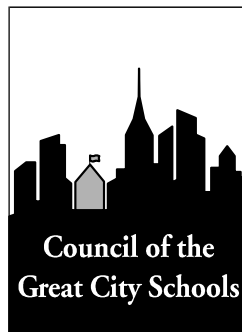


Focusing on Achievement in the Pittsburgh Public Schools

Report of the Strategic Support Team
of the
Council of the Great City Schools

Submitted to the
Pittsburgh Public Schools

By the
Council of the Great City Schools



March 2006

Acknowledgments

The Council of the Great City Schools thanks the many individuals who contributed to this project to improve student achievement in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Their efforts and commitment were critical in presenting the district with the best possible proposals.

First, we thank Superintendent Mark Roosevelt. It is not easy to ask one's colleagues for this kind of review. It takes courage and openness. It also requires a commitment to the city's children that is uncompromising. He has these qualities in abundance.

Second, we thank the Pittsburgh School Board for its cooperation. Its leadership will be critical if the proposals in this report are to be implemented with conviction and integrity.

Third, we thank the staff members of the Pittsburgh Public Schools who provided their valuable time and gathered all of documents and data that the team needed in order to do its work. The staff's openness was critical to our understanding of the challenges facing the district.

Fourth, the Council of the Great City Schools thanks the many groups, organizations, and associations with which we met. We apologize that we were unable to meet with everyone we know had something valuable to say.

Fifth, the Council thanks school districts that contributed staff to this effort. They included those of Broward County (Florida), Ft. Worth (Texas), and Norfolk (Virginia). The enthusiasm and generosity of these districts serve as another example of how the nation's urban public school systems are banding together to help each other improve student performance.

Sixth, we thank The Broad Foundation for providing financial support for the team's expenses to do its work in Pittsburgh.

Finally, I thank Council staff members Ricki Price-Baugh and Amanda Petteruti whose skills were critical to the success of this effort. Thank you all.

Michael Casserly
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Council of the Great City Schools

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**FOCUSING ON ACHIEVEMENT IN THE PITTSBURGH PUBLIC
SCHOOLS:
Report of the Strategic Support Team
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS

FINDINGS

The Pittsburgh Public School district is one of many urban school systems across the country that is struggling to boost student performance and regain the respect of its community.

Students Pittsburgh public schools have performed better than students in some school systems across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, but Pittsburgh students still score well under state averages. Public support for charter and private schools has been growing; the state's investments in the district have been waning; the city itself is undergoing substantial economic strain; and federal and state accountability systems have added new stresses on a school system that is laboring to keep pace with the public's growing need for a better educated citizenry.

The district's new superintendent, Dr. Mark Roosevelt, has moved aggressively to confront the district's challenges before the school system falls into a rut from which it cannot recover. His reforms and the speed at which he is moving to implement them indicate that he urgently wants to make improvements, use resources more effectively, and produce measurable gains in student achievement. The superintendent and his staff have undertaken a new data-driven, value-added initiative to guide decision-making about school performance. He is moving proactively to deal with budget shortfalls by closing low-performing schools and relocating students. He is taking the time to listen to the community about needed changes, and he has established a new focus on student achievement.

But the challenges facing the new superintendent are substantial. Achievement gaps are wide; student achievement is low; and public confidence is fragile. To begin addressing these issues, Dr. Roosevelt asked the Council of the Great City Schools to review the instructional program of the Pittsburgh Public Schools and propose ways to accelerate the student achievement in language arts and mathematics. To do the work, the Council assembled a Strategic Support Team (SST) of individuals who have worked successfully in other large urban districts and have raised student achievement. The team looked specifically at the district's curriculum and instructional program and prepared a list of recommendations for the superintendent. All findings and observations were current as of when the team visited the district in November 2005. Much has happened in the district since the site visit that may not be reflected in this report.

NEXT STEPS

The Council of the Great City Schools benchmarked the instructional program of the Pittsburgh Public Schools against those of other urban school districts that have been making substantial progress in raising student achievement. The organization developed a set of recommendations that would bring Pittsburgh's instructional program more in line with these districts. The Strategic Support Team suggests that the district—

1. Focus the efforts of the board, staff, and community on the urgency of improving student achievement.

The Pittsburgh Public Schools has a superintendent who is working to earn the respect and trust of the community and external partners. However, the board is deeply divided, publicly and privately, about the direction of the district. Moreover, the school system faces substantial budget shortfalls and challenges common to all urban districts, but it needs to tighten and focus its energies around the one result that is likely to help regain public support: raising student achievement and closing student achievement gaps. The district might want to—

- Use a facilitator to conduct a retreat with the school board to establish a broader consensus about the district's agenda and how members will work together.
- Communicate clearly and definitively to the public that the present level of student achievement is unacceptable.
- Establish measurable goals and objectives for improving student achievement.
- Connect those goals to a stiffer accountability system for all professional staff members, starting at the central-office level.
- Continue outreach efforts to rebuild foundation and community support for district priorities.
- Ensure that time is set aside on each board meeting agenda to review some aspect of the academic program and status reports on the progress of the instructional reforms.

2. Review and revise the district's strategic plan to ensure that it includes measurable goals for improving student achievement, goals for each subgroup, and objectives that go beyond the requirements set by the federal and state governments. The plan should set timelines for meeting goals and link goals to district priorities and accountability systems.

The district has clearly met the state's requirement to develop a districtwide strategic improvement plan. But the Strategic Support Team was not convinced that the plan

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actually drove the work of the district in the past. To make that linkage more explicit, the district might—

- Expand its student achievement goals beyond what is required under *No Child Left Behind* and the state, so that the goals include Advanced Placement, honors course participation, college attendance, dropout rates, and the like.
- Report all performance data by subgroup and include the results in the district's accountability system.
- Restructure the way schools conduct planning so that they are required to craft a single plan. The district should track performance and monitor progress more closely over the course of the school year and provide support when data indicate that it is needed.

3. Incorporate student achievement goals and implementation of district instructional initiatives into principal and central-office personnel evaluations.

The district has an evaluation system for employees, but the district does not strongly articulate the role that various employee groups play in improving student achievement. Once the district sets measurable goals, including goals for subgroups, and sends a clear message about the urgency of meeting those instructional goals, the district should consider revising its personnel evaluation system. A revised personnel evaluation system should assess senior staff members and principals, at least in part, on the ability of the district and individual schools to attain the objectives for improvement and to implement instructional initiatives. As next steps, the district might—

- Revise the job descriptions of principals and central-office staff members to reflect their roles in improving student achievement and implementing district instructional initiatives.
- Revamp the criteria by which staff members are evaluated so that the criteria include improvements in student achievement and implementation of district initiatives.
- Establish a system of rewards and sanctions for meeting or failing to meet student achievement goals.
- Give principals more latitude over staffing and budgeting if they are going to be held more accountable for results.
- Establish a monitoring system to track progress on the reform process, and communicate that progress to the public.

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- Develop criteria for when principals are required to attend meetings out of their buildings with members of the central-office staff. The criteria might be built around student achievement issues.

4. Recommit the district to a uniform curriculum and instructional program in the core content areas, so that schools and teachers are clear on what needs to be taught. Develop pacing guides that link classroom instruction explicitly to the assessments so that teachers can be assured that they are preparing students for state testing and the next grade level.

The district has adopted standard textbooks in reading and mathematics in some grades, provided some supplementary materials, and mandated 90-minute blocks of instruction in reading and mathematics. The school system also uses double blocks of instruction in secondary schools for students who are not proficient. The central office has created pacing guides, but several groups of interviewees voiced concerns that the curriculum and the guides were inadequate to prepare students for the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). Current pacing guides may include the general topic being tested in the suggested lessons, but may not link the precise content or skill in the lesson explicitly with the specific content likely to be tested. The precision of this alignment of curriculum objectives and pacing guides is a critical element in all reform efforts. As next steps, the Strategic Support Team recommends that the district—

- Review its pacing guides to ensure that they include not only the objectives being taught, but also indicate when specific concepts need to be reviewed in order to build mastery. The pacing guides also should provide teachers with information on when and how to supplement textbook resources when textbooks are not well aligned with the specific concept or skill that students must learn.
- Mandate the use of new pacing guides districtwide, but build in an annual review/revision process that involves school personnel and data analysis.
- Consider expanding the use of *Trophies* to grades 1-5.
- Evaluate the effects of the district's varied high school reading programs on the ability of students to perform successfully on the PSSA.
- Conduct an external evaluation of both core math programs currently in use in the district in order to determine a single districtwide instructional program.
- Establish a committee of teachers to review/revise the district's portfolio guidelines so that these guidelines better reflect the PSSA, are less onerous, and are more aligned with the curriculum.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the district's writing program on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), Advanced Placement (AP), International

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Baccalaureate (IB), National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), SAT, etc., and use the results to address needs in this area.

5. Assess district professional development efforts for their effects on student achievement data, and revise the professional development program to ensure that district reforms and initiatives are reaching the classroom level.

The Pittsburgh Public Schools has a plethora of professional development offerings, the vast majority of which are voluntary. The district has two release-days for districtwide professional development, and schools have extensive opportunities for on-site professional development, which is defined and controlled by each school. Moreover, new teachers have substitutes when they attend professional development sessions for new teachers, but the substitutes have no training to ensure that learning continues while the regular teacher is off campus. Finally, the district has numerous literacy coaches funded through Reading First and other federal programs, but only eight math coaches. As next steps, the district might—

- Create a coordinated, districtwide professional development plan based on district priorities and student performance data. Ensure that the plan includes training on the nature and use of the district’s curriculum and assessment system, instructional strategies to boost student achievement, understanding and use of data to inform classroom instruction, and differentiation by teacher skill and experience.
- Determine the best method for delivery of professional development, considering the goals that it is meant to help schools attain. Establish criteria that articulate when such methods as central offerings, university courses, coaching, study groups, distance learning, or online courses are most appropriate.
- Track teacher participation in professional development.
- Evaluate the effects of professional development on classroom practice and growth in student achievement.

6. Evaluate the implementation of the district’s coaching model and the effects of the professional development that coaches receive on student achievement and classroom practice. Revise job descriptions, training, and monitoring accordingly. Consider funding additional math coaching positions with federal, foundation, or school-based funding.

Literacy coaches, math specialists, and “learning walks” are the main mechanisms that the district has for monitoring how reforms move from concept into classroom practice. However, the district does not appear to have an overarching plan that unites the work of the coaches or the use of the learning walks. To ensure that reforms are understood and used throughout the district, the Strategic Support Team suggests that the district—

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- Revise the job descriptions of coaches to focus on district goals and make certain that all staff members are aware of coaches' roles and responsibilities.
 - Have coaches assigned to specific schools and accountable to their respective principals for establishing positive relationships with teachers, developing their own knowledge base, and improving student achievement results.
 - Plan and deliver a uniform but differentiated program of professional development to all coaches so that they have the knowledge and skills to fulfill their job goals.
 - Develop a plan for providing new coaches with catch-up training if they move into the position after the teachers have already covered specific concepts.
- 7. Develop a process to maintain accurate, easily accessible data on the district's progress on its goals. The data should have the capacity to provide schools and teachers with information on each student's academic strengths and weaknesses.**

The district has developed quarterly benchmark tests and scoring rubrics with both multiple choice and open-ended questions. It also has begun development of a real-time data warehouse (RTI) with 45 preprogrammed reports. Principals are knowledgeable about their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data and "safe harbor" or minimum-improvement requirements under *No Child Left Behind*, and staff members often use the phrase "data-driven decision-making." To take the next steps in using data to drive instructional decision-making, the district should—

- Reengineer the data collection and storage process to ensure built-in error checking at data entry points, identification and rectification of data irregularities, collaboration with user groups on the types and formats of data and data reports needed for decision-making and planning, and professional development on accessing and interpreting data.
- Conduct an analysis to determine if the Standards-Based Assessments (SBAs) have predictive validity to forecast performance on the PSSA.
- Consider purchasing an item bank aligned with the Pennsylvania standards and PSSA so that local assessments can be customized to Pittsburgh's "scope and sequence" document.
- Plan and implement a systematic reporting process so that the school board and other audiences can see progress on district priorities, including student achievement, and can make needed policy decisions and course corrections.
- Incorporate evaluations into every instructional initiative that the district launches. The evaluations should go beyond compliance or program implementation to include the impact on district goals.

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- Establish a three-year calendar for the regular evaluation of district programs, initiatives, and ongoing data needs. The calendar should include a budget to conduct the assessments.

8. Use some of the district's closed schools to house additional early childhood programs. The district should also undertake a study of long-term reforms needed on the identification of and services for gifted and talented students.

The Pittsburgh Public Schools is not only a local Head Start provider; it also serves non-Head Start pre-K students with state and private grant funds. The district is also surveying kindergarten teachers on their perceptions of students who have participated in district pre-K programs; has assigned 10 coaches to support pre-K programs; and requires early childhood certification for teachers in its pre-K programs. The district also has contracted with the RAND Corporation to investigate alternative ways to identify students for gifted programs. As next steps, the district might—

- Conduct a detailed study of the district's gifted and talented program, beginning with an examination of the program's identification process, its academic results, its pull-out component and the impact on coursework success, its level of parent participation, and its training effort for teachers with gifted students in their classrooms.
- Set specific targets for participation in gifted and talented programs and include a nonverbal screening instrument in the identification process.
- Phase out the current program of campus-based gifted and talented programs organized around a curriculum for high-ability learners.
- Reallocate funding for the gifted and talented program and its implementation.
- Conduct regular evaluations of the gifted program and the performance of participating students.
- Establish a regular program of professional development for teachers who work with the district's gifted and talented students.

9. Establish a process across schools and grades to reduce the need for remedial instruction at the upper grades and prepare more students to take rigorous high school courses.

The Pittsburgh Public Schools offers at least one Advanced Placement (AP) course in every high school, and the district's Center for Advanced Studies' program is available to all gifted and talented students. The district is also developing end-of-course tests at the high school level to emphasize rigorous expectations at every school. And students scoring below basic levels on the PSSA are given double

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periods in core content areas and can participate in credit recovery efforts to ensure that they meet graduation requirements. To take the next steps, the Strategic Support Team suggests that the district—

- Establish a set of pre-AP courses at the sixth-grade level and plan for AP or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and expansions at every high school in the district.
- Establish measurable outcome indicators—such as dropout, attendance, course enrollment, successful course completion, and high school graduation rates and end-of-course examination results—to assess progress in the district’s high school reforms, rather than measures of structural changes. The district should focus on what is taught (the curriculum), how it is taught (instruction), how students are engaged in rigorous, meaningful learning, how students are treated as they strive to achieve, and how learning is measured (assessment).

10. Provide specific and clearly articulated intervention strategies in the district’s lowest-performing schools. (The strategies should go beyond what is provided to other schools in the district.)

Low-performing schools are required by the state to have improvement plans, and the district has adopted intervention programs in reading and math for those schools. The district uses part of its Reading First grant to provide K-3 literacy coaches to those low-performing schools. The district gives low-performing schools priority in receiving coaching and additional funding based on their failure to meet AYP goals and others benchmarks. To take the next steps in helping these lower-performing schools, the district should—

- Develop a plan of incentives in conjunction with the teacher’s union to place and retain the “best” teachers to work in the district’s lowest-performing schools.
- Maintain support of the lowest-performing schools until they have the capacity to operate more independently.
- Ensure that the district’s supplemental services meet *No Child Left Behind* requirements.
- Ensure that learning walks and other in-class forms of monitoring are understood clearly by all stakeholders and are used to inform school and district action.

Introduction: Purpose and Origin of the Project

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

The Council of the Great City Schools has prepared this report to summarize the findings and recommendations that the organization's Strategic Support Team (SST) on instruction made to the Pittsburgh Public Schools following its visit to the district on November 27-30, 2005.

Pittsburgh school superintendent Mark Roosevelt has asked the Council to review the school district's instructional efforts and to propose ways to accelerate student achievement.

To carry out its charge, the Council assembled a Strategic Support Team composed of curriculum and instructional leaders from cities that were increasing student achievement and who have struggled with many of the same issues facing the Pittsburgh school system. Council staff specializing in student achievement accompanied the SST. This report summarizes the team's findings and proposals.

Mark Roosevelt, the school board, and the district's staff are to be commended for their courage and openness in having a peer review such as this one conducted. It is not an easy decision to subject oneself and the institution one leads to the scrutiny that a project such as this entails. These leaders deserve the public's thanks.

PROJECT GOALS

The main goals of this review were to—

- Analyze the instructional practices and reforms in the Pittsburgh schools and assess their potential for raising student achievement.
- Determine if programs and initiatives penetrated the entire school system.
- Propose course-corrections in the Pittsburgh schools' instructional programs and reforms to improve student performance based on strategies that have proven successful in other major urban school systems.
- Assist the district in meeting and exceeding the goals defined by the federal *No Child Left Behind* law.
- Identify expertise, resources, strategies, and materials from other city school systems across the country that the Pittsburgh Public Schools could use to increase student performance.

THE WORK OF THE STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM

The Strategic Support Team (SST) visited Pittsburgh from November 27-30, 2005, with financial support from The Broad Foundation.¹ Drawing on their experience as instructional and curriculum leaders from urban school districts that have made substantial gains in student achievement, team members analyzed the district's broad instructional strategies and improvement plans. They paid special attention to the district's reading/language arts and math curricula. The team also reviewed district priorities and analyzed how well the strategies and programs of the school system reflected those priorities. Team members briefed Mark Roosevelt and Lynn Spampinato, the district's Chief Academic Officer, on the team's preliminary findings and proposals at the end of the visit. On January 31, 2006, the Council sent the superintendent a memorandum outlining the SST's key recommendations. This action was taken to assist the district in its planning.

The SST carried out its charge by conducting interviews and meetings with Pittsburgh school staff and representatives of outside organizations and groups, reviewing numerous documents and reports, and developing initial drafts of recommendations and proposals. After the site visit, the team conducted conference calls, gathered additional information, and refined the recommendations.

This approach to providing technical assistance by using small Strategic Support Teams of senior managers from other urban school systems across the nation is unique to the Council and its members. The organization finds this approach effective for a number of reasons. First, it allows the superintendent or CEO of a school system to work with talented, successful practitioners from around the country.

Second, the recommendations from urban school peers have validity because the individuals who developed them have faced many of the same problems now encountered in the school district requesting review. It cannot be said that these individuals do not know what working in an urban school system is like or that their proposals have not been tested under the most rigorous conditions.

Third, using senior urban school managers from other communities is faster and less expensive than retaining a large management-consulting firm. The expertise of team members allows a rapid learning curve and permits services to be delivered in a faster and less expensive manner than could be obtained in the open market.

Finally, the team comprises a pool of expertise that superintendent, school board, and staff can use to implement the recommendations or develop other follow-up strategies.

Members of the Strategic Support Team for the Pittsburgh Public Schools included the following individuals—

¹ The Broad Foundation takes no responsibility for any statements or views expressed in this report.

STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM

Nancy Timmons Associate Superintendent for Curriculum/Chief Academic Officer Ft. Worth (Tex.) Independent School District	Russell Clement Research Specialist Broward County (Fla.)
Denise Walston Coordinator, Mathematics Norfolk (Va.) School District	Ricki Price-Baugh Director of Academic Achievement Council of the Great City Schools

CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT

Chapter 1 of this report presents a brief overview of the Pittsburgh Public Schools and trends in its student achievement. Chapter 2 summarizes the findings and recommendations that the Strategic Support Team made to the school district in November 2005 to strengthen the school system’s curriculum and instructional reforms. Chapter 3 summarizes and synthesizes the report.

The appendices of the report benchmark Pittsburgh practices against characteristics of fast-improving urban districts (Appendix A) and lists the people to whom team members talked (Appendix B) and the documents that the team reviewed (Appendix C). The appendices also present brief biographical sketches of team members (Appendix D) and a brief description of the Council of the Great City Schools and the past teams that it has fielded (Appendix E).

The Council has shied away from using a specific school reform model to guide its recommendations. Instead, we have taken a distinctly district-level orientation to reform and have relied on what has produced high student achievement in some of the fastest-improving urban school districts in the country.

The Council developed a protocol to benchmark urban districts against these faster-improving urban districts. The survey is based upon the groundbreaking report *Foundations for Success*² produced for the Council by the research firm MDRC.

We should point out that the team did not examine everything. For example, we did not spend time looking at food services, transportation, personnel, facilities management, security, or other operational functions. The Council is deploying a separate team to the city to examine technology systems and to make recommendations to the

²Snipes, J., Doolittle, F., Herlihy, C., (2002). *Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban Schools Systems Improve Student Achievement*. New York: MDRC for the Council of the Great City Schools.

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superintendent about how to improve them. Our efforts, instead, focused exclusively on the instructional program and student achievement.

PROJECT STAFF

Council staff working on this project included—

Michael Casserly Executive Director Council of the Great City Schools	Amanda Petteruti Research Specialist Council of the Great City Schools
Ricki Price-Baugh Director of Academic Achievement Council of the Great City Schools	

Chapter 1. Background

LEADERSHIP

The Pittsburgh Public Schools are governed by a nine-member elected school board or Board of School Directors. All members serve four-year terms and represent one of nine geographic areas. The school board also serves as the board for the Pittsburgh-Mt. Oliver Intermediate Unit, which is one of 29 Regional Intermediate Units in the state to provide services such as special education and programs for nonpublic school students. Regular school board meetings are referred to as legislative meetings and are held on the fourth Wednesday of every month. The Board of Education also meets for agenda review on the third Wednesday of the month. Committee meetings are scheduled as needed.

By statute, the Board of School Directors has the power to establish policies, adopt curriculum and textbooks, employ and dismiss employees, and establish rules for the operation of school district facilities.

Since 1993, the district has had six superintendents, including—

- Mark Roosevelt August 2005 -
- Andrew King (Acting) February 2005 – August 2005
- John W. Thompson July 2000 – February 2005
- Helen S. Faison (Acting) July 1999 – June 2000
- Dale E. Frederick September 1997 - June 1999
- Louise R. Brennen September 1992 – August 1997

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The Pittsburgh Public Schools is the second largest school district in Pennsylvania, enrolling some 35,146 students in 2002-2003, the most recent year for which comparable data are available for other major cities from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).³ The district enrolls about 1.9 percent of the state’s students but a disproportionately large share of the state’s poor children. Some 59.5 percent of the district’s students are eligible for a federal free or reduced-price lunch, compared with about 29.1 percent statewide.

Some 58.2 percent of Pittsburgh’s enrollment was African-American in 2002-03, compared with 15.5 percent statewide; 0.6 percent was Hispanic, compared with 5.2 percent statewide; and 39.6 percent was white, compared with 77.1 percent statewide. In addition, students with disabilities accounted for 17.3 percent of the district’s enrollment, compared with 13.4 percent statewide. (See Table 1.)

³ The Council has used NCES data rather than the Pennsylvania Department of Education data because some comparisons in this report are made to districts in other states.

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The average school in Pittsburgh enrolled 378 students in 2002-03, lower than the statewide average of 557 students and the national urban school average of 681 students.⁴ Moreover, the district had a lower student-teacher ratio (13.0) than did the average Pennsylvania school district (16.1) that year. And the per-pupil expenditure in Pittsburgh was \$9,796, or about \$1,259 higher than the statewide average of \$8,537 in 2002-03. (See Table 1.)⁵

Table 1. Comparison of the Pittsburgh Schools with Pennsylvania and the Great City Schools, 2002-03⁶

	Pittsburgh	Pennsylvania	CGCS
Enrollment	35,146	1,816,747	7,457,832
% African-American	58.2	15.5	38.3
% Hispanic	0.6	5.2	32.5
% White	39.6	77.1	22.4
% Other	1.6	2.3	6.8
% FRPL	59.5	29.1	64.2
% with IEPs	17.3	13.4	13.0
% ELLs	NA	NA	16.7
Pupil/Teacher	13.0	16.1	16.9
Schools	93	3,264	10,954
Students/School	378	557	681
Spending/Pupil	\$9,796	\$8,537	\$8,209

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The Council looked at student achievement in the Pittsburgh Public Schools on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) Program from several vantage points—spring 2005 state tests results, 2004 results compared with 2001, 2004 results compared with 2005, Pittsburgh’s achievement gap compared with the state, ACT results, Advanced Placement (AP) exams, and Pittsburgh’s status on the federal *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) accountability system.

State Assessment Results⁷

Pennsylvania administers the PSSA to measure student learning. The state tested grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 prior to 2005-2006, but now tests in grades 3-8 and 11 in reading and math in accordance with *No Child Left Behind* (See Table 2.). This report analyzes trends in selected grades (5, 8, and 11). In addition, the report examines the performance of the district’s two largest ethnic subgroups.

⁴ Includes all schools – elementary, middle, and high.

⁵ The Council did receive information from the PDE-2058 Instructional Expense Computation that expense per pupil was \$9,969 for the period ending June 30, 2005.

⁶ Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Common Core of Data, “Public Elementary and Secondary School Universe Survey,” 2002-2003.

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Table 2. Content Areas and Grade Levels Tested on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) Program

Content Area	Grade Levels
Reading	3-8, 11
Math	3-8, 11
Writing	5, 8, 11

Pittsburgh students consistently outscore Philadelphia students on the PSSA, but Pittsburgh student scores are below state averages in all three sampled grade levels in reading and math. The gap between scores of Pittsburgh students and state averages on the PSSA reading test in 2005, for instance, was greatest at fifth grade (18 percentage points) and smallest at eleventh grade (13.9 percentage points). The gap between scores of Pittsburgh students and students statewide on the math test in 2005 was greatest in eighth grade (17.1 percentage points) and smallest again in the eleventh grade (12.5 percentage points).

School-by-school performance data on the PSSA ranged between 17 percent proficient to 85 percent proficient in reading, and between 5 percent and 92 percent proficient in mathematics.⁸

Districtwide results in 2005, moreover, indicate that 46.2 percent of Pittsburgh's fifth-graders scored at or above the state-defined proficiency level in reading on the PSSA, compared with 64.2 percent of the state's fifth-graders; 49.5 percent of the city's eighth-graders scored at or above proficiency levels, compared with 64.1 percent statewide; and 51.1 percent of the city's eleventh-graders were proficient in reading on the state test, compared with 65.0 percent of eleventh-graders statewide (See Graphs 1-3.)

In math, districtwide data indicate that 55.6 percent of Pittsburgh's fifth-graders scored at or above the state-defined proficiency level in 2005, compared with 69.0 percent of the state's fifth-graders; 45.8 percent of Pittsburgh's eighth-graders performed at or above the proficiency level in math, compared with 62.9 percent statewide; and 38.4 percent of the city's eleventh-graders scored at or above proficiency, compared with 50.9 percent statewide. (See Graphs 4-6.)

Short-Term Trends: Spring 2004 to 2005

Short-term results—spring 2004 to 2005—show that Pittsburgh's fifth-graders increased their reading scores 3.2 percentage points, and that fifth-graders statewide improved their reading scores by only 1.5 percentage points—suggesting that the Pittsburgh Public Schools had picked up some ground on the state in reading that year. Pittsburgh's eighth-graders, however, showed a 4.9 percentage-point decline in their

⁸ PPS Right Sizing Plan notebook; PowerPoint entitled "Right-Sizing the Pittsburgh Public Schools, presented November 9, 2005, slide 7.

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reading scores between 2004 and 2005, while scores of eighth-graders statewide declined by 4.8 percentage points. And Pittsburgh's eleventh-graders improved their reading performance by 2 percentage points, but eleventh-graders statewide improved by 4.2 percentage points over the same period. (See Graphs 1-3.)

Improvements in math from spring of 2004 to spring of 2005 were generally larger than in reading. Pittsburgh's fifth-graders improved their scores by 14.2 percentage points over the one-year period, while statewide, fifth-graders gained 7.2 percentage points. The city's eighth-graders improved their math scores by 8.5 percentage points, but eighth-graders statewide gained by 13.8 percentage points. Pittsburgh's eleventh-grade scores showed a slight increase of 0.6 percentage points, while scores of eleventh-graders statewide grew by 1.8 percentage points.

Long-Term Trends: Spring 2001 to 2004

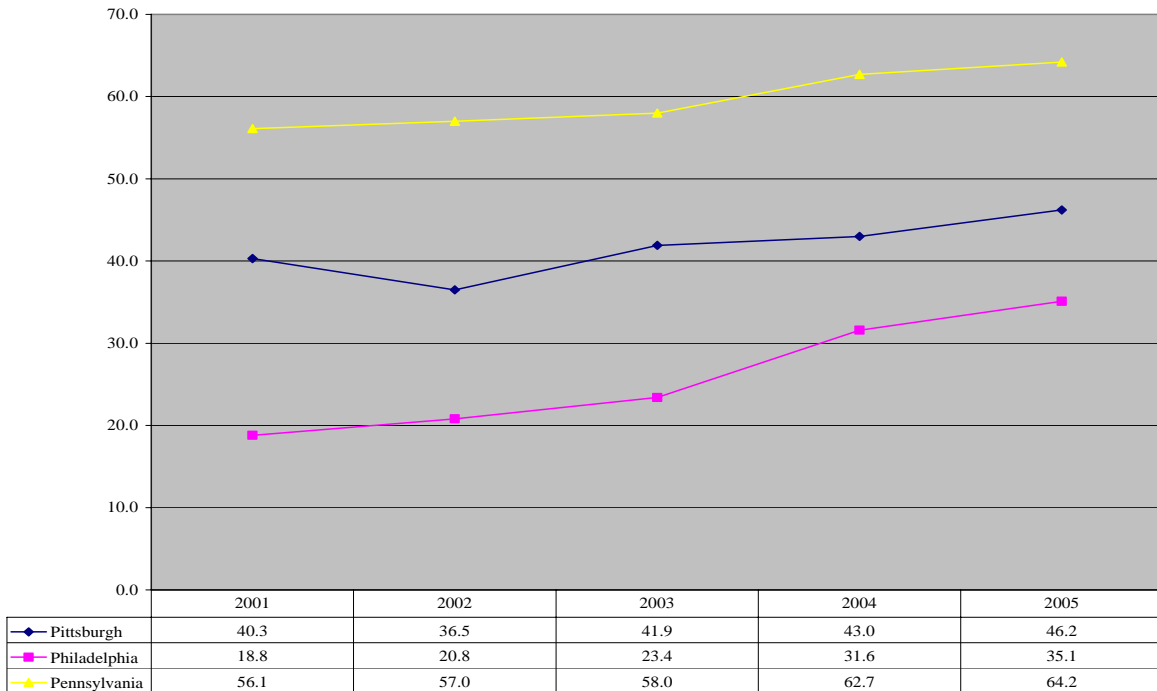
Longer-term trends—spring 2001 to 2005—show that gains of Pittsburgh students in reading outpaced gains of students statewide in grades 8 and 11, but that the gap between city and state fifth-graders in reading widened from 15.8 percentage points in 2001 to 18.0 percentage points in 2005. City students outpaced the state in math, however, at the fifth- and eleventh- grade levels. The gap between eighth-graders in Pittsburgh and their statewide peers increased slightly (0.8 points) from 16.3 percentage points in 2001 to 17.1 percentage points in 2005.

Results also indicated that Pittsburgh's fifth-grade reading scores increased 5.9 percentage points over the same 2001-2004 period, compared with an 8.1 percentage-point gain among fifth-graders statewide. Scores of the district's eighth-graders increased 6.8 percentage points in reading, compared with a gain of 4.0 percentage points statewide. And scores of Pittsburgh's eleventh-graders increased 14.2 percentage points in reading between 2001 and 2005, compared with an increase of 6.9 percentage points statewide. (See Graphs 1-3.)

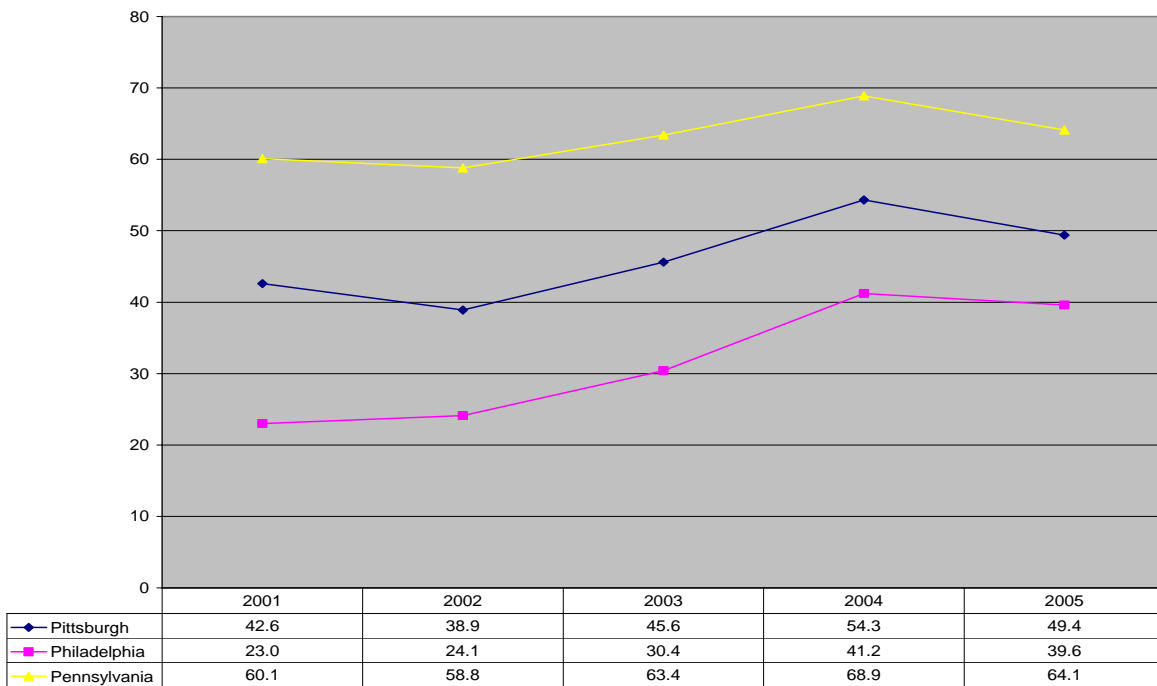
On the math portion of the PSSA, Pittsburgh's fifth-graders increased their scores by 18.5 percentage points between 2001 and 2004, while statewide, scores of fifth-graders jumped 16 percentage points. City eighth-graders increased their math scores by 14.2 percentage points, compared with a 15 percentage-point gain statewide. And the district's eleventh-graders increased their scores by 6.8 percentage points, compared with a 3 percentage-point gain statewide. (See Graphs 4-6.)

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Graph 1. Percent At or Above Proficient on PSSA Reading for Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania 5th-Graders

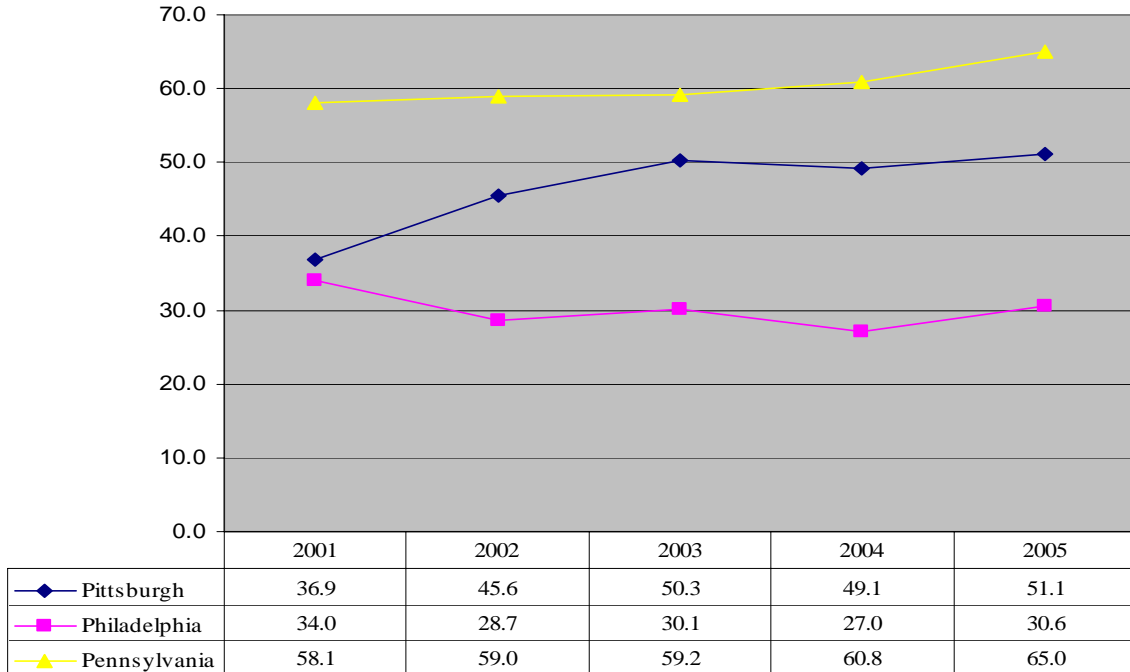


Graph 2. Percent At or Above Proficient on PSSA Reading for Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania 8th-Graders

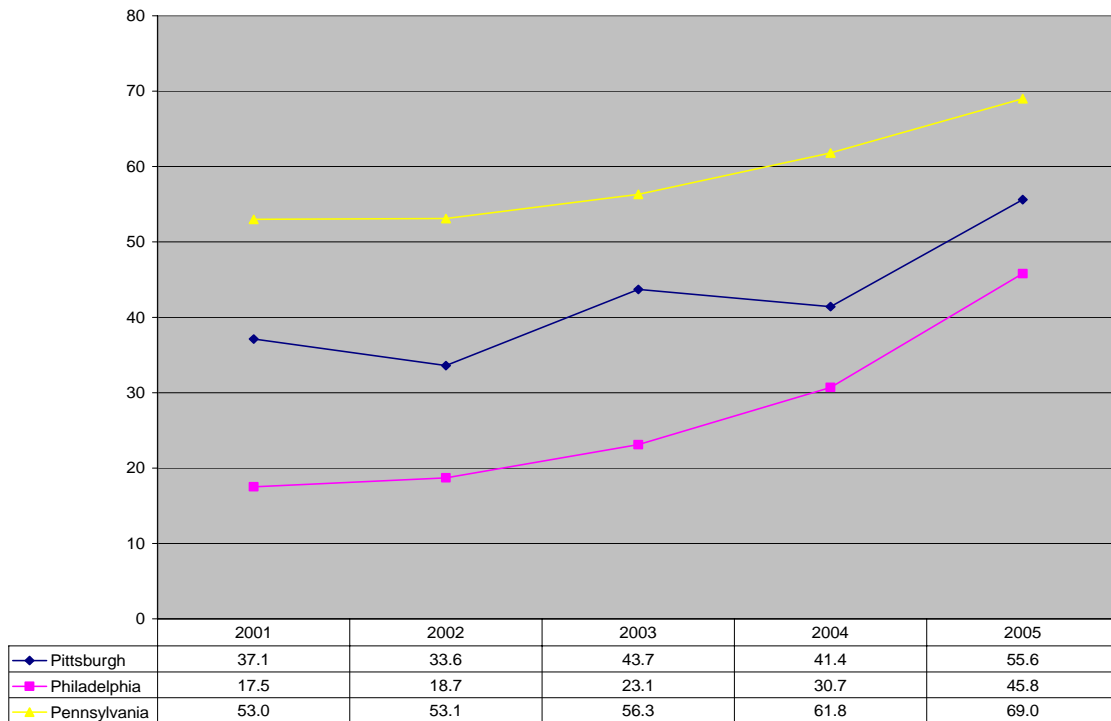


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Graph 3. Percent At or Above Proficient on PSSA Reading for Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania 11th-Graders

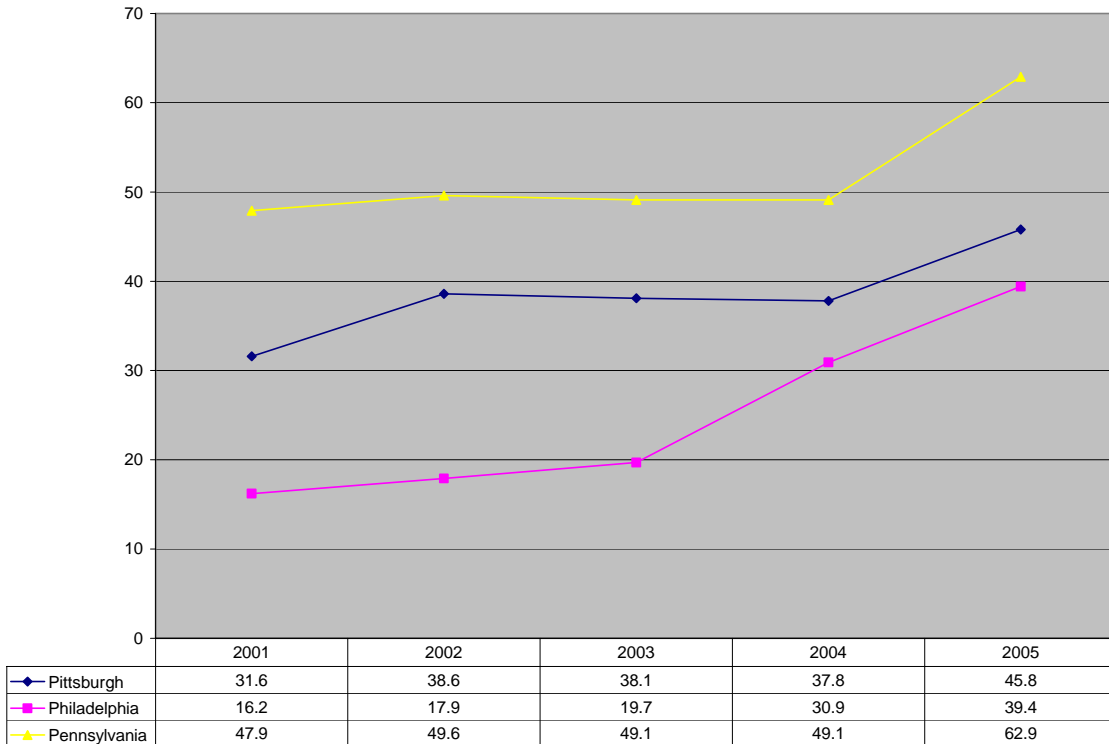


Graph 4. Percent At or Above Proficient on PSSA Math for Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania 5th-Graders

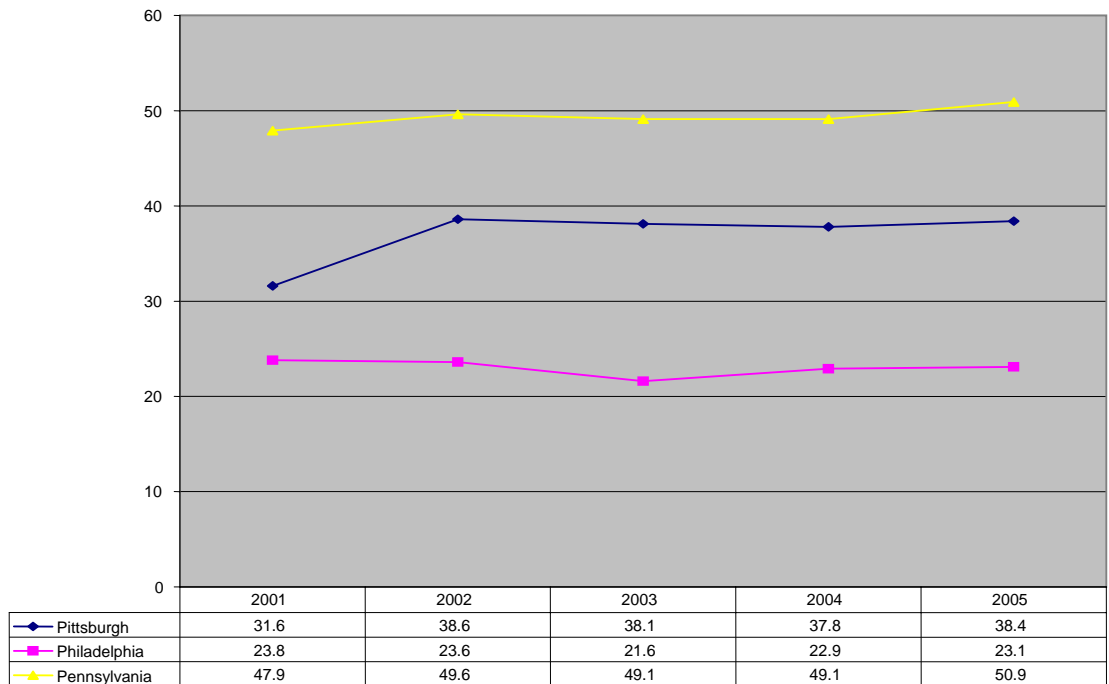


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Graph 5. Percent At or Above Proficient on PSSA Math for Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania 8th-Graders



Graph 6. Percent At or Above Proficient on PSSA Math for Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania 11th-Graders



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Trends in the Achievement Gap between Pittsburgh and the State

The achievement gaps between students in the city and the state have shown a mixed pattern of improvement over the last several years, as well. In 2001, the gaps in reading ranged from 15.8 percentage points in grade 5 to 21.2 percentage points in grade 11. In 2005, the gaps ranged from 13.9 percentage points in grade 11 to 18.0 percentage points in grade 5. Trends in math gaps were similar to reading gaps. In 2001, the gaps in math ranged from 15.9 percentage points in the fifth grade to 16.3 percentage points in the eighth and eleventh grades. In 2005, the gaps ranged from 12.5 points in eleventh grade to 17.1 percentage points in eighth grade. (See Table 3.)

Table 3. Trends in the Achievement Gap between Pittsburgh and the State

Subject	Grade	2001	2005
Reading	5	15.8	18.0
	8	17.5	14.7
	11	21.2	13.9
Math	5	15.9	13.4
	8	16.3	17.1
	11	16.3	12.5

Trends in the Racially-Identifiable Achievement Gap

The PSSA data also allow one to examine racially-identifiable gaps in student performance. Data from the 2005 test shows that white students in Pittsburgh scored consistently higher than did African-American students in both reading and math in grades 5, 8, and 11, and higher than did Hispanic students in grade 8. Pittsburgh Public Schools' Hispanic eleventh-graders, however, outperformed all subgroups in reading. The district has narrowed the reading gap between itself and its statewide peers among Hispanic eighth- and eleventh-graders between 2001 and 2005 by 20.2 and 37.0 percentage points, respectively.

In 2005, PSSA reading results indicated that 62.2 percent of white fifth-graders in the Pittsburgh schools were scoring at or above proficiency levels, a gain of 2.4 percentage points from 2002; but over the same period, the gap between the reading performance of white students in Pittsburgh and their statewide fifth-grade peers grew from 5.1 percentage points to 10.2 percentage points.

Also in 2005, 71.0 percent of white eighth-graders in Pittsburgh scored proficient or above in reading, an increase of 14.4 percentage points over 2002; and 71.6 percent of white eleventh-graders scored proficient or above, a gain of 6.8 percentage points—equaling their statewide racial peers in both grades that year. This improvement represented a narrowing of the gap between city white eighth-grade students and their statewide racial peers by 10.1 percentage points since 2002, but Pittsburgh's white eleventh-graders had performed as well as or better than their racial peers since 2002.

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African-American students in Pittsburgh performed at levels that were similar to their statewide racial peers in reading. In 2005, scores of fifth-grade African-American students in the city differed from scores of their racial peers statewide by only 0.3 points. Eighth-grade African-American students in Pittsburgh scored 1.1 percentage points below their eighth-grade racial peers statewide the same year. And, eleventh-grade African-American students in the city scored only 0.9 percentage points below their racial peers statewide in 2005. Between 2002 and 2004, however, African-American eleventh-graders in Pittsburgh had been outscoring their statewide racial peers in reading by as much as 3.0 percentage points.

Only 35.3 percent of Pittsburgh's fifth-grade African-American students attained the proficiency level or above in reading in 2005, an increase of 13.8 points since 2002. This level of attainment is 26.9 percentage points lower than that of white fifth-graders in the city. However, the achievement gap between white and African-American students in Pittsburgh narrowed by 12.2 percentage points between 2002 and 2005.

Some 36.1 percent of eighth-grade African-American students in Pittsburgh public schools scored at the proficient level or above in 2005, up from 21.6 percent in 2002. The gap between the city's white and African-American eighth-graders narrowed by only 0.1 points between 2002 and 2005.

The reading performance of eleventh-grade African-American students, moreover, has shown little movement in Pittsburgh. In 2005, 30.8 percent of African-American eleventh-graders in Pittsburgh scored at proficient or above, an increase of 3.1 percentage points over 2002. The gap between white and African-American eleventh-graders was 40.8 percentage points in 2005, an increase of 3.7 percentage points from 2002. (See Tables 4-5.)

The reading performance of Pittsburgh's eighth-grade Hispanic students in 2005 showed that some 58.8 percent were proficient or advanced, as were 72.8 percent of eleventh-grade Hispanic students and an uncertain number of fifth-graders (because of the small number of students counted).

The eighth-grade scores among Hispanic students reflected a gain of 37.7 percentage points between 2002 and 2005, and the numbers of eleventh-graders attaining the proficiency level or better improved by 18.9 points over the same period.

The achievement gap in reading between white and Hispanic eighth-grade students stood at 12.2 percentage points in 2005, a narrowing of the gap by 35.5 percentage points since 2002. The gap in the eleventh grade was 10.9 percentage points in 2002 but had closed by 2005 to a point where Hispanic students were scoring 1.2 percentage points above white students.

The trends in the math gaps were similar to those in reading. Approximately 72.3 percent of white fifth-graders in Pittsburgh attained at least proficient levels in 2005, an increase of 19 percentage points since 2002. Some 66.5 percent of white eighth-graders

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were at least proficient in math in 2005, an increase of 18.7 percentage points since 2002. The percentage of white students in the eleventh grade who attained at least proficient levels in math, however, gained just 1.0 percentage point (58.2 to 59.2 percent) between 2002 and 2005.

Pittsburgh's white students improved their math scores in grades 5 and 8 at a faster rate than did white students statewide, even though white students statewide continued to score slightly higher than did Pittsburgh's white students. In 2005, the gap between Pittsburgh's white students and their statewide racial peers was only 3.7 percentage points in the fifth grade and 3.6 percentage points in the eighth grade. Pittsburgh's eleventh-grade white students outperformed their statewide racial peers by 2.8 percentage points in math, as white students statewide have made only a gain of 2.3 percentage points since 2002.

Pittsburgh's African-American fifth- and eighth-graders also have made steady gains in math since 2002, but the gap between their performance and that of white students continues to be very high. In 2005, some 44.6 percent of African-American fifth-graders in Pittsburgh achieved at the proficient level or above, an increase of 24.3 percentage points since 2002, but the gap between white and African-American fifth-graders was 27.7 percentage points in 2005.

This persistent gap at the fifth-grade level has narrowed by only 5.3 percentage points since 2002. The rate of African-American eighth-graders attaining proficiency levels or better in math increased from 14.6 percent in 2002 to 32.3 percent in 2005, an increase of 17.7 percentage points. The achievement gap between white and African-American students in eighth-grade math was 34.2 percentage points in 2005, representing a slight widening of the gap by 1.0 percentage point since 2002. (See Tables 4 and 5.)

Eleventh-grade African-American students in Pittsburgh performed worse in 2005 in math than in 2004, with only 17.4 percent reaching proficient or above on the state math assessment—a level 0.3 points lower than in 2002. This level of attainment was 41.8 percentage points lower than that of white students in the same grade in 2005, and 1.3 percentage points larger than the achievement gap in 2002. (See Tables 4 and 5.)

The math performance of Pittsburgh's African-American students is very close to that of their African-American peers statewide in grades 5, 8 and 11. In 2005, fifth-grade African-American students in Pittsburgh outperformed African-American fifth-grade students statewide by 1.6 percentage points.

Finally, the math performance of eighth-grade African-American students in the city was only 0.5 percentage points below that of eighth-grade African-American students statewide in 2005. And just a 2.0 percentage-point gap separated the math scores of eleventh-grade African-American students in the city from the scores of their statewide racial peers.

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Table 4. Racially-Disaggregated Reading Scores At or Above Proficient in Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania Grades 5, 8, and 11

		Pittsburgh				Pennsylvania			
		2002	2003	2004	2005	2002	2003	2004	2005
Grade									
5	White	60.6	60.8	59.6	62.2	65.7	66.5	70.5	72.4
	Black	21.5	30.4	31.3	35.3	22.0	28.3	34.6	35.6
	Hispanic	58.8	50.0	65.0	NA	28.8	29.8	35.3	38.6
	Asian	64.6	64.8	60.9	63.7	60.0	63.8	72.0	64.0
8	White	56.6	64.5	73.2	71.0	66.7	71.0	75.8	71.0
	Black	21.6	33.3	39.9	36.1	24.0	32.5	41.4	37.2
	Hispanic	21.1	31.3	46.7	58.8	30.0	32.1	39.7	38.6
	Asian	60.0	50.0	59.1	61.1	63.1	66.8	74.0	73.0
11	White	64.8	68.9	66.9	71.6	64.1	64.6	67.1	71.6
	Black	27.7	29.8	30.9	30.8	25.9	28.2	27.9	31.7
	Hispanic	53.9	60.0	72.8	72.8	28.7	27.5	29.4	35.8
	Asian	55.0	72.7	77.0	65.5	61.2	62.9	63.5	66.3

Table 5. Racially-Disaggregated Math Scores At or Above Proficient in Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania Grades 5, 8, and 11

		Pittsburgh				Pennsylvania			
		2002	2003	2004	2005	2002	2003	2004	2005
Grade									
5	White	53.3	61.6	62.1	72.3	61.4	64.5	70.0	76.0
	Black	20.3	32.6	27.2	44.6	18.2	25.1	30.3	43.0
	Hispanic	53.0	58.3	65.0	50.0	28.8	32.0	38.2	49.3
	Asian	87.1	71.0	76.0	82.8	67.6	70.6	78.4	83.1
8	White	47.8	48.8	58.6	66.5	59.6	58.7	65.2	70.1
	Black	14.6	17.8	22.4	32.3	15.5	18.7	26.1	32.8
	Hispanic	36.8	18.8	53.3	53.0	23.7	22.1	31.5	41.2
	Asian	72.0	58.4	77.3	88.9	69.0	67.8	77.3	80.8
11	White	58.2	57.2	56.5	59.2	54.1	54.3	54.6	56.4
	Black	17.7	16.9	18.3	17.4	17.3	15.9	17.5	19.4
	Hispanic	38.5	40.0	60.0	36.4	21.3	19.5	18.9	23.4
	Asian	75.0	72.7	80.7	75.9	66.6	66.6	70.0	72.2

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Table 6. Achievement Gaps in Pittsburgh on the PSSA Reading and Math Assessments 2002-2005

White-Black Achievement Gap	PSSA Percentage-Point Gap in Reading					PSSA Percentage-Point Gap in Mathematics			
	2002	2003	2004	2005		2002	2003	2004	2005
Grade									
5	39.1	30.4	28.3	26.9		33.0	29.0	34.9	27.7
8	35.0	31.2	33.3	34.9		33.2	31.0	36.2	34.2
11	37.1	39.1	36.0	40.8		40.5	40.3	38.2	41.8
White-Hispanic Achievement Gap									
Grade									
5	1.8	10.8	-5.4	NA		0.3	3.3	-2.9	22.3
8	35.5	33.2	26.5	12.2		11.0	30.0	5.3	13.5
11	10.9	8.9	-5.9	-1.2		19.7	17.2	-3.5	22.8

ACT Scores

According to high school records that Pittsburgh staff members provided to the team, just 90 of the district's students took the ACT in 2005. The number of students tested ranged from a high of 21 students at Allerdice to a low of one student at Peabody. Testing indicated that the city's students scored an average of 19.6 on the reading portion of the test, about 2.7 points below the statewide average of 22.3. (See Tables 7-9.) City students averaged a score of 19.2 on the math portion of the test, about 2.3 points below the statewide average of 21.5.

Average ACT scores in the Pittsburgh Public Schools decreased in both reading and math between 2003 and 2005. Over the same period, however, statewide scores increased by 0.2 points in reading and 0.3 points in math. In 2005, only Allerdice exceeded the state average in math, while no Pittsburgh school exceeded the statewide average in reading. (See Tables 7-9.)

ACT reading scores ranged from a high of 22.0 at Perry Traditional Academy to a low of 14.6 at Westinghouse. Math scores ranged from a high of 21.9 at Allerdice to a low of 13.8 at Westinghouse. (See Tables 8-9.)

Longitudinal data for individual schools show mixed results. Of the eight schools for which 2003 and 2005 data are available, four had improved their reading scores and four had improved their math scores. (See Tables 8-9.)

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**Table 7. ACT Number Tested 2003-2005
Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania**

	2003	2004	2005
Allerdice	33	28	21
Brashear	8	12	14
Pittsburgh CAPA	0	3	8
Carrick	5	13	6
Oliver	2	2	6
Westinghouse	4	11	5
Langley	4	4	2
Peabody	6	6	1
Perry Traditional Academy	19	17	8
Schenley High School Teacher Center	12	16	19
Pittsburgh	93	112	90
Pennsylvania	11,290	12,012	11,848

**Table 8. ACT Reading Scores 2003-2005
Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania**

	2003	2004	2005
Allerdice	23.2	23.0	20.4
Brashear	19.3	19.1	17.9
Pittsburgh CAPA	NA	18.3	20.4
Carrick	21.6	19.6	17.2
Oliver	19.0	18.5	19.5
Westinghouse	14.3	15.5	14.6
Langley	21.8	18.8	18.0
Peabody	21.7	17.5	NA
Perry Traditional Academy	18.2	19.4	22.0
Schenley High School Teacher Center	18.3	19.1	21.9
Pittsburgh	20.5	19.7	19.6
Pennsylvania	22.1	22.3	22.3

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**Table 9. ACT Math Scores 2003-2005
Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania**

	2003	2004	2005
Allerdice	22.2	21.3	21.9
Brashear	20.6	18.2	19.9
Pittsburgh CAPA	NA	17.7	19.3
Carrick	17.8	19.8	17.0
Oliver	16.5	13.0	17.2
Westinghouse	14.3	14.7	13.8
Langley	20.3	20.5	17.0
Peabody	18.3	18.5	NA
Perry Tradition Academy	17.7	18.5	20.8
Schenley High School Teacher Center	18.3	18.7	18.9
Pittsburgh	19.6	18.9	19.2
Pennsylvania	21.2	21.5	21.5

SAT Scores

Pittsburgh's students participate in the SAT college entrance examination to a far greater extent than they take the ACT. The team received data only on 2005 participation and SAT scores by school. In that year, 1,038 students took the SAT, with the number of participants ranging from one at Letsche Education Center to 249 at Allerdice. Allerdice also had the highest average verbal score (545) and the highest average math score (566). Peabody had the lowest average verbal score (370) and the lowest average math score (390). The team had no other trend data to determine whether or not the district was improving on these scores.

**Table 10. Pittsburgh Public Schools SAT Participation
with Average Verbal and Math Scores for 2005**

School	Number of Participants	Verbal Score	Math Score
Pittsburgh AVTS	4	*	*
Allerdice	249	545	566
Brashear	100	517	504
Carrick	100	459	465
Langley	51	448	445
Letsche Education Center	1	*	*
Oliver	63	394	398
Peabody	53	370	390
Perry Traditional	120	434	438

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School	Number of Participants	Verbal Score	Math Score
Pittsburgh H.S.	80	517	489
Schenley	186	492	486
Westinghouse	31	392	365
Total Students Tested	1038		

* Scores not reported in schools testing small numbers of students.

Advanced Placement

The Strategic Support Team also examined Advanced Placement (AP) scores to determine the number of students tested, and the number of exam grades of 3 or higher. According to data provided by the district (using College Board information from November 11, 2005), some 288 Pittsburgh students took 495 AP examinations in 2005. Approximately 60.8 percent of the tests were scored at 3 or better. Only 10 percent of the test takers, however, were African-American students, taking just 40 exams. Only five tests taken by African-American students received a score of 3 or better. The team also received a hard copy of a spreadsheet that indicated that 15 different AP exams were taken in 2005 and that more than one-half of the test takers attended Allerdice.

Graduation and Dropout Rates

Finally, the Council requested 2004 and 2005 graduation and dropout data (using Pennsylvania State definitions). The district reported a four-year graduation rate of 79.96 percent in 2004 and 87.87 percent in 2005. The dropout rate for students in grades 9-12 was 4.91 percent in 2004 and 1.70 percent in 2005, as reported by the district.

DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY

The Pittsburgh Public Schools failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2004 in reading and in mathematics among African-American students, special education students, and students eligible for free and reduced price lunches. The district also failed to meet AYP in the graduation rate category for all students and in the test participation rate category for English language learners in reading only. The district is now in District Improvement II status under the provisions of the *No Child Left Behind* law.

The team reviewed district-furnished data on AYP status from school years 2002-03 through 2004-05. In 2004-05, 31 schools failed to make AYP, six were in warning status, and 43 schools met AYP outright. Only one school, Arsenal Middle School, was in School Improvement I status, and nine schools were in School Improvement II status. Three middle schools were in Corrective Action status. Some 19 schools were classified in School Improvement 1 status in 2002-03, but only 10 schools moved into School Improvement II status in 2003-04. Seven of those schools were improved, but three of them moved into Corrective Action status for 2004-05. (See Table 11.)

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The team then reviewed district-furnished data on schools failing to make AYP due to their academic performance in math and/or reading. The total number of schools in the district decreased between 2003-04 and 2004-05, so the team used the percent of schools failing to make AYP rather than the number of schools in order to analyze AYP performance.

Overall, reading performance has been a greater cause of failure to make AYP than math performance at elementary schools. Math and reading had approximately the same impact on AYP at the middle and high school levels. In all three years, math and reading performance had greater impacts on AYP in high school than in middle school. Similarly, math and reading performance had more impact on AYP in middle school than in elementary school. (See Table 12.)

AYP achievement improved from 2002-03 to 2003-04. However the percentage of AYP failures due to math and/or reading increased at every level in 2004-05. In 2004-2005, approximately 29 percent of schools failed to make AYP due to math performance, while approximately 48 percent of the district's schools failed to make AYP due to reading performance. (See Table 12.)

Table 11. Pittsburgh Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Status 2003-2005⁹

School Type	Year	Made AYP	Warning	Making Progress	SI Year 1	SI Year 2	CA Year 1	CA Year 2	Total
Elem	2002-03	25	31	0	1	0	0	0	57
Middle	2002-03	2	16	0	0	0	0	0	18
High	2002-03	1	10	0	0	0	0	0	11
Total	2002-03	28	57	0	1	0	0	0	86
Elem	2003-04	41	1	8	1	6	0	0	57
Middle	2003-04	10	0	1	2	5	0	0	18
High	2003-04	3	1	0	7	0	0	0	11
Total	2003-04	54	2	9	10	11	0	0	86
Elem	2004-05	34	11	5	0	3	0	0	54
Middle	2004-05	8	2	1	1	2	3	0	16
High	2004-05	1	5	0	0	4	0	0	10
Total	2004-05	43	18	6	1	9	3	0	80

* SI-school improvement; CA-corrective action.

⁹ Seven schools were closed between 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. Four were elementary schools (Beltzhoover, Chartiers, Regent Square, and Spring Garden). Additionally, Arlington Middle School and South Vo-Tech were closed. Faison Elementary (state-named New Homewood) opened in 2004-05.

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Table 12. Pittsburgh Schools AYP Math and Reading Performance 2003-2005

Year	School Type	Total Schools	Math Performance				Reading Performance			
			Met AYP	Met AYP with CI	Did not meet AYP	% not meeting AYP	Met AYP	Met AYP with CI	Did not meet AYP	% not meeting AYP
2002-2003	Elementary	57	38	n/a	19	33%	29	n/a	28	49%
	Middle	18	8	n/a	10	56%	9	n/a	9	50%
	High	11	7	n/a	4	36%	7	n/a	4	36%
	Total	86	53	n/a	33	38%	45	n/a	41	48%
2003-2004	Elementary	57	40	12	5	9%	32	12	13	23%
	Middle	18	5	6	7	39%	8	5	5	28%
	High	11	1	3	7	64%	2	2	7	64%
	Total	86	46	21	19	22%	42	19	25	29%
2004-2005	Elementary	53	37	9	7	13%	22	12	19	36%
	Middle	17	5	5	7	41%	6	1	10	59%
	High	10	0	1	9	90%	1	0	9	90%
	Total	80	42	15	23	29%	29	13	38	48%

Chapter 2. Curriculum and Instruction

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the findings and recommendations that the Strategic Support Team (SST) made to the Pittsburgh Public Schools in November 2005 to strengthen the district's instructional program, raise student achievement, and meet the academic requirements of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. These findings and recommendations are consistent with the practices identified in *Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improved Student Achievement*. These practices appear to be responsible for spurring student achievement in some of the nation's faster-improving urban school systems. The chapter organizes these practices around a number of broad themes: political consensus-building, goal setting, accountability, curriculum, professional development and teacher quality, the ability to get reforms into the classrooms, assessments and use of data, low-performing schools, elementary schools, and middle and high schools. The team presents findings in areas where it thought the district deserved credit, as well as in areas that raised special concerns. This chapter also includes specific recommendations on how the district can bring its practices more in line with those of faster-improving urban school districts in the interest of raising student achievement.

A. Political Preconditions/Governance

Urban school districts that have improved significantly have a number of characteristics in common. These commonalities also set them apart from urban school systems that have not seen much academic improvement. One of these characteristics involves the ability of the school district to achieve political consensus about where it wants to go and how it wants to get there. This political unity usually needs to be defined around student achievement and sustained over a prolonged period. Operationally, this kind of political consensus normally means that the school board is in general agreement about its priorities and its theory of action about how it will attain its goals. It also means that the board and administration are working in tandem on the same agenda to raise student performance. The Strategic Support Team did not conduct a special analysis of the school board or its governing structure, but it did ask specifically about the direction of the district and the political consensus around that direction. The team had a number of observations about the district's political consensus and a series of recommendations.

Positive Findings

- The school board has hired a new superintendent who is passionate about instituting systemic changes in the school district to improve student achievement.
- The school board is beginning to set priorities for itself around a single agenda of reform and improvement.

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- Some board members realize that one of their major functions is to serve as ambassadors for reform in the community.
- The superintendent is working hard to establish rapport with the community and to develop a collaborative dialogue with the teachers' union.
- The superintendent appears to take responsibility for the decisions he is making, and generally has been receiving favorable press for his actions.
- The district's new leadership has a vision for change and is taking bold action to make instructional improvements.
- The teachers' union generally has refrained from taking sides in school closings, thereby allowing the school board to exercise its best judgment about where buildings need to be shuttered.
- District staff members are using value-added data and other metrics created by the Rand Corporation to inform its decision-making on which schools need improvement and to determine what schools to maintain, expand, reconfigure, close, move, or consolidate.
- Rather than making piecemeal changes every year, the district is moving aggressively to downsize from 86 schools to 68 schools in 62 buildings. This move is being made to respond to declining enrollments, address budget shortfalls, and attain a more efficient and equitable system with higher student achievement.
- The Pittsburgh school district has a parent involvement policy, which was adopted on February 8, 2005. This policy requires parent participation in specific committees and places responsibility on principals for providing ongoing parent involvement at the school level. The state provides the district with translations of documents to further community outreach.

Areas of Concern

- The school board's reputation for infighting and micromanagement has led the press and the public to lose confidence in the district, its schools, their management, the district's financial integrity, and its students. The public reputation of the board has been poor for many years.
- The district has lost valuable financial and political support over the last several years from several national foundations located in Pittsburgh. Community members interviewed by the team indicated being alienated from the school system and not being engaged in what the district was doing.

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- A number of individuals interviewed by the team indicated that the district educates bright students well, but that it is not doing a good job with average and low-achieving students.
- Almost everyone interviewed by the team indicated that the district is marked by very low expectations for students and persistent achievement gaps among student groups.
- The district's new leadership is working to turn around the district, but the team did not see much sense of urgency for improving student achievement elsewhere in the district.
- District enrollment has declined by approximately 7,000 students since 1995 as a result of people leaving the city or sending their children to schools outside the system. Eighty percent of city residents do not have children in the school system.
- Parents interviewed by the team expressed deep-seated, long-term anger over perceived inequities in the schools, and stated that they were not heard at the school or district level unless they were exceedingly persistent.
- The district has a written set of parent involvement strategies, but the document is not easily accessed or widely known. The strategies were not among the district's policies posted for easy access on the Pittsburgh Public Schools Web site, nor were parents interviewed by the team aware of the document. The school system's District Improvement Plan, written to comply with its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status, charges the Technology Department with ensuring that parents are targeted for involvement "in a seamless and coordinated manner that leverages the expertise and offerings"¹⁰ of other departments. Yet little evidence exists that this charge was being pursued aggressively.
- Parents interviewed by the team expressed concern about closing schools and sending students to different schools where children from the neighborhoods do not get along, rerouting children through dangerous neighborhoods, or forcing children to cross busy streets.
- In a "Performance Study of the Administrative Operations and Expenditures of the Pittsburgh School District" conducted by MGT of America for the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, survey responses indicated that more than 80 percent of district administrators rated parent participation in school activities and organizations as *fair* or *poor*.
- The district projects a \$47 million budget shortfall next year.

¹⁰ School District of Pittsburgh Improvement: Approved by the Board of Education November 23, 2004, p. 52 of 102.

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Recommendations

1. *Focus the work of the board and the superintendent on student achievement and build a sense of urgency by—*

- *Communicating clearly and definitively that the present level of student achievement is unacceptable.*
- *Establishing objectives and measurable goals for student achievement and connecting the goals to an accountability system.*
- *Implementing an accountability system for all professional staff.*

The Strategic Support Team found that, while the leadership team expresses a strong sense of urgency for raising student achievement, the same level of concern was not evident at every level of the organization. The urgency can be reflected in clear and measurable goals for student achievement and accountability for achieving those goals. Many staff members interviewed by the Council team did not view the state performance test (PSSA) as important. The district needs to be clearer with its own employees and the public about the district's priority to educate all students who walk in the door.

2. *Consider using a facilitator to conduct a retreat with the school board to build a consensus about its agenda.*

The Board of Education clearly is fractured and has been this way for some time. In contrast, other urban school districts that have made significant progress on student achievement have school boards that are focused single-mindedly on a short list of priorities built around raising academic performance. The Pittsburgh school board is working on reaching agreement about priorities, but it has not yet come to consensus about where it is going. The board does not have a mechanism for handling its differences and allowing board business to continue.

3. *Continue the superintendent's outreach efforts to rebuild foundation and community support for district priorities.*

It is vital that school districts have the support of community foundations in order to attain district priorities. The superintendent has begun meetings with foundation staff members and has been encouraged to continue them in order to articulate district reforms and build broader community consensus around the reforms.

The Strategic Support Team received copies of fliers and a "Parent Concern Flowchart" showing how Parental Educational Resource Centers (PERCs) are available for use to funnel concerns to school principals or appropriate administrative offices, but no one interviewed referred to this process. As the superintendent reaches out to rebuild support for the district, he should consider investigating whether

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complaint policies and parent involvement policies are well known or effective. The board and superintendent might consider naming a district ombudsman to field and address parent complaints and problems.

In addition, with so many families not having children attending Pittsburgh Public Schools, the district needs to make a concerted effort to communicate more effectively with the public about its reforms and the critical role that the school system plays in building a strong city. The district has been very open about its plans to consolidate schools. Similarly, as the district develops its strategies to improve student achievement, it should consider ways to explain how changes will benefit student achievement and how changes will be monitored and assessed.

- 4. Charge the communication office with establishing a task force made up of educators, business leaders, religious leaders, government leaders, parents, and other key stakeholders to design a strong district marketing initiative, and build public understanding of the importance of having a strong school district even for community members who do not have children in the schools.*

Eighty percent of the city's households do not have children enrolled in Pittsburgh's public school system; yet the city depends on the success of its schools, its ability to attract businesses looking for an educated workforce, and its capacity to remain competitive with other cities. It was not clear to the team that this citywide commitment exists.

- 5. Provide training in public relations to district school leadership and support staff to develop a climate that takes more responsibility for customer service.*

Parents perceive severe inequities in the school district and feel that only people who are exceedingly persistent are heard. The district, moreover, has lost enrollment due to the competition from charter and private schools. District staff members need to change their tone and consider how their actions are perceived by those that they serve. Each department and school should consider developing a customer service focus that encourages the public to seek out the services and resources of the schools.

- 6. Involve key community partners and parents in developing action steps that can be folded into the strategic plan to address issues such as the overrepresentation of African-American males in special education, the underrepresentation of African-Americans in gifted programs, and the disproportionate allocation of human and material resources.*

Community partners indicated that they were seriously alienated from the district and saw the district as lacking much willingness to engage the community. The district's development of a strategic plan would be an excellent opportunity to reengage the community on its priorities and on programs and initiatives that would address critical needs and concerns.

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7. *Ensure that plans to close schools and develop K-8 schools spell out specifically how the district will take into account parent concerns about bullying, transportation, safety, and equity.*

Parents voiced strong concerns in the interviews about putting students from diverse neighborhoods together and having children cross dangerous gang boundaries and busy streets. Parents were similarly concerned that older students could bully younger ones in K-8 schools. More importantly, parents being interviewed by the team did not perceive the school system as responding to their concerns.

8. *Conduct an evaluation of positive behavior programs that may be in use in the district to determine if such programs should be implemented districtwide.*

A perception exists that lack of discipline in the schools is having an impact on the instructional program. The district has a number of behavior programs, but the team could not determine if any of them had been evaluated or compared. Moreover, the district appears to lack a program to teach positive behaviors to students.

9. *Ensure that there is a clear system for identifying visitors and authorized personnel in school buildings. Principals also should be informed when workers are expected in their schools.*

The team heard repeated complaints from staff about the lack of communication between the central office and schools. Several examples indicated that personnel were often sent to schools by the central office to conduct work that the principals did not know about.

B. Goal Setting

Urban school systems that have seen significant gains in student achievement often have a clear sense of where they are going. This clarity is exhibited not only in the consensus among the district's leadership about the system's direction, but also in how leaders have translated that broad vision into explicit academic goals at both the district and school levels. These goals need to be explicit, concrete, measurable, and time-specific. And they need to include more than those required under *No Child Left Behind* and to stretch the district beyond just state targets.

Positive Findings

- The district has a mission statement in its strategic plan and on its Web site:

“The mission of Pittsburgh Public Schools is to improve social and academic achievement to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s State Goal Standards for all students, one child at a time, by providing outstanding staff, curriculum and instructional practices, and a wide range of productive opportunities for parent/community involvement

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which enable all students to be successful school and community citizens who grow into contributing adults.”

- The school board and superintendent have agreed on several critical priorities: providing quality professional development, developing accelerated learning academies, driving data down to schools for decision-making, formulating school improvement plans that drive action, developing a model for evaluating the performance of principals, making dramatic achievement gains, and developing models for instruction.
- Each school and various departments have written at least one type of improvement plan, and the district has a strategic plan dated 2002, as required by the state. In addition to the strategic plan, the district submitted a District Improvement Plan to the state, as required of a school system that had not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under *No Child Left Behind*. This plan focuses on schools and subgroups not making AYP.
- The district has put into place a state-mandated protocol to review school plans.

Areas of Concern

- The district goals articulated in the “Midpoint Review Report on Pittsburgh Public Schools’ Strategic Plan for 2002-2007”, dated September 30, 2005, are general statements that do not specify the numeric targets for each subgroup to attain. For example, the document has the following general goal: “Improve student achievement by an increase in numbers and percentages of students reaching proficiency on the PSSA and Terra Nova.”
- Generally, the district has written its school-by-school goals to comply with the safe harbor provisions of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* law and various state requirements. The team saw little evidence of the district’s setting any “stretch” goals for itself that involved anything more than minimum requirements.
- School-by-school goals do not align with any districtwide priorities or numeric goals.
- Individuals interviewed by the team rarely mentioned the district’s strategic plan or the District Improvement Plan, suggesting that these plans do not actually drive staff action or student achievement.
- Principals expressed frustration with excessive paperwork and duplicative plans from the central office.
- It appears that the system has a number of planning inefficiencies and redundancies. For example, staff members reported receiving a new set of goals

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from the central office that triggered a new planning process and written product almost three weeks after the school improvement plans were due.

Recommendations

- 10. Revisit the strategic plan to ensure that measurable goals include subgroups in terms of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, special education needs, gifted and talented identification, and English language learners (ELL). The plan should set timelines and responsibilities that are linked clearly to district priorities and accountability systems.*

The district provided the Strategic Support Team with a copy of the district's 2002 strategic plan and midpoint evaluation, but the team found that many of the district's goals were not disaggregated by subgroup as required under *No Child Left Behind*. The district has a goal to close gaps, but has not demonstrated what that would look like. Without specifics, staff may be ignoring the overarching goal of the instructional program.

- 11. Expand student achievement goals beyond minimum No Child Left Behind and state goals to include Advanced Placement (AP) and advanced course participation, college attendance, and the like.*

The Pittsburgh Public Schools should want to be the school district where every household yearns to send its children. However, the team heard repeatedly that the system had low expectations for many students and that the district's programs and goals reflected those low expectations. District staff members were quite familiar with various "safe harbor" goals under *No Child Left Behind*, for instance, but were not focused on stretch goals that would demonstrate higher expectations for student achievement. The safe harbor goals represent the lowest possible rate of improvement to avoid sanctions under the federal law, but do not represent the level of progress that the district needs to make. Stretch goals, on the other hand, might include AP and advanced course participation rates, dual enrollment in college and high school courses, and college attendance rates. The district needs to be setting its sites on goals that far outstrip those articulated under safe harbor.

- 12. Consolidate the various planning documents required of schools into a single plan. Track performance by goal and monitor progress on a monthly basis and provide support when data indicate it is needed.*

Each school and various central-office departments develop and submit an improvement plan each year (School Improvement Plan, Central Office Improvement Plan). Schools also submit a Comprehensive Education Improvement Plan (CEIP) and a brief EPASS form outlining their strategies that fit under the district mission and goals. Schools that are performing poorly also have to fill out a second plan (Quality Review) required by state law.

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The staff members interviewed by the team expressed considerable frustration about the amount of paperwork involved in these plans and the amount of energy that was being devoted to what was seen as a compliance exercise. Staff members clearly did not see the plans as anything more than paper shuffling. In addition, it was clear that the planning system—however viewed—had a number of inefficiencies. For example, the team was told that schools received the goals that triggered the planning process some three weeks after the CEIP was due. The result was additional paperwork and additional frustration.

While the consolidation of plans may be handled by the state in its online planning process now under development, the district also needs to examine how it uses staff time in creating so many different planning documents. The district might consider assembling a task force of principals and central-office staff members to review paperwork and planning requirements to determine what can be eliminated, what can be combined, what can be streamlined, and what is really necessary for the improvement of student achievement.

For plans to be truly useful, they need to move from paper into practice. A process could be established for the principals to review progress on the plans every month and at least quarterly with their supervisors, providing evidence that progress is being made toward the plans' goals. Central monitoring by the deputy superintendent also needs to take place to ensure that the plans are guiding the work of departments and schools and are worth the time spent to develop them. Additionally, central monitoring of progress can alert staff to particular needs of a campus before the district receives the state testing results, in order to make the interventions timelier. Such monitoring also would allow the district to determine where strategies are producing student gains, so that school staff members can learn differing ways to improve student achievement from each other.

13. Align the district's strategic plan and financial resources with the district's priorities.

Most districts, including rapidly improving ones, are not necessarily very good at aligning their spending with their instructional priorities. However, emerging models do exist about how districts might do this. As long as the Pittsburgh school system is reinventing many of its current practices, it might consider revamping its budgeting practices so that they align better with instructional goals. The Council can assist the district in this effort.

C. Accountability

It is not sufficient for a school system, particularly an urban one, to have goals if no one is held accountable for attaining them. Urban school systems that have made substantial improvement have devised concrete methods for holding themselves responsible for student achievement, usually starting at the top of the system and working down through central-office staff and principals. Many successful districts also have instituted rewards for achieving their targets.

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Positive Findings

- The superintendent is on a performance contract tied to board goals to reform the district.
- The district is moving toward a performance-based personnel assessment and accountability system for principals, beginning with those in the accelerated academies.
- The district has brought principals and curriculum staff members together to conduct classroom observations and observe curriculum implementation in schools. The approach is not used frequently in other urban school systems, but the team thought that the approach had potential.
- A RAND Corporation study has provided the district with an alternative method—a value-added model—to assess school performance.
- The District Improvement Plan provides written directions to schools not attaining AYP on how to analyze Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) test data by subgroup as part of the planning process needed to complete the Comprehensive Education Improvement Plan (CEIP) {pages 9-10 of 102}. The District Improvement Plan also indicates how specified staff members are held accountable for meeting clear and measurable goals for improving student achievement.
- The District Improvement Plan requires elementary principals to form Progress Review Teams and conduct monthly reviews with executive directors of student progress. Middle school principals must conduct daily five-minute classroom observations and record their observations in journals. From December through February, principals also conduct school walkthroughs to review student work and provide written feedback to each teacher. High school principals are required to be in at least five classrooms a week and to conduct follow-up conversations with teachers.

Areas of Concern

- The district has no effective system for evaluating staff members' performance based on their attainment of established goals.
- No rewards or sanctions have been established for central-office or school staff members who meet or fail to meet student achievement goals.
- Multiple central-office departments apparently call meetings with school principals on short notice, pulling principals away from their schools and their responsibilities for monitoring instructional performance.

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- As with many other urban school systems, the district uses seniority—rather than performance or other criteria—to place teachers in schools.
- The preparation of student high school portfolios clearly requires a great deal of time for students and teachers, yet these portfolios appear to have no connection to performance on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). The portfolios may have become a compliance measure that has lost its meaning for students and teachers.

Recommendations

- 14. Revamp the central office so that roles and responsibilities of its staff are defined clearly in job descriptions and personnel evaluations of central-office and school staff are done annually and are linked to the job descriptions and the academic goals in the district's strategic plan.*

The new leadership team should review the current job descriptions of central-office staff members to clarify their roles and responsibilities for meeting district goals. Individuals should be taking greater and more explicit responsibility for achieving the goals in the strategic plan, not just writing the plan and other documents for compliance purposes. For some people, this will require a change in focus from producing lists of completed projects to focusing on the results of those projects. In addition, it was clear to the team that administrators often were locked into their respective silos and did not communicate effectively with each other to address systemwide issues. The Council would propose that the superintendent, deputy superintendent, and others require staff members to work in cross-functional teams—across silos—to force or encourage better communications and collaboration.

- 15. Review and amend the personnel evaluation system to give greater weight to student achievement and student achievement gains.*

Little mechanism exists in the Pittsburgh schools to evaluate personnel at any level in relation to the district's student achievement goals. This situation has created a system, as it has elsewhere, in which there is little accountability for results. Some staff members and teachers may argue that they work with students who are more difficult to educate or that teachers' work does not show up in student achievement. But, there are counter arguments. Value-added tools are getting better and better in their ability to assess whether classroom efforts are having an impact. These tools can now be pressed into action, starting at the senior staff level, to start holding people accountable, at least in part, for the impact of their work on student achievement. The responsibility of central-office administrators in providing the appropriate tools and data to teachers is pivotal, however, if teachers are to have the information they need to be efficient and effective in their classrooms.

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16. *Establish a system of rewards and sanctions for meeting or failing to meet district and school achievement goals. Give principals more latitude over staffing and budgeting if they are going to be held more accountable for results.*

Many faster-improving urban school districts across the country are establishing accountability systems that hold staff members responsible for student achievement. Such systems require careful thought and usually must begin at the senior staff level and work down. Moreover, these systems often give principals greater flexibility over staffing and spending in exchange for the additional accountability. The assumption here is that staff members cannot be held responsible for things over which they have little control.

17. *Develop specific criteria—in conjunction with principals—that clarify when central-office staff members can require principals to attend meetings out of their buildings with central-office staff.*

The team heard repeated complaints from principals that they were being called to meetings at excessive rates by various central-office staff members, sometimes on short notice, and sometimes in conflict with other meetings. These requests sometimes came several times each week. It is imperative, of course, that principals be in their buildings as much as possible if they are to be the instructional leaders that the district wants. The district's leadership might consider establishing a system that minimizes the time principals are called away from their buildings and for determining when central-office staff can summon principals.

The district might think of this issue in cost terms. Would principals spend the money equivalent to their time at central-office meetings if they had the discretion? Did the meetings provide principals with information so valuable that they would have been willing to spend the money to attend? If the answers are no, then the district ought to think about curtailing the time principals spend traipsing to district headquarters. Similarly, the department calling the meeting could ask if it would have spent money from its budget to pay for principals to attend the meeting and whether there could have been a better way to disseminate information. The district might consider making better use of e-mail, videoconferencing, or teleconferencing.

18. *Establish a monitoring system to track progress on the district's reforms, and communicate that progress more aggressively to the public.*

Several of the Council's districts have created exemplary systems by which they monitor progress on their reforms. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district is an example. It explicitly monitors program implementation and results, sends rapid response teams to schools when data indicate the need for intervention, and communicates progress toward the goals articulated in the strategic plan.

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D. Curriculum

Urban school districts that have made substantial improvements in student achievement have and use a curriculum that is focused, coherent, articulated clearly, and aligned with state standards. These districts also analyze the content of their instructional programs and textbooks and compare the outcomes to state standards and state assessment, filling any identified gaps with supplemental materials. The result is a complete package of texts, supplemental materials, and intervention strategies to bolster and accelerate student achievement.

Positive Findings

- The district has launched initiatives in reading and math that include 90-minute literacy and math blocks in the elementary grades, and double periods in both subjects—based on achievement levels—in middle and high schools.
- The district has pacing guides and syllabi available in reading and math.
- The district has placed math and science resources online using SchoolNet.
- The district made adjustments to its Scope and Sequence document to align with the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in middle school language arts and math. The math department also has prepared additional resources (Tool Kit) to fill in gaps with the state test.
- The district has attempted to fill gaps in phonics, vocabulary, and tested skills in its adopted reading program.
- The district has a diagnostic/progress monitoring system in early reading using DIBELS to regroup students for classroom instruction.
- The district is piloting a new math program alongside a program that has been in place for more than a decade without producing adequate gains in student achievement.
- In the “Literacy-Plus Overview Status Report,” dated August 2005, the district acknowledges the needs for a more substantial districtwide writing program, for high school reading reform, and for adequate time and resources to provide training for principals and teachers.

Areas of Concern

- The district’s reading adoption uses Harcourt *Trophies* in prekindergarten and kindergarten, but then switches to the older *Collections* series.

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- While the district has developed an extended-day Literacy-Plus program in grades 6-8 using Holt Reinhart's *Elements of Literature*, there is little indication of how the district links its use to the specific needs of low-performing students and the instruction students receive during the regular school day.
- The team saw little evidence of a districtwide instructional model. For example, some teachers use Direct Instruction, some use a Madeline Hunter approach, some use components of various constructivist models, and some use a balanced literacy approach.
- The team was told that students were not allowed to take home books for reading, but the group was not able to confirm this.
- Elementary school teachers have to juggle multiple documents in order to ascertain what Pittsburgh Public Schools students are expected to know and be able to do. There is no way to ensure vertical alignment districtwide across grade levels and no assurance for teachers that the curriculum is explicitly aligned with the PSSA.
- The team was concerned that terms such as “aligned” may be used imprecisely in the district. For example, the District Improvement Plan states that all adoptions and pacing guides are aligned with the Pennsylvania Academic Standards (p. 60 of 102). The team could not determine whether that statement referred to the materials’ covering the same general topics as the PSSA, or whether the materials were being compared for content, level of thinking, and development of concepts required by the state assessments. The document is not clear in this regard
- Curriculum tools were not developed according to consistent specifications within and across content areas. The reading unit material, which was furnished to the team, was formatted in columns listing the instructional activities within the 90-minute block, recommended resources for those activities, instructional activities beyond the 90 minutes, and their resources. The material had no references to the precise curriculum objectives being addressed. The math materials provided were hard copies of SchoolNet units, a very different format from the reading materials. Again, the objectives/learning goals were not linked explicitly to the curriculum, but these materials did provide frequent references to teaching students to explain their problem-solving process using the criteria for scoring well on the PSSA General Rubric.
- The variety of curriculum documents available to teachers is difficult to manage. When each content area uses different formats at the elementary school level, it complicates the work of a classroom teacher. When teachers must go to the curriculum, pacing guide, a separate PSSA alignment guide, and the textbook, it is likely that teachers will simply turn to the textbook to save time. In grades 3-5, teachers face the added complication of having too many supplementary reading materials to fill in gaps in the older reading texts.

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- The district’s staff is quite polarized about the use of the system’s two main math programs: *Everyday Mathematics* and Harcourt Brace’s math program. The district has not conducted any meaningful research on the relative effectiveness of the two programs.
- The math pilot program was implemented without an evaluation plan in place.
- Teachers, principals, and math staff members concur that the district’s main math program requires supplementation and, in some cases, resequencing.
- Many of the staff members interviewed by the team expressed the general belief that the math and reading curriculum is not aligned with the PSSA. In reviewing the materials provided, the Council’s Strategic Support Team did not find sufficient alignment with the PSSA to allay those concerns.
- The “CMS-Instructional Rubric” (a classroom observation system) furnished to the team uses instructional indicators to assess the quality of teaching that are virtually identical for both “Advanced” and “Proficient” ratings. Nothing in the rubric distinguishes the two levels, except for a five-minute warm up in mathematics—used to meet the “Advanced” rating.
- Some principals have opted out of using the pacing guides in some schools.

Recommendations

19. *Recommit the system to using a standardized, districtwide curriculum so that every classroom is focused on a common set of rigorous expectations for student learning and that the curriculum is aligned vertically and incorporates greater complexity and rigor across grade levels. This means steps should be taken to—*

- *Ensure that the district states a set of clear expectations for each grade level and content area that meet or exceed state requirements and are supported by adopted programs and textbooks.*
- *Clarify how teachers should tailor or adjust instruction to meet the expectations of the curriculum.*
- *Charge the instructional and professional development staff with demonstrating to principals and teachers that teaching the curriculum to mastery will ensure success at the next grade level and on the PSSA by showing connections explicitly in the pacing guides.*

The Strategic Support Team uses the term “curriculum” to refer to a written set of clear and specific expectations of what students will know and be able to do in each content area and grade level. The curriculum is the foundation for textbook adoption, professional development, and classroom support. It is deeply aligned with state

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standards and assessments, and is revisited annually using student performance results to ensure that all areas where student achievement is low are properly covered in classroom materials and whether professional development for teachers is needed. Low test scores are treated as an indication of weak curriculum or instructional alignment within a grade level. One possible explanation for reading and math performance impacting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status at secondary schools more greatly than at elementary schools is a lack of vertical alignment across grade levels, resulting in a poor foundation for more complex learning at higher grade levels. Students and teachers can be working very hard on areas that are not tested or are tested at a higher level of rigor. This does not mean that only tested areas should be taught, but rather that among all the teaching taking place in school, the district must ensure that content eligible for testing is taught.

The research conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools over the last several years suggests that when each school is free to define and teach its own curriculum, the system's direction and momentum can fracture. The result can be lower achievement when school systems have high mobility rates, as Pittsburgh's does. A more standardized program, on the other hand, can spur equity and boost the ability of the central office to provide greater focus and stronger technical assistance and professional development. There is no contradiction between high quality, which parents indicated they wanted, and flexibility, which most teachers said they wanted, and a more standardized instructional system.

Rather than just telling teachers that using the curriculum will lead to better scores on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), the district should be able to demonstrate how curriculum and instruction are linked. Otherwise, teachers rely unduly on just the textbook or test-prep materials. And while test prep can produce an immediate spiking of scores, it can undermine the development of "higher order" skills that students will need in the upper grades.

For many Pittsburgh teachers, the program or the textbooks used are synonymous with curriculum. The district should clarify the distinction between the two. There is no single textbook or program that will be aligned perfectly with Pennsylvania's or any other state's standards and assessment system. The best solution is to provide teachers with detailed information on where the program the district is using is strongly aligned with state standards and assessments and where and how it needs to be supplemented.

Right now, teachers have little to guide them on whether they are teaching at the right levels. For example, the "Wild Shots, They're My Life" unit in the reading program furnished to the team has a notation in red that appears when an activity presents a skill assessed on the state test. There is no indication, however, how the skill may be tested or the level of rigor expected. Consequently, the teacher has little way of knowing from the documents if the materials are sufficient or whether they should be supplemented with more rigorous activities.

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The mathematics materials furnished to the team include a separate document showing the alignment of the mathematics curriculum with PSSA assessment anchors and eligible content. Many *Everyday Mathematics* lessons correlate to several items eligible for testing, and sometimes a single lesson is meant to cover multiple content areas. Again, the pacing materials include no annotation or guidance to let teachers know that students engaging in the lessons will have sufficient preparation and practice to do well on the PSSA. This observation is not intended as an indictment of the materials, but rather as an indication of a lack of specific, explicit information about when to rely on the materials and when to supplement them.

20. *Consider extending the use of the Harcourt Trophies reading program through grade 5 or use another reading program, but be sure to implement it from grades pre-K-5. The district also should conduct comprehensive training for staff on how to use the new adoption in connection with the district's curriculum so that the phonics instruction that is currently located in the supplemental materials is found in the basic textbook.*

The district uses the newest edition of the Harcourt reading basal (*Trophies*) in its prekindergarten and kindergarten, but an older edition in grades 1-5. This practice has meant that the district has had to add phonics, vocabulary building, and other important skills as supplemental materials in the intermediate grade levels. The team admires the effort that this has taken, but is worried that so many supplements make the course too complicated to teach systematically. Such complex implementation can be uneven, resulting in gaps in student learning. Furthermore, the newer basal readers do not always feed logically into the older textbook series because the more recent materials are based on the latest reading research. Consequently, the Strategic Support Team recommends extending the current *Trophies* adoption to all the elementary grades pre-K-5 with the appropriate professional development or using another similar program in the pre-K-5 grades. The team recommends using a single program within the district both to facilitate support services and to minimize disruption when students transfer from school to school within the district.

21. *Conduct an external evaluation of both core math programs in use in the district to determine which one works better (i.e., produces the higher achievement), and then make a decision about implementing a single districtwide instructional math program. Specifically—*

- *Make sure that Everyday Math, while it is in use and being evaluated, is properly sequenced and aligned with the PSSA and that the program is taught to the mastery level.*
- *Make sure that Harcourt mathematics, while it is in use and being evaluated, is analyzed for any gaps with the PSSA, is supplemented if gaps are identified, and is sequenced properly and taught to the mastery level. Also, the district should include K-5 Harcourt mathematics in the pacing guide in addition to Everyday Mathematics.*

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The Strategic Support Team found that there was great deal of staff and teacher loyalty to specific math programs and approaches used in the Pittsburgh schools, but that the loyalty was not necessarily connected to whether the programs produced better results for students. For example, one camp believes strongly in *Everyday Mathematics* and another advocates with equal passion for *Harcourt*. Both programs have their strengths and weaknesses, and both have proven successful in other settings. However, neither group appears to be willing to examine the other program openly in terms of its ability to prepare students for the PSSA and for secondary-level instruction.

The truth is that there is no perfect program. To resolve this situation, the district is going to have to be clear—first—on what it wants its students to know and be able to do. (This should go beyond state requirements.) Then, each program needs to be analyzed and supplemented to fill any gaps between what it teaches and what the district/state is requiring on its standards and tests. Finally, each program needs to be evaluated by an independent group to see which program gets the better results. The deputy superintendent should use whatever consultants are necessary for the effort, but should select people who are familiar with both sets of materials without having loyalty to either one.

22. *Consolidate teaching tools (such as pacing guides, scope and sequence documents, and assessment materials) into a single document for each grade level/course to make it easier for teachers to use the district’s current materials. Combine the information into a pacing guide that performs the following functions—*

- *Ensures that students get an adequate chance to learn and review content prior to the administration of the Standards-Based Assessment (SBA) and Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). For instance, the team learned that “probability” is taught in the third grade after it is tested on the PSSA. A revised pacing guide would ensure that topics eligible for testing would have been introduced, practiced, and reviewed prior to the testing date. (The team was informed after its visit that these issues were being addressed, but team members wondered why they were not presented with evidence of the “fix” when they were in the district. Moreover, team members doubt that teachers have been made aware of attempts to address the problems.)*
- *Defines a specific period of time for the teaching of concepts, knowledge, and skills. (This would not be a rigid timeline, but would serve to guide teachers on which objectives are the most important for students to master and revisit, and when.)*
- *Provides time for reteaching as necessary*
- *Is realistic in terms of days available for instruction (recognizes holidays, snow days, testing days, etc.)*

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- *Spirals explicitly for the review of concepts, knowledge, and skills throughout the year*
- *Builds in reference to the materials teachers use to teach specified concepts*
- *Indicates how and when to supplement textbooks where they are weak or misaligned with state and/or local assessments, and*
- *Indicates how to assess student learning, including and going beyond state assessments*

It is essential that the district have a curriculum that drives the selection of textbooks and the nature of classroom teaching. Programs and curricula are not equivalent concepts, although some district staff members think that they are the same things. The district's curriculum should encompass all state standards and requirements, but should go beyond them if the city's children are to catch up with students elsewhere in the state, to have the preparation they need to participate in advanced coursework; and to have a chance to compete for admissions into postsecondary education and training programs. Every teacher should have access to the entire curriculum, and the curriculum's linkage to district-provided programs should be explicit, detailed, and stated unequivocally. Moreover, online versions of curriculum should be easy for teachers to use and to print out, if they wish.

Elementary school teachers currently have to manage multiple documents to ascertain what students are expected to know and be able to do. No clear, annual set of expectations exists to provide vertical alignment across elementary and secondary schools so that every teacher can be confident that his or her focus is on the right things. It is also not clear that some of the district's teaching tools use consistent specifications within and across content areas, making it more difficult for teachers to manage their very limited instructional time. According to the teachers' contract provided to the team, elementary teachers are assigned to teach students only six of eight periods, an allotment that translates into approximately four and one-half hours a day. It is critical that the district translates these time requirements into an actual instructional pacing system, so teachers are focusing on the most essential learning—or extend teaching time.

A pacing guide is a tool designed to support and guide teachers and administrators, and to ensure equity for all students and a foundation for future academic work. Creating a more comprehensive pacing system in every content area for each grade will enable teachers to be more confident that students changing schools will find continuity of instruction. Teachers, moreover, benefit by having more time to work on instructional quality rather than inventing a sequence of instruction independently or trying to determine how much weight to give each objective.

23. *Mandate the use of the new pacing guides districtwide, but build in an annual review/revision process that involves school personnel and data analysis.*

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The new pacing guides can take the place of multiple documents, but it is still important to build in a process by which teachers and others can revise the documents as they gain more experience with them and the district sees the results of its SBA and PSSA assessments. Poor performance on a particular area of the PSSA would suggest that the guides should be evaluated for when and how the content is placed into the teaching program, what materials are used to support it, what length of time should be used to teach and review concepts, whether additional professional development or coaching was required, and how errors in earlier grades might lead to difficulties in later grades. The district should allocate sufficient time and budget to conduct these reviews. Professional development then needs to follow the changes in the guides so that everyone is informed about how the instructional system is changing. Finally, the year following the revisions, a careful analysis should be made of whether the changes produced higher performance in the areas that were altered.

24. *Evaluate the district's varied high school reading programs for effectiveness in helping students perform successfully on the PSSA.*

The district requires a 90-minute reading intervention program for students scoring below the basic level of proficiency in reading, but staff members interviewed by the team do not perceive the programs selected to be effective in meeting student needs. The team could not find any evidence that the programs had actually been evaluated. The district should evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions on student achievement and take appropriate steps, depending on what the evaluations reveal. In addition, the central office should work with career and technology teachers to support the integration of vocational coursework into core academic instruction, not just remedial class work, to reinforce and build reading and writing skills.

25. *Establish a committee of teachers to review/revise the district's portfolio guidelines so that they better reflect the PSSA, are less onerous, and are more aligned with the curriculum.*

The district's high school writing portfolio appears to be very time-consuming and of dubious value to students or teachers. Teachers appear to spend considerable time preparing the portfolios for examination, but it was not clear to the Strategic Support Team exactly what value the district places on them. The team saw no direct connection between the writing exercises and the PSSA or to college-preparatory work. The portfolios had too many required samples and genres to give priority to the informational and research writing that dominate most adult writing. It was also not clear to the team how teachers had been involved in designing the guidelines or whether students who completed the portfolio were more ready for the PSSA or other competency measures.

26. *Ensure that there is a districtwide policy that allows students to take textbooks home.*

The Strategic Support Team heard from several sources that district students might not have access to textbooks at home. If it is district policy to check out books, the

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policy should be well known and used. If there is no such policy, the district should incorporate the requirement into policy. Students need access to textbooks for homework and study. Concerns about the budget impact of such a policy should be secondary but otherwise addressed.

27. *Evaluate the effectiveness of the district's writing program on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), SAT, etc., and use the results to address needs in this area.*

The district is justifiably worried about its writing efforts but has not done an analysis of what is working and what is not. The Strategic Support Team encourages the district to analyze how writing is taught in the district and what an analysis of writing results on the PSSA, AP, IB and district Standards-Based Assessment (SBA) exams can teach the district about what is working. The district should define what quality of writing it expects at each grade level based on state standards, develop a set of exemplars, determine if any of the district's efforts are producing such results, and then broaden those practices districtwide. If nothing in the district produces good results, then the Council could recommend a number of programs that—when accompanied by good professional development and coaching—have gotten results in other cities.

E. Professional Development/Teacher Quality

A common characteristic of many of the faster-improving urban school districts across the country is a high-quality and cohesive professional development program that is aligned closely with instructional offerings. These programs are often defined centrally, but built around the district's articulated curriculum, delivered uniformly across the district, and differentiated in ways that address the specific needs of teachers. These faster-improving districts also find ways to ensure that some of their better teachers are working in schools with the greatest needs.

Positive Findings

- All groups interviewed by the team mentioned that they want and need better and higher quality professional development.
- The district has designated two calendar days for districtwide professional development. The time, however, is not filled with a standard professional development program.
- The Department of Academic Services offers a plethora of professional development sessions in a variety of content areas during the school year.
- The Pittsburgh teachers' union also offers professional development sessions designed by the American Federation of Teachers.

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- New teachers are pulled out of their classrooms for literacy and math training. Their classes are covered by a core group of substitute teachers. New teachers receive on-site support from literacy coaches and math resource teachers. The substitute teachers, however, receive no special training.
- The district offers 29 class-hours of professional development in pre-K programming for both teachers and paraprofessionals. The training handles up to 200 participants at a time using Meisels' Early Screening Inventory, healthy child training, *Trophies* reading training, early intervention training, and High/Scope curriculum and assessment training.
- Twenty-nine literacy coaches are assigned to Reading First schools. Eight literacy coaches are funded through Title I, of whom two serve elementary schools and six serve middle schools. These Title I coaches report to the literacy program manager but do not have any reporting or accountability responsibility to individual principals. Nine high schools have used their own funds to hire on-site literacy coaches.
- Lead principals have participated in *Lenses on Learning* training to better understand good mathematics instruction.
- The district has provided professional development on the implementation of core instructional materials in literacy and math to teachers and has provided training to school-based personnel on the use of SchoolNet technology.

Areas of Concern

- District staff members indicate that they want professional development, but attendance at professional development sessions is low. This disconnect suggests that the professional development offered is not meeting the needs of participants or that teachers really do not want professional development, which is unlikely.
- The district does not measure the effects of the hundreds of sessions of professional development that it offers in terms of changes in classroom practice or in student achievement gains.
- The district is not using the data that it has on where student achievement is low to target or differentiate professional development. The result is poor linkages between professional development and the district's instructional goals, such as they are.
- The use of professional development time that has been placed into the school schedule is not monitored or evaluated for effectiveness.
- Data from a 2005 survey provided to the Strategic Support Team indicated that only 52 percent of principals responded that the school district did a good or

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excellent job of providing staff development opportunities for school administrators.¹¹

- No organized plan is in place for providing professional development to principals.
- No differentiated professional development for principals or teachers is available other than that for new teachers.
- The majority of professional development occurring in the district appears to involve disconnected and largely volunteer sessions that lack coherence or an overall strategy directed at the district's instructional goals.

Recommendations

28. *Develop a single, districtwide professional development plan that supports district and campus priorities.*

There is a serious “disconnect” between what the district says it wants in professional development and what it does about it. Currently, no plan is in place that addresses district priorities for professional development clearly or defines and differentiates it for the disparate audiences within the district. A single, districtwide plan should include the following—

- Professional development on the district's instructional priorities and goals, instructional models, pacing guides, and content.
- A component for new teachers (or teachers new to the district) on the district's vision and belief system, its curriculum and how to teach it, the implementation of district programs, and classroom management.
- Benchmarking data that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development program on classroom practice and student achievement gains.
- Student achievement data analyzed in a way that it can inform where and what professional development to offer. The plan should also articulate the types of knowledge or skills required to meet the needs identified in the data, and determine whether those skills are best learned by teachers in districtwide staff development or at the campus level. Finally, the plan should determine the most effective mode of delivery for the training and indicate how offerings are differentiated to meet the varied needs of principals and teachers.

¹¹ *Performance Study of the Administrative Operations and Expenditures of the Pittsburgh School District conducted by MGT of America* produced for the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, Final Report, June 2005, page 3-21.

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- A principals' academy to develop new leadership, mentor new principals, and enhance the skills of current principals. Focus areas should include instructional leadership, school management, and public relations. The district should consider using community partners as appropriate, (e.g., to share their expertise on conflict resolution, or time and fiscal resources management) and also should consider using experienced principals as mentors for new principals.
- An evaluation of the usefulness and effectiveness of the current on-site professional development period. Should the school system decide to keep this period, the district should help build capacity of the campus leadership to utilize the professional development period for grade-level planning, identification of instructional strategies to meet student needs, and analysis of student work.
- A strategy for having curriculum staff members provide training materials and support for principals and teachers to translate data into classroom practice.
- Coaching strategies and professional development for coaches and lead teachers that align with that provided to teachers.

29. Collaborate with the teachers' union to address district priorities in professional development.

The local teachers' union uses some of the professional development created by its national organization. The Strategic Support Team heard mixed reviews from teachers on both the union-developed and the district-developed professional development efforts. Since both are available to teachers, the central office ought to use the opportunity to collaborate on redesigning the entire effort to ensure that training aligns with state standards, is not duplicative, and is aimed at strategies to improve student achievement explicitly.

F. Reform Press

Urban school systems that are succeeding in improving student achievement are not waiting for their reforms to trickle down from the central office into the schools and classrooms. Instead, these faster-improving school districts have developed specific strategies to drive instructional reforms into schools and classrooms, and they create strategies to monitor the implementation of these reforms to ensure their integrity and comprehensiveness.

Positive Findings

- The superintendent is focused on reform.
- “Learning walks” provide a means to monitor implementation of reforms. Three retired principals do learning walks to flag schools for lead principals to revisit.

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- The district’s coaching model provides a means for on-site support for reforms, with 69 reading coaches, eight math resource teachers, and one math specialist.
- A district and school improvement planning process results in a number of products and reports—
 - The District Strategic Plan
 - The EPASS School Improvement Plan that lists a school’s strategies and resources needed to meet the three stated districtwide goals.
 - The Comprehensive Education Improvement Plan (CEIP), which does not have to roll up into the District Strategic Plan
 - The Quality Improvement Plan required by the state for low-performing schools
- The district has assigned a senior staff member to oversee the implementation of various *No Child Left Behind* efforts and the district’s supplemental service programs.

Areas of Concern

- The Strategic Support Team heard mixed reviews from those it interviewed about the quality and frequency of coaches’ classroom support.
- The planning process behind changing the district’s grade configurations to a K-8 structure is clearly not transparent or clear to many staff members whom the team interviewed.
- The link between the data generated by the learning walks and the district’s professional development system is not articulated or defined clearly. Also, limited data exists on the effects of the learning walks on classroom practice or student achievement.

Recommendations

30. *Evaluate the coaching model used by the district, the professional development coaches receive, and revise them accordingly.*

Coaching is used widely in urban school systems nationwide and can be a powerful tool for implementing professional development and monitoring classroom performance. The Strategic Support Team heard very different views about people’s experiences with coaches in Pittsburgh schools. Some teachers spoke highly of their coaches; others had not seen coaches in their classrooms. The district did not provide the team with information about how individual coach’s efforts were evaluated or

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whether student progress was expected as a result of the coaching. In general, however, coaches can be instrumental in implementing programs, monitoring practice, and documenting trends. They also can be critical in letting district leaders know if various parts of the instructional program are not working, which apparently is not occurring in Pittsburgh. Teachers in the district clearly distrust the coaching program and what it is intended to do. The result is that the program is undermined and is not as effective as it could be. The district should consider making the nonevaluative role of the coaches clear and ensuring that coaches have the skills to do their jobs and are evaluated accordingly.

31. Consider using federal Title I and Title II sources and foundation funding to hire more math coaches.

In the opinion of the team, the district does not have enough coaches to support the implementation of the math programs. Circulating eight math coaches to multiple schools across the district with no accountability for raising student achievement explicitly is unlikely to result in much permanent change in instruction. The district could consider prioritizing its needs and placing math coaches accordingly. If the district does not have the resources in its general fund to support more coaches, it might take a look at either foundation aid or the reconfiguration of Title I or Title II assistance to support additional math coaches assigned to specific schools—and then hold these coaches accountable for results.

Math scores for African-American and English language learner (ELL) students were unacceptably low on the PSSA, and scores at the high school level were low for all groups. The Strategic Support Team urges the district to take action to align classroom instruction in math across grade levels (K-12) and ensure that PSSA-tested concepts are featured prominently in the curriculum and supported with on-site math coaching.

G. Data, Assessment, and Evaluation

One of the most noticeable features of urban school systems that are seeing significant improvements in student achievement involves the regular assessment of student progress and the use of data to decide on the nature and placement of intervention strategies before the end of each school year, when it is too late. Data also are used in more effective districts to shape and define their professional development strategies. Moreover, these districts use data to monitor school and district progress and hold people accountable for results.

Positive Findings

- Pittsburgh Public Schools uses locally developed quarterly benchmark tests with both multiple choice and open-ended questions, and scoring rubrics.

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- The district has a real-time data warehouse (RTI) that has the potential to assist the district in maintaining and analyzing data.
- RTI is producing 45 out of 72 planned preprogrammed reports on student achievement for school use, so the system is moving towards making data more accessible to schools. Use of the reports is uncertain at this point.
- Principals are aware of and familiar with Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data and safe harbor requirements under *No Child Left Behind*.
- The district has developed a useful tool to measure student progress on graduation requirements and to alert staff members about high school students who are not on track to graduate.
- The hard copy of a September 20, 2005, PowerPoint presentation furnished to the team indicates that staff has the capability to translate student achievement data into graphics for use at the school level to inform instructional practice. In this example, a slide clearly illustrates data on student and subgroup performance, and AYP status.

Areas of Concern

- Data on student achievement broken down in a variety of ways are not readily accessible to district decision-makers. In response to requests, for instance, district Advanced Placement (AP) and AYP data took considerable time to generate.
- No regular procedure exists for ensuring the accuracy of data elements in the data warehouse.
- Teachers and principals have not yet been trained on using the RTI.
- The district has not conducted any detailed studies to see if the Standards-Based Assessment (SBA) has predictive validity with the PSSA.
- The district does not have a systematic process, method or schedule by which it evaluates its programs to see if they work, need modification, or should be terminated.
- The data reports given to school board members need to contain more analysis and conclusions rather than being simple compilations of data. The board could make better decisions about policy and programs with some clear conclusions from staff about what the data are saying. The board does not have to agree with staff members, but it should have more detailed analysis of the results.

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Recommendations

32. *Implement procedures to conduct regular data checks, including error checking at data entry points. The process should include an identified person or process responsible for checking data accuracy (e.g., verification of data, random sample checks of data).*

There are three main areas of concern about whether the district's data are useful: data accuracy, reports that meet the needs of end users, and translating data into answers to questions that provide support for decision-making. There does not appear to be a real procedure in the district for ensuring the accuracy of data elements in the data warehouse. Data are entered by so many staff members in multiple locations that the system invites errors. There are software systems available that can check for data parameters. And staff and procedures could be established to ensure data accuracy. School districts such as that in Broward County (Fla.) could assist with examples.

33. *Execute queries to identify and address data irregularities.*

The district needs to ensure that it is alert to data irregularities so that they can be addressed. For example, unusually high or unusually low numbers in a data field may indicate a problem. Since the district is moving to data-driven decision-making, it is essential that the data be accurate and that the public be assured that data are accurate.

34. *Work with user groups (e.g., school leaders, central-office administrators, and teachers) to identify the types and formats of data necessary to facilitate decision-making and planning. This process should be reviewed annually to determine whether the content and formats meet end-user needs.*

For data to be useful, they must be presented in ways that serve the end user; must be perceived by the user as accurate; and should have included the end user in the design and formatting. The number of reports is not as important as the type. Central-office staff members and school-based staff should be involved in helping to translate the data into action, for the effectiveness of the data systems ultimately lies in their ability to provide end users with immediate, accurate information that guides decision-making.

35. *Incorporate the content and use of the Real Time Information System (RTI) into the district's professional development programs. Training should include interpretation of data.*

The school district needs to set up a way for users to know how to access and interpret the information contained in the data system and know how to use that data. The district's RTI is not being rolled out for classroom use, however. It appeared to the team that the tool was being developed more for administrative purposes and was being perceived by teachers as having a regulatory or punitive purpose. Professional

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development on how to access and use the data is essential if a data-driven system is going to work.

36. *Conduct a study of the predictive validity of the Standards-Based Assessments (SBA) to forecast performance on PSSA.*

As far as the team could determine, no formal study has been conducted to see if the locally developed SBA was a valid predictor of performance on the PSSA. A student passing the SBA should be proficient or advanced on the PSSA, if the SBA is aligned with the knowledge and skills measured on the PSSA. The validity study should also be done in a way to determine if various parts or items on the SBA have more or less validity than other parts.

37. *Consider purchasing an item bank aligned with the Pennsylvania standards and the PSSA so that local assessments can be customized to match the Pittsburgh scope and sequence document.*

If the SBA is not aligned with or predictive of the PSSA, the district has two main choices. It can develop additional test items on its own to ensure that these assessments are aligned better, or the district can attempt to identify and purchase a bank of test items. If the district decides to turn to a commercial product, the Strategic Support Team urges the district to check the contents in the item bank carefully. Many publishers claim that their item banks are aligned with state tests, but closer inspection will often determine that the alignment is superficial and may not mean content alignment or similarity of question format. The purpose of short-cycle testing is for teachers and district administrators to be able to take action if students are not mastering the concepts and skills they should be learning throughout the year. In addition, testing should only be done as the district's pacing guides determine that skills have been introduced and taught. Broad-based failure on specified items or strands suggests that the district needs to examine its curriculum, pacing guides, instructional delivery, or professional development. Failure should trigger additional work on the relevant concepts to ensure mastery as students continue through the curriculum.

38. *Plan and implement a systematic process that will provide the school board and other audiences with presentations and reports that show progress on district instructional priorities, including student achievement, and implications for decision-making and policy.*

The research department should be charged with providing data analyses that answer specific questions for the school board, the superintendent, or other audiences. The reports should include implications for decision-making.

39. *Build an evaluation design into every instructional initiative that the district launches. The evaluations should go beyond compliance or program implementation to include measurement of impact on district goals and change in classroom practice.*

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Program evaluation provides decision-makers with vital information on the effectiveness and cost-benefit of district initiatives, but the Pittsburgh school district appears to have undertaken projects and initiatives without first deciding on how the programs will be assessed. For example, the district began a math pilot program last summer, but the program's evaluation was still being designed when the team visited in November. The integrity of the evaluation has now been compromised, and the results will be subject to greater challenge.

40. Charge the cabinet with establishing a three-year calendar for the regular evaluation of district programs, initiatives, and ongoing data collection and analysis. The calendar should include budget resources to conduct the assessments.

The Strategic Support Team has made this recommendation because the school district does not have a culture or schedule by which its initiatives are evaluated automatically. The calendar should place priority on programs in the core academic areas first. The Pittsburgh school district is fortunate to be located in an area boasting considerable university and research expertise that the district could tap, rather than having to rely solely on its own in-house capacity.

H. Early Childhood Education and Elementary Schools

It is often difficult for an urban school district to improve everything at the same time. The districts experiencing success in improving student achievement did not take on the entire system at once. Instead, these districts started their reforms at the early elementary grades and worked up to the middle and high school grades, or they differentiated and sequenced their reforms so that the improvements had an internal logic.

Positive Findings

- The Pittsburgh school district is the Head Start provider for the city and also serves non-Head Start pre-K students with state and grant funds.
- The district has begun to collaborate with private pre-K providers (14 so far) to write goals and support the Keystone STARS initiative with curriculum, assessments, professional development, and resources. The effort is part of a statewide "Partnership for Quality Pre-K" initiative to coordinate multiple child-care providers.
- Sixty percent of prekindergarten teachers in the district have Early Childhood certification. Beginning in the upcoming school year, all new hires will have Early Childhood certification.
- There are 10 early childhood coaches in the district conducting classroom observations.

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- The district is sponsoring a survey of kindergarten teachers' perceptions of students who have participated in district pre-K programs.
- The RAND Corporation is investigating alternative ways to identify students for the district's gifted and talented programs.

Areas of Concern

- The pull-out procedures in the gifted and talented program remove students from classroom instruction for a full day each week. The program's curriculum also may not be aligned with state standards and has not been evaluated for effectiveness.
- Teachers working with gifted and talented students in the regular classroom are not required to have special training or certification for instructing these students.
- Testing for the gifted and talented program is done only by referral or request.
- African-American students are grossly underrepresented in the district's gifted and talented programs, and there is a glaring overidentification of African-American males in special education. According to data furnished by the district to the team, African-American students comprised more than 58 percent of district enrollment, but only 856 students in the gifted and talented program were African-American (29.7 percent of the 3,031 students). Similar patterns were also seen in Advanced Placement (AP) course participation (see Chapter I.) On the other hand, African-Americans make up 63.5 percent of students identified as students with exceptionalities (special education). Of the 7,139 identified students with exceptionalities listed on a May 2005 table furnished by the Pittsburgh Public Schools, more than 41 percent were African-American males.

Recommendations

- 41. Consider using some of the district's closed school buildings as early childhood centers in different sections of the city.*
- 42. Charge the leadership of the gifted and talented program with redesigning the effort to include—*
 - *A study of the status of the gifted and talented program and various parent and teacher concerns about the program.* The district might form a task force reporting to the deputy superintendent to evaluate the current program, including—
 - a. The identification process, with particular attention to identification criteria, diagnostic instruments, and overidentification

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- b. Academic results
 - c. Linkage of the pull-out program to coursework success
 - d. Reactions of students to the pull-out program and the work they missed in the regular classroom
 - e. Training level of teachers who work with gifted students
 - f. Parent perceptions of the program
- *An investigation of successful gifted programs in other urban school systems (such as those in Norfolk, Va., and Columbus, Ohio)*
 - *A universal screening/identification system that is less culturally biased. (The district might consider using the Naglieri or other tests to ensure that the Pittsburgh school district is more equitably identifying its gifted and talented students)*
 - *The phaseout of the pull-out program, replacing it with a campus-based program organized around a curriculum for high-ability learners*
 - *The reallocation of funding to achieve a better program design and implementation*
 - *Curriculum extensions that are designed explicitly to address the needs of gifted students*
 - *The conduct of a regular program evaluation*

In the program's current configuration, the district requires parents or staff members to take an active role in having a child tested for participation. At the elementary school level, participation means a pull-out program one day a week. Requiring students to miss class time often means that students are missing foundation material introduced that day. It was not clear to the team that the pull-out model gives the participating students an enriching enough experience to offset the concepts they may be missing that day in the regular classroom. There did not appear to be a connection between the concepts taught in the pull-out program and the pacing guides, so it was impossible to tell what was missed—or what was gained.

Members of the Strategic Support Team also wondered if Pittsburgh, with its high poverty levels, might be missing some gifted and talented students due to its testing and identification methodology. When the team looked at the number of students identified per school, the numbers often did not jibe. A child of poverty, for instance, may not have the vocabulary to score in the 90th-percentile required for placement, but may indeed be gifted. The district makes some accommodations in that regard,

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but it has little way of knowing whether talented students have slipped through the cracks. Instead, the system appears to adhere mainly to state requirements, rather than developing students who might be able to eventually take Advanced Placement courses in high school if given a strong elementary and middle school foundation. By adhering so closely to the Pennsylvania definition of giftedness, the district may be missing talented students who could accelerate their learning and attain much higher levels of achievement.

There was also little apparent effort to provide special training for teachers who work with gifted students throughout the week.

43. Develop a training/certification program for teachers of high-ability students, including training on—

- *The nature of giftedness*
- *Identification of gifted students*
- *Strategies for teaching high-ability learners*

The Council's team also recommends that all teachers learn to use strategies successful with high-ability learners as part of teachers' ongoing professional development.

44. Develop a specific set of goals to increase the number and types of students participating in gifted and advanced programs in the district.

Students of poverty may lack the verbal skills to be identified as gifted, but such skills can be developed in students. Even if a child in a talented pool does not attain gifted levels, that child may be capable of taking advanced courses with the instructional proper background early in his or her academic career.

I. Middle & High Schools

While many urban school systems that are seeing gains in student performance focus initially on their elementary schools, they do not ignore their middle and high schools. There is no national consensus on how to improve high schools, particularly in the nation's urban school districts, but the faster-moving districts have put a number of strategies in place to ensure that students who did not learn the basic skills in elementary school do so before they graduate.

Positive Findings

- At least one Advanced Placement (AP) course is offered in every high school.

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- High schools offer double periods for students scoring below the basic level of proficiency to provide intervention and allow these students the chance to catch up with age peers.
- Nova Net is used for credit recovery.
- The district is writing end-of-course tests for core high school courses.
- The Center for Advanced Studies (CAS) program is available to all gifted and talented students.
- Extended-day and extended-year programs are available at the high school level.
- The district offers extensive magnet, International Baccalaureate (IB), and Advanced Placement (AP) programs.

Areas of Concern

- Pittsburgh's District Improvement Plan has a section on career development, which calls for career and technology teachers to integrate math and reading in their content areas. But the plan does not say how this step will be accomplished, monitored, or evaluated.
- Individuals interviewed by the team indicated that students often came to high school without necessary academic skills. Interviewees did not perceive the reading interventions at the high school level as being effective in meeting student needs.
- Data using state procedures may not reflect the actual dropout and graduation rates in the district.
- Participation rates are low in college readiness and advanced placement tests such as the ACT, SAT, AP, and International Baccalaureate, as shown in Chapter I. SAT testing had the greatest number of students participating (approximately 1,200 students), but only 300 students took AP exams and 61 percent of those students scored a 3 or higher.
- The Pittsburgh school district's new leadership is eager to begin high school reforms, but needs to ensure that changes are not simply structural.

Recommendations

45. Charge the instructional unit with developing a mechanism for elementary, middle, and high school personnel to collaborate on the vertical alignment of their instructional efforts to reduce the need for remediation at the upper grades.

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High schools are receiving students who are unprepared for high school work. The Strategic Support Team recommends that the district not wait until students are entering ninth grade to summon serious interventions. The district needs to begin developing clear expectations for what concepts and skills students need to master at each grade level in each content area, and needs to develop a clear set of intervention strategies for when students begin to fall behind. The district might consider a specific summer program for incoming ninth-graders to bridge gaps in academic readiness for high school courses and build student engagement, but the district also needs to marshal its best expertise across grade spans to ensure that the instructional programs are aligned vertically.

46. *Establish a set of pre-Advanced Placement (AP) courses at the sixth-grade level and plan for AP or International Baccalaureate (IB) course offerings and expansions at every high school.*

In order to expand AP offerings in high school and prepare students for those classes, the district might consider designing pre-AP courses beginning in the sixth grade. The team recommends that advanced courses and exams at the twelfth-grade level be examined for their concepts, skills, thinking strategies, and rigor. These courses then could be “back-mapped” down to the sixth grade in core courses. Further, the district should consider common districtwide end-of-course exams in core subjects to focus attention on course rigor and high student performance.

47. *In planning high school reforms, use measurable indicators—such as dropout, attendance, course enrollment, successful course completion, and high school graduation rates, as well as end-of-course examination results, etc., — to assess progress on these reforms, rather than measures of structural change. The focus should be on what is taught (the curriculum), how it is taught (instruction), how students are engaged in rigorous, meaningful learning, how students are treated as individuals to attain academic success, and how learning is measured (assessment).*

Early results of the emerging research on high school reform show improvement in affective areas and some indicators of “holding power,” but little improvement in student achievement. The district’s leadership might consider sending its instructional staff to a special meeting that the Council will hold this summer on course rigor and high school reform.

I. Low-Performing Schools

Urban school systems that are seeing substantial improvement in student performance usually have a targeted strategy to intervene in and increase achievement in their lowest-performing schools. Such strategies may vary from city to city, but they share a number of common elements and are almost always over and above what is done in other types of schools in the district.

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Positive Findings

- All low-performing schools in the district have school improvement plans. The district also has adopted explicit intervention programs in reading and math.
- Four lead principals and contracted retired administrators conduct learning walks and recommend support and services for principals and schools that have low student achievement.
- The district gives schools priority in receiving coaching and additional monetary resources based on failing to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status under *No Child Left Behind*.
- The district utilizes part of its \$16 million Reading First grant to provide K-3 literacy coaches.

Areas of Concern

- Individuals interviewed by the team indicated that staff members in low-performing schools were highly mobile and that these schools often failed to attract the highest performing teachers. The district could not provide the Strategic Support Team with data on the turnover rates and qualifications of teachers in the lowest-performing schools.
- The approximately 44 percent mobility rate impacts reform planning and classroom instruction.
- It is unclear how the results of the learning walks are used systematically to improve instruction, inform professional development, examine the use of the district curriculum, or improve student achievement.
- Coaches and other resources may be removed prematurely from low-performing schools when improvements are made, without taking the necessary time to build the capacity of the staff to sustain growth in student achievement.
- Interviewees perceive a lack of discipline in the schools. A 2005 survey supports this perception. In response to a survey item stating that Pittsburgh schools handle misbehavior problems effectively, only 26 percent of teachers, 68 percent of principals, and 31 percent of central-office administrators agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.¹² Character education is featured in the District's Strategic Plan, yet discipline issues are still an often-voiced concern.

¹² *Performance Study of the Administrative Operations and Expenditures of the Pittsburgh School District* conducted by MGT of America produced for the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, Final Report, June 2005, page 12-4. This same report commends recent improvements in management and in campus monitoring using video cameras at two-thirds of all secondary schools and metal detectors at all middle and high schools.

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- Parents expressed concerns about the proposed K-8 structural configuration, particularly fearing that older students would intimidate and bully younger students.
- The team heard reports of people entering school buildings without proper identification (e.g., personnel sent by the central office without any communication with the building administrator).

Recommendations

48. *Develop financial and other incentives to attract high-quality teachers and principals to low-performing schools and to retain them in these schools.*

Faster-improving school districts often have an explicit means of attending to the challenges faced by its lowest-performing schools. The Strategic Support Team suggests that the district provide additional incentives to attract its best teachers to its low-performing schools. Examples of how this could be done are found in the Cincinnati and New York City school districts.

49. *Consider working with the union when contract negotiations reopen to allow the district greater discretion to place teachers on the basis of quality, rather seniority.*

Seniority appears to be the criteria most used to place teachers at selected schools in Pittsburgh. This practice can result in some of the district's highest quality teachers selecting the schools that need their talents the least. The district might propose a set of incentives, such as extra pay or reduced class load, for its most experienced teachers to work in its most challenged schools, a strategy that has been accepted by AFT-affiliated teachers' unions in other big-city school districts.

50. *Maintain support of low-performing schools until capacity is established.*

The team was told that low-performing schools lose coaching and support as soon as they begin making progress. This strategy leaves these schools vulnerable to falling back into low performance. The team recommends that the district phase out its resources in a more graduated process so that the schools have additional time to build internal capacity and lift the campus out of low performance permanently. Coaching and monetary resources are only two areas of consideration. Others might include—

- a. Administrative support
- b. Lowering the teacher/student ratio
- c. Support to English language learners and exceptional children
- d. Support for new teachers
- e. Financial incentives to teach in the more challenging schools
- f. Extra instructional materials
- g. Computer usage

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- h. Library books
- i. Co-curricular programs

51. Ensure that the district's supplemental services program meets No Child Left Behind requirements.

The Pittsburgh public school system is calling for all supplemental services to meet district requirements, but it was not clear to the team that this process is in compliance with federal law. The district needs to make sure that the law is followed as district requirements are being articulated. The Council can help in determining whether the district's federal programs are consistent with federal law.

52. Ensure that learning walks or other forms of in-class monitoring support district priorities, are clearly understood by all stakeholders, and are used to inform school and district action.

Chapter 3. Conclusions

The Pittsburgh public school system is at an important crossroads. It has hired new, dynamic leadership eager to make fundamental changes and boost the ability of the district to attract and retain students. However, the school system's student achievement scores are consistently lower than are statewide averages and these scores demonstrate an unyielding gap between subgroups. Falling enrollment, reduced income, and budget shortfalls also challenge the Pittsburgh public school district. And the district has created a culture that accepts small, incremental growth in student performance.

The chief priorities of the new superintendent are to challenge the status quo, confront the budget deficit by making hard choices, strive to create a new culture that is data-driven (in fact rather than by slogan), and build a sense of urgency around the improvement of student achievement. To do so, however, will require skillful and sustained two-way communications with the public and staff. Using data to improve student achievement levels also will require a data warehouse that contains the type of data needed to determine how well the district is meeting its goals and evaluation reports that focus on the district's main instructional initiatives. Administrators and teachers must have the knowledge and skills to access and use the data to inform and improve their work with students.

Superintendent Mark Roosevelt asked the Council of the Great City Schools to review the district's efforts to improve student achievement and propose ways to accelerate performance. The Council assembled a Strategic Support Team with senior managers with strong records of effective practice in other major urban school districts that have struggled with many of the same issues that Pittsburgh faces. Council staff members specializing in student achievement accompanied the team.

When the team arrived in November 2005, the district was in the midst of closing schools based on performance data provided in a RAND study. Many members of the community were extremely concerned about some of the recommended school closings and raised serious safety issues about proposed moves of student populations to different school sites and configurations. As with all major changes, stakeholders need clear communication that their concerns have been acted upon, or have been heard in advance of announcements, if the leadership is to have any hope of regaining public confidence.

The Council's team found that the district had some elements that one sees in faster-moving districts, such as systemwide programs in reading and math, but the team also saw that many district staff members did not believe those programs were preparing students for state tests. The district also had a coaching model in place, particularly in Reading First schools, to support teachers as they are implementing research-based instruction. The district has made substantial strides in its early childhood program as well. Moreover, the district provides double blocks of instructional time for students in need of remediation at the secondary level and has adopted interventions in reading and

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math for after-school programs. Recognizing the importance of making data-driven decisions, the district also has been working on a data warehouse.

While acknowledging such positive developments, the Council's instructional team also made a number of recommendations in this report to strengthen and focus some of the superintendent's priorities, as well as to augment reforms that he already has begun. For example, some of the team's proposals were directed at setting measurable targets by subgroup that go beyond *No Child Left Behind* requirements. The team also made recommendations about the district's reading adoption and math program. The team described a new approach to the district's pacing guides that it believes would provide for more instructional consistency, could guide classroom work, build in concept reviews, and better align instruction with the curriculum and state assessments, and prepare students for the next grade level and its required testing. The team also made a series of recommendations to strengthen professional development. And the team suggested additional steps toward more accurate data on which to make instructional and program decisions. Finally, the team made a number of recommendations on the district's program for gifted and talented students.

As the district revamps its strategic direction, reorganizes its staff and schools, and builds a sense of urgency for the work ahead, the Council offers a note of caution. The many changes being pursued aggressively by the leadership may stretch staff too thinly and may risk the appearance of incoherence among those affected by the changes. It is important for the district to take the time to develop an organizing vision and rationale that unifies all of the changes.

The Council urges the district leadership to avoid the temptation to focus on structural changes rather than on the levers that could effect student achievement positively. The package of reforms needs to be rolled out in a coherent manner that the public and staff can understand and see how the changes fit together on behalf of greater student achievement. The staff and the teachers also need time to revamp their practices, gain new skills and knowledge, and develop new attitudes and expectations if the leadership's reforms are to take root and be sustained over a prolonged period. Time will also be needed for the public to develop some sense of ownership and support for the reforms. These points do not constitute an argument to slow down or to dampen the leadership's sense of urgency. Urgency is called for now more than ever. But these points do argue for taking the time to think through the reforms in a way that assures that they mesh seamlessly together, that unintended consequences are not created, and that the skills necessary to implement the reforms correctly are built.

To accomplish the changes necessary to boost student achievement, central-office staff will need to take responsibility for improving the academic performance in ways that they have not done before. Redefining goals, roles, and responsibilities, and reshaping how people are held responsible for the results will help. There are any numbers of ways to accomplish what the Council's Strategic Support Team has laid out in this document, but we think that the district has a better chance of succeeding doing much of what is proposed here. The Council sees no reason that Pittsburgh Public

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Schools cannot be the best urban school district in America if it focuses more on achievement.

APPENDIX A. BENCHMARKING PITTSBURGH

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APPENDIX A. BENCHMARKING PITTSBURGH

The chart below presents the average scores of the curriculum and instructional Strategic Support Team on a rating scale developed by the Council of the Great City Schools to benchmark school districts against the practices of faster-improving urban school systems on areas that the organization's research shows are instrumental in boosting student achievement districtwide. Scores range from 1.0 (lowest) to 5.0 (highest).

Political Preconditions							
Setting a Vision							District Score
1. Board has not articulated a clear direction for the future of the district.	1	2	3	4	5	Board articulates a vision around where it wants the district to go.	2.25
2. Board has multiple objectives that compete with improved achievement.	1	2	3	4	5	Board sets student achievement as a clear, top priority and uses this to guide decisions.	2
3. Board shows no sense of urgency for improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	Board proclaims urgency for raising student achievement and establishes a "no excuses" attitude.	2.25
School Board							
4. Board is fractured, and most decisions are made on split votes.	1	2	3	4	5	Board has a stable working majority on most issues.	1
5. Board is involved in administrative and operational issues of the district.	1	2	3	4	5	Board is focused on policymaking and lets superintendent handle policy implementation and administration.	1.5
6. Board devotes most of its time discussing nonacademic issues.	1	2	3	4	5	Board devotes most of its time monitoring academic progress of district.	2.3
Superintendent							
7. Board selects superintendent because he/she had success elsewhere and brings own vision about how to succeed.	1	2	3	4	5	Board selects superintendent because of his /her commitment to pursue board's vision and priorities.	3.3

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8. Board has nebulous goals for superintendent and has no specific provisions for holding him/her accountable.	1	2	3	4	5	Board sets initial goals for superintendent and holds him/her accountable for making progress on them. Superintendent welcomes the accountability.	3.8
9. Board and superintendent are not in accord about the direction of the school district.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent refine district goals jointly and are in agreement about them.	3.3
10. Board evaluates superintendent mostly on administrative operations.	1	2	3	4	5	Board evaluates superintendent mostly on the progress the district is making on student achievement.	3.5
11. Board and superintendent experience high rates of turnover.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent have stable and lengthy relationship as the district improves.	1.8
Average: Political Preconditions							2.5
Diagnosing Situation							
12. Board and superintendent conduct no assessment of the district's challenges, conduct a general assessment, or use an assessment brought to the district by the superintendent.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent jointly analyze specific local factors affecting student achievement that are under the control of the district.	2.8
13. District leadership does not consider strategies that are being successful in other cities.	1	2	3	4	5	District leadership spends time and effort seeking out evidence of what works in other cities.	2.8
Making Plans							
14. Board and superintendent have no specific plan for raising student achievement or plan lacks details and tactics.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent develop a detailed blueprint for raising student achievement.	2.8
15. Board endorses superintendent's plan but has little role in	1	2	3	4	5	Board is involved actively in crafting strategic plan and has a strong interest in its	3.0

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crafting it.						implementation and success.	
Selling Reform							
16. Board and/or superintendent develop reform plan on their own.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent meet with community leaders and listen to them as plan is being developed.	3.0
17. Superintendent takes the lead in selling the reform plan, but board members are only involved sporadically.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent work jointly to sell the reform plan to key community stakeholders.	3.3
18. Board and/or superintendent moves forward with reform plan without community input.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent garner community support before moving forward with plan.	3.5
Average: Strategic Planning							3.0
Administrative and Operational Foundations							
Setting Goals							
19. District lacks specific systemwide academic goals or timelines for meeting goals.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent translate the reform plan into “SMART” goals– S tretching, M easurable, A spirin G , R igorous, and with T imelines.	2.3
20. District’s goals lack explicit targets for academic performance of subgroups.	1	2	3	4	5	Districtwide goals have specific targets for improving the academic performance of subgroups.	3.0
21. District does not have school-by-school goals or goals do not align with systemwide targets.	1	2	3	4	5	Districtwide goals have been translated into specific school-by-school targets for principals.	3.3
22. School-by-school goals lack specificity and/or do not have targets for subgroups.	1	2	3	4	5	School-by-school goals are specific and have explicit targets for subgroups.	2.5
23. “School Improvement Plans” do not contain school and subgroup targets.	1	2	3	4	5	School-specific goals, including subgroup targets, appear in “School Improvement Plans.”	4.0
24. District’s work seems fractured or distracted by noninstructional priorities.	1	2	3	4	5	District appears to be focused relentlessly on improving student achievement.	2.5

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Being Accountable							
25. Central-office staff members have nebulous goals or no goals that are tied to districtwide student performance.	1	2	3	4	5	Central-office staff members have specific performance goals tied to districtwide targets.	2.5
26. District has no formal mechanism for holding senior staff accountable for student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5	District has a way (e.g., performance contracts) to hold senior staff accountable for district results.	2.0
27. School board can protect favored senior staff without regard to districtwide progress.	1	2	3	4	5	Superintendent evaluates senior staff based in part on progress on districtwide goals.	2.3
28. Principals are evaluated mostly on administrative performance.	1	2	3	4	5	Principals are evaluated on their progress in meeting their school's goals and targets.	1.8
29. School board and/or constituent groups protect principals when progress is not made.	1	2	3	4	5	Superintendent can remove or transfer principals for lack of progress on meeting school goals.	2.7
30. District does not recognize staff or principals when goals are attained.	1	2	3	4	5	District has a well-publicized system to recognize staff or principals when goals are attained.	2.3
Operating Smoothly							
31. Central office is generally seen as focused on compliance and rule-setting.	1	2	3	4	5	Central office is generally seen as working to lead and support schools in meeting goals.	1.8
32. Noninstructional operations are seen as a barrier to meeting academic goals.	1	2	3	4	5	Noninstructional operations generally work to support the district's academic goals.	3.0
33. Noninstructional staff is seen as remote and unresponsive to immediate needs of schools.	1	2	3	4	5	Noninstructional operations staff is seen as responsive to the immediate needs of schools.	3.0
34. Noninstructional staff members are often	1	2	3	4	5	Superintendent is able to hire and place	2.3

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promoted because of longevity or contacts.						noninstructional staff members because of their expertise.	
Finding Funds							
35. District has little way to fund reforms that it is pursuing.	1	2	3	4	5	District identifies how it will fund reforms by moving monies internally or through external sources.	3.3
36. District pursues and/or accepts funds without regard to their relationship to plan.	1	2	3	4	5	District pursues and accepts funds that are tied explicitly to strategic plan, reforms, and priorities.	4.0
37. District is not moving funds into its instructional priorities.	1	2	3	4	5	District is moving funds into instructional priorities.	3.7
38. District has no concerted effort to build public confidence or attract external funds to support district priorities	1	2	3	4	5	District is working to build public confidence for reforms in order to attract new funds.	3.3
39. District has a reputation for management and fiscal inefficiency.						District is working to improve operations and financial standing.	2.5
Average: Administrative and Operational Foundations							2.8
Programmatic Strategies							
Unifying Curriculum							
40. District permits schools to choose their own programs in reading and math.	1	2	3	4	5	District picks a uniform program in reading and math at lower grades or uses an overarching framework for its instructional system.	3.0
41. District has a multiplicity of reading and math programs in its schools.	1	2	3	4	5	District uses a single program or framework for teaching reading and math at the lower grades.	3.0
42. District has not analyzed and filled the gaps between its program and state standards and tests.	1	2	3	4	5	District's reading and math program has been aligned explicitly with state standards and assessments.	2.3
43. District reading and math instruction is not aligned vertically or is aligned by grade bands.	1	2	3	4	5	District's reading and math program or curriculum is aligned grade-to-grade.	3.3

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44. District uses a reading program that is not scientifically-based.	1	2	3	4	5	District uses a scientifically-based reading program developed after 2000.	4.0
45. District has no policy defining the time each day teachers are to spend on reading and math instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	District requires a specific amount of time each day for reading and math instruction.	4.3
46. District lacks a system by which it determines the pace at which skills are taught.	1	2	3	4	5	District has an explicit pacing system to ensure teachers are covering the curriculum before skills are tested.	3.5
Training Staff							
47. Schools define and control the bulk of professional development for principals and teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	District defines and controls the bulk of professional development for principals and teachers.	2.0
48. School-by-school professional development focuses on many different instructional programs not related to the district's programs.	1	2	3	4	5	Districtwide professional development is focused explicitly on implementation of the district's reading and math programs.	2.5
49. Professional development is not defined on the basis of teacher skills or student needs.	1	2	3	4	5	Districtwide professional development is differentiated by teacher skills and student needs.	2.3
50. Professional development is sporadic and fractured.	1	2	3	4	5	Professional development is intense, ongoing, and is followed by support and technical assistance.	1.5
51. District's teacher recruitment efforts are not strong enough to prevent the weakest teachers from continuing.	1	2	3	4	5	District's teacher recruitment efforts are strong and timely enough to strengthen teaching pool over time.	2.3

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Pressing Reforms							
52. District approves reform policies and waits for staff to accept them at school level.	1	2	3	4	5	District-approved reforms are pressed explicitly into schools and classrooms.	2.8
53. District is uncertain about the extent to which its reading and math policies and programs are implemented and has no way to monitor their implementation.	1	2	3	4	5	District pushes explicitly for districtwide implementation of reading and math policies and programs through “walkthroughs,” classroom observations by principals, lead teachers or coaches, or other methods.	4.0
54. District does not have its principals monitor classroom practice in any systematic way.	1	2	3	4	5	District holds principals accountable for monitoring the implementation of reforms.	3.5
55. Central office leaves instruction up to individual schools.	1	2	3	4	5	Central office takes responsibility for nature and quality of instruction.	3.3
Using Data							
56. District waits until end of school year before testing students and determining whether they have fallen behind.	1	2	3	4	5	District administers regular (often quarterly) low-stakes tests of student progress over course of school year to assess student progress.	4.5
57. District has not determined if its tests or quarterlies are aligned with state standards and assessments.	1	2	3	4	5	District end-of-year and interim tests are aligned explicitly with state standards and assessments.	2.5
58. District does not disaggregate either end-of-year or quarterly tests by school and subgroup.	1	2	3	4	5	District disaggregates end-of-year and interim tests by school and subgroup.	4.0
59. District distributes interim and final test results to schools and teachers in the next school year.	1	2	3	4	5	District distributes results of interim and end-of-year test results fast enough to allow teachers to use them.	4.0

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60. District relies almost exclusively on test data to measure its progress.	1	2	3	4	5	District performance indicators include an array of data beyond standardized test scores.	2.5
61. District does not use student test results to determine where to intervene or provide professional development. Results are often used simply to rank or rate schools.	1	2	3	4	5	District uses results of annual and interim tests to decide on where and how to target instructional interventions and provide professional development.	2.8
62. District has no ongoing way of training principals and teachers on how to interpret and use test data.	1	2	3	4	5	District provides ongoing training to principals and teachers on the use of end-of-year and interim test results to improve instruction.	2.3
Focus on Lowest-Performing schools							
63. Lowest-performing schools receive little attention over and above districtwide program or are left to fend for themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	District has a specific strategy designed specifically to improve instruction in its lowest-performing schools.	3.3
64. District lacks any specific interventions for its lowest-performing schools or lets schools identify their own strategies.	1	2	3	4	5	District has a bank of specific interventions for its lowest-performing schools and students.	3.3
65. District does not differentiate instruction for its low-performing students.	1	2	3	4	5	District differentiates instruction for its low-performing students.	2.5
66. District's "School Improvement Planning" exists only on paper and does not drive real improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	District uses the "School Improvement Planning" process to improve performance in its lowest-performing schools.	2.3
67. District assigns the least experienced and weakest teachers to its lowest-performing schools.	1	2	3	4	5	District provides incentives for its most experienced teachers to work in the lowest-performing schools.	1.8

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68. District provides the same resources to all schools regardless of need.	1	2	3	4	5	District provides extra resources to its lowest-performing schools.	3.5
Starting Early							
69. District has no strategy for where to start or how to sequence its reforms.	1	2	3	4	5	District starts reforms in early elementary grades and works up.	2.3
Handling Upper Grades							
70. District has no strategy for improving instruction for older students who have fallen behind.	1	2	3	4	5	District has fledgling strategies to strengthen teaching for older students.	2.3
71. District provides no extra time for students lacking basic skills.	1	2	3	4	5	District provides additional instructional time for older students who lack basic skills.	3.8
72. District offers AP courses in select schools only.	1	2	3	4	5	District offers AP courses in all high schools.	2.8
73. District does not monitor course-taking patterns of high school students.	1	2	3	4	5	District actively encourages and places high school students in higher level courses.	2.5
Average: Programmatic Strategies							2.9
Average: All Categories							2.8

APPENDIX B. INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

APPENDIX B. INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

- Larry Hubbard, Executive Director of Academic Services
- Diane Briars, Senior Program Officer for PRIME Plus
- Denise Yates, Senior Program Officer for Literacy Plus
- Patrick Dowd, Board Member
- Jean Fink, Board Member
- Carol Barone-Martin, Senior Program Officer Pre-K/HeadStart
- Patricia Fisher, *Acting* Executive Director of School Management
- Tim McKay, Coordinator, English as a Second Language
- J. Kaye Cupples, Executive Director of Support Services
- Jacqueline Dandridge, Elementary, Gifted Program
- Janice Holzen, Secondary, Gifted Program
- Jack Garrow, Director of Assessment and Accountability
- Sherman Shrager, Vice President, Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers
- Vera Garmon, Lead Principal
- Luke Holzen, Lead Principal
- Nancy Kodman, Lead Principal
- Rhonda Taliaferro, Lead Principal
- Andrew King, Special Assistant to the Superintendent on *No Child Left Behind*
- Dawn Dugger, Parent, Sheraden School
- Mary Kunkel, Parent, Beechwood/Brashear Schools
- Lucille Clarke, Parent, Reizenstein Middle School
- Marvella Brown, Parent, Clayton/Schiller Schools
- Shirley A. Edwell, Parent, Miller African Centered School
- Deloris L. Smith, Parent, Allderdice School
- Tracy L. Pennix, Parent, Peabody/Allderdice Schools
- Carmen Moon, Parent, Lemington Elementary School
- Lisa Yonek, Elementary Literacy Coach
- Deborah Cook, Middle Literacy Coach
- Michelle McClendon, Secondary Literacy Coach
- Vonnie Comer-Holbrook, Elementary Math Resource Teacher
- Marianne O'Connor, Resource Teacher
- Jacqueline Snyder, Curriculum Specialist
- Mary Beth Herzberger, Principal, Allegheny Traditional Elementary School
- Marvine Garrett, Principal, Crescent Elementary School
- Jo Ann Hoover, Principal, Linden Elementary School
- Lorraine Eberhardt, Principal, Northview Elementary School
- Meridith Murray, Principal, Millions Middle School
- Craig Jackson, Principal, Reizenstein Middle School
- Sophia Facaros, Principal, Peabody High School
- Howard Bullard, Principal, Schenley High School
- Robin Kinselbaum, Math Teacher, Beechwood
- Chimene Brant, Reading Teacher, Dilworth
- Rosalynn Williams, Math Teacher, Lemington

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- Roberta Deal, Reading Teacher, Miller
- Geraldine Abrams, Reading Teacher, Sheraden
- Kate Baker, Reading Teacher, South Hills
- Tamara Allen, Teacher, Rooney
- Jeff Laurenson, NBC Math Teacher, Brashear
- Angela Allie, English Teacher, Oliver
- Michele Cheyne, Coordinator, Professional Development Project, University of Pittsburgh
- Helen Faison, Director, Pittsburgh Teachers Institute
- Richard Flanagan, Youth Development Director, Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation
- Mort Stanfield, State Director, Communities in Schools
- Sekai Turner, Project Director, Center for Minority Health, University of Pittsburgh
- Ira Weiss, Attorney at Law for Pittsburgh Public Schools

APPENDIX C. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

APPENDIX C. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- Organization Structure (Deputy Superintendent for the Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Accountability, School Management, Academic Services, Support Services, School Directory, Administrative Offices Directory), October 3, 2005
- Strategic Plan Quality Framework Overview, March 4, 2002
- Strategic Plan Evaluation (Midpoint Review Report on Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) Strategic Plan for 2002-2007, September 30, 2005
- July 2005-August 2006 Professional Development Workshops Calendar
- Reading and Language Arts (Overview, Pacing Guide, Lesson Plan, Curriculum, Textbooks and Intervention Programs)
- Mathematics (Overview, Assessment Results, Pacing and Lesson Guide, Syllabus, Curriculum, Textbooks and Intervention Programs)
- Pre-K/Head Start (PPS Early Childhood Program Curriculum Assessment, and Outcomes Summary), November 2005
- Career and Technical Education
- PPS School Choice Plan (Transfer Request Form, Listing by Sending and Receiving Schools)
- Science Program (Science Education Program At-A-Glance 2005-06, Academic Affairs, PRIME+PLUS 2005-06 Elementary Science Instructional Timeline, Middle School Science Timeline, Science Course Descriptions, PPS Science Standards Matricies)
- School Supports (Lead Principals-Differentiated Support, Coordinator's Report to the Title I Districtwide Parent Advisory Council September 12, 2005, 2005-06 Title I Schools, PPS Improving the Achievement of All Students in School Improvement Schools 11/21/05, 2005-06 Educational Assistance Program)
- ACT (College Readiness Reports)
- SAT I Scores 2005
- Exam Grades (AP Results for Spring 2005 Testing-All PPS Students, PPS Results of IB Exams 2005)
- Special Education
- Gifted Education
- ESL Program
- Principal Evaluation (Professional Rating Form-School Administrators)
- Teacher Evaluation Process
- Reform Models (Magnet Program)
- Supplemental Educational Services Providers (Listing by School, Approved State Providers)
- Accountability Status
- Carmalt Academy of Science and Technology Quality Review Report 2005-06
- Carmalt Academy of Science and Technology Comprehensive Education Improvement Plan, October 18, 2004
- Carmalt Academy of Science and Technology School Improvement Action Plan

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- Frick International Studies Academy 2005-2007 Comprehensive Education Improvement plan (CEIP)
- Sunnyside School Comprehensive Education Improvement Plan 2004-06
- Stevens Elementary School Comprehensive Education Improvement Plan 2005-2006
- Pittsburgh Public School Improvement Plan, October 5, 2004
- Pittsburgh Public School-Mission, Facts, Policies, Elementary Assessment Schedule, Magnet Registration, Instructional Rubric, District Improvement Plan
- MGT Report
- Pittsburgh Public School Right Sizing Plan
- Pittsburgh Public Schools Comprehensive Education Improvement Plan 2004-2006 Carmalt Academy of Science and Technology, October 18, 2004
- School District of Pittsburgh 2005-2006 Site-Based Budget Allocations
- Middle School Accreditation, Spring 2005
- Science K-12
- Pittsburgh Public School Program for Students with Exceptionalities Proposed Special Education Core Budget 2005-2006-A Summary of Fiscal, Programmatic, and Student Data, May 2005
- Test Results PSSA and AYP
- Pittsburgh Public School Division of Instructional Support-District-Wide Inservice, February 21, 2005
- Pittsburgh Public School Department of Academic Services District-Wide Inservice (Act 48 Credits), September 27, 2005
- Elementary Mathematics Syllabi and Standard-Based Assessments
- Office of Literacy Plus Progress Monitoring 6-8 Intervention Plan for Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content
- Teacher Edition, Volume 1-Harcourt Mathematics Pennsylvania Edition
- Elementary School Schedule of District Assessments Grades K-5
- Middle School Schedule of District Assessments Grades 6-8
- Reporting Category: Comprehension and Reading Skills-Grade 3 Standards 1.1 and 1.2
- Correlation of Harcourt Language © 2002 and Collections © 2001
- Collections Teachers Edition Hidden Surprises-Theme 2 What A Team
- Pennsylvania Assessment and Planning Guide-Theme 1 At A Glance
- Elementary Mathematics Syllabi and Standards-Based Assessments 2004-2005
- Mathematics Standards in Pittsburgh Public Schools Grades 6-8 A Parent's Handbook
- Mathematics Standards in Pittsburgh Public Schools Grades K-5 A Parent's Handbook
- Everyday Mathematics The University of Chicago School Mathematics Project-Third Grade Teacher's Lesson Guide Volume 1
- Update on Implementation of MGT Study Recommendations, November 21, 2005
- Middle Secondary Mathematics Syllabi and Standards-Based Assessment 2004-2005
- Pittsburgh Public School Early Childhood Program Assessment, Curriculum and Outcomes Summary, November 2005

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- Head Start/Pre-K Resource Reallocation Plan
- Summary of Research Findings-Quality Pre-School
- Governor Rendell's Vision for Early Childhood Education
- Pittsburgh Public Schools Pre-K Program 2005-2006 Child Funding Sources and Child Count
- Reading First Schools PPSRA Fall 04/Spring 05 Results K-5
- Communications The New Curriculum Guide Tool Kit Grades 6-8 Department of Academic Services Office of Literacy Plus, September 2005
- CEIP Toolkit K-8 Mathematics Section V Department/Grade Level/Individual Action Plan
- Middle School Mathematics Student Work Protocol
- Observing Within and Everyday Mathematics Classroom
- Highly-Rated Lessons, by Adherence to LSC-Designated Materials
- Pittsburgh Public School "Bridging the Gap" Grade 5 PSSA Mathematics % Proficient of Advanced
- Alignment of the new Pennsylvania Pre-K Standards with the High/Scope Child Observation Record (COR) and the High/Scope Key Experiences
- Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards for Prekindergarten January 2005
- Grade 8 Mathematics Intervention Resources
- PRIME-PLUS Math Elementary Intervention Plan, 2004-2005 Grade 3
- CEIP Toolkit: High School Mathematics Section V. Department/Grade Level/Individual Action Plan
- Mathematics Practice Test Booklet for the PSSA-Elementary Level Grade 5 Mathematics
- Mathematics Practice Test Booklet for the PSSA-Middle Level Grade 8
- Mathematics Practice Test Booklet for the PSSA-High School Level Grade 11
- Pittsburgh Public Schools Program for Students with Exceptionalities
- Office of Support Services Organizational Chart
- Pittsburgh Public Schools Program for Students with Exceptionalities Staff Organization 2005-2006 School Year
- Pittsburgh Public Schools Office of the Chief Academic Officer Program for Students with Exceptionalities 2005-2006-Listing of Special Education Programs/Teachers by Elementary, Middle Secondary, and Special School Buildings and PSE's Early Intervention Program
- Lead Principals-Differentiated Support for Making Adequate Yearly Progress and working with New Administrators
- Pittsburgh Public Schools Comprehensive Education Improvement Plan 2005-2006 Arsenal Middle School
- Pittsburgh Public Schools Quality Review Arsenal Middle School, November 15, 2005
- Documents from Community
- Pre-K/Head Start Job Description Pre-K Coach, Organization Chart, Preschool Child Observation Record (COR)
- 2004 & 2005 Standardized Test Data
- School District of Pittsburgh Code of Student Conduct

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- Local Assessment/Benchmark Assessment Data
- 2004 & 2005 PSSA Data
- Enrollment Data (District/School/Grade Level)
- IEP, LEP, or Title I Program Plans
- Examples of Public Relations with Parents and Community
- Teacher Induction System Plans
- Student Assistance Team Reports
- Data on Student Mobility
- District/School Calendar folder
- AYP Reports
- Health activities folder from the University of Pittsburgh
- “Standards, Assessments—and What Else? The Essential Elements of Standards-Based School Improvement” by Diane J. Briars and Lauren B. Resnick (undated, but uses data from 1996-1999 and cites articles from the year 2000)

**APPENDIX D. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF
STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS**

**APPENDIX D. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF STRATEGIC
SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS**

Russell Clement

Russell Clement, Ph.D., is the lead research specialist in the Department of Research Services for Broward County (Florida) Public Schools (BCPS). Dr. Clement has been a researcher with BCPS for eight years. In this position, Dr. Clement works closely with staff in the curriculum and instruction, educational technology, and student assessment units. He conducts educational program evaluations, psychometric studies for test development, and statistical analyses of student performance and behavior. Dr. Clement has published findings in national education research journals and presented at professional conferences, including those sponsored by the American Education Research Association and the Council of the Great City Schools. Dr. Clement earned a B.A. degree from Florida Atlantic University and a Ph.D. degree in experimental psychology from Brown University.

Nancy Timmons

Dr. Nancy Timmons, Ed.D., is a national consultant specializing in urban education. In this role, she has served as executive advisor to the School District of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and as a consultant to numerous school districts across the nation. Formerly, she was Associate Superintendent for Curriculum/Chief Academic Officer for the Fort Worth Independent School District (ISD), Fort Worth, Texas. In the Fort Worth ISD, she also served as Associate Superintendent for Instruction, Executive Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Staff Development, Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services, and Director of Curriculum. Before that, Dr. Timmons served as Director of Curriculum, Supervisor of English Language Arts and Social Studies, and a middle school and high school teacher of English language arts and social studies for the Temple Independent School District, Temple, Texas. Dr. Timmons has extensive experience in curriculum design and development, campus and district planning, school improvement, and staff development. She has been an adjunct professor at Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas, and has contributed to several textbooks in the area of English language arts. She has been listed in *Who's Who in American Education* and is a certified auditor with Curriculum Management Audit Centers, Inc. She also has served on boards for numerous community, civic, and educational organizations and institutions. She currently serves on the Board of Visitors for the School of Education, Texas Christian University. Dr. Timmons earned a B.S. degree from Prairie View A & M University and M.S. and Ed.D. degrees from Baylor University.

Ricki-Price Baugh

Ricki Price-Baugh, Ed.D., is the Director of Academic Achievement for the Council of the Great City Schools. She is also the president of a consulting company, and previously was the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instructional Development in the

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Houston Independent School District. There she was responsible for strategic planning and the design, implementation, and evaluation of the district's curriculum, professional development, alternative certification, and instructional initiatives. Since beginning her career in 1970, Dr. Price-Baugh has served as a teacher, department chair, resource coordinator, project manager, and director of curriculum services. Her major accomplishments with the Houston school district included a districtwide effort to align curriculum, textbook, and assessment systems and the creation of a detailed, specific curriculum with model lessons and benchmark tests, which are aligned with professional development. During her tenure, Houston public schools saw a substantial increase in student achievement scores and a narrowing of the achievement gap. She is a certified curriculum auditor for Phi Delta Kappa and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. Dr. Price-Baugh earned an Ed.D. degree from Baylor University, a master's degree in Spanish literature from the University of Maryland, and a B.A. (magna cum laude) from Tulane University.

Denise Walston

Denise Walston is the senior coordinator for Mathematics in the Norfolk (Virginia) Public Schools, a post she has held since 1994. In this capacity, she has overseen the district's dramatic improvement in its math achievement scores. Ms. Walston is an active member of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics, and has served as president of the Tidewater Council of Teachers of Mathematics. She also serves on a number of statewide assessment committees responsible for the development and oversight of Virginia's math standards and testing system. Ms. Walston received an undergraduate degree in mathematics from the University of North Carolina and a master's degree in mathematics education from Old Dominion University. She also has had extensive graduate training at Princeton and George Washington universities. She began her career as a high school math teacher in the Norfolk Public Schools.

APPENDIX E. ABOUT THE COUNCIL

APPENDIX D. ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

Council of the Great City Schools

The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 66 of the nation's largest urban public school systems. Its Board of Directors is composed of the Superintendent of Schools and one School Board member from each member city. An Executive Committee of 24 individuals, equally divided in number between Superintendents and School Board members, provides regular oversight of the 501(c)(3) organization. The mission of the Council is to advocate for urban public education and assist its members in the improvement of leadership and instruction. The Council provides services to its members in the areas of legislation, research, communications, curriculum and instruction, and management. The group convenes two major conferences each year; conducts studies on urban school conditions and trends; and operates ongoing networks of senior school district managers with responsibilities in such areas as federal programs, operations, finance, personnel, communications, research, technology, and others. The Council was founded in 1956 and incorporated in 1961, has its headquarters in Washington, D.C., and can be found at www.cgcs.org.

The Broad Foundation

The Broad Foundation is a Los Angeles-based venture philanthropic organization established in 1999 by Eli and Edythe Broad. The Foundation's mission is to dramatically improve k-12 urban public education through better governance, management, labor relations and competition. The Foundation's major initiatives include the \$1 million Broad Prize, awarded annually to urban school districts that have made the greatest overall improvement in student achievement; The Broad Superintendents Academy, a ten-month executive management program to train working CEOs and other top executives from business, non-profit, military, government, and education backgrounds to lead urban public school systems; and The Broad Institute for School Boards, an annual training program for newly elected school board members designed to increase student achievement through improved governance. The Broad Foundation's internet address is www.broadfoundation.org.

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History of Strategic Support Teams Conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools

City	Area	Year
Albuquerque		
	Facilities and Roofing	2003
	Human Resources	2003
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2005
	Legal Services	2005
Anchorage		
	Finance	2004
Broward County (FLA.)		
	Information Technology	2000
Buffalo		
	Superintendent Support	2000
	Organizational Structure	2000
	Curriculum and Instruction	2000
	Personnel	2000
	Facilities and Operations	2000
	Communications	2000
	Finance	2000
	Finance II	2003
Caddo Parish (LA.)		
	Facilities	2004
Charleston		
	Special Education	2005
Cincinnati		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
Cleveland		
	Student Assignments	1999, 2000
	Transportation	2000
	Safety and Security	2000
	Facilities Financing	2000
	Facilities Operations	2000
	Transportation	2004
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
Columbus		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Human Resources	2001
	Facilities Financing	2002
	Finance and Treasury	2003
	Budget	2003

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	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
Dayton		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Curriculum and Instruction	2001
	Finance	2001
	Communications	2002
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Budget	2005
Denver		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Personnel	2001
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Bilingual Education	2006
Des Moines		
	Budget and Finance	2003
Detroit		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2002
	Assessment	2002
	Communications	2002
	Curriculum and Assessment	2003
	Communications	2003
	Textbook Procurement	2004
Greensboro		
	Bilingual Education	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2003
	Facilities	2004
Hillsborough County (FLA)		
	Transportation	2005
	Procurement	2005
Jacksonville		
	Organization and Management	2002
	Operations	2002
	Human Resources	2002
	Finance	2002
	Information Technology	2002
	Finance II	2006
Kansas City		
	Human Resources	2005
	Information Technology	2005
	Finance	2005
	Operations	2005
Los Angeles		

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	Budget and Finance	2002
	Organizational Structure	2005
	Finance	2005
	Information Technology	2005
	Human Resources	2005
	Business Services	2005
Louisville		
	Management Information	2005
Miami-Dade County		
	Construction Management	2003
Milwaukee		
	Research and Testing	1999
	Safety and Security	2000
	School Board Support	1999
	Instruction	2006
Minneapolis		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Finance	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
New Orleans		
	Personnel	2001
	Transportation	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Hurricane Damage Assessment	2005
Norfolk		
	Testing and Assessment	2003
Philadelphia		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Food Service	2003
	Facilities	2003
	Transportation	2003
	Human Resources	2004
Pittsburgh		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
Providence		
	Business Operations	2001
	MIS and Technology	2001
	Personnel	2001
Richmond		
	Transportation	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003

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	Special Education	2003
Rochester		
	Finance and Technology	2003
	Transportation	2004
	Food Services	2004
San Francisco		
	Technology	2001
St. Louis		
	Special Education	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
	Textbook Procurement	2004
	Human Resources	2005
Toledo		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
Washington, D.C.		
	Finance and Procurement	1998
	Personnel	1998
	Communications	1998
	Transportation	1998
	Facilities Management	1998
	Special Education	1998
	Legal and General Counsel	1998
	MIS and Technology	1998
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Budget and Finance	2005
	Transportation	2005