bundling standards into units.

- A. Review data to determine what content area(s) to begin with; the auditors suggest mathematics, as it is a more manageable content area with fewer standards.
- B. Include all teachers and principals and assistant principals in the curriculum development process. Use PLCs to discuss how the curriculum is being used and engage teachers in discussions around the activities and strategies used to implement it and their effectiveness (based on data).
- C. Develop a timeline for the development process.

- D. Allow documents to remain in draft status for several months; not all fields of the unit plan must be completed prior to their use, but establish a due date for when each field on the unit plans is expected to be completed.
- E. Consider attending the CMSi Curriculum Development Workshop to turnaround this training with all stakeholders involved in writing curriculum.

A.2.5: Clearly define expectations and processes to follow in implementing the district curriculum and in supporting its delivery. This includes both professional development expectations, so teachers can be trained in how to navigate and use the district documents to plan differentiated, student-centered instruction that reflects the district vision and philosophy, as well as expectations for modeling, coaching, and monitoring its delivery by assistant principals and principals. See the section on curriculum delivery in **Recommendation 3** for more detail on professional development and monitoring.

A.2.6: Define the intent for assessment and requirements for ensuring that all assessment procedures reflect the philosophy and vision of the district. Particularly note expectation that every day, high quality instruction is the best and most effective preparation for any assessment, including but not limited to the state test. Keep assessment focused on how students are demonstrating the required learning, what it looks like in terms of their work, engagement, and cognitive demand, and that measures should be used to monitor student progress in mastering the required learning so teaching can respond to the demonstrated needs. This feedback loop can happen daily, weekly, or by bigger increments of time, depending on the learning students should walk away with and the amount of time typical to teach it (as outlined in the written curriculum).

A.2.7: Establish a plan for communicating to all stakeholders and board members the expectations and guidelines that are represented in the curriculum management plan, and define the procedures for holding all (teachers, paras, principals, etc.) accountable for its implementation. Clarify roles and responsibilities of all positions in the district with respect to curriculum design and/or delivery, in keeping with the updates to the job descriptions and table of organization (see **Recommendation 1**). Keep curriculum design and delivery central to all decisions made. Principals, in particular, are critical to the success of improving student learning. Review with them how these expectations are evident in their decision and actions every day.

Planning for curriculum design and delivery begins with clear expectations and a clearly defined philosophy for teaching and learning. Engaging in this planning will add the needed specificity to the strategic planning that district leaders have already begun, but with a clear focus on instruction. Development of a written plan will assist in institutionalizing and bringing clarity to the vision, priorities, and expectations defined by leaders that will result in improving the learning of every child in Chewelah.

Curriculum and Assessment Development Process

Strong written curriculum is critical in defining the concepts, skills, reasoning, and knowledge students need to learn, in what sequence, at what pace, and to what level of complexity. Without this definition, teachers spend valuable time trying to interpret the standards and what on-level mastery of the standards looks like, rather than devoting their efforts and creating engaging and meaningful lessons designed to meet the needs of their classroom of students.

In Chewelah School District, there is almost no written curriculum (see **Finding 2**) Student work and instructional practices were mostly whole-group, showed little evidence of differentiation, and very low cognitive demand (see **Finding 3**). Students do not have consistent access to high quality instruction and support services and programs (see **Finding 4**).

The Chewelah School district needs to develop high quality written curriculum for teachers that outlines the most critical content in units and sub-units, with suggestions for how to teach them using engagement strategies that reflect the district vision, philosophy, and expectations for high level student learning. There must then be a coordinated effort to deliver this curriculum in the most effective ways possible, through intensive and ongoing training, monitoring, and coaching to support teachers in this critical endeavor. This recommendation is organized into two key sections: Curriculum Design and Development, and Curriculum Delivery.

Curriculum Design and Development

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Chewelah School District Board of Education:

G.2.3: Revise **Policy EH (Local)** to include the requirements outlined below (**A.3.1-A.3.10**) for every curriculum guide in the district.

G.2.4: Direct the Superintendent (or designee) to review the concepts of deep curriculum alignment and require that those concepts form the basis for curriculum design efforts across the district (see **A.5.8**).

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to Chewelah School District Superintendent of Schools:

A.2.8: Require the use of a unit-based structure to develop the written curriculum for all content areas and grade levels. This structure supports differentiation by allowing for flexible pacing of instruction within units, while maintaining consistent pacing at the macro level, for the pace of each unit. Using the recommended components presented in **Appendix J**, also require the development of introductory information, scope and sequence documents (K-12 progression of standards/objectives, prioritized), year-at-a-glance documents, unit plans, and appendices with additional materials.

A.2.9: Define what a “model” curriculum document looks like using the information in **Appendix J** and also the suggested unit plan format in **Appendix J**. Provide a standard unit structure that paces, sequences, defines, and prioritizes the content into successive increments of time and then at the smallest increment (3-5 days of time), suggest ways to teach that bundle of content. Units may vary across content areas and grades, but the layout and organization should be consistent districtwide. The following components are minimum requirements and should be included in the unit plan, which includes BOTH components that define, pace, sequence, and prioritize the WHAT while providing suggestions for HOW.

Components defining the CONTENT, based on standards (tightly-held content with flexible pacing within the units):

1. **Objectives (Tightly-held):** An objective is a specific statement of the intended skill or knowledge to be learned, the variety of contexts in which it is to be learned and practiced, and the standard of performance by which a teacher knows mastery of that skill or knowledge has been achieved. These should all align closely with the state standards, but specific learner objectives give the teacher more precise information of what mastery looks like and clearly define which objectives are assigned to which grade or instructional level (because the first grade objective is clearly different from the second, and so on). The number of objectives included in the curriculum must also be manageable; continue with the work of Solution Tree in prioritizing the standards; collapsing and condensing as possible to then place the standards in a teachable sequence (or spiraling specific concepts or skills when needed repeatedly). It is better to focus on fewer objectives and address them more “deeply” than to present an entire battery of objectives that

teachers “might” touch on. All objectives should be reviewed for evidence of rigor using Bloom’s Taxonomy; revise as needed. Integrate the process standards with the content standards, so they are taught in conjunction with the content standards as intended.

2. **Assessment (Tightly-held):** Tools for authentically and effectively evaluating students’ learning must be included in the curriculum. Attach assessments to units; include progress-monitoring tools, exit tickets, and other quick checks that teachers can choose from to determine student learning progress. Relying on released test items or commercially produced assessments or unit/chapter tests is insufficient; teachers must have tools with which to continuously evaluate student progress and move them at the appropriate, individualized pace in all content areas. Teachers also need flexibility over some assessment tools, while unit assessments must be common across all teachers (although they may be differentiated, as long as rubrics remain consistent).

Use the formative and performance-based tools to inform standards-based grading and feedback on learning. Link student exemplars with standards-based grading criteria, so teachers have a solid picture of what on-level learning looks like for the most critical standards and skills. Clarify how assessments are used in giving students and their parents feedback; consider abandoning grades in favor of standards-based reporting that is tied to performance-based evidence and clear progressions of learning.

3. **Prerequisites/Scope and Sequence (Tightly-held):** Place the learner objectives (PreK-12) within a scope and sequence document to allow teachers to easily discern what content and skills students come in with, and what content and skills they are responsible for seeing students leave with at the end of the year. This will also facilitate greater articulation of the curriculum from one level to the next and assure greater coordination across a single level or course, as the mapping out of objectives is already completed and eliminates gaps and overlaps in student learning. It is also appropriate to continue to “map out” the objectives for a particular grade level and course as is currently done with the district scope and sequence documents, which should be a component of the written curriculum documents.

Suggestions for HOW to teach the paced/sequenced content, attached to smallest increment of time within the units:

4. **Suggested Strategies and Approaches (Loosely-held):** This item is a critical part of ensuring high expectations for students and achieving deep alignment. This component is intended to provide teachers, particularly inexperienced teachers, with support in deciding ways to teach the assigned objectives. Flexibility is always allowed in how teachers approach a given objective, but this component provides teachers with invaluable, research-proven suggestions if they want or need them that work with Sealy students. The suggested strategies should reflect the vision, philosophy, and expectations of the district (see **Recommendation 1**).
5. **Resources and Materials (Loosely-held):** Every book, recommended professional resource, audiovisual aid, technological enhancement or program, and other resource should be listed (after ensuring teachers have all that are necessary) in the curriculum documents. The resources should be referenced by objective or strategy (or cluster) where strategies or student activities are presented. All suggested resources or materials should be analyzed for deep alignment to the curriculum and the tests in use, and for alignment to district vision, philosophy, and expectations. While an abundance of resources may be preferred, all resources must be congruent in content, context and cognitive type.

Establish a process to ensure that all texts, instructional materials, and ancillary resources for all courses that are offered, including interventions and adopted commercially produced programs and computer apps, are screened for quality, rigor, and alignment to the curriculum and district expectations for delivery in all three dimensions (content, context, cognition) and present to the board for adoption. Require all resources to be vetted for quality and alignment by a district committee prior to purchase and use in any district classroom.

6. **Suggested Student Work/Activities for Classroom Use (Loosely-held):** The curriculum provides teachers with an idea of what high quality, rigorous engagement looks like for all students by providing suggestions for student work, practice activities, assignments, or projects for all instructional objectives or clusters of objectives. Each of the suggested activities can be differentiated for deep alignment with the objectives or cluster of objectives, and supports (scaffolds), interventions, and extensions should be integrated throughout, so RtI is reinforced and supported. Ensure that suggested student work deeply aligns to the state test contexts and is authentic, relevant, and rigorous.

Additional considerations for the curriculum:

A.2.10: Require the design of the curriculum to support the expectation that instruction will be differentiated to accommodate individual student needs and learning styles. This requires the support of fluid student groups, so teachers can use the interventions, scaffolds, and suggestions for reteaching as well as enrichment with only those students who need them. Also, include curriculum components and characteristics that reflect the district philosophy and beliefs concerning effective curriculum delivery. Design must support delivery. Make ALL suggestions for differentiation, even for special populations, an integral part of all unit plans, rather than in a separate location.

A.2.11: Take steps to ensure that all courses (core and non-core) taught at all grade levels across the district have a corresponding written curriculum. Set priorities and dates for completion that span the next 3-5 years, beginning with the core courses for development and revision of curriculum documents. Although a major undertaking, it focuses all teachers on the core work of schools: student learning.

A.2.12: Keep curriculum work in the district focused on developing Chewelah curriculum and define adopted or purchased resources as just that: resources, not curriculum. No resource deeply aligns to the WA state tests, nor are they authentic and rigorous enough to ensure high-level learning. All resources need extensive modifications for effective instruction; the curriculum is the tool that assists teachers in knowing what to teach and how to do it and with which resources for maximum effectiveness.

Assessment:

A.2.13: Modify policy and procedures for assessment to more clearly link assessment practices with the revised vision, mission and philosophy of the district. Ensure that formative tools are prioritized and that the policy also emphasizes alternative assessment practices, such as performance-based and portfolio tools.

A.2.14: Develop assessments that align to the priority standards. Train teachers in performance-based assessment and use these student tasks as a bundling mechanism for the standards. These assessments can serve as the anchor for each grade level/course's units. These end-of-unit assessments must deeply align in all three dimensions (content, context, and cognitive level), that is, meeting or exceeding the demands of the Washington State assessments, but also represent authentic, meaningful activity found in the real world. The assessments should use a variety of contexts other than multiple choice, and minimally must address speaking and writing skills, since these are necessary in all facets of life.

Link, embed, and/or reference formative assessments (diagnostic, progress monitoring, pre/post-tests) within each curriculum. For each assessment instrument, specify when it is appropriate or desirable to be used, its main purpose, and how to use the data it yields. For performance-based measures (projects, essays, etc.), include specific rubrics with exemplars that teachers can use to quantify students' learning. Identify those assessments for which the data will be entered electronically and monitored at the district or campus level. Determine which assessments are mandatory and which assessments are open or teacher selections, but all should be rigorous, address the content objectives, and incorporate a wide variety of contexts, never just multiple choice. Emphasis should be given to assessments that engage students in writing and that demand evidence of thinking.

A.2.15: As curriculum is developed or revised, require a deep alignment analysis of all components of the written curriculum to ensure the content of these components align in multiple dimensions with state standards and high-stake assessments. It is a fundamental principle of the audit that the work students encounter in the classroom must deeply align with any assessment, particularly high-stakes measures.

The steps outlined above are intended to provide Chewelah School District with direction for establishing an effective system for designing, developing, and delivering curriculum to define and develop a robust, student-centered curriculum that clearly defines what students are expected to learn, the cognitive engagement that learning requires, and ways to make the learning relevant and meaningful for Chewelah students. Only when all students are effectively engaged in their learning and interested in what's happening in the classroom will student achievement improve. Many of the steps described above will be accomplished over a period of time but will result in long-lasting change and improvement if the focus remains on an aligned written, taught, and tested curriculum. Attention to these steps will provide greater focus on district priorities and needs and establish a greater constancy of purpose in providing all students in the district with the highest quality educational experience.

Recommendation 3: Develop clear expectations for delivering the district curriculum and establish processes and procedures for training and supporting others in its delivery. Develop a teacher- and student-centered building culture that sets high expectations for teachers and students, holds everyone accountable, and that provides formative support and coaching through various means to make the vision for student engagement a reality.

In effective school districts, aligning the written, taught, and tested curricula is top priority. Aligning classroom-based teaching and learning with the written curriculum and priorities of the district is the most challenging aspect of alignment, since there is the greatest potential for misunderstanding when teachers are making decisions independently. Therefore, while teachers need a great deal of autonomy over the instructional process, teachers must also have clarity around what the district expects to see for student learning and engagement, and for classroom management and differentiation practices. The following steps will help the district plan for the eventual implementation of new written curriculum with the aligned assessments, focusing first on defining quality delivery and expectations for coaching and monitoring, and then designing a professional development program that will equip teachers, coaches, and principals to fulfill their responsibilities in the curriculum delivery process.

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Chewelah School District Board of Education:

G.3.1: In policy (as noted in Recommendations 1 and 2), allow decision making for curriculum delivery to be under the purview of school autonomy, but require all school-based instructional decisions (by

leaders and teachers) to align with the content in the established curriculum and the district's vision and philosophy.

G.3.2: Revise **Policy 5520** to define the purpose of professional development in terms of equipping teachers to deliver the curriculum more effectively to improve student achievement. Include in the policy roles and responsibilities of district and school administrators in assuring the development of teachers.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Chewelah School District Superintendent of Schools:

A.3.1: As indicated in **Recommendation 2**, as an extension of the vision, philosophy, and expectations for high-level student learning, define quality instruction; high-level learning, and differentiation.

Include in this definition what quality instruction looks like for students with special needs, such as gifted students or students with a disability or learning challenge, if it is in any way different from the definition for regular education students. Establish tightly held expectations for student engagement and teaching that should be reflected in every classroom on a regular basis, regardless of grade level or content area. Define the types of student engagement practices desired in district classrooms; note where teachers have flexibility and where they don't with respect to how curriculum is delivered (must all learning be student-centered? Rigorous? Support RtI? Scaffolded and differentiated?).

Specify district expectations for holding only the highest expectations for student learning district-wide. Emphasize the importance of building self-efficacy and a strong, positive identity as a learner for all Chewelah students, regardless of income level, background, or ethnicity. Expectations can be powerful in either developing strong self-efficacy or in reinforcing a negative self-concept in learners and in ultimately impacting achievement.

A.3.2: Require any support program in the district to have clearly defined procedures for referring and identifying students, and for clustering them in classrooms. Establish guidelines that no more than 25% of any class may be students with a specific classification nor need, such as gifted or special education. Increase the identification of HiCap students, offering teachers clearer guidelines for what giftedness is and looks like (see **Appendix K**). Require a minimum amount of time for implementing RtI before any student can be identified as Special Education; assure the implementation of a variety of contexts and strategies that are focused on the diagnosed academic need and that learning activities allow students voice and choice in their learning (see **Appendix L**).

A.3.3: Develop procedures to monitor adherence to these special program guidelines; require their implementation. Train all teachers in proper referral and identification practices. Have principals monitor disproportionalities in gender and income status. Make annual reports to the board regarding improvements. As pedagogical practices improve, so should student learning, and special education identification should lower to be more in line with state percentages. The intent is not to deny any student proper supports and services; rather, the intent is to ensure that Tier I instruction is more effective for all students since differentiation and supports are regularly used with highly engaging practices.

Mechanism for Curriculum Delivery: Lesson Planning

A.3.4: Clarify district expectations for lesson planning in policy. Define lesson planning as the mechanism by which teachers decide how to deliver the curriculum in a manner that meets the identified needs of their class(es) and students. Define the preferred lesson planning model (differentiation--the mastery

learning model), not the format for lesson plans, for using data in planning the delivery of the district curriculum that is responsive to student needs. This model is portrayed in **Exhibit R.3.1**.

Exhibit R.3.1: Mastery learning modelThe model presents the cycle of lesson planning in response to collected or observed evidence regarding what students have learned. Implementation can occur at the individual, small group, or even whole group level. However, the model only works when teachers have valid, reliable, and aligned assessment tools to use in collecting evidence of student learning, and when they are effective at developing students as self-directed learners. The most effective implementation of the model incorporates scaffolds, interventions, and extensions into lesson plans for all students in the classroom.

A.3.5: Train teachers in how to use data to group students to enable students to work on-level with needed supports or even interventions. Train teachers in how to use small groups so they are free to work with a small group of students while the rest of the class is productively engaged in collaborative or individual learning activities.

A.3.6: Use coaches to work with teachers on adhering to the mastery learning model in planning instruction from the written curriculum, using approved approaches and student engagement strategies. Have coaches model small group approaches, self-directed learning, and data-driven instruction.

A.3.7: Hold all stakeholders accountable for district expectations, especially campus leaders. Expect all teachers to deliver the district curriculum in accordance with district philosophy and expectations. Collect samples of student work to calibrate against the standards and against district expectations as an additional form of monitoring.

Monitoring and Supporting Delivery of Instruction

Monitoring is intended as a support function for teachers. It's part of the accountability system in that principals and assistant principals are ensuring that the district curriculum is in fact being delivered in classrooms in a manner reflective of the district vision, but the philosophical approach is collaborative and non-inspectional. Coaching, modeling, and support are the most important roles of principals as the instructional leader on the campus. Principals must share the district vision for high level, engaging, and effective student learning so they can support it and achieve it on their campus.

A.3.8: Require instructional leadership and monitoring to be the primary responsibility of all school administrators in keeping with their role as instructional leaders. In monitoring, district administrators should not only keep the learner objectives in mind, but the way students are learning and that teachers are teaching, focusing reflective questions with teachers on those aspects of delivery the administrators want teachers to think about for professional growth.

A.3.9: Develop clear expectations for monitoring for all school leaders, with specific direction for how all will work together to support improved delivery of curriculum in alignment with district vision, philosophy, and expectations. Develop a simple observation tool and procedures that are consistent with the newly adopted lesson-planning model and recommended framework for strategies and practice these procedures together during instructional rounds. Determine how monitoring data will be collected and reported.

A.3.10: During classroom visits and as part of a regular protocol, pay particular attention to the nature of student work, using the three Cs (content, context, and cognitive demand) as a lens for evaluating that work. Determine if student work calibrates to the curriculum and the state standards; determine relevance and cognitive demand to see if it also reflects district expectations.

A.3.11: Use the PLC process with teachers to focus on planning lessons from the district curriculum, and later, to review different samples of student work that teachers chose to have their students complete. Discuss the quality and alignment of this work with the objectives; discuss (led by coaches and principals) how to improve for greater relevance and rigor or alignment to the standards.

A.3.12: Define and establish processes for delivering special education/504 services and supports and monitor adherence to these expectations during instructional rounds, especially with respect to providing interventions and accommodating and modifying instructional practices.

A.3.13: Monitor access to programs for all student groups, particularly access to gifted and talented programming for students of poverty and males. Monitor special education identification, as well; clarify what instructional approaches are to be implemented prior to beginning the referral process for special education. Hold all accountable for following the guidelines.

A.3.14: Improve alignment district-wide by monitoring instructional delivery and coaching; at the district level, also collect and review samples of student work to calibrate against district expectations and the state standards, as well as to monitor student writing and preparedness for the state test. Adjust, train, and modify curriculum where needed; use the results of the analysis of student work to provide feedback to principals and PLCs.

Professional Development

The most effective focus of professional development is to provide teachers with the understandings, skills, and support needed to be able to implement the district curriculum with maximum effectiveness and in alignment with the district vision and philosophy. Effectiveness is determined by the level of improvement in student learning on district (using a variety of performance-based, progress-monitoring, and diagnostic instruments) and state assessments. Teachers need training in not only the format, structure and components of the written curriculum, but also in the types of student engagement and teaching strategies that reflect the district vision and philosophy for learning. Implementing new engagement strategies, many of which require flexible student groupings, also requires training in classroom management strategies. Professional Development Planning is a goal of the strategic plan, and is appropriately focused on a major weakness in the district: effective delivery of curriculum, in terms of student engagement and achievement (see **Finding 3**).

A.3.15: Assist the Board with the development of the recommended policy; define professional development as being a critical part of improving student learning. As such, professional development must be coordinated and aligned at the district level; schools may only plan and deliver professional development that is in coordination with and/or an extension of district initiatives and priorities.

A.3.16: Assign all professional development duties to the appropriate administrator under the umbrella of curriculum and instruction to ensure that professional development is cohesive and aligned to curriculum priorities district-wide. It should be driven by and responsive to the curriculum management plan, but more specifically outline the timelines and procedures for PD over a five-year period. The responsible administrator should incorporate all professional development planning within ongoing curriculum management planning and be in response to the curriculum development and delivery processes and timelines.

A.3.17: Finalize the development of the Professional Development Plan. Use the criteria in **Exhibit R.3.2** to develop a plan that defines priorities for supporting teachers in achieving the district's vision:

Exhibit R.3.2: CMAC™ Model Professional Development Criteria and Auditors’ Assessment of Staff Development Program and Planning

Characteristics
Policy
1. Has policy that establishes the expectation that professional development focus primarily on the improved delivery of curriculum
2. Fosters an expectation for professional growth and requires planning to support growth for the improvement of student learning
3. Is for all employees
Planning and Design
4. Is based on a careful analysis of data and is data-driven
5. Provides for system-wide coordination and has a clearinghouse function in place
6. Has a current plan that provides a framework for integrating initiatives in professional development with the mission, vision, and curriculum implementation
7. Has a professional development mission in place
8. Is built using a long-range planning approach
9. Provides for organizational, unit, and individual development in a systemic manner
10. Focuses on organizational change—professional development efforts are aligned to district goals
Delivery
11. Is based on proven research-based approaches that have been shown to increase productivity
12. Provides for three phases of the change process: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization
13. Is based on human learning and development and adult learning research
14. Uses a variety of professional development approaches
15. Provides for follow-up coaching and on-the-job application, which are necessary to ensure change in practice
16. Expects each supervisor to be a staff developer of staff supervised
Evaluation and Support
17. Provides the necessary funding to carry out professional development goals
18. Requires an evaluation process that is ongoing, includes multiple sources of information, focuses on all levels of the organization, and is based on actual change in behavior

Engage all administrators in developing the PD plan for the district. Collaboration takes more time but increases having a common understanding of and accountability in its design and delivery.

In the plan, center all PD on defining and furthering the district vision and philosophy, as defined by concrete descriptions of what that looks like when walking through classrooms (in observable, measurable terms describing teacher and student activity). Keep the goals very limited and focused on only 2 major areas (see below), once teachers have been trained in how to develop and then navigate and use the curriculum (and understand its format, structure, and purpose).

A.3.18: Identify goals for professional development areas of focus. Use the audit report as well as the observational data from building administrators’ walk-throughs. Have administrators walk through each others’ buildings, together, to observe instruction to encourage collective practice and discussion. Note where current practice aligns with the district vision and where the greatest improvement is needed. With these data, consider the auditors’ suggestions for the most needed areas of professional development, presented in order of priority:

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Curriculum design:** its format, structure, components, and various parts and how to navigate the documents.
2. **Expectations for student learning and teaching approaches:** clarify with every teacher the district's expectations for what high-level student learning *looks like*, what relevance (meaningful) and cognitive demand looks like and how to deliver that in the classroom.
3. **Flexible student groupings:** model and practice with teachers how to group students flexibly for instruction and for processing, practicing, and demonstrating their learning.

Once teachers have developed proficiency in the above areas of focus (2-3 years, minimum), start training all teachers in how to differentiate effectively for content (objectives from the learning progression, informed by assessment or performance data) and context (how students will practice and/or show their learning and the learning environment). Differentiation should focus on the mastery learning model (**R.3.1**) and how to use available data, decide appropriate objectives, plan strategies and approaches for specific students, group students accordingly, and monitor student learning, all within a cyclical format.

A.3.19: Have principals and assistant principals, along with the teaching and learning administrator, model and coach teachers in implementing all the areas of focus listed above, engaging teachers in reflective conversations during PLCs and classroom walkthroughs regarding their practices and how to improve alignment with the district vision. Encourage a supportive, reflective climate in all buildings. Modeling the vision is essential in assisting teachers with reflecting on current practice, in order to move them to desired practice, but this must be performed in a supportive, positive climate that is not inspectional or corrective in nature.

Recommendation 4: Design and implement a performance-based budget and allocation system to tighten the linkage between resources, results, and district priorities. Communicate facility needs to the community and prioritize passing a bond to support critical facility renovations.

The development and implementation of processes to link budget allocations to district goals and priorities are needed to increase productivity in the Sealy Independent School District. The performance-driven budgeting process establishes tangible linkages among curriculum goals, student achievement, and costs. With these linkages in place, the public will have a better idea of what is funded and why, and the school leadership will have more creditable rationale for allocating to specific programs and eliminating others based on data. To allocate resources without comprehensive evaluation of results ignores the annual opportunity to strategically re-establish priorities and aggressively pursue intended results with new direction. Transition to a performance-driven budget should not be undertaken hastily, but should be implemented over a period of years.

Auditors found the district budgeting process has resulted in sound financial practices, stable funding, and a healthy fund balance. The district is not, however, producing desired results in student achievement (see **Finding 5**). The system's budgeting process needs to increasingly provide connections from data to decisions and from allocations to results (see **Finding 6**). The lack of effective cost-benefit analysis has resulted in an inability to determine the effectiveness of programming weighed against the program cost, and in linkages between goals and resources that are not explicit.

The recommendations that follow are made to help the system design and implement transparent, performance-driven budgeting and plan for needed facilities renovations, to support increases in enrollment and also enable the district to support the educational program more effectively.

Performance-Driven Budgeting

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended for consideration to the Chewelah Board of Education:

G.4.1.: Revise policy for board consideration and adoption that directs procedures in finance and budgeting to move to a performance-driven budgeting process (see **Finding 6**).

G.4.2: Require that data be collected for district programs to enable future cost-benefit analyses.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Chewelah School District Superintendent:

A.4.1: Develop, for Board consideration, policy that supports the development and implementation of performance-driven budgeting.

A.4.2: Once the developed policy is approved by the Board, develop procedures for implementing the policy.

Include in procedures steps for designing a performance-driven budget that include the following:

- Review and modify or confirm goals for the district. The budgeting process should be focused on specific, time-bound, and measurable goals. Consider Curriculum Audit Report findings and recommendations during this process.
- Develop a budget schedule. Planning should be completed prior to budgeting.
- Identify various educational activities or programs and group them into broad areas of need or purpose served. Examples of potential programs are elementary instruction, district governance (board and superintended functions), high school instruction, middle school management, transportation, counseling, staff development, etc. The cost of providing needed district resources, including personnel, will be identified. Try to divide the organization into the most logical (but least number necessary) subgroups.
- Assign the responsibility of preparing the budget packages for each of the identified programs to specific administrators. Direct them to prepare a concise and meaningful budget proposal for their respective areas. The district will provide budget preparation forms for uniformity. Each budget package represents a level of activity that stands alone, but that builds sequentially on the previous package. For example, a 95% budget package is developed first and serves as the foundational package for a specific program. The 100% package builds on the 95% package, and the 105% package builds upon the 100% package. Budget packages need to be concise and meaningful.
- Goal statements need to be attached to each program areas or budget request to state the program's linkage to established goals and priorities, its purpose, the criteria for identifying success, and specifically how results will be evaluated and reported. Each budget package should be described to permit evaluation of the consequences of funding or non-funding in terms of performance results.
- Build budget packages within each of the subgroups by the priority with which they deliver the objectives of the areas of need or purpose. Components could be packaged into units that

provide programs and services at (1) ninety-five percent of the previous year's budget (recovery level), (2) one hundred percent of the previous year's budget (current level), and (3) one hundred and five percent of the previous year's budget (enhancement level). Additional recovery levels may be included, as well as additional enhancement levels. At the one-hundred percent current level of funding, program managers should be asked if they would spend the funds differently. The business office will need to furnish each budget manager with their 100% funding level from the previous year's budget. The recovery and enhancement percentages will differ over time, as the system becomes more sophisticated and data-driven. These program increments describe various levels of service.

- Goal statements and budget packages are compiled, and given to appropriate staff to gather data to best describe service levels, program outputs and cost benefits.
- Past cost information and performance data use for assessment and documentation of previous program results are essential for cost-benefit analysis.
- Define program performance expectations and accountability for each program area. Current results should be compared to desired expectations and related service level requirements. For example, to be successful a specific program may need to be established at 105% of the previous spending level. Some programs may be funded at less than the previous year level. Changes in funding may necessitate a comparable reduction from some other program to allow an increased allocation for another program judged to be of greater consequence.
- Each program manager must create at least three program alternatives that deliver an adequate and workable program at different levels of allocation. This number of alternatives may change in future years.
- Budget packages, including costs, are compiled into a worksheet by the business office with instructions for evaluating and ranking.
- Determine the members of the Budget Advisory Committee, representing various district stakeholders.
- Budget program packages are presented by program managers to the Budget Committee for evaluation and ranking. Budget requests need to compete with each other for funding based upon evaluation of priority of need and relationship to achievement of program effectiveness. Publish compiled results in a tentative budget with program packages listed in order of ranked priority.
- Submit Budget Committee recommendations to the Superintendent, who in turn reviews and gives consideration for recommendation to the Board of Education for approval.
- Finalize budget allocations based on revenues available, the appropriate levels to be authorized, and the program funding priorities and rankings by the Superintendent.
- Have the Board review the recommendations, evaluate priorities, establish final programs and services to be funded and at what level, and adopt the budget.
- Establish final programs and services to be funded at the level approved by the Board and set the budget in place.

A.5.4: Provide training as needed to all affected staff members during the transition to a performance-driven budget process and format. ¹

Given attention to these recommendations, the leaders of the Chewelah School District will better establish tangible connections between district goals and expectations and the resource allocation process, resulting in an on-going process of improved program outcomes and aligned budget allocations.

Facility Planning

The district currently has a long-range facilities plan in place and is discussing the renovations and changes needed to bring the buildings up to standard and legal requirements. The focus of this recommendation is to simply communicate these needs widely to the community and emphasize the importance of schools in serving the future of not only students, but the community itself. Beautiful schools encourage community growth and morale, and are uplifting to students and community members, alike. Be transparent regarding the connection between facilities and the educational program, particularly with CTE programs and safety needs.

Developing the vision, mission, and tightly-held philosophy and beliefs for the district and ensuring that all decision making aligns with those priorities will assist in providing a unifying, positive focus for all district stakeholders. These are statements that remind teachers of why they entered the teaching workforce and are inspiring to others in the community. A renewed focus on the most important aspects of teaching and learning will position the district for real improvement in student learning. The capacity has always been there; it is now up to leaders to inspire and coalesce that capacity for meaningful and lasting change.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Auditors' Biographical Data



Holly J. Kaptain, PhD

Holly J. Kaptain is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Curriculum Management Solutions, inc., owner of the Curriculum Audit and Audit Trainings. She has worked in public education for over 25 years, teaching at every grade level and more recently in higher education at Iowa State University, where she was a program director of a bilingual and two-way immersion program for culturally and linguistically diverse students. She is a CMSi (Curriculum Management Solutions, inc.) licensed trainer in deep curriculum alignment and has participated in over 32 audits in 15 different states since 1996. Dr. Kaptain graduated with a BA from St. Olaf College in Minnesota and completed curriculum management audit training in St. Paul, Minnesota, in July 1996. She completed her MS in Curriculum and Instruction and her PhD in Educational Administration at Iowa State University. She has presented at regional and national conferences on bilingual education research, instructional efficacy, and curriculum design and development.

Dr. Kaptain is a member of Phi Delta Kappa, the National Association for Bilingual Education, the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages, as well as other honor and professional organizations.



Denise McGloughlin, EdD

A public educator for over 30 years, Dr. Denise McGloughlin recently retired from the position of Chief Academic Officer. Her previous roles included: Director of Curriculum and Instruction, County Education Service Agency Field Specialist, Principal, Assistant Principal, Instructional Coach, and Teacher. Dr. McGloughlin serves as an Optimization Guru for Creative Solutions Group, supporting leaders to optimize both talent and processes. She prepares master's level students for the principalship as a Northern Arizona University Adjunct Professor. Dr. McGloughlin received her Doctorate in Organizational Leadership with an emphasis in K-12 Instructional Leadership from Grand Canyon University; her Master's in Educational Administration from Arizona State University; and her Bachelor's in Elementary Education from the University of Houston. Dr. McGloughlin completed her Curriculum Management Audit training in Phoenix, Arizona, in 2018.

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Appendix B: Audit Methodology

The Model for the Curriculum Audit™

The model for the Curriculum Audit™ is shown in the schematic below. The model has been published widely in the national professional literature, including the best-selling book, *The Curriculum Management Audit: Improving School Quality* (Frase, English, Poston, 1995).

A Schematic View of Curricular Quality Control

General quality control assumes that at least three elements must be present in any organizational and work-related situation for it to be functional and capable of being improved over time. These are: (a) a work standard, goal/objective, or operational mission; (b) work directed toward attaining the mission, standard, goal/objective; and (c) feedback (work measurement), which is related to or aligned with the standard, goal/objective, or mission.

When activities are repeated, there is a “learning curve,” i.e., more of the work objectives are achieved within the existing cost parameters. As a result, the organization, or a subunit of an organization, becomes more “productive” at its essential short- or long-range work tasks.

Within the context of an educational system and its governance and operational structure, curricular quality control requires: (a) a written curriculum in some clear and translatable form for application by teachers in classrooms or related instructional settings; (b) a taught curriculum, which is shaped by and interactive with the written one; and (c) a tested curriculum, which includes the tasks, concepts, and skills of pupil learning and which is linked to both the taught and written curricula. This model is applicable in any kind of educational work structure typically found in mass public educational systems, and is suitable for any kind of assessment strategy, from norm-referenced standardized tests to more authentic approaches.

The Curriculum Audit™ assumes that an educational system, as one kind of human work organization, must be responsive to the context in which it functions and in which it receives support for its continuing existence. In the case of public educational systems, the support comes in the form of tax monies from three levels: local, state, and federal.

In return for such support, mass public educational systems are supposed to exhibit characteristics of rationality, i.e., being responsive to the public will as it is expressed in legally constituted bodies such as Congress, state legislatures, and locally elected/appointed boards of education.

In the case of emerging national public school reforms, more and more this responsiveness is assuming a distinctive school-based management focus, which includes parents, teachers, and, in some cases, students. The ability of schools to be responsive to public expectations, as legally expressed in law and policy, is crucial to their future survival as publicly-supported educational organizations. The Curriculum Audit™ is one method for ascertaining the extent to which a school system, or subunit thereof, has been responsive to expressed expectations and requirements in this context.



Standards for the Auditors

While a Curriculum Audit™ is not a financial audit, it is governed by similar principles. These are:

Expertise

CMSi-certified auditors must have actual experience in conducting the affairs of a school system at all levels audited. They must understand the tacit and contextual clues of sound curriculum management.

The Chewelah School District Curriculum Audit™ Team selected by the Curriculum Management Audit Center included auditors who have been assistant superintendents, directors, coordinators, principals and assistant principals, as well as elementary and secondary classroom teachers in public educational systems in several locations, including Arizona and Iowa.

Independence

None of the Curriculum Audit™ Team members had any vested interest in the findings or recommendations of the Chewelah School District Curriculum Audit™. None of the auditors has or had any working relationship with the individuals who occupied top or middle management positions in the Chewelah School District, nor with any of the past or current members of the Chewelah School District Board of Directors.

Objectivity

Events and situations that comprise the database for the Curriculum Audit™ are derived from documents, interviews, site visits, and online surveys. Findings must be verifiable and grounded in the database, though confidential interview data may not indicate the identity of such sources. Findings must be factually triangulated with two or more sources of data, except when a document is unusually authoritative, such as a court judgment, a labor contract signed and approved by all parties to the agreement, approved meeting minutes, which connote the accuracy of the content, or any other document whose verification is self-evident.

Triangulation of documents takes place when the document is requested by the auditors and is subsequently furnished. Confirmation by a system representative that the document is, in fact, what was requested is a form of triangulation. A final form of triangulation occurs when the audit is sent to the superintendent in draft form. If the superintendent or his/her designee(s) does not provide evidence that the audit text is inaccurate, or documentation that indicates there are omissions or otherwise factual or content errors, the audit is assumed to be triangulated. The superintendent's review is not only an additional source of triangulation, but is considered a summative triangulation of the entire audit report.

Consistency

All CMSi-certified curriculum auditors have used the same standards and methodology since the initial audit conducted by Dr. Fenwick English in 1979. Audits are not normative in the sense that one school system is compared to another. School systems, as the units of analysis, are compared to a set of standards and positive/negative discrepancies cited.

Materiality

CMSi-certified auditors have broad implied and discretionary power to focus on and select those findings that they consider most important to describing how the curriculum management system is functioning in a school district, and how that system must improve, expand, delete, or reconfigure various functions to attain an optimum level of performance.

Confidentiality

Auditors must reveal all relevant information to the users of the audit, except in cases where such disclosure would compromise the identity of employees or patrons of the system. Confidentiality is respected in all audit interviews.

In reporting data derived from site interviews, auditors may use some descriptive terms that lack a precise quantifiable definition. For example:

“Some school principals said that...”

“Many teachers expressed concern that...”

“There was widespread comment about...”

The basis for these terms is the number of persons in a group or class of persons who were interviewed, as opposed to the total potential number of persons in a category. This is a particularly salient point when not all persons within a category are interviewed. “Many teachers said that...” represents only those interviewed by the auditors, or who may have responded to a survey, and not “many” of the total group whose views were not sampled, and, therefore, could not be disclosed during an audit.

In general these quantifications may be applied to the principle of full disclosure:

Descriptive Term	General Quantification Range
Some...or a few...	Less than a majority of the group interviewed and less than 30%
Many...	Less than a majority, more than 30% of a group or class of people interviewed
A majority...	More than 50%, less than 75%
Most...or widespread	75-89% of a group or class of persons interviewed
Nearly all...	90-99% of those interviewed in a specific class or group of persons
All or everyone...	100% of all persons interviewed within a similar group, job, or class

It should be noted for purposes of full disclosure that some groups within a school district are almost always interviewed in toto. The reason is that the audit is focused on management and those people who have policy and managerial responsibilities for the overall performance of the system as a system. In all audits, an attempt is made to interview every member of the board of education and all top administrative officers, all principals, and the executive board of the teachers’ association or union. While teachers and parents are interviewed, they are considered in a status different from those who have system-wide responsibilities for a district’s operations. Students are rarely interviewed unless the system has made a specific request in this regard.

Interviewed Representatives of the Chewelah School District	
Superintendent	School Board Members
All principals	District Support Staff
K-12 Teachers (voluntary, self-referred)	Parents (voluntary, self-referred)

Approximately 51 individuals were interviewed during the site visit phase of the audit.

Data Sources of the Curriculum Audit™

A Curriculum Audit™ uses a variety of data sources to determine if each of the three elements of curricular quality control is in place and connected one to the other. The audit process also inquires as to whether pupil learning has improved as the result of effective application of curricular quality control.

The major sources of data for the Chewelah School District Curriculum Audit™ included the following:

Documents

These sources consist of curriculum guides, memoranda, state reports, accreditation documents, assessment information, and any other source of information and data that reveal elements of the written, taught, and tested curricula and the linkages among these elements. **Appendix C** lists all documents reviewed over the course of the audit.

Interviews

The auditors conducted interviews with stakeholders throughout the district to shed light on district initiatives and documents and on the district context, as a whole. Interviews were conducted with all board members, the superintendent, top administrators in the system, all building principals, and several teachers and parents. A total of 51 stakeholders were interviewed as part of the audit process.

Site Visits

Site visits reveal conditions in which students are learning and the related expectations for their performance that teachers and school leaders may hold. The school context is invaluable in revealing additional areas of inconsistency that may result from a lack of alignment between district expectations and site-level implementation of those expectations.

Online Surveys

Selected stakeholders (teachers, administrators, community members, parents, and students, depending on district preference) are offered a comprehensive, online survey prior to or at the time of the site visit or off-site audit (simultaneous with the submission of documentation). The intent of the survey is to offer every stakeholder an opportunity to speak to the strengths and weaknesses of the system. Samples of the questions on these surveys are available.

Appendix C: List of Documents Reviewed by the Chewelah School District Audit Team

Document Reviewed	Date Reviewed
Board Goals 2021-22	4/27/2023
Board Goals 2022-23	4/27/2023
Chewelah Board of Director Goals	4/27/2023
Chewelah Superintendent Goals 2021-22	4/27/2023
Chewelah Superintendent Goals 2022-23	4/27/2023
District Admin. Meeting Agendas	4/27/2023
Principal Final Evaluations	4/27/2023
Chewelah School District Enrollment	4/27/2023
Chewelah SD Schools and Principals	4/27/2023
Chewelah District Maps	4/27/2023
Board Members and Superintendents/10 years	4/27/2023
Job Descriptions	4/27/2023
PD Survey and Assessment 2022	4/27/2023
Chewelah Institute 2022-23	4/27/2023
Blended Learning Cohort	4/27/2023
Jenkins PD—Engagement Blended Learning	4/27/2023
Leadership PD for Principals—PLC	4/27/2023
CSD Strategic Plan Final Summary	4/27/2023
Chewelah Strategic Planning Presentation	4/27/2023
Curriculum Adoption 2022-23	4/29/2023
District Wide CTE Plan 2021-2024	4/29/2023
Community Survey Feb. 2021	4/29/2023
District Assessment Plan	4/29/2023
Board Policies	5/1/2023
Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	5/1/2023
District Improvement Plan	5/12/2023
School Improvement Plans	5/12/2023
Weekly Schedule Gess Elementary	5/18/2023
Jenkins Master Schedule 2022-23	5/18/2023
Community Rigor Focus Group March 22, 2023	5/19/2023
Supes Scoop CSD Staff	5/19/2023
Supes Scoop Community	5/19/2023
Chewelah Academia (Newsletters)	

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Appendix D: CMSi Five Audit Focus Areas

FOCUS AREA ONE: The School District has a Clear Vision and Demonstrates Its Control of Resources, Programs, and Personnel.

Quality control is the fundamental element of a well-managed educational program. It is one of the major premises of local educational control within any state's educational system.

The critical premise involved is that, via the will of the electorate, a local school board establishes local priorities within state laws and regulations. A school district's accountability rests with the school board and the public.

Through the development of an effective policy framework, a local school board provides the focus for management and accountability to be established for administrative and instructional staffs, as well as for its own responsibility. Such a framework enables the district to create meaningful assessments and use student learning data as a critical factor in determining the overall success of the educational program.

Although educational program control and accountability are often shared among different components of a school district, ultimately, fundamental control of and responsibility for a district and its operations rest with the school board and top-level administrative staff.

Focus Area One: District Vision and Accountability

Under Focus Area One, auditors review the scope and quality of policy (governance) and planning across the school system. A school system meeting Curriculum Management Audit™ Focus Area One is able to demonstrate its control of resources, programs, and personnel so it can realize its vision and mission.

Common indicators include:

- A clearly defined vision for instructional delivery and student engagement in district classrooms that is congruent with best practice;
- A curriculum policy framework that:
 - Is centrally defined and adopted by the school board,
 - Establishes an operational framework for management that permits accountability,
 - Reflects state requirements and local program goals,
 - Reflects the necessity to use achievement data to improve school system operations, and
 - Defines and directs change and innovation within the school system to permit focus of its resources on priority goals, objectives, and mission;
- A curriculum that is centrally defined and adopted by the board;
- A functional administrative structure that coordinates and facilitates the design and delivery of the system's curriculum (programs and services) and achievement of goals;
- A direct, uninterrupted line of authority from governing board to the superintendent/chief executive officer and other central office officials to principals and classroom teachers;
- Documentation of school board and central office planning for the attainment of goals, objectives, and mission over time; and
- Organizational development efforts that are focused to improve system effectiveness.

FOCUS AREA TWO: The School District Has Established Clear and Valid Objectives for Students.

A school system meeting this audit focus area has established a clear, valid, and measurable set of pupil standards for learning and has set the objectives into a workable framework for their attainment.

Unless objectives are clear and measurable, there cannot be a cohesive effort to improve pupil achievement in the dimensions in which measurement occurs. The lack of clarity and focus denies to a school system's educators the ability to concentrate scarce resources on priority targets. Instead, resources may be spread too thin and be ineffective in any direction. Objectives are, therefore, essential to attaining local quality control via the school board.

Focus Area Two: Curriculum

Under Focus Area Two, auditors examine the scope, quality, and alignment of the educational program within the school system. An educational system meeting Focus Area Two demonstrates clearly established learner expectations and definitions of instructional content for effective teaching and learning.

Common indicators include:

- A clearly established, system-wide set of goals and objectives that addresses all programs and courses and is adopted by the school board;
- Demonstration that the system is contextually responsive to national, state, and other expectations as evidenced in local initiatives;
- Evidence of comprehensive, detailed, short- and long-range curriculum management planning;
- Knowledge, local validation, and use of current best curricular practices;
- Written curriculum that addresses both current and future needs of students;
- Major programmatic initiatives designed to be cohesive;
- Provision of explicit direction for the superintendent and professional staff;
- A curriculum that is clearly explained to members of the teaching staff and building-level administrators and other supervisory personnel; and
- A framework that exists for systemic curricular change and for assuring support for all populations.

FOCUS AREA THREE: The School District Demonstrates Internal Consistency and Rational Equity in Its Program Development and Implementation.

A school system meeting this Curriculum Audit™ focus area is able to show how its program has been created as the result of a systematic identification of deficiencies in the achievement and growth of its students compared to measurable standards of pupil learning.

In addition, a school system meeting this focus area is able to demonstrate that it possesses a focused and coherent approach toward defining curriculum and that, as a whole, it is more effective than the sum of its parts, i.e., any arbitrary combinations of programs or schools do not equate to the larger school system entity.

The purpose of having a school system is to obtain the educational and economic benefits of a coordinated and focused program for students, both to enhance learning, which is complex and multi-year in its dimensions, and to employ economies of scale where applicable.

Focus Area Three: Consistency and Equity

Under Focus Area Three, auditors review the design and delivery of the educational program to determine equity, consistency, and overall alignment. A successful school system meeting Focus Area Three will have in place a highly-developed, articulated, and coordinated curriculum (programs and services) in the organization that is effectively monitored and supported by building and central office administrators and staff.

Common indicators include:

- Documents/sources that reveal internal connections at different levels in the system;
- Predictable consistency through a coherent rationale for content delineation within the curriculum;
- Equality of curriculum/course access and opportunity;
- Allocation of resource flow to areas of greatest need;
- Operations set within a framework that carries out the system's goals and objectives;
- Specific professional development programs to enhance curricular delivery and equip personnel to participate in its design and development;
- A curriculum that is monitored by central office and site supervisory personnel; and
- Teacher and administrator responsiveness to school board policies, currently and over time.

FOCUS AREA FOUR: The School District Uses the Results from System-Designed and/or -Adopted Assessments to Adjust, Improve, or Terminate Ineffective Practices or Programs.

A school system meeting **Focus Area Four** has designed a comprehensive system of assessment/testing and uses valid measurement tools that indicate how well its students are achieving designated priority learning goals and objectives.

Focus Area Four: Feedback

Under Focus Area Four, the auditors examine the overall scope and quality of the assessment system in providing data (feedback) for use in decision making at all levels of the system: classroom, building, and district. A school system meeting Focus Area Four has designed a comprehensive system of assessment/testing and uses valid measurement tools that indicate how well its students are achieving designated priority learning goals and objectives. Within this system, teachers have access to formative assessment tools that they can use to determine each students' progress in mastering needed content.

Common indicators include:

- A *formative* and *summative* assessment system linked to a clear rationale in board policy;
- Knowledge, local validation, and use of current best practices for curriculum and program assessment;
- Use of a student and program assessment plan that provides for diverse assessment strategies for varied purposes at all levels—district, school, and classroom;
- A way to provide feedback to the teaching and administrative staffs regarding how classroom instruction may be modified, evaluated, and subsequently improved;
- High quality and valid formative tools teachers can use to determine each students' progress in mastering the defined content.
- A timely and relevant database upon which to analyze important trends in student achievement;
- A vehicle to examine how well specific programs are actually producing desired learner outcomes or results;
- A database to compare the strengths and weaknesses of various programs and program alternatives, as well as to engage in equity analysis;
- A database to modify or terminate ineffective educational programs;
- A method/means to relate to a programmatic budget and enable the school system to engage in cost-benefit analysis; and
- Organizational data gathered and used to continually improve system functions.

FOCUS AREA FIVE: The School District Has Improved Productivity.

Productivity refers to the relationship between system input and output. A school system meeting this focus area of the CMSi Curriculum Audit™ is able to demonstrate consistently improved pupil outcomes, even in the face of diminishing resources. Improved productivity results when a school system is able to create a consistent level of congruence between major variables in achieving enhanced results and in controlling costs.

**Focus Area Five:
Productivity**

Under Focus Area Five, auditors examine the degree to which school systems are equipped to achieve goals and improve the delivery of the educational program and services with the existing resources available. Attaining improved productivity and system effectiveness in school systems is dependent on the complex balance between a tightly-held organizational structure with the flexibility required by individual schools. This balance ensures responsiveness to schools' clientele within a framework of consistent district expectations.

Common indicators include:

- Planned and actual congruence among curricular objectives, results, and financial allocations;
- A financial database and network that can track costs to results, provide sufficient fiduciary control, and is used as a viable database in making policy and operational decisions;
- Specific means that have been selected or modified and implemented to attain better results in schools over a specified time period;
- A planned series of interventions that have raised pupil performance levels over time and maintained those levels within the same cost parameters as in the past;
- School facilities that are well-kept, sufficient, safe, orderly, and conducive to effective delivery of the instructional program;
- Support systems that function in systemic ways; and
- District and school climate that is conducive to continual improvement and program effectiveness.

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Appendix E: Full Set of Policy Criteria and Characteristics

Exhibit E.1: CMAC™ Model Criteria and Characteristics of Quality Policies for Focus Area One

Audit Criteria and Characteristics
Focus Area One: District Vision and Accountability
1.1 Philosophical statements of the district instructional approach
Clearly specifies and defines the district vision for instruction and student engagement in the classroom, providing a framework for the selection of strategies, approaches, and student activities to support student learning (TH/LH).
Communicates clear expectations for the teacher’s role and responsibilities in the classroom.
Includes a general statement about curriculum and the instructional approach that should be used, such as standards-based, competency-based, outcome-based, etc.
Includes clear expectations for all students to be assured academic success across all content areas and grade levels, regardless of background, language proficiency, income level, or any other factors.
Requires vision, expectations, and goals for specific programs and content areas, in congruence with the district expectations, philosophy, and vision (such as Special Education, ELL, etc.).
1.2 A taught and assessed curriculum that is aligned to the district written curriculum
Defines role and purpose for written curriculum: the definition of student learning.
Expects alignment to standards (state or national).
Includes clear expectations regarding deep alignment to high-stakes assessment.
Directs that delivery of the curriculum align with the overarching vision, mission, and expectations of the district.
1.3 Board adoption of the written curriculum
Requires the review of new or revised written curriculum prior to its adoption and directs that the content and suggestions for how to teach the curriculum align with all district expectations.
Expects the design and development of curriculum to be seen as the most critical processes and product to support high quality classroom instruction that aligns to district vision and expectations.
Requires review and revision of curriculum on a periodic cycle.
1.4 Accountability for the alignment of the written, taught, and tested (WTT) curriculum through a clearly defined organizational structure and corresponding roles and responsibilities
Identifies the overarching role of defining the organizational structure as the most critical means in supporting the alignment of the WTT curriculum and connecting design with delivery across the system.
Expects an organizational chart that is annually reviewed, presented to the board, and approved by the superintendent.
Requires clearly defined job descriptions that specify responsibilities and that correspond to the table of organization.
Directs and specifies the processes for the formation of decision-making bodies (e.g., cabinet, task forces, committees), in terms of their composition and decision-making responsibilities, to ensure consistency, non-duplication of tasks, and product requirements.
Identifies appraisal procedures as essential in evaluating the effectiveness of all personnel in improving student learning and in determining the quality of adopted programs and interventions.
1.5 Long-range, system-wide planning
Requires as part of the district planning process that the superintendent and staff think collectively about the future and that the discussion take some tangible form (allows for flexibility without prescribing a particular template).
Requires the development of a system-wide, long-range plan that is updated annually; incorporates system-wide student learning targets; and is evaluated using a variety of both formative and summative measures.
Expects school and other district plans to be congruent with the vision, goals, and expectations of the district long-range plan.
Expects plans that coordinate expectations for curriculum design and development, professional development, student assessment and program evaluation, and other critical functions across the district, in order to assure alignment with district vision, mission, and goals.
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Exhibit E.2: CMAC™ Model Criteria and Characteristics of Quality Policies for Focus Area Two

Audit Criteria and Characteristics
Focus Area Two: Curriculum
2.1 Written curriculum that defines the content that must be learned and provides suggestions for how to support that learning in congruence with district vision
Requires curriculum to define, sequence, and bundle (pace) the content (concepts, skills, knowledge, vocabulary, etc.).
Requires curriculum to provide adequate suggestions for how teachers should approach the content and how students should practice and demonstrate the content, in alignment with district vision.
Requires curriculum to specify a variety of measures to monitor progress that also reflects the district vision.
Directs that curriculum provide scaffolds and supports so teachers have the tools they need to differentiate.
Requires the curriculum to allow for flexibility in pacing and instructional decision making so teachers have the ability to respond to students’ needs and interests/backgrounds, while maintaining on-grade-level learning.
Requires the written curriculum to support the needs of specific student groups with suggestions for strategies and activities in an integrated fashion (within the curriculum itself, not as a separate or isolated component).
Includes clear expectations for assuring user-friendliness, feasibility, and access when electronically housing/ providing access to curriculum.
Specifies how the curriculum supports learning in both in-person and virtual formats.
2.2 Periodic review/update of the curriculum and aligned resources and assessments
Requires the development of procedures to both formatively and summatively review the quality and effectiveness of all curriculum in all grade levels and content areas.
Requires the annual review of test banks, benchmark assessments, and other assessment instruments for deep alignment (meets and exceeds CCC dimensions) with the district or state accountability system.
Requires the evaluation of all assessment instruments for alignment to the district curriculum in all three dimensions: content, context, and cognitive type.
Requires the periodic review of all resources for alignment to the content of the district curriculum in all three dimensions (CCC), and prior to adoption for use.
Requires the review of all externally-adopted assessment instruments for alignment to the district’s vision and philosophy for instructional approach.
2.3 Textbook/resource alignment to curriculum and assessment
Requires textbooks/resources to be regularly reviewed and the resource revision/adoption cycle to align with the curriculum revision cycle.
Directs review of all new instructional resource materials for content, context, and cognitive type alignment to the district curriculum and assessment.
Directs district staff to identify discrete areas where alignment is missing and provide teachers with supplementary materials to address gaps in alignment (missing content, inadequate contexts, etc.).
Requires that all resources used in the district reflect the diversity and backgrounds of its students.
2.4 Content area emphasis
Directs the yearly identification of subject areas that require additional focus and/or support based on a review of assessment results.
Within subject areas, requires identification by administration of specific objectives, contexts, cognitive types, and instructional practices to receive budgetary support.
Requires focused professional development and coaching to support the instructional delivery of identified priorities within content areas.
2.5 Program integration and alignment to the district’s written curriculum
Directs that all subject-related (e.g., reading, Title I) and school-wide (e.g., tutoring, DARE, AVID) programs be reviewed for alignment to the written and assessed curriculum, as well as the district vision and expectations for student engagement.
Requires written procedures for both formative and summative evaluation of all new subject-related and school-wide programs before submission to the board for approval.
Directs administrative staff to prepare annual recommendations for subject-related and school-wide program revision, expansion, or termination based on student achievement.
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Exhibit E.3: CMAC™ Model Criteria and Characteristics of Quality Policies for Focus Area Three

Audit Criteria and Characteristics
Focus Area Three: Consistency and Equity
3.1 Delivery of the adopted district curriculum
Identifies curriculum as the definition of what students should learn and student learning as the primary goal for delivering the district curriculum.
Requires all personnel to deliver the curriculum as approved by the board.
Identifies an instructional model for delivering the curriculum in response to student need, as evidenced in data from multiple assessment tools.
Requires an annual report to the board regarding the status and effectiveness of curriculum delivery.
Specifies the strategies, approaches, and student engagement that reflect the district’s vision and expectations.
Requires the delivery of curriculum to reflect consistent content expectations (on-grade-level) across the district within a grade level or course (horizontal coordination).
Requires the delivery of curriculum to be sequenced and spiraled from one grade level to the next, consistently across the district (vertical articulation).
Specifies the role of the curriculum in supporting lesson planning (but not providing them).
3.2 Professional development for staff in the delivery of the district curriculum
Identifies the primary purpose of professional development: to support the effective delivery of the district curriculum to improve and increase student learning district wide.
Requires all professional development initiatives to align to the district vision, goals, and expectations related to student engagement and learning.
Directs the development and implementation of a district professional development plan focused on effective curriculum delivery that is congruent with the district long-range plan and vision for the system.
Requires a process whereby staff are coached over time in the implementation of professional development initiatives.
Directs the regular evaluation of the impact of professional development on student learning, using both formative and summative measures.
3.3 Monitoring, coaching, and supporting the delivery of the district curriculum
Specifies the purposes of curriculum monitoring and coaching and expectations concerning the process.
Specifies other measures to determine strengths, weaknesses, and inconsistencies in the curriculum delivered to students (collection of student work, walk-throughs by central office curricular personnel, student surveys, data from common assessments).
Delineates the district philosophy concerning classroom visits/monitoring and coaching procedures and distinguishes between coaching and the appraisal process.
Requires periodic school and classroom data-gathering reports from administrators detailing the status of the delivery of the curriculum across the district and links the reports to professional development and curriculum revision planning for the upcoming year.
3.4 Student access to the curriculum, resources, programs, and services
Requires equal student access to the curriculum and instructional resources.
Requires that identification of students by gender or ethnicity for special programs (AVID, GT, SPED) be proportional with their representation in the general population.
Directs the development of procedures for fast-tracking students who lack sufficient prerequisite skills for courses such as AP, honors, etc., but need more challenging content.
Requires all students to have appropriate instructional materials for a variety of learning levels and modes, and appropriate facilities to support the learning environment necessary to deliver the district curriculum.
Specifies expectations for all students to have equal access to on-level, rigorous, and meaningful content, with scaffolding and supports when gaps exist to assure academic success.

Audit Criteria and Characteristics
Focus Area Three: Consistency and Equity
3.5 Equitable and bias-free educational environment
Has clear expectations for ensuring all students have an equitable school experience free from discrimination and bias.
Defines equity and specifies district goals related to equity, diversity, and inclusion.
Communicates expectations for addressing equity and eradicating discrimination and bias across the district.
Establishes guidelines for equity within the context of the district’s instructional vision and philosophy that inform and direct curriculum design, development, and revision and professional development initiatives.
Requires an annual review of all data related to assuring and maintaining equity (access to programs, rigor, high quality teaching/learning, discipline and retention data, resource allocation).
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Exhibit E.4: CMAC™ Model Criteria and Characteristics of Quality Policies for Focus Area Four

Audit Criteria and Characteristics
Focus Area Four: Feedback
4.1 A comprehensive system to assess student learning, monitor progress, and diagnose student learning needs
Requires the development and implementation of a district student assessment process that goes beyond the state accountability assessment system and includes both formative and summative measures that align to the district’s vision, philosophy, and goals.
Requires the development and implementation of a district formative student assessment process that is differentiated to address variations in student achievement (both above and below grade level).
Requires assessment instruments to be more rigorous in content, context, and cognitive type than external, high-stakes assessments.
Requires all assessment instruments be evaluated for validity and all evaluation tools (rubrics, checklists) be supported with ongoing training and reliability checks.
Specifies expectations for students to develop self-assessment skills through the use of authentic, performance-based measures with clear and valid rubrics.
Includes expectations for teachers to take responsibility for monitoring student progress and for periodically evaluating their needs in-person rather than via electronic measures.
4.2 A program assessment process
Directs the development and implementation of a district program evaluation process.
Requires each proposed program to have an evaluation process (includes both formative and summative evaluations) before that program is adopted and implemented.
Directs the program assessment process to link with district planning initiatives, including the strategic/long-range plan, school improvement plans, and plans that support the management of curriculum and alignment of its written, taught, and tested forms.
4.3 Use of data from assessments to determine effectiveness of instruction and programs
Requires the disaggregation of assessment data at the school, classroom, student subgroup, and student level to determine instructional, curriculum, and program effectiveness.
Requires classroom teachers to track and document individual student progress and mastery in core content areas.
Specifies expectations that data be used in planning instruction.
Requires the development of modifications to the curriculum and/or programs as needed in response to disaggregated assessment data to bring about effectiveness and efficiency.
4.4 Reports to the board about program effectiveness
Requires yearly reports to the board regarding program effectiveness for all new programs for the first three years of operation.
Requires reports to the board every three years for long-term programs.
Requires summative reports to the board every five years for all content areas before any curriculum revisions or major materials acquisition, with the reports delivered prior to the curricular adoption cycle.
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Exhibit E.5: CMAC™ Model Criteria and Characteristics of Quality Policies for Focus Area Five

Audit Criteria and Characteristics
Focus Area Five: Productivity
5.1 Program-centered budgeting that is responsive to planning and system priorities
Directs development of a budget process that requires program evaluation, identification of specific measurable program goals before the budget process begins, and documented costs to ensure that expenditures are aligned within revenues and cost-benefit analysis is facilitated.
Requires adherence to a program-centered budgeting process that includes incremental budgeting based on different program types, delivery, and quality for all curriculum areas (process provides evidence of tangible connections between allocations and anticipated program outcomes or accomplishments).
Directs full implementation of a program-centered budgeting process that includes incremental funding possibilities, a process for evaluating options, and the use of program evaluation data linked to budget allocations (process enables program budget decisions to be based upon documented results and performance).
5.2 Resource allocation tied to curriculum priorities
Requires a budget that allocates resources according to documented needs, assessment data, and established district curriculum and program goals and priorities.
Requires a budget that may be multi-year in nature, provides ongoing support for curriculum and program priorities, and connects costs with program expectations and data-based needs.
Directs a budget that provides resources needed to achieve system priorities over time and demonstrates the need for resources based on measurable results and/or performance of programs and activities.
5.3 Environment to support curriculum delivery
Directs facilities that enable teachers to work in an environment that supports adequate delivery of the curriculum.
Directs consideration of multi-year facilities planning efforts to adequately support the district curriculum and program priorities.
Directs facilities planning linked to future curriculum and instructional trends and to the teaching-learning environment incorporated in the documented system mission and vision statements.
5.4 Support systems focused on curriculum design and delivery
Provides a clear connection between district support services and the achievement of the district curriculum design and delivery, and evidence of optimization within the system.
Requires formative and summative evaluation practices for each support service to provide data for improving these services and documented evidence of improvement over time.
Requires periodic reports to the board with recommendations for continuing, revising, and/or developing new support services to enhance fulfillment of the mission, including needs-based data.
5.5 Data-driven decisions for the purpose of increasing student learning
Requires all departments or divisions of the district to identify how their responsibilities connect to supporting/ensuring student learning.
Directs the development of specific requirements for using data from student assessment to inform decision making for all functions of district operations.
Directs the development of specific requirements for data analysis that lead to improved student learning for all operations of the district.
5.6 Change processes for long-term institutionalization of district priority goals
Requires the identification of strategies, grounded in documented assessment of program success or efficacy, to be used by the district to ensure long-term institutionalization of change.
Directs the development of school improvement plans that address the use of specific change strategies at the building level to ensure the institutionalization of change and improved results or performance.
Directs that all district, department, and program plans incorporate procedures for change strategies to ensure the institutionalization of change for improvement; and include procedures with formative and summative practices that provide data about change implementation and effectiveness.
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Appendix F: Scope and Sequence of the Written Curriculum

Exhibit F1: Scope and Sequence of the Written Curriculum, Grades K-6

Course Title	Grade							Curriculum Yes/No	Courses Offered	Courses with Curriculum
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6			
Core Courses										
English Language Arts										
Kindergarten Reading	O							No	1	0
Kindergarten Writing	O							No	1	0
First Grade Reading		O						No	1	0
Second Grade Reading			O					No	1	0
Second Grade Writing			O					No	1	0
Second Grade Small Groups/ Intervention			O					No	1	0
Third Grade Language Arts				O				No	1	0
Fourth Grade Reading					O			No	1	0
Fourth Grade Spelling					O			No	1	0
Fourth Grade English/Writing/ Grammar					O			No	1	0
Fifth Grade ELA						O		No	1	0
Sixth Grade ELA							O	No	1	0
Total # of English Language Arts Courses/# of English Language Arts Courses with Curriculum									12	0
Total Percentage of Scope of English Language Arts Courses									0%	
Math										
Kindergarten Math	O							No	1	0
First Grade Math		O						No	1	0
Second Grade Math			O					No	1	0
Third Grade Math				O				No	1	0
Fourth Grade Math					O			No	1	0
Fifth Grade Math						O		No	1	0
Sixth Grade Math							O	No	1	0
Total # of Math Courses/# of Math Courses with Curriculum									7	0
Total Percentage of Scope of Math Courses									0%	
Science										
First Grade Science		O						No	1	0
Second Grade Science			O					No	1	0
Third Grade Science				O				No	1	0
Fourth Grade Science					O			No	1	0
Fifth Grade Science						O		No	1	0
Sixth Grade Science							O	No	1	0
Total # of Science Courses/# of Science Courses with Curriculum									6	0

Course Title	Grade							Curriculum Yes/No	Courses Offered	Courses with Curriculum
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6			
Total Percentage of Scope of Science Courses									0%	
Social Studies										
First Grade Social Studies		X						Yes	1	1
Third Grade Social Studies				X				Yes	1	1
Fourth Grade Social Studies					X			Yes	1	1
Fifth Grade Social Studies						O		No	1	0
Sixth Grade Social Studies							O	No	1	0
Total # of Social Studies Courses/# of Social Studies Courses with Curriculum									5	3
Total Percentage of Scope of Social Studies Courses									60%	
Total # of Core Courses/# of Core Courses with Curriculum									30	3
Total Percentage of Scope of Elementary Core Courses									10%	
Non-Core Courses										
Music										
Kindergarten Music	O							No	1	0
First Grade Music		O						No	1	0
Second Grade Music			O					No	1	0
Third Grade Music				O				No	1	0
Fourth Grade Music					O			No	1	0
Fifth Grade Music						O		No	1	0
Sixth Grade Music							O	No	1	0
Elementary Band						O	O	No	1	0
Total # of Music Courses/# of Music Courses with Curriculum									8	0
Total Percentage of Scope of Music Courses									0%	
PE										
Kindergarten PE	O							No	1	0
First Grade PE		O						No	1	0
Second Grade PE			O					No	1	0
Third Grade PE				O				No	1	0
Fourth Grade PE					O			No	1	0
Fifth Grade PE						O		No	1	0
Sixth Grade PE							O	No	1	0
Total # of PE Courses/# of PE Courses with Curriculum									7	0
Total Percentage of Scope of Music Courses									0%	
Library										
Kindergarten Library	O							No	1	0
First Grade Library		O						No	1	0
Second Grade Library			O					No	1	0
Third Grade Library				O				No	1	0

Course Title	Grade							Curriculum Yes/No	Courses Offered	Courses with Curriculum
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6			
Fourth Grade Library					O			No	1	0
Fifth Grade Library						O		No	1	0
Sixth Grade Library							O	No	1	0
Total # of Library Courses/# of Specials Courses with Curriculum									7	0
Total Percentage of Scope of Library Courses									0%	
SEL										
Kindergarten SEL	O							No	1	0
First Grade SEL		O						No	1	0
Third Grade SEL				O				No	1	0
Fourth Grade SEL					O			No	1	0
Total # of SEL Courses/# of SEL Courses with Curriculum									4	0
Total Percentage of Scope of SEL Courses									0%	
Study Hall										
Sixth Grade Study Hall							O	No	1	0
Total # of Study Hall Courses/# of Study Hall Courses with Curriculum									1	0
Total Percentage of Scope of Study Hall Courses									0%	
Total # of Non-Core Courses/# of Non-Core Courses with Curriculum									27	0
Total Percentage of Scope of Elementary Non-Core Courses									0%	
Key: X=Grades in which course was offered with written curriculum, O=Grades in which course was offered with no written curriculum										
Source: Elementary School Master Schedule and district curriculum documents provided										

Exhibit F2: Scope and Sequence of the Written Curriculum, Grades 7-12

Course Title	Grade						Curriculum Yes/No	Courses Offered	Courses with Curriculum
	7	8	9	10	11	12			
Core Courses									
English									
English A	0	0	0	0	0	0	No	1	0
English B			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
English C			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Title	0	0					No	1	0
English 7	0						No	1	0
English 8		0					No	1	0
7/8 English	0	0					No	1	0
Honors English 8		0					No	1	0
English 9			0				No	1	0
Honors English 9			0				No	1	0
English 10				0			No	1	0
Honors English 10				0			No	1	0
English 11					0		No	1	0
CIHS English 11					0		No	1	0
English 12						0	No	1	0
Total # of English Courses/# of English Courses with Curriculum								15	0
Total Percentage of Scope of English Courses								0%	
Math									
Math A	0	0	0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Math C		0	0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Math Support			0				No	1	0
LAP	0	0					No	1	0
Financial Math				0	0		No	1	0
Math 7	0						No	1	0
Math 8		0					No	1	0
7/8 Math	0	0					No	1	0
Integrated Algebra 1			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Algebra 1			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Algebra 2			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Algebra Extension			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
CIHS Math					0	0	No	1	0
Geometry			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Honors Geometry			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
CIHS Pre-Calculus				0	0	0	No	1	0
CIHS Calculus					0	0	No	1	0

Course Title	Grade						Curriculum Yes/No	Courses Offered	Courses with Curriculum
	7	8	9	10	11	12			
Total # of Math Courses/# of Math Courses with Curriculum								17	0
Total Percentage of Scope of Math Courses								0%	
Science									
Earth and Space Science				O			No	1	0
Biology			O				No	1	0
Environmental Science					O	O	No	1	0
7/8 Science	O	O					No	1	0
Health/Science Capstone			O				No	1	0
Chemistry					O	O	No	1	0
Anatomy				O	O	O	No	1	0
Total # of Science Courses/# of Science Courses with Curriculum								7	0
Total Percentage of Scope of Science Courses								0%	
Social Studies									
CIHS Political Science					O	O	No	1	0
Geography/World			O	O	O	O	No	1	0
Current World Affairs/Economics						O	No	1	0
CIHS World History					O	O	No	1	0
7/8 Washington History	X	X					Yes	1	1
Total # of Social Studies Courses/# of Social Studies Courses with Curriculum								5	1
Total Percentage of Scope of Social Studies Courses								20%	
Total # of Core Courses/# of Core Courses with Curriculum								44	1
Total Percentage of Scope of Core Courses								2%	
Non-Core Courses									
Health and Fitness									
7/8 Health/PE	O	O					No	1	0
High School PE			O	O	O	O	No	1	0
PE/Health			O	O	O	O	No	1	0
Health			O	O	O	O	No	1	0
Fitness			O	O	O	O	No	1	0
Weights			O	O	O	O	No	1	0
Dance 7-12	O	O	O	O	O	O	No	1	0
Total # of Health and Fitness Courses/# of Health and Fitness Courses with Curriculum								7	0
Total Percentage of Scope of Health and Fitness Courses								0%	
Fine Arts									
2D/STEAM			O	O	O	O	No	1	0
Drawing/Pottery			O	O	O	O	No	1	0
Drawing/Painting			O	O	O	O	No	1	0
Pottery			O	O	O	O	No	1	0

Course Title	Grade						Curriculum Yes/No	Courses Offered	Courses with Curriculum
	7	8	9	10	11	12			
Symphonic Band	0	0	0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Concert Band		0	0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Total # of Fine Arts Courses/# of Fine Arts Courses with Curriculum								6	0
Total Percentage of Scope of Fine Arts Courses								0%	
Technology									
7/8 Computers	0	0					No	1	0
Total # of Technology Courses/# of Technology Courses with Curriculum								1	0
Total Percentage of Scope of Technology Courses								0%	
CTE									
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources/ Plant			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources/ Animal			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources/ Forest			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Work Based Learning			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Design Technology			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Woods			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Construction			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Metals			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
AG Mechanics			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Woods/Metals			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Computer Science			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Engineering			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Total # of CTE Courses/# of CTE Courses with Curriculum								12	0
Total Percentage of Scope of CTE Courses								0%	
General Electives									
Credit Options			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Yearbook			0	0	0	0	No	1	0
Explore	0	0					No	1	0
7/8 Leadership	0	0					No	1	0
Total # of General Elective Courses/# of General Elective Courses with Curriculum								4	0
Total Percentage of Scope of General Elective Courses								0%	
Total # of Non-Core Courses/# of Non-Core Courses with Curriculum								30	0
Total Percentage of Scope of Non Core Courses								0%	
Key: X=Grades in which course was offered with written curriculum, O=Grades in which course was offered with no written curriculum									
Source: Secondary School Master Schedule and district curriculum documents provided									

Appendix G: Research Snapshot: Poverty and Academic Performance

Poverty and Academic Performance

A major predictor of academic performance is a child's socioeconomic status. The lower a child's SES, the more likely they are to perform poorly in school and on standardized tests. Children in poverty face significant challenges:

Reduced access to health care and health screenings. This can result in certain conditions being overlooked or illnesses and infections lasting longer. Students may be chronically absent or function poorly in school because of illness or underlying conditions. **Food insecurity.** Hungry children don't learn well; the body and the mind pull all resources toward the need for self-preservation, leaving no energy for higher cognitive function. **Housing insecurity.** Financial stress often makes the cost of housing a major issue. Even if children do not move, the threat of moving can cause significant anxiety. **Weakened family units.** While all children can experience this, it is particularly damaging to the economically disadvantaged because it directly impacts available financial resources. **Higher exposure to violence.** This can be a result of the neighborhood environment, or specifically contained in the student's home, or a result of discriminatory law enforcement practices. **Increased mental health issues.** Parents *and children* experiencing poverty have higher rates of depression and anxiety. **Trauma.** All children are vulnerable to trauma, but children in poverty are vulnerable in multiple ways at once. One of the major effects of trauma is that it shuts down higher cognitive function as a way to protect the self from further emotional or physical assault. The body and mind are held in survival mode until the threat passes.¹ Income level is also a predictor of lexile level, or the number of words a child knows. The higher the income, the more words a child can understand. This gap widens until a child enters a formal educational setting, and only closes with effective, continuous intervention.²

This is a short list of what children in poverty bring with them when they arrive in the classroom. Without appropriate understanding and intervention, educational success becomes a function of zip code or bank balance. A significant intervention that directly impacts the likelihood of academic success is the way in which districts distribute students of poverty across schools.

A study from Clemson University concluded that placement in a high-poverty school (defined as 75% FRL or more) reduced academic performance for all students in the schools, even those whose individual SES was middle class. Additionally, placement of economically disadvantaged students in a low-poverty school (24% or less FRL) resulted in economically disadvantaged students outperforming middle class students in high poverty schools. *The practice of clustering high concentrations of economically disadvantaged students in schools is, in and of itself, a major factor in suppressing academic performance.* This effect was ameliorated by distributing the percentage of low-SES students across buildings so that no one building had more than 50% FRL. The best results were obtained by also insuring that student populations were racially balanced, with each school having a minimum of 25% White students.³

Another piece of research measured academic resilience (the ability to perform at a high level despite SES factors) among economically disadvantaged math students participating in the TIMSS test. Three of the factors that promoted resilience were: **1. Teachers' beliefs that students can do well in mathematics** (as

Poverty and Academic Performance (continued)

perceived by the student); **2. School's percentage of economically disadvantaged students** (resilience occurred more often when the overall percentage of students in poverty was below 25%); **3. School's emphasis on academic success** (perceived by students as "high"). Finding two affirms the Clemson research; the other two factors were **relational**. The student's perception of the teacher's belief in their abilities and the school's emphasis on being academically successful resulted in academic resilience for the economically disadvantaged child.⁴

Multiple studies have demonstrated that teachers who hold high expectations for their students and are intentional about building relationships with them see better academic results. Zaretta Hammond calls this *rapport* and deems it critical to academic success. Children in poverty often arrive in classrooms with brains primed for flight or fight; only *rapport*, which encompasses trust, affirmation, allyship, and validation, can bring those minds into a state ready for learning.⁵

Research demonstrates that the intellectual capacity of children in poverty is intact, though it may be suppressed by external factors, including all the situations resulting from poverty, but also by poorly designed programs and poorly delivered instruction (see **Intellectual Fluidity**). While poverty creates more obstacles to learning, those obstacles can be overcome with high quality interventions enacted as early as possible and delivered effectively; deliberate decisions to balance the percentages of FRL and White students in district schools; high expectations for all students; and intentional *rapport* building by teachers to affirm and validate student ability. Neither zip code nor bank balance has to determine a child's destiny.

¹ McKenzie, K. (2019). The Effects of Poverty on Academic Achievement *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, Volume 11, Issue 2.

² Hart, B. & Risley, T. (2003) The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap. *American Educator*, vol. 27 (1), p. 4

³ Southworth, S. (2010) Examining the effects of school composition on North Carolina student achievement over time. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 18 (29). Retrieved from <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/848>

⁴ Erberber, E., Stephens, M., Mamedova, S., Ferguson, S., & Kroeger, T. (2015, March). Socioeconomically disadvantaged students who are academically successful: Examining academic resilience cross-nationally. IEA's Policy Brief Series, No. 5, Amsterdam, IEA, http://www.iea.nl/policy_briefs.html

⁵ Hammond, Z. (2015). *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. California, Corwin Press, 124-129.

Appendix H: Research Snapshot: Intellectual Fluidity

Intellectual Fluidity: The Infinite Capacity of the Brain

Sometimes, ideas in psychology filter into the general consciousness—usually via the media—and lodge there for long periods of time. Unfortunately, such ideas can remain in the public consciousness long after their validity has expired. Such is the case with the theory of the “hardwired” human brain. This idea that the human brain was hardwired originated in tandem with the advent of computers because there’s a marked tendency for humans to look for metaphors in the prevailing technology of the day to help us understand psychological principles. The computer, with its pre-programmed routines and processes, became a lens to frame our understanding of the human brain. The danger in this particular theory is the idea that if something is hardwired it can’t be changed, which is true of computers but not, as it turns out, of the human mind.

Some supposedly hardwired conditions have lasting ramifications for students. Believing that a condition is fixed and unchangeable changes how practitioners approach it: the level of innovation they may apply, their willingness to persist in what may seem like a pointless exercise, the rapidity with which they categorize a student’s work as “good enough,” the likelihood that they will recommend a child for gifted or special education. But even conditions with demonstrable brain differences such as ADD are being shown to respond to new methods of retraining the brain to improve focus and impulse control. What was once thought to be a fixed condition is now known to be far more malleable.¹

The Matthew Effect has gotten a lot of attention in education recently. The principle is that those who are intellectually rich will continue to get richer and those who are not will never catch up. But the Matthew Effect occurs not because the cognitively “poor” have less capable brains, but because they are not given the opportunity to develop key cognitive skills for independent learning—in effect, they don’t learn how to learn apart from the input and guidance of the teacher. Without the opportunity to develop independent learning skills, dependent learners will never improve their performance. The problem is not in their brains, *but in the opportunities they have to develop critical cognitive skills.*²

The Matthew Effect is sometimes used to explain why some kids start out as good readers and just continue to improve while others remain far behind; cognitive “poverty” makes closing the gaps impossible and that “poverty” appears fixed. However, research from Temple University demonstrated that when exposed to a high quality program to build vocabulary, preschool children in poverty were able to close gaps between their abilities and those of affluent children. The problem wasn’t the children’s intellect, *it was the quality of the instruction they were given.* A high quality program, coupled with intensive teacher training in delivering it, resulted in a rapid narrowing of gaps. Note, the children did nothing here; only the program and the delivery were targeted for reform.³

So the brain is not “hardwired” in any meaningful sense—intellect is not fixed. A better metaphor, especially for children, might be **the brain as a camera**: when the camera shutter opens, it reacts to light and transforms the film to record the image. The brain reacts and transforms itself when recording or experiencing certain stimuli. In this metaphor, the brain can only react and transform insofar as it is exposed to stimuli. In other words, if the stimuli are lacking, the brain will not expand its neural pathways. The problem is in the stimuli, not in the brain.

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Intellectual Fluidity: The Infinite Capacity of the Brain (continued)

Madeline Hunter, one of the truly great educational practitioners, famously said, “If a child didn’t learn, a teacher didn’t teach.” The excuse that a child’s brain is hardwired a particular way and that learning is enhanced or prohibited by those fixed features is not supported by the research. In fact, the opposite is true: the brain is infinitely moldable and changeable, capable of transforming in response to a vast array of information and situations. This means that all children—all—have the innate capacity to learn and to learn at high levels. The task for teachers is to *assume intellectual capacity* in all students, and if they aren’t learning, find better ways to aim their lenses.

¹ Hallowell, E. (2014) “Your Brain Is Not the Hardwired Machine You Think It Is.” *Psychology Today Online*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/driven-distraction/201401/your-brain-is-not-the-hard-wired-machine-you-think-it-is>

² Hammond, Z. (2015). *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. California, Corwin Press, 124-129.

³ Hindman, A.H., Erhart, A. & Wasik, B. (2012) Reducing the Matthew Effect: Lessons from the *ExCELL* Head Start Intervention, *Early Education & Development*, 23:5, 781-806

Appendix I: Student-Centered Instruction

Student-Responsive Teaching¹

Responding to students in the classroom:

Hammond's Ready for Rigor Framework:

Awareness—being aware of background and its role in learning

Learning Partnerships—student/teacher relationship, student-student. Independent learners with self-efficacy

Information Processing—RIGOR and Cognitive engagement in an authentic, feedback-rich environment

Community of learners and learning environment—intellectually and socially safe, affirming environment; student voice; classroom rituals and routines, restorative practices to manage conflict and redirect negative behaviors.

Become a “warm demander.”

Understand Background and Perspective Archetypes:

Collectivism	Individualism
Focused on interdependence and group success	Focused on independence and individual achievement
Emphasizes reliance on the collective wisdom or resources of the group and the belief that group members take care of each other to get ahead.	Emphasizes self-reliance and the belief that one is supposed to take care of himself to get ahead.
Learning happens through group interaction and dialogue.	Learning happens through individual study and reading.
Group dynamics and harmony are important.	Individual contributions and status are important.
Collaborative	Competitive
Relational	Technical/analytical

Understanding different backgrounds is important in understanding how students may approach problem solving and classroom learning differently. Allow students to share their perspectives and practices with learning.

¹ Excerpts from Zaretta Hammond's book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, 2015, Corwin.

How to “own” our own lens and widen our “aperture”

- I. Identify your personal background and frame of reference.
- II. Widen your aperture. This involves processing through actions, events, and information, keeping background, perspective, and your own lens at the forefront, comparing and contrasting what you experience, hear, and read.
 - 1. What do I know?
 - 2. What don’t I know? What am I assuming?
 - 3. What am I missing? What can’t I see?
- III. Identify your key triggers.

“Triggers” occur when what is normal/acceptable in one person’s background conflicts with our own. Triggers typically relate to one of the following five Social Interaction Elements:

Standing: your position with respect to those around you—your sense of importance relative to others. Also relates to concern with how others perceive you.

Certainty: one’s need for clarity and predictability in social situations—having routines, known causes/effects, action/reactions.

Control: the sense of having control of oneself and what happens to one—that you can control the outcome of a situation or influence it positively/negatively.

Connection: your connectedness to others and sense of trust.

Equity: sense of fairness, having an unbiased exchange with others.

STRATEGIES: creating environments that are supportive, accepting and develop TRUST. Establishing risk-free environments in the classroom that emphasize relationship and caring are the most effective classrooms.

<p>Respect</p> <p>Teach students to value all people, seek to understand other perspectives, and to respect their values and differences.</p> <p>Teach students to respect themselves and their own worth as a person and a student—building on their self-esteem and self-efficacy.</p>	<p>Evaluate</p> <p>Teach students to think critically about all new knowledge and information. This includes seeing how that knowledge is constructed, identifying those perspectives that are present as well as those that are omitted. This also may include evaluating the credibility of sources.</p>
<p>Process</p> <p>Teach students to work through dissonance—social, emotional, and cognitive—when disagreements or conflicts occur. Working against bias is an ongoing process that is only ameliorated when students process through it, rather than “shutting it down.”</p>	<p>Empower</p> <p>Teach students to have agency in standing up for themselves and others in response to observed or experienced racism, bias, or oppression. Equip students to take action in appropriate, effective ways, depending on the situation.</p>

Conventional vs. Transformed Classrooms

Dependent Learner	Independent Learner
1. Is dependent on the teacher to carry most of the cognitive load of a task always	1. Relies on the teacher to carry some of the cognitive load temporarily
2. Is unsure of how to tackle a new task	2. Has and utilizes strategies and processes for tackling a new task
3. Cannot complete a task without scaffolds	3. Regularly attempts new tasks without scaffolds
4. Will sit passively and wait if stuck until the teacher intervenes	4. Has cognitive strategies for getting unstuck
5. Doesn't retain information well or "doesn't get it"	5. Has learned how to retrieve information from long-term memory



CONVENTIONAL	TRANSFORMED
• Students are "recipients"	• Students are "interactors"
• Teacher: director of learning	• Teacher: an engager with effective strategies
• Rote, routine, right answers	• Authentic and better answers
• Single subject teaching	• Multi- and cross-disciplinary teaching
• Teacher with one group of students	• Family of teachers and cohorts of students
• Responsible for class	• Responsible for all students
• Homogeneous grouping, whole-group approaches	• Heterogeneous grouping, flexible learning arrangements
• Retention, intolerance of variation	• Recognition of variation
• Pull-out groups	• Differentiated Instruction (curricular and instructional)
• Competitive	• Collaborative

Building VOICE and CHOICE**Eight ways teachers can encourage student voice:²**

- 1. INCLUSIVE. Lift up under-engaged voices.** Listen to students whose voices are seldom heard, including students from minority groups, who have different cultural backgrounds, lower grades or socioeconomic status or seem quieter around their peers. This may mean allowing students to contribute in their native languages and having a peer translate for them; it also may mean giving them alternative modes to contribute (oral, written, constructed).
- 2. TIME. Give kids more discussion time to explore and develop their ideas.** It's tough to formulate an opinion on something when you're still trying to figure out what it is. Providing that time to **process** and discuss with others will not only deepen understanding on a topic but will also provide time to hear other's perspectives.
- 3. CHOICE. Allow for creative expression—ORAL WRITTEN, CONSTRUCTED.** The most powerful expression of voice is not only in thought, but in how those thoughts are shared. Give kids the opportunity to articulate their voice in the most powerful way for them—art, poetry, video, a paper, activity—that can demonstrate evidence in their learning and understanding. ORAL, WRITTEN, CONSTRUCTED
- 4. PERSPECTIVES. Writing in the voice of others.** Encouraging students to take on the voice of others can help students to develop empathy and be understanding of other perspectives. This does not mean they have to agree with them; it means *understanding* and *valuing* them.
- 5. PERSONAL. Make lessons personally relevant.** Kids have diverse backgrounds, experiences and passions. Giving students an opportunity to provide voice where they know and understand what their voice is, can help to make life connections and build confidence with familiarity. This means incorporating CHOICE, as well.
- 6. TRUST. Reward risks and recognize those who speak up.** Creating a classroom culture where students are rewarded for taking risks and showing courage can foster a more open and participatory learning environment.
- 7. TOLERANCE. Encourage debate.** Create curious learners who can formulate through research. Listen to and engage in respectful discourse. Articulated arguments foster a stronger voice.
- 8. SERVICE. Engage different forms of leadership.** Leadership is not always demonstrated through outspoken students. Kids can demonstrate leadership by teaching and mentoring others, visual storytelling, or through school/community volunteerism.

² Adapted from Knowledge Works, Cris Charbonneau's Eight ways to encourage student voice. <https://knowledgeworks.org/resources/8-ways-encourage-student-voice/>

Appendix J: Curriculum Steps and Components

Steps in Curriculum Guide Development

Preliminary work (Preparing for writing)

1. Review research
2. Backload from tests: for alignment, information for units
3. District data analysis
4. Program/content-area specific guidelines

1. Establish philosophy, vision for classrooms (curriculum delivery) <i>1.5 Establish content area-specific (or program) parameters expectations</i>		Prioritizing, Defining, Pacing, and Sequencing the WHAT	
2. Select format, non-negotiable components for <i>guide</i> in its entirety (not unit); consider the structure for the curriculum			
3. Sequence and bundle/cluster standards and objectives (scope and sequence)	4. Categorize, prioritize and refine the standards into objectives (scope and sequence)		5. Define Focus for Units; begin defining unit plan format
			6. Develop year-long overview for the grade level or course (year at a glance)
			7. Develop sequence of instruction <u>within</u> units (identify “micro” bundles, such as sub-units, instructional modules, learning experiences, etc.)
		8. Develop and select assessments and related tools: performance-based, formative, progress monitoring, Etc.	
9. Include suggested student activities (differentiation and rigor)—supports, interventions, extensions		Suggestions for the HOW	
10. Include suggested strategies, approaches and model lessons (differentiation, rigor, and integration of subgroup approaches)—supports, interventions, extensions			
11. Identify key resources/materials needed (differentiation, rigor, authenticity) for all suggested approaches/activities			
12. Train, Pilot, Train!—ALL building personnel; focus on how to plan instruction using the curriculum			
13. Monitor, coach, support—ALL building personnel			

A Curriculum Guide: *Pieces of the Whole*

What goes in a curriculum guide? What is the structure?

Key components: Objectives, Assessment, Prerequisites, Suggested Resources/Materials, Suggested Strategies and Approaches, Sample Student Activities/Tasks

Structural Components:	
Introductory Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Table of Contents b. Philosophy, Beliefs, Vision c. Subject/content area vision, philosophy, guidelines (emphasize vision/philosophical considerations that impact teaching and learning) d. Model for Planning Instruction (i.e., ML model)—how use data to differentiate for needs e. Instructional Strategy Framework—what are the strategies/approaches the district endorses? For example, is the SIOP a major focus of professional development? What are the five-7 most critical strategies/approaches (there may be models, examples in the appendices). f. The Instructional BLOCK: for example, in primary reading, what is the expectation for the literacy block? What are its components? What does each component represent and why is it included, such as to reflect the gradual release of responsibility model? Or the 5E model in Science? This is to give new teachers a model for how to use instructional time. g. Notes on USING the guide; how to lesson plan; additional professional resources that are available, etc.
Course or grade level overview	Year at a glance, single page overview of pace/sequence of the units, performance assessments, and/or sub-units, etc.
Scope and Sequence	<p>PreK-12 sequence of all objectives for the content area, prioritized by essential/priority and supporting objectives.</p> <p>These are organized/bundled/clustered into UNITS (and even sub-units)</p>
Units	This is the main component from which teachers PLAN INSTRUCTION. All components are present and organized into a paced, sequenced, and prioritized plan from which teachers can plan their daily lessons.
Appendices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. model lessons b. menu of strategies (ISF) c. professional resources/aides d. samples of student work/exemplars e. assessment instruments, rubrics f. Sample lessons (video) g. ??

Appendix K: A Review of Literature —Gifted and Talented Instruction and Best Practice

Educating the gifted can create certain difficulties for schools, particularly with regard to how they decide who is gifted and, once identified, how those children can best be served. Educating the gifted has begun to pose more of a problem for districts since the advent of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*. Since Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) demands that all students make progress toward improvement, those who are very far behind the norm may receive the lion's share of academic attention, while those who are already topping out and therefore make little or no AYP may receive far less. At the same time, the movement away from tracking has pushed for an inclusive classroom: one in which students of all abilities reside and must be educated, but this is sometimes to the detriment of certain groups. A review of pertinent research articles taken from educational journals and publications offers some insight to the most pressing issues facing districts regarding gifted and talented (GT) education: What is the best method for assessing and identifying gifted and talented learners? Once students are identified, what are the best practices for meeting their needs? What might be the long term impact of the servicing choices districts make?

Identification: A Case for Multiple Measures

Identifying gifted learners would appear to be rather straightforward in theory: test scores and classroom attitudes, ability to reason and assimilate information all seem self-evident. But in practice, identified gifted populations in districts have been disproportionately white and lacking in both minority and low socioeconomic students, indicating that methods of identification may be better at measuring socioeconomic levels than identifying actual gifted potential. Other processes focus disproportionately on “academic leaders,” or students who are high achieving and successful in the classroom, but some of the established characteristics of giftedness actually may manifest in boredom leading to misbehavior or may even be misdiagnosed as another condition entirely. In this model, the underachiever and misbehaviorer may be omitted, to their further detriment. Research indicates some steps districts can take to ensure that they are appropriately considering all students and identifying those who need focused attention and accelerated coursework.

Familiarity with the Characteristics of Giftedness

Characteristic of gifted learners as compared to regular learners established by research are a starting point for educators. These characteristics include the following:

1. Greater processing speed for both simple and complex tasks. The flow of information is faster from intake to output.
2. More thorough problem solvers who use a wider array of strategies to solve problems.
3. Employ more metacognitive strategies and are better at assessing their ability to learn something or complete a learning task.
4. Able to sustain attention to a problem.
5. Superior memory and more efficient retrieval.
6. Advanced ability for abstraction and generalization during learning.
7. Can learn with less direct instruction – in other words, they can to some extent teach themselves. (Kettler, 2014)

It is noteworthy that some of these characteristics, coupled with a lack of appropriate acceleration and differentiation, might lead to disruptive behavior or disengagement/withdrawal in the regular classroom

(Valpied, 2005). The ability to process information more quickly than regular students means a student may arrive at a conclusion or understanding long before the rest of the class or even before the teacher is finished explaining the issue. Faced with lag time while the rest of the class catches up, s/he may look for other activities to occupy that time, some of which may be disruptive. Likewise, a gifted child who wants to spend more time on a problem may become frustrated when forced to leave it and move to another activity. While this in no way exonerates all misbehaviors, it does highlight the importance of not excluding behaviorally-challenged children from the possible pool of gifted learners. It may even indicate the necessity of more closely examining the root of misbehavior. A further characteristic, examined in some intriguing recent research, is that of the Need for Cognition (NCF), which is a tendency among gifted learners to “engage in and enjoy effortful, cognitive endeavors” (Meier, Vogel & Preckel, 2014, p. 39). This is a student who seeks out challenging cognitive work and who may even be mildly distressed by work s/he perceives as too easy. Because NCF is a strong predictor of attendance in gifted programs, it should be explored as a means of identifying students for gifted instruction. Positive academic self-concept and a high interest in math are also cited as predictors of attendance in gifted classes and indicate that these, too, should be investigated as identifiers of giftedness (Meier et. al, 2014).

Kitano’s (1990) research into “psychological intensities” sheds further light on characteristics that often go hand in hand with intellectual giftedness but may be interpreted negatively. She found a relationship between intellectual precocity and the following characteristics:

- Liking to do things different from the group
- Impatience with peers
- Preoccupation with abstract ideas
- Preference for independent work
- Persistence
- Enthusiasm
- Vigorous pursuit of problem solving
- Serious approach to learning situations
- Need for recognition

Kitano also found a trend in the data for those with higher emotional sensitivity (reaction either positively or negatively to emotional outbursts from others or to stressors) to be associated with higher levels of originality, though this is hard to measure using traditional means. All of these characteristics can be “flipped,” or made to be either positive or negative, depending on how they are perceived by the observer. Liking to do things differently from the group can make a child either original (good) or a non-conformist (not so good). Impatience with peers can be interpreted as a sign of immaturity (bad) or of advanced intellect (good). Preferring to work alone may look like an excellent understanding of one’s academic needs or like poor socialization and immaturity. A need for recognition can be perceived as clingy and immature (bad) or conscientious fact checking (good). Vigorous pursuit of problem solving is good until the student refuses to leave a science project while the rest of the class is going to music. Further research indicates that some GT characteristics can be misinterpreted as ADHD or other similar disorders. Interestingly, a researcher has demonstrated that some of these intensities that may bring a child into conflict with his/her environment are ameliorated when that child is placed in a learning situation with his/her intellectual peers, particularly those characteristics that on a cursory basis appear to be issues of socialization and maturity (Valpied, 2005).

Valpied's (2005) research into institutional interpretation and response to some of the characteristics of giftedness demonstrated that, on occasion, parents, rather than the schools themselves, pushed for a child's inclusion in a gifted program. While this would not hold true for every case, in Valpied's research, the schools interpreted the students' daydreaming and frustration with tasks as mere average ability, rather than recognizing the child's need for more complex tasks. In nearly all cases, the teacher had interpreted the gifted characteristics as attributes that in fact negated giftedness, such as disorganization, lack of productivity, and antisocial behavior. Disorganization, in particular, is common to gifted children, but is often seen as a negating factor. Lack of productivity, too, which may occur because a child sees no value in completing a task that is of no interest or that holds no meaning, is often cited as a negating factor (Valpied, 2005). It is not difficult to extrapolate from this research ways in which other factors might prevent children from being assessed for gifted intervention—factors such as English language proficiency, poverty of experience, timidity, or behavior issues.

Instruments for Assessing and Identifying Students for Gifted Instruction

Test scores are often the primary basis for inclusion in gifted programming, but Joseph Renzulli (2011), a national expert in gifted education and the director of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, cautions against the use of state and national norms when making decisions regarding gifted and talented inclusion. Using local norms helps to ameliorate the still-low representation of low-income and minority students in gifted programming.

While test scores are limiting enough, sometimes only certain portions of test scores are examined to determine inclusion. Those portions are likely to be verbal reasoning or ability and logic/math ability, either because this is all the state/national/local exams test or because this is the traditional bias of gifted instruction and IQ tests. Reliance solely on these two areas for inclusion in gifted instruction may undervalue students whose giftedness lies in less traditional areas. Some evidence exists for the use of a Multiple Intelligences (MI) approach to gifted identification, primarily because it proposes a range of approaches rather than a single avenue of identification. Preliminary data indicated that an MI approach to identification results in less bias (more low-income students identified). Further evidence indicated that even adding just one additional intelligence type to gifted assessments increased the diversity of the identified population (Fasko, 2001). However, this method and philosophy do pose further issues for districts, namely, how to structure instruments to assess the various intelligences, and how to administer and score them while controlling for bias.

An intriguing piece of older research offers interesting insight in to the problem of identifying gifted students. In this study, which was seeking ways of nurturing potential in students who might be gifted but had not been identified as such by traditional means and did not have the verbal skills to provide sufficient clues to their potential, the researchers used a battery of identifiers designed to identify children with the potential to be identified as gifted if their latent talents were nurtured. The battery included, among other things, the Cartoon Conservation Scale (tests Piagetian development using pictures), Diagnostic Thinking Tasks (examines how students think/cognitive ability), Draw a Person (helps assess cognitive development), a Rating of Student Potential (to be completed by teachers), and a Student Interview and Peer Survey. The peer survey asked other students questions such as "Who is really funny? Who makes up stories? Who usually knows the answers? Who is good at building things?" In essence, the children's peers identified their potential. The fascinating result of this battery was a pool of children that closely paralleled the ethnic makeup of the schools involved in the study without any manipulation of the selection process to achieve that result (Johnson, Starnes, Gregory & Blaylock, 1985). Approximately 40% of the students identified and involved in the nurturance program were later identified as GT via

traditional identifiers and enfolded into the GT program. While this research is old, it does shed light on ways of identifying potential when potential has not fully manifested itself in achievement or when potential may be obscured by a lack of English skills, poverty, or some other mitigating factor. The use of the student survey is of particular interest, since it highlights the possibility that ability in math or other academic areas may be readily identified by other students even in Limited English Proficient situations.

Just as giftedness can take many forms, gifted children may look very different from one another. Issues of poverty or language may mask giftedness, as may perceived “antisocial” behaviors or even misbehavior. Districts must be careful not to exclude children based on misconceptions about giftedness and how it manifests itself.

Teaching the Gifted and Talented: Options and Best Practice

Options

Some of the deepest controversy in gifted education centers around which method of education is best, both in terms of academic effectiveness in given areas of study and social and emotional growth. A number of options exist for districts, such as acceleration, enrichment, pull-out programs, and grouping. Each provides a different avenue for students and instructors, and each has certain caveats and concerns to be considered.

Acceleration

Acceleration can take several forms:

- **Accelerated Study:** Students have early entrance/early exit options. This lends itself well to standards-based instruction: if the student can demonstrate and document mastery, s/he has the opportunity to move forward. Students move up the grades at their own pace regardless of age.
- **Content Acceleration:** Similar to accelerated study, but allows the student to move forward in content only, not in grade level. In other words, a third grader might be allowed to do fourth grade work while remaining in third grade. Currently, math is usually the only content area that enjoys this freedom. One problem inherent in this option is the perception that students shouldn't progress too far beyond their peers, so the content acceleration is capped at some point, usually 6-12 months ahead at the elementary level. At the secondary level, content acceleration takes the form of honors classes, AP courses, International Baccalaureate courses, or dual-enrollment programs.
- **Grade Level Acceleration:** Students showing more than 2 years advancement in all subjects are allowed to skip grades. Determined after careful consideration of individual students.
- **Telecommunication Options:** Essentially provides advanced coursework via available technology. (VanTassel-Baska, 2005)

Acceleration is the most effective strategy for gifted students (Gallagher, Smith & Merrotsy, 2011), but is also the most controversial of the options available, primarily because of concerns that students who are allowed to advance will suffer social and emotional issues as a result of not being with their same-age peers. However, the students themselves regard acceleration as positive and many report being happier when allowed to advance. Research shows that their psychological and emotional needs were unaffected, which suggests a link between those needs and academic needs, rather than the two existing in a zero-sum relationship as has previously been supposed (Kim, 2006). It is important to note that acceleration alone is not enough to ensure success. Success is still dependent on the quality of the teachers and their

willingness to differentiate and also dependent to some extent on the parents and their dedication and involvement (Kim, 2006).

Enrichment

Enrichment is the practice of going deeper in a particular content area when a student demonstrates mastery of concepts or advanced understanding. Enrichment can be a powerful tool because it accommodates both student interest and real world application. This is one of the easiest modes of education to incorporate into the classroom because it can be planned for and included in the regular curriculum. For example, a teacher could introduce new learning for 4 days, then have a day in which students who mastered the learning participate in enrichment activities while those who didn't are given additional help. Like acceleration, it is reliant on quality teaching and effective differentiation (as opposed to more practice of the same concepts) for success. Enrichment can be combined with content acceleration, which accommodates both student interest and acceleration of the linear curriculum in specific subjects (Kim, 2006).

Pull-Out Programs

In a pull-out program, gifted students are taken out of the regular classroom by a specialized teacher and given advanced and/or enriched instruction in particular subject areas. It has the advantage of allowing gifted students to work with their intellectual peers where their precocity will not seem out of place or weird. Since teachers typically work with only a small portion of the total student body, the number of students is usually low, increasing opportunity for more targeted differentiation. Research indicates that pull-out programs for enrichment have resulted in increased achievement in critical and creative thinking, especially if the pull-out was an extension of the regular curriculum (Rogers, 1993). One disadvantage of this type of program is that classroom teachers sometimes require gifted students to make up work they missed while participating in the pull-out, resulting in the child having to do twice as much work. Another disadvantage is that pull-out programs require additional staff and are more costly. Because of this, they are sometimes among the first to be eliminated in times of economic crisis (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012). Occasionally, programs of this nature may be perceived as elitist, particularly if districts are not careful to control for bias in the inclusion process. This type of program is used more frequently at the elementary level.

Grouping

Grouping goes by several names: clustering, flexible grouping, ability grouping, etc. Essentially, students with similar intellectual ability are grouped together within the regular classroom to work on accelerated content or enrichment. Grouping is not the same as tracking, which funnels all students of a particular ability range into a single class and tends to be inflexible with regard to movement between tracks. Current research regards grouping within classes as one of the nonnegotiable options for serving GT students, even to the point that within-class grouping should be used in classes composed entirely of GT learners (VanTassel-Baska, 2005). As a strategy for educating gifted learners, ability grouping in math can produce academic gains a month greater than those of GT students who are not ability-grouped, even without adjusting the curriculum (Kim, 2006). Ability grouping has the added advantage of enabling appropriate pacing for GT students and producing greater achievement and more positive attitudes (Kim, 2006); it facilitates diagnosis of the student's level and prescription of necessary interventions and enrichment to advance progress; and it increases the likelihood that teachers will actually differentiate instruction and curriculum, which research has demonstrated they will do with more fidelity for a group of GT students and less fidelity if only one or two are present in their class (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012). Since teachers spend about 84% of class time in the heterogeneous classroom doing whole-class activities

(VanTassel-Baska, 2005), ensuring that differentiation occurs is an important consideration. Additionally, gifted students themselves are more likely to take advantage of differentiated learning opportunities if there are others working at advanced levels. They may also attempt more challenges and be more comfortable and confident learning with their intellectual peers (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012). Cluster grouping (in which GT students are all placed in one or two classes rather than spread evenly across all classes) within the heterogeneous classroom has produced large gains in academic achievement across subjects, whether students are grouped for acceleration or enrichment (Rogers, 1993). Interestingly, while ability grouping is widely used in reading, more evidence exists for its effectiveness in math, where it has produced significant academic gains for elementary students (Rogers, 1993). The extreme end of grouping is to place all gifted students full time in classes designed expressly for them. However, this is usually unpopular, not because it doesn't work but because it is seen as limiting appropriate socialization, promoting elitism, and possibly damaging other students' academic self-concept (Gallagher et al., 2011).

The One Grouping that Doesn't Work

It has long been asserted that mixed-ability learning groups are benefited by the inclusion of gifted students. In such groups, gifted, high achieving, average, below average, and far below average students are combined to, in theory, maximize learning for all involved, but especially for average, below average, and far below average students, who will, it is supposed, benefit from the example of the high achievers and gifted students in the group. While this presents a charming picture of the inclusive and egalitarian ideal, the actuality deviates substantially. Probably the most surprising revelation is that non-GT learners did not show improvement in academic achievement when placed in mixed ability learning groups with GT learners (Kim, 2006). Gifted learners are often not effective as academic role models in part because their reasoning is intuitive and leapfrogs over connecting concepts, rather than being linear (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012). Additionally, inclusion of GT learners in mixed groups resulted in a decrease in non-GT students' academic self-concept – in other words, they saw themselves as poor learners in the presence of GT learners (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012).

Research also indicates that gifted learners made no academic gains when placed in mixed-ability group settings (Kim, 2006; Rogers, 1993). And it is not an enormous leap to conclude that the comfort GT learners feel in the presence of their intellectual peers translates to discomfort when isolated as the lone GT learner in a mixed ability grouping. Additionally, there is a tendency for teachers to use GT learners as peer tutors instead of differentiating for GT learning, regardless of the student's readiness for such a task (Bernal, 2003). Not surprisingly, GT learners often resent being placed in that role (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012).

One of the reasons that mixed-ability grouping doesn't work as well as might be hoped is that the inclusive classroom can contain a range of abilities, the sheer breadth of which makes differentiation difficult for the teacher (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012). This has led some to suggest that the range of abilities be limited in the classroom so that the teacher with GT students does not also have the far below average students. The goal is not, as may be supposed, to track students, but to reduce the total range of abilities in any given classroom (Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012). Additionally, Brulles and Winebrenner advocate for separating the GT learner from the high achieving learner, because high achieving learners out of the presence of GT learners will often "step up to the plate," as it were, and emerge as academic leaders. Thus, in their estimation, the most effective classroom would have gifted or high achieving students, and below average or far below average. The one thing all the research agrees on is that grouping, done correctly, produces academic gains for gifted learners and non-gifted.

The general consensus of the research is that all these modes of gifted instruction should be utilized as needed and in combination for the greatest academic effect. Gifted learners should have as many options as it is possible for a district to offer in order to ensure that all students' needs are met. And like all other forms of education, gifted education is not a one-size-fits-all proposition.

Best Practices

While the logistics of gifted learning can be carried out in a variety of ways, research points to a number of best practices in the gifted classroom. Many of these practices have made their way into regular instruction as a result of the push for inclusion in the wake of *NCLB*. The following practices are good pedagogy for any student, but they are critical for the gifted learner:

- Using advanced curricula in core areas at an accelerated rate;
- Grouping GT learners by subject area for advanced curricular work based on students' level of learning within the subject;
- Embedding multiple higher-order thinking models and skills within core subject area teaching to enhance learning;
- Using inquiry as a central strategy to promote GT learning in multiple modalities; and
- Using student-centered learning opportunities that are issue/problem-based and relevant to the students' world (VanTassel-Baska & Brown, 2007).

Appropriately differentiated curriculum is another critical practice for gifted students, and in VanTassel-Baska's (2005) estimation must be exemplary for the subject matter. Curriculum must be linked to GT learner characteristics, standards-based, and relevant to real world practices. The curriculum must be sufficiently advanced and complex for the best learners in the group, but it must also provide depth and creativity to stimulate open-ended response and high-level choices. Resources must also be differentiated to accommodate student interest and provide challenging ideas and conceptual depth.

Instructional differentiation is another nonnegotiable, whereby teachers use approaches that are inquiry-based, open-ended, and employ flexible grouping practices. In particular, problem-based learning allows gifted learners to encounter real world problems to explore at the highest levels of their ability. Teachers involved in this type of instruction must be well versed in high-level questioning skills and discussion facilitation to assist students in defining and solving issues. They must also be capable of differentiating products (projects, presentations, assessments) to measure learning in ways that depart from the standard paper-and-pencil exam (VanTassel-Baska, 2005).

The Need for Quality Teachers and Supportive Principals

One area in which districts sometimes fail to plan well for their GT populations is in the quality of the teachers assigned to those students. Since these are the front-line individuals, it is critical that they be both willing and well suited for the task of educating the gifted child. Likewise, principals who are uninformed about the efficacy of GT education modes or of gifted learner characteristics may also serve as roadblocks to success.

Research out of Australia demonstrates that teachers, even though well informed about gifted characteristics, still bought into the myth that acceleration will cause lasting social/emotional harm to students even while they themselves were engaged in the acceleration. Neither understanding of social and emotional development nor of the characteristics of giftedness changed the likelihood that a teacher

would accept the myth of the stunted psyche, and in fact half of the teachers of the gifted involved in the study were opposed to at least some forms of acceleration (Gallagher et al., 2011). While this pertained almost exclusively to acceleration, the same research showed that principals were more likely to object to certain forms of ability grouping in the interest of egalitarianism (students) or fairness (teachers). All this suggests that staff development may need to shift its focus from child development issues to issues of efficacy for GT learners, especially since developmental issues appear to be well understood while efficacy measures do not. Likewise, it underscores the pivotal nature of principals, who can be facilitators and educational leaders who promote achievement, or can hinder achievement gains by failing to adequately support or implement measures for gifted instruction.

The current model of inclusion leads to classrooms that are egalitarian on the surface, but have difficulty serving all students' needs. Bernal (2011) asserts that GT students are particularly ill-served because, in his estimation, scattering GT students among several classrooms requires that all teachers be trained in GT instruction, and not all teachers are suited, or even inclined, toward such instruction. This assumption that any teacher can teach the gifted is a practice he calls "professionally naïve" (p. 184). An examination of VanTassel-Baska's (2005) list of the nonnegotiable qualities for those who would teach gifted learners lends support to this assertion. In her estimation, teachers of the gifted should be:

- Lifelong learners;
- Open to new experiences;
- Able to apply new experiences in the classroom;
- Passionate about at least one area of knowledge;
- Able to communicate that passion to students;
- Deeply knowledgeable about at least one subject area with the ability to use that knowledge at a high level;
- Good thinkers, able to manipulate ideas at the highest levels of cognitions (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) within and across subject areas (this implies that they were good students themselves); and
- Capable of processing information in a simultaneity mode, meaning they can address multiple objectives at the same time while recognizing how students might manipulate different higher level skills in the same task demand and then easily align lower level tasks within those that require higher level skills/concepts.

Succinctly put: "Teacher-directed differentiation for gifted students has no meaning if teachers cannot perform these types of tasks and evidence these skills" (p. 96).

Mathematics research points to the importance of interactive approaches for gifted learners, although the argument could be made that all learners would benefit from these approaches. Research indicates that discussion (more interactive) in mathematics courses was directly correlated with increased achievement. Conversely, a less interactive approach (lecture) was directly correlated with a decrease in achievement (Matthews & Farmer, 2008). Hence, a teacher who merely talks at the students and assigns tasks with little or no interaction or discussion with the concepts and materials would directly hinder student achievement.

Research among potentially gifted low-income and minority students indicated that teachers who carefully planned hands-on lessons and found ways to maximize students' ability to express themselves

in non-traditional ways saw gains in achievement that led to identification as GT for a high proportion of students. While not strictly related to gifted instruction, the implications of a hands-on curriculum thoughtfully implemented by an interactive teacher with a view to maximizing student learning and potential are hard to ignore (Johnson et al., 1985).

Teaching the gifted is, if anything, more cognitively challenging, even at the primary level. It is not a job to which those who have otherwise washed out of the traditional classroom should be relegated, or a job one is given by virtue of tenure in a position. It is manifestly not a job to which everyone is suited, and careful attention must be paid to the vetting and selection of teachers who aspire to this role.

The Danger of Ignoring Gifted Students' Needs

While accelerating and enriching the gifted child does not pose any threat to the child's social and emotional development, not accelerating him or her does have a direct effect on academic self-concept and attitude.

Kim's (2011) research into gifted primary math students indicated that ability grouping produced more positive attitudes among GT learners, while VanTassel-Baska's (2005) research shows that content acceleration produced positive outcomes in enhanced learning, motivation, and extracurricular engagement. The benefits were felt both in and out of the classroom.

In fact, all types of acceleration and enrichment programs produce varying levels of academic gains for gifted learners over those who were not accelerated. Enrichment programs in particular resulted in increased likelihood of college attendance and improved achievement in critical thinking and creative thinking. Ability grouping within elementary classes is specifically tied to academic gains in math. Cross-grade grouping (non-graded classroom) is linked to positive academic gains in reading and math for students of all ability levels and large academic gains for GT students allowed to work at their own pace in all subjects (Rogers, 1993).

Providing children with intellectual peers has far-reaching consequences, both in and out of the classroom. Gifted learners are more likely to take advantage of differentiated learning opportunities if they are with a group of students working at higher levels rather than if they are alone in a class of regular learners. Because they are more comfortable with their intellectual peers, they are more likely to attempt greater intellectual challenges—they will, in effect, learn more. Placing them in a group makes it more likely that they will have the opportunity to learn more, as Brulles and Winebrenner's (2012) research demonstrated with regard to the fidelity of teachers actually differentiating the curriculum for gifted learners. The more GT learners there are in a given classroom, the higher the likelihood that the teacher will differentiate.

Valpied's (2005) work with the interpretation of the characteristics of giftedness showed that addressing giftedness, particularly putting gifted learners with their intellectual peers, ameliorated many of the characteristics that might otherwise bring a GT learner into conflict with his/her environment, further underscoring that socio-emotional needs and academic needs are inextricably linked. This research further showed that not providing more accelerated academic work and a peer group of intellectual equals could result in a reluctance to attend school, and eventually in the child's abilities "going underground" (p. 20). The child would, in effect, learn to hide his or her giftedness to appear the same as his or her non-gifted peers, and continually choose away from anything that might reveal advanced intellectual ability. The long-term ramifications of these actions are not difficult to imagine.

Mathematics deserves special attention within the context of gifted instruction. Math is an instructional area in which the opportunity to learn directly affects achievement because skill in math is not developed

in isolation, but rather by undertaking difficult and challenging problems and understanding complex ideas. While linguistic ability and reasoning may be at least partially developed in isolation once a student attains a certain level of reading competency, mathematics activities require careful planning to ensure proper sequencing and they require oversight to ensure correctness and assess mastery. Planning, sequencing, oversight, and assessment are all direct functions of teaching (Ysseldyke, Tardrew, Betts, Thill & Hannigan, 2004). Put simply, in math, where there is no instruction, far less achievement occurs. Children denied the opportunity to advance in math are less likely to take challenging math courses as they move up the grades. Algebra I, for example, serves as a gateway to advanced coursework in math and science both through the remainder of high school and into college (Matthews & Farmer, 2008). Performance in Algebra I is a predictor of participation in advanced instruction in both math and science at the secondary level. Students who take it late or take it and don't do well have set in motion a series of events that will impact their entire academic and even professional lives. Recognizing and nurturing gifted ability in math are of critical import. Some interesting research examining the efficacy of certain modes of gifted math instruction indicated that giving students an instructional management system to allow them to move through the curriculum at their own pace was more beneficial than allowing gifted students to "teach themselves" using materials. While the purpose of this study was to examine the efficacy of one particular intervention, the finding of the study can be more widely interpreted: gifted math students who are given focused instruction tailored to their ability level, paced in such a way that they can move through the curriculum at their own advanced rate, do better. Additionally, GT students attempted more tests and mastered more math objectives than non-GT students, but also more than the GT students left to attempt the materials without focused instruction, practice, and support (Ysseldyke et al., 2004).

Conclusion

Gifted learners are a challenge for districts, but a good one, because the potential for success is great. These are children who, once identified and nurtured, almost invariably do significantly better than non-GT students, and even better than GT students without focused attention, instruction, and differentiation. Unfortunately, these are sometimes the learners who get the least attention because their needs appear less great than those who are far below average. Ignoring the needs of the GT learner, however, can have long-term impact both emotionally and academically, particularly in mathematics. Districts that wish to enhance their gifted programs of instruction would do well to ensure that their selection processes are free of bias and open to a wide range of students, especially those whose abilities may be masked in some way. Additionally, districts should ensure that acceleration, ability grouping, and appropriate differentiation of the curriculum are available for the gifted students in their care in whatever combination best fits the individual learner, and that those students are entrusted to teachers who are themselves sufficiently cognitively gifted to meet the challenge of educating children of this level. Districts that attend to these practices will find themselves positioned to maximize achievement for these exceptional children.

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DRAFT

Appendix L: Special Education: A Review of Relevant Literature

Special Education, as a descriptive term, covers an array of possible conditions, ranging from learning disabilities and Attention Deficit Disorder to autism and deafness, and on to severe intellectual and physical handicaps, many of which are, in turn, on continuums of their own. How can districts best serve this particular population of learners? Identification of children for special education services has long been associated with socioeconomic levels and ethnicity, a problem that districts must be aware of and attempt to ameliorate since research shows placement in Special Education can have long-term implications for children well into adulthood. Probably the most critical—and debated—question is that of inclusion. Some argue that inclusion isn't the best option for some categories, while others envision a system of total inclusion in which all children are served in the regular classroom. Special education students have special needs and how best to meet those needs in the general education setting is a challenge, one that research demonstrates not all teachers are rising to. Problems with the gap between documented best practices and what actually occurs in the classroom are evident, as are issues with ability grouping, which can undermine some of the benefits such grouping provides.

Identification: Getting It Right

No discussion of Special Education can avoid addressing the problems inherent in identifying children who need services. Over-representation of ethnic minorities, English language learners, and children of poverty in Special Education is a national concern—one that districts must keep at the forefront as they seek to develop protocols for identification, ever mindful that identification, however well-intentioned, can have a negative long-term impact on the child. On the continuum of disabilities, identification becomes more problematic the less obvious the disability is. A child who is deaf and blind obviously qualifies for services, while one who *might* have a learning disability requires more examination. A recent study compared students identified between grades 1 and 8 for Special Education with their matched peers who were not so identified and tracked their outcomes as adults in a number of areas, including educational attainment, emotional health, and incarceration rates. While this was only one urban district, the results were striking and offer at least an invitation to caution. Students who were identified for placement in Special Education were:

- More likely overall to work entry-level, low-paying jobs with little chance of promotion;
- Thirty-nine percent less likely to graduate from high school and had fewer years of education overall;
- Fifty-five percent more likely to be incarcerated;
- Sixty-nine percent more likely to misuse substances;
- One hundred thirty-three percent more likely to suffer depression if their special education placement occurred between grades 4 and 8. Placement in lower grades was not associated with an increase in depression rates (Chesmore, Ou & Reynolds, 2016).

Further research would be necessary to determine the degree to which these findings apply in other districts, and it should be noted that these students were all minorities from a high poverty area, so it is possible the placement in special education compounded other issues. However, given the fact that poverty and minority status has led to over-representation in special education programming, this study should give educators and school psychologists pause for consideration. Getting it wrong may have a very real, life long, negative impact.

So how to counter over-identification? Three studies provide insight into methods that appear to reduce identification overall for special education; two rest on early intervention, and the third on an intensive RTI process. The first study examined participants in the Chicago Child-Parent Center program, a preschool program that emphasized child-centered education and family support services for children in high poverty neighborhoods. Participation in the program was associated with lower rates of identification for special education services as compared to children in other Chicago early education programs (Conyers, Reynolds & Ou, 2003). The study found that 12.5% of children in the CPC program were subsequently identified for special education, as compared to 18.4% in the non-CPC group. Interestingly, the CPC program, with its focus on reading readiness activities, reinforcement and feedback, and parental involvement, had the most impact on rates of identified learning disabilities (LD).

The second study examined the effect on special education identification of Head Start when coupled with transition experiences through grade 3 as compared to traditional Head Start, which terminates with the beginning of Kindergarten. Families in this program received transition experiences from kindergarten through grade 3, including curricular modification, health screening, parental involvement activities, and social services. The study found that Head Start with extended transition services had a measurable impact on rates of identification for some special education services—29% fewer identified as intellectually disabled and 27% fewer identified as emotionally disturbed (Redden, *et al.*, 2001).

The implications of these two studies lie in two areas: early intervention focusing on academic readiness, particularly reading and writing activities, and family involvement and support. Both seem to offer viable approaches to mitigating the effects of poverty long-term and decreasing the incidence of identification of children for special education. One interesting thing to note is that both studies showed a reduction in the incidence of identification, but the studies showed that reduction in *different* categories. This may simply be because of differences in populations studied, or it may be because of the relatively subjective nature of identification for these particular categories (Speech and Language Disability, Learning Disabled, Emotionally Disturbed, and Intellectual Disability), but the over arching principal is the same: early, targeted, and sustained intervention, beginning in preschool or Head Start, reduces the likelihood of identification for special education.

The third study employed an intensive RTI process called STEEP, which uses a commercially available set of probes in reading and math to obtain data surrounding performance on objectives. RTI processes and protocols can differ from state to state and district to district, so the methods and definitions of any particular program under study are important to understanding what worked. The teachers and school psychologists were trained in the use of the probes, the use of the data from the probes to inform instructional decisions and plan remediation, and how to evaluate the effectiveness of those interventions. The program examined data from four schools for several years before and after implementation of the STEEP protocols. The study found that after STEEP was implemented, fewer children overall were evaluated for special education, but more of those evaluated were found to qualify for services. At one school, the number of evaluations went from 30 in a non-STEPP year to 9 in the year STEEP was implemented. The study also found that psychologists trained in using STEEP evaluated fewer children for services than did psychologists not trained in STEEP (VanDerHeyden, Witt & Gilbertson, 2007). This suggests that the possession of adequate tools for data collection and intensive training on interpreting data and using it to effectively plan instruction to remediate deficits lead to more accuracy in referring children to special education.

Inclusion: Best for Most

Inclusion, like everything else in special education, is on a continuum ranging from full inclusion to segregated special schools. Student placement in these settings depends largely on the type of disability. High-Incidence (HI) disabilities—those disabilities that are less severe—are the ones most likely to be serviced with more inclusion. These include Learning Disability (LD) Speech Language Disability (SL) Intellectual Disability (ID) and Emotionally/Behaviorally Disturbed (ED), as well as ADD and ADHD and milder forms of autism. The questions for educators are: does inclusion benefit special education students, and if so, how does it benefit them? And closely aligned to that is: which students should be serviced in an inclusion model? Research demonstrates that inclusion is beneficial, with varying benefits depending on the disability.

Because of the potential negative effects of being identified as “special education,” it would seem that the more inclusive a child’s setting, the better. Keeping a child with his or her grade level peers may help them avoid the stigma of special education. Additionally, there is good evidence that a significant percentage of children receiving tier 1 or tier 2 interventions can return to general education without ever being formally identified as special education (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson 2003). The Response to Intervention model (RTI) also allows classroom teachers to begin addressing curricular areas of need in a focused, intense, extended manner without needing to wait for a special education designation. This allows the classroom teacher to more effectively monitor student progress toward grade level benchmarks without needing to coordinate with other teachers or departments because all the instruction is taking place in one setting. Likewise, a push-in program of special education services keeps all the instruction in one setting, and the teacher can monitor exactly what the student is doing plus his or her progress toward mastery. These are important considerations, especially since some children were often required to demonstrate failure before qualifying for special education services; also when services have to be coordinated between multiple settings and teachers, the potential for fragmentation of the learning process increases.

Move a little farther along the continuum to students with moderate disabilities, and there are important benefits to inclusion. Research demonstrates that when students with moderate intellectual disabilities, such as Down syndrome, are included in a general education setting, they experience measurable benefits in literacy skills, vocabulary, and grammar comprehension (Dessementet, Bless & Morin 2012); this improvement was sometimes not evident until four years or more in an inclusive setting. Additionally, students in an inclusive setting saw more improvement in their adaptive skills than did those who were in segregated programs. A little farther still along the continuum, autistic students in inclusive classrooms were found to spend more time on academic tasks and use of grade level and adapted curriculum than their peers in special education classrooms, who spent less time on academic tasks and used special education curriculum or no curriculum. They were also more likely to receive instruction from a teacher as opposed to a paraprofessional (Kurth & Mastergeorge 2012) In fact, separated students spent one third less time on math and language arts than did autistic students in an inclusive setting. (This was not an undiluted benefit, however; separated students were more likely to receive small group and individual instruction than those in inclusive settings.)

The students farthest along on the continuum are those with low-incidence disabilities. LI conditions such as deaf-blindness, severe autism, and multiple disabilities are the least likely to be served in an inclusive setting. The rationale for this has rested on three precepts: 1) Students should not be exposed to the potential assault on their self-esteem; 2) Students with severe disabilities require a more functional, rather than academic, curriculum; and 3) Segregated special education has been effective for them in

the past and will continue to be so. However, a series of studies has demonstrated that even for these children, the inclusive classroom leads to the development of academic skills, such as math and literacy, and overall improved academic performance. Inclusion also leads to improved communication, social, and employment skills when children are fully involved in general education settings, and this inclusion now serves as a critical predictor in school and post-school outcomes (Kurth, Morningstar & Kozelski 2014). The authors of the LI study went so far as to say that research does not confirm any benefit for segregation of LI students. Inclusion offers improved outcomes socially, academically, and from an employment standpoint at every level one might care to examine.

That being said, there are some children for whom inclusion is *not* the best setting. These children include those for whom large groups create too much stress or too much distraction for learning to take place; children with severe sensory processing issues; and children whose self-esteem or self-regulation is too fragile to cope with the vicissitudes of the general education classroom. For these children, a segregated setting may be the best choice. While the overarching goal of any district should be to include as many children as possible in a general education setting, reality dictates that provision must exist for those who can't tolerate an inclusive setting (Hornby 2015). Therefore, inclusion should be considered on a case-by-case basis, with the needs of the individual child serving as the final, determining factor for placement.

The final question to be answered is whether inclusion is best for *non*-disabled students. There is actually ample research in this area, but it was brought home to this reviewer during a recent discussion with a sitting board member that the public (and sometimes board and administrative) perception is that regular and high ability learners suffer when “forced” to share classroom space and instructional attention with special education students. Actually, the reverse is true. A study from 1995 demonstrated that general education students do *not* experience academic decline in inclusive classrooms, nor do they receive less instructional attention (Staub & Peck, 1995). Other studies have demonstrated that the presence of special education students in the classroom actually *increased* the academic achievement of the general education students because the differentiation techniques employed by the teacher were beneficial to all learners in the class. Exploring the effects of inclusion on gifted children is beyond the scope of this review, but it may be possible that gifted populations do receive less instructional attention than the non-gifted and that this would be ameliorated by thorough training in differentiation for all ability levels; in fact, it is possible that without proper staff development in RTI, monitoring, differentiation, etc., that these allegations of a lack of benefit for general education students might be true simply because teachers are not equipped to deal with multiple ability levels in a single classroom. Academics aside, non-disabled students in inclusive classrooms can accrue a number of social benefits, such as greater empathy and tolerance for differences. These traits were stronger the more time special education students spent in the general education classroom and weaker or non-existent in classrooms where special education students were only present for a portion of the day (Senecal, 2001).

Best Practice: Quality Instruction, Which May Not be Happening

One of the ironies emerging from research surrounding Special Education is that some of the methods that made it “special” appear not to be as effective as was once believed. At the same time, greater focus is being paid to those methods that *do* show improved outcomes for students, e.g., targeting interventions to the student’s *area of need* rather than on the processes which may interrupt his or her learning, i.e., focus on reading, math, or writing, etc., (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003).

The authors of that study went on to point out a number of instructional characteristics that were of benefit to special education students. Although their focus is primarily Learning Disabled students, the

precepts would seem to hold true for many groups of students, including those without special needs. They include:

- Controlling task difficulty to maintain high levels of success;
- Teaching in small, interactive groups;
- Modeling questioning, reasoning, and metacognitive strategies;
- Utilizing direct and explicit instructional practices;
- Encouraging higher-order thinking skills and problem solving;
- Helping students know what strategies to apply and when to apply them;
- Monitoring specific skill progress on an ongoing basis to inform instructional decisions (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003).

Even a brief review of this list reveals the caliber of instruction required; and this is, don't forget, what is expected of the general education teacher. However, Vaughn and Linan-Thompson cite a number of studies that indicate that while research has confirmed the need for a differentiated and appropriate education for students with disabilities, *undifferentiated* instruction *not* specifically designed to meet the needs of special students is what typically prevails. So while much of their method relies on the teacher monitoring student progress and intervening in a targeted way when progress is not being made, it is not an enormous leap of logic to understand that the success of the entire program requires a series of supports to ensure that delivery conforms to the needs of the special education students. Those supports, such as adequate, focused staff development and training, quality curriculum guides with differentiation approaches, a battery of diagnostic assessment instruments, a further battery of intervention tools that are proven effective, and someone monitoring the instructional delivery to ensure compliance with best practice, would ameliorate the gap between research and actual practice.

Grouping and Clustering: Good If Small, Fluid, and Rigorous

There is ample evidence that grouping by ability level produces gains for high-, medium-, and low-ability students, and, in fact produces more gains for low-ability learners than for medium-ability. However, one study highlighted a number of negative aspects to this type of small-group instruction, which must serve as a warning to educators.

The first cautionary finding was that grouping by ability was *ineffective* unless the small-group instruction was accompanied by materials and teaching that accommodated the needs of the learners in the group. Without differentiation, grouping doesn't work. The authors posited that this differentiation was even more critical for low-ability students. The second cautionary finding was that ability groups tended to be rigid and restrict student mobility between groups. This is contrary to special education recommendations that such groups be fluid so that as children gain skills they can expand opportunities for academic growth. The third cautionary finding—and it's a big one—was that teachers tended to provide less instruction, and less effective instruction, for students in low-ability groups (Wilkinson & Fung 2002).

While this study is an older one, it bears further examination because of the current climate of high-stakes testing when so much effort is devoted to parsing skills into ever more discrete fragments. The study, which was of reading groups, found that in low ability groups:

- Less time overall was allocated for instruction than for high ability groups, and the pacing tended to be slower so that low-ability students read less overall.

- Teachers spent more time on decoding tasks focusing on individual words and parts of words rather than on tasks related to making meaning of text. High-ability students spent more time discussing aspects of text directly related to meaning.
- Teachers focused more on oral reading with low ability children than on silent reading. This oral reading also reduced students' total time reading because they waited for each other while they took turns reading. High ability students, by contrast, spent more time reading silently and, therefore, read considerably more in their allotted time.
- Teachers allowed more interruptions of the low-ability group from students outside the group.
- Teachers were more likely to interrupt low-ability learners who made reading errors, and to interrupt with the correct answer rather than providing a prompt to self-correct. When teachers did prompt low readers, it was to offer phonemic or graphemic clues rather than help them construct meaning from the text.
- Teachers tended to ask more factual, recall questions of low-ability readers rather than questions that required reasoning or problem solving. In other words, questioning was low in rigor for low-ability learners; high-ability learners, however, were asked more questions that required critical thinking (Wilkinson & Fung 2002).

All of these points are troubling, because studies indicate that cognitive challenge is important for special education students (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003); yet grouping by ability seems to remove the challenge from low-ability groups, and focus on reading in a fragmented way detracts from making meaning—the very thing that makes reading an engaging, motivating activity. Reducing the rigor of the small group instruction makes it less engaging and less effective. The conclusion here would be that districts need to ensure that teachers are trained in effective differentiation that provides content in ways that are appropriate to the students' needs but still cognitively challenging and engaging, and that teachers not lose sight of the critical need for students to make meaning of what they read so that comprehension doesn't get "lost in the weeds" of decoding and phonemic awareness, which are considerably less meaningful to students because they in no way resemble a real-life context. The central purpose of reading is communication; making meaning of text is vital to, and embedded in, that purpose.

It is worth noting here that it is entirely possible for a student to have a disability *and* also be gifted—to have ADHD or be autistic, for example, and also have advanced math ability. The general tendency, however, is for teachers to see the disability and overlook the giftedness. Students referred for special education are mostly *not* referred for gifted education (Mayes & Moore, 2016). In light of this tendency, and in light of the potential long-term deleterious effects of special education identification and Vaughn and Linan-Thompson's research demonstrating that focused intensive intervention can raise some learners out of special education entirely, fluidity in ability grouping becomes that much more critical. Groups must remain fluid so that as students achieve goals they are regrouped to reflect that progress. One's ability group should not be one's destiny.

Clustering data for special education is somewhat difficult to find, but one dissertation did offer some insight into its effectiveness. The researcher found that students in cluster groups scored slightly higher than their non-cluster counterparts—but not significantly higher. The suggestion is that clustering may have some benefit, and is, at least, not harmful, to the academic achievement of special education students. However, it is important to note that the study examined elementary classes in which clusters of special education students were small—no more than six children. Additionally, the cluster classrooms were provided with an additional adult, either a Speech/Language therapist, a special education teacher,

or a special education aide. These adults rotated into classrooms so that the extra adult was not always a paraprofessional, and the second adult provided direct, small-group or individual instruction, with instruction modified based on ability needs (Daigneault, 2003). Since Vaughn and Linan-Thompson specified that groups for RTI tiers should be small, the conclusion here is that clusters *may* be beneficial, but should probably also be kept small. Overloading a class with special education students will likely not show good results.

Special Education presents districts with a number of challenges, chief among which is how to ensure that those who are identified for services are actually in need of them because of the long-term negative impact such designation can have on students. Focusing efforts on early interventions such as preschool and extended Head Start and investing heavily in teacher and psychologist training to measure progress and use data to modify instruction as part of a clearly defined Response to Intervention program are viable options to help reduce overall identification and improve the accuracy of those who are referred to special education. Inclusion for as many students as possible should be the goal in light of the many benefits accruing to both special education students and general education students in both academic progress and social skills. Districts need to monitor instructional delivery with great care to ensure that quality teaching is taking place; again, training in differentiation, use of data to inform instructional choices, RTI program protocols, and evaluating intervention effectiveness are of critical import. The more capacity teachers have in these areas, the more successful such programs will be. Finally, clustering and grouping need to be carefully monitored to keep sizes small; clusters in individual classrooms should be no larger than six students and staffed with additional adults to provide targeted support and instruction to all students. Groups must remain fluid to prevent *de facto* tracking from occurring, and delivery of instruction needs to be monitored to ensure that the overall quality of instruction remains high and that special education students are provided with problem solving opportunities and not denied instruction related to making meaning of text.

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