Full Report

A TASA-CMSi Curriculum Audit™ of Lake Travis Independent School District

June 2022

Stefani Allen
Assistant Superintendent

Lake Travis Independent School District
3322 Ranch Road 620 South
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TASA INSPIRING LEADERS

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

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

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

Sections of the Full Report are as follows:

Executive Summary (Introduction)
District Strengths
Key Findings
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Expanded Report
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Findings
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Executive Summary

TASA-CMSi Curriculum Audit™ of Lake Travis Independent School District

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CMSi Curriculum Management Solutions, Inc

Executive Summary Table of Contents

This Audit Report is comprised of two sections:

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

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

Lake Travis ISD Curriculum Audit by the numbers

Site Visit Date:
February 28 - March 3, 2022

59
interviews conducted with teachers, board members, district administrators, principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches, and ESL instructional support teachers

43
documents collected for review

269
classrooms observed

2,368
survey responses from parents, teachers, and administrators

1,598
student work artifacts evaluated

Introduction: The CMSi Curriculum Audit

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

District Background

Lake Travis Independent School District is a fast-growth district consisting of 11,304 students in grades PreK–12 and 1,280 employees. A 6A district, Lake Travis currently has seven elementary schools, three middle schools, and one high school. Student demographics include 65.86% White, 19.86% Hispanic, 7.29% Asian, 5.01% Two or More Races, 1.6% African American, 0.29% American Indian, and 0.1% Pacific Islander. Economically Disadvantaged students make up 9.67%, Special Education 10.79%, and English Learners 7.17%. These percentage points have increased only slightly in the past 10 years, with Special Education increasing 2.8%, and Economically Disadvantaged students and English Learners increasing less than 1% each. State accountability test scores are well above state average, and college entrance exam scores are above the national average. The district received a demographic study in 2020-21 that projected an increase in growth in the next 10 years from the current 11,640 in 2021-22 to 15,286 by the 2030-31 school year; this would be a 31.3% increase.

System Purpose for Conducting the Audit

The purpose for the audit is multifaceted. Lake Travis ISD hired a new superintendent, Paul Norton, in the fall of 2020. In 2021, Mr. Norton

hired a new assistant superintendent of C&I, Stefani Allen. District leaders recognize that although the district test scores on state and national tests are above average, rapid growth in the district could explain a recent slight decline in some test scores. There is also a concern that as the district grows, systems are not in place to ensure consistency in district functions and efficient operations. There are no fully developed curriculum documents, and teachers have had no district guidance to help them in planning instruction, leaving them on their own to find resources. Schools in the district operate as silos, largely independent in decision making. A statement from district leadership expresses the reason for the audit: "In order to best meet the needs of the students of Lake Travis ISD, it was decided to conduct a curriculum audit. In the audit, we hope to improve our curriculum quality and equity in order to improve learning for all students."

District leaders also indicated plans regarding audit results. "When the audit results are returned to LTISD, an audit committee composed of district and campus leadership will analyze the results. We will look for our highest impact levers in which to focus. We will then create a Plan of Action that will span several years with a focus on progress monitoring of the items."

CMSi Audit History

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

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

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

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

Audit Scope of Work

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lake Travis ISD Strengths

Lake Travis ISD, located about 20 miles west of Austin, Texas, is a high-achieving district that is committed to continuing to serve a fast-growing community with excellence in educational opportunities. Auditors noted several areas of strength in the district:

1. Community and District Relationships and Support
2. Advance Planning for Curriculum Development
3. Openness of Administrators to Systems Development
4. Strong Career and Technology Education and Fine Arts Offerings at Middle and High School Levels
5. High Achieving on Multiple Measures
6. Abundance of Resources and Technology

1 Community and District Relationships and Support

Lake Travis ISD has a strong sense of community with high expectations. Comments on teacher and administrator surveys mentioned strengths such as great family vibe, high expectations of staff and students, nice facilities, generous community, good reputation, good kids, and supportive parents. One stated, "This district holds a very high reputation and is well liked and sought after." Many mentioned, "great community support." Teachers also noted, "administration support for teachers," and "the culture of the district is excellent – everyone from the top down is approachable and committed to ensuring that this is a great place to work." Parents who responded to both the English and Spanish surveys noted the great reputation, excellent teachers, high standards, excellent resources, and good communication. Comments were overwhelmingly favorable in all of the surveys regarding the excellent relationships and support across the community, schools, and administration.

2 Advance Planning for Curriculum Development

Although the district does not currently have fully developed curriculum guides, the commitment to that development is evident. Instructional coaches have been hired and have recently received training in the curriculum writing process. Efforts have begun to develop curriculum and house it in a central Curriculum and Instruction online hub where it is easily accessible to teachers and administrators. Already developed for most courses are scope and sequence charts that divide the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills into teaching units to ensure articulation across the district. Coaches have also linked resources to the various grade levels and subject areas in the hub to provide a one-stop location for teachers to access resources. Through training, coaches understand the components of a quality curriculum and are collaborating with teachers to begin the work of fleshing out curriculum guides.

3 Openness of Administrators to Systems Development

District and campus administrators recognize that with the fast growth of the district, systems are becoming outdated or do not exist. One administrator commented, "We are a 6A school district with 4A systems." Numerous administrators expressed in interviews and in the survey their concern regarding a lack of systems. The need is recognized, and administrators are willing to begin developing new systems to make their work and the functions of the district more consistent and efficient. Plans have already begun to revive the district strategic plan, which was begun about two years ago before the pandemic. New commitment is evident for developing a strategic plan, which will include detailed systems to improve district functioning.

4 Strong Career and Technology Education and Fine Arts Offerings at Middle and High School Levels

Auditors noted the multiple opportunities that middle and high school students have for career and technology education as well as fine arts courses. The middle schools all offer the same courses, including video broadcast, audio-visual technology, digital media, graphic design, and engineering as well as technology applications and computer science. Fine arts offerings at middle schools include music, band, choir, theater, and dance. Auditors noted during observations the large enrollment and the active participation of students in those classes. The high school offers 143 different courses in career and technology education and 41 courses in fine arts. Parents expressed on the surveys their approval of the wide variety and broad range of choices their students have for coursework.

5 High Achieving on Multiple Measures

Lake Travis ISD is a high-achieving district on multiple measures. The district consistently scores higher than the state on the *STAAR* state tests and above the national average on college entrance exams. Lake Travis High School recognized 71 seniors under the National Merit Scholarship program in the current year. Eight of those seniors are National Merit Semifinalists, 35 are Commended Scholars, 28 are National Hispanic Scholars, and four are National Indigenous Scholars. In addition to academics, the district has multiple awards in athletics, fine arts, and Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA).

6 Abundance of Resources and Technology

One of the strengths of the district expressed by teachers, administrators, and parents is the abundance of resources and technology available to teachers and students for instruction and learning. If vetted for alignment and appropriately referenced in the curriculum, these resources can be invaluable to teachers. District instructional coaches have recently cataloged over 150 of the district's available resources and evaluated them for alignment, cost, and language availability. They still have more work to do to complete this task because of the numerous resources available, but the process has started. Accomplishing this task will allow the coaches and teachers to reference the resources more effectively into the curriculum documents as they are developed. Technology use can also be referenced in the curriculum documents in appropriate places, because the district has provided every student with a Chromebook for their use in class and at home.

Key Focus Areas

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

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

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

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

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

What We Found

The site visit for the Lake Travis Independent School District was conducted February 28-March 3, 2022, by a team of four auditors whose biographical sketches are provided in **Appendix A**. One additional auditor provided off-site analysis of student work artifacts. The auditors reviewed and analyzed 43 different documents, many with multiple editions (e.g., board policies, curriculum documents, student work artifacts) prior to, during, and after the site visit. A copy of the list of documents is provided in **Appendix B.** While in the district, the auditors visited 269 classrooms in 11 schools and personally interviewed 59 district stakeholders, including the superintendent, board members, district administrators, principals, assistant principals, teachers, instructional coaches, and ESL instructional support teachers. The auditors also administered online surveys to parents, teachers, and administrators for which they received 2,368 responses.

The auditors triangulated information from these sources of data to arrive at 12 findings and 4 recommendations based on the 5 audit areas of focus. The findings provide Lake Travis ISD with specific details about the current and potential barriers and challenges that internal stakeholders face in their efforts to move the district forward toward achieving its mission and goals, centered on increased quality of student learning. The recommendations provide detailed action steps for removing those barriers. [Note: Each of the recommendations covers multiple findings. All recommendations should be completed in one to four years.]

"We welcome this curriculum audit because we have no curriculum." (Campus Administrator)

A summary of the audit findings within the five focus areas included in the Lake Travis Independent School District full report follows:

Focus Area One: District Vision and Accountability

When reviewing the current status of Lake Travis ISD in relationship to the principles of **Focus Area One**, which addresses system control and oversight of resources, programs, and personnel, the auditors found the Lake Travis ISD board policies and regulations did not meet audit criteria to provide a foundation to guide all necessary aspects of curriculum management and the overall educational program. Few policies or local regulations provide guidance for day-to-day operations and decision making. Although the district is in the process of reviving the strategic plan, district plans are at this point incomplete and do not provide enough direction to guide implementation of district functions. Interviews and survey responses revealed inconsistent understanding or use of district or campus improvement plans by district personnel for making decisions (see **Finding 1.1**).

"I am very excited about the strategic planning because the community drove the definition of the pillars. We will include community members as we develop the plan to make sure we are driving in the right direction." (Board Member)

The auditors found that although the district values their employees as noted in interviews and survey responses, inconsistencies regarding span of control, chain of command, scalar relationships, and full inclusion exist between the district's current organizational chart and job descriptions. Job descriptions are not routinely updated, limiting control of human

capital available within the district. Systems for guiding the functions of the district are not in place, causing confusion among personnel regarding performing their job duties efficiently and effectively (see **Finding 1.2**).

"Overall, having district systems in place is happening little by little this year. That is encouraging." (District Administrator)

Focus Area Two: Curriculum

Under **Focus Area Two**, the auditors examined Lake Travis ISD's direction for teaching and learning. They looked for systematic curriculum management planning, representation of curriculum offerings in high quality written curriculum guides, and clear alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum.

The auditors found that Lake Travis ISD needs a comprehensive written plan to coordinate the development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum. Although some elements of curriculum management planning were evident, they lack the specificity needed to provide direction for the design and delivery of the curriculum to achieve the district's student achievement goals (see **Finding 2.1**).

Auditors found the scope of written curriculum does not meet audit expectations for any grade level K-12 or subject area in core and non-core content. In analyzing the quality of curriculum documents provided to auditors, they found minimal basic components needed to provide a quality curriculum that is highly focused, consistent, rigorous, and aligned. Finally, the auditors found inconsistent use of the district's curriculum by teachers as evidenced in survey and interview data from teachers and campus administrators (see **Finding 2.2**).

Focus Area Three: Consistency and Equity

Under **Focus Area Three**, the auditors looked for predictable consistency for curriculum delivery, high quality student work, professional development based on monitoring of curriculum and instruction, and equity in course access and opportunities for students.

The auditors found during 269 classroom observations that current instructional practices do not reflect district expectations for rigorous and collaborative learning. The most common teacher behavior was assisting students as they did independent work or large group teacher-centered instruction. Auditors observed students working on computers as a dominant activity more than any other student activity observed. Classroom activities that required lower levels of thinking were observed in the majority of classrooms (see **Finding 3.1**).

"It is hard in a high-performing district to have them look at data in a different way." (District Administrator)

Auditors also analyzed 1,598 student work artifacts. Artifacts were sometimes not aligned to standards, and cognitive demand was generally low in mathematics, science, and social studies. Contexts were of the least engaging type. Artifacts also showed disparities in curriculum among schools, overlaps in objectives between grade levels, and multiple interpretations of mastery in evidence. Artifacts also did not reflect the rich diversity of the district (see **Finding 3.2**).

Auditors examine the relationship among professional development, implementation of instructional strategies, and monitoring of curriculum and instruction to improve teacher capacity and student learning. Auditors found no written professional development plan in

place to guide this relationship, but professional development opportunities are provided in the district that teachers and administrators generally find helpful. There is no connection between professional development and monitoring of curriculum and instruction. Monitoring is primarily done in Lake Travis ISD as a part of the formal teacher evaluation system, and not for informal feedback or to inform professional development activities to improve instruction (see **Finding 3.3**).

In examining possible equity issues, auditors found some concerns worthy of further investigation by district leaders. Auditors found discrepancies among campuses in enrollment of at-risk, economically disadvantaged, and emergent bilingual students compared to the district average. In addition, interviews with district and campus leaders revealed concerns over access to support for the emergent bilingual program. Auditors also found an inverse relationship between the percentages of students identified for Gifted and Talented and Special Education programs by campus (see **Finding 3.4**).

"We believe there is a lack of rigor, and our kids can handle more." (District Administrator)

Focus Area Four: Feedback

Focus Area Four emphasizes the use of feedback data from various student assessment activities and program evaluations. The auditors found Lake Travis ISD does not have an assessment plan to provide adequate direction for effective student assessment planning. The overall scope of student assessments is not adequate to guide instructional decision making. Auditors found no district-developed formative curriculum-based assessments in place to inform teachers of student progress in a timely manner. The auditors also did not find a formal process to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-benefit of district programs (see **Findings 4.1** and **4.2**).

"We have technology, but it's often hard for the students to complete tasks with the equipment we have." (Teacher)

Focus Area Five: Productivity

Included in **Focus Area 5** is the district's choice of specific means to improve instruction and learning, such as implementation of a technology program. Auditors focused here on the district's technology program and budget development. Auditors found the district has an outdated technology plan that does not provide adequate direction for effective implementation. The district has provided every student with a Chromebook through the 1 to 1 initiative. During classroom observations, auditors found teachers using technology only passively and students using technology actively. Teachers were found using technology at the substitution level of the SAMR Model. During interviews and on survey comments, auditors found administrators had concerns regarding the overuse of computers in the classrooms in place of deep discussions and collaborative learning. Teachers expressed concerns that the equipment was outdated and slow. Administrators also noted a need to provide teachers laptops for collaborative planning of instruction (see **Finding 5.1**).

"We need structured PD. There is no plan driving PD now." (District Administrator)

Auditors found the budgeting process in Lake Travis ISD does not ensure increased productivity in the allocation of financial resources. Programmatic budgeting is not in practice, leaving the district without systems to allocate financial resources based on performance-based principles that incorporate cost-benefit data gained from comprehensive program analysis.

We have strong teachers, a supportive community, and excellent students. (Campus Administrator)

Many [job descriptions] are very general in nature and may not adequately describe what the person really does. (District Administrator)

Campuses have the skills but do not have clearly designed systems. (Campus Administrator)

A housed curriculum needs to be established. Teachers don't have an established curriculum that they can rely on, and they have to make things up as they go. (Campus Administrator)

We need more ideas for hands-on activities to get away from the excess of using worksheets.(Teacher)

For the best PD, I've had to go find it myself and search for topics that actually are related to my students. (Teacher)

Key Recommendations

The auditors are confident that this audit report will provide the foundation for improvement efforts. However, future progress will depend, in part, on the district leadership's efforts to make the tough decisions incorporated in the audit recommendations, including the willingness of the governing board to allocate additional resources necessary to implement the recommendations.

1. Gain and maintain control of district resources through quality board policies, focused planning, the strategic deployment of personnel, and creation of systems for district functions.

2. Develop and implement quality written curriculum for all content areas taught at all grade levels, guided by a comprehensive curriculum management plan.

3. Promote effective instructional practices, rigorous student work associated with high levels of student achievement. Refine and expand efforts to develop the capacity of teachers through professional learning and monitoring instruction. Institutionalize a system aimed at ensuring equitable access to curriculum, support, and programs for all students.

4. Focus the value of student assessment and program evaluation, guided by a comprehensive assessment plan, on the systematic use of data for decision making. Develop a program-based budget.

District leaders and board members expressed their desire to begin making some improvements in district systems, including reviving the strategic long-range plan, creating additional plans and systems to clarify and guide their work, continuing to develop and improve curriculum documents, improving professional learning and monitoring processes to deepen the rigor of instruction, establishing curriculum-based assessments, and creating processes for using the resulting data. District leadership must be willing to commit to this work and to allocate additional resources necessary to implement the recommendations.

The district has begun efforts to create a long-range strategic plan and develop curriculum documents. Using the audit report recommendations for guidance, the district can continue these efforts to refine and develop quality policies, plans, systems, curriculum documents, instructional frameworks, and assessments that will provide a clear pathway forward for administrators and teachers to maintain and further the high level of excellence in teaching and learning in Lake Travis Independent School District.

Recommendation 1: Review, revise and adopt board policies and the district strategic plan to provide clear direction and accountability for curriculum management. Develop comprehensive job descriptions and organizational charts that meet the principles of sound organizational management. Develop systems to guide critical district functions.

The role of a governing board is to establish and maintain control of the foundation of the district's work. Well-written policies and regulations ensure long-term stability of the foundation. Additionally, an organizational chart that conforms to the principles of sound organizational management and job descriptions with clear linkage to duties and evaluation measures are critical to support the goals of the district. Well-written plans and established systems to guide and coordinate the functions of the district provide district leadership with control of district direction and decision making.

Recommendation 2: Develop and implement a comprehensive curriculum management plan to provide system-wide direction for the design, delivery, and evaluation of the curriculum. Complete the scope of the written curriculum and revise existing curriculum documents to define, prioritize, sequence, and pace student learning and to provide suggestions for how to deliver learning most effectively. Specify expectations for use of the written curriculum.

Quality curriculum planning requires a comprehensive curriculum management plan and written curriculum documents to focus the system on efforts to achieve a quality, deeply aligned curriculum with strong delivery and evaluation components. A curriculum management plan provides for instructional resources, strategies, and assessments aligned to the content, context, and cognitive type for each objective taught. The curriculum management plan should be directed by school board policies that delineate processes for curriculum development and review, roles and responsibilities of staff, and procedures for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the district curriculum.

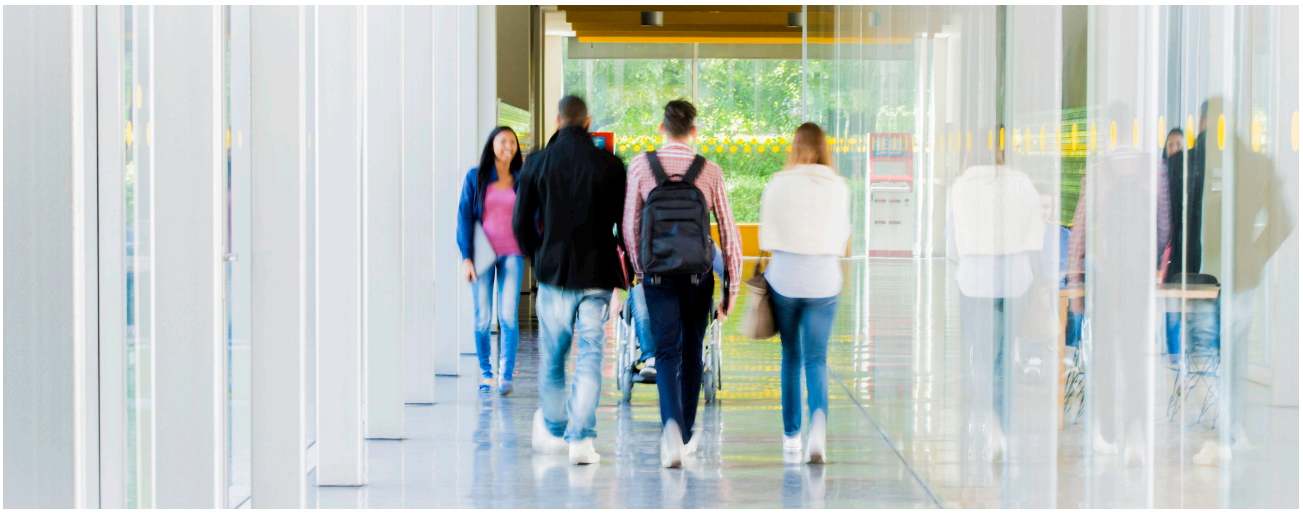
Recommendation 3: Develop a comprehensive professional development plan that supports the instructional capacity of teachers and leadership capacity of administrators. The plan should illustrate how professional development is supported through the monitoring of instruction, and, in turn, provides the means to improve instructional delivery, student work, the use of technology, and address equity concerns.

Although quality curriculum documents are crucial to student success, effective instructional practices are required to deliver the quality curriculum. Effective districts utilize current research to determine the most effective instructional practices to meet varied learning needs so curriculum comes to life in students' daily learning activities and work products.

Building capacity for teachers and district/campus administrators is essential to continued improvement of teaching and learning. A comprehensive professional development plan is necessary to accomplish the intended purpose of improving performance and achieving desired student achievement outcomes. Monitoring instructional delivery and resulting student work is a key component of the improvement process for teachers, providing an authentic evaluation of professional learning efforts through teacher demonstration via on-the-job application. An effective district has a comprehensive professional development plan based on a cycle that includes focused professional development opportunities related to district goals, an expectation that new learnings will be utilized in the classroom, ongoing instructional monitoring to determine fidelity of delivery and quality of student work, and targeted evaluation to determine if the professional learning is achieving desired outcomes. This cycle applies also to large-scale district initiatives, such as technology implementation, in order to ensure that cost-benefit is achieved according to district expectations. The cycle also provides district leadership the opportunity to examine monitoring data campus-by-campus to ensure all students are receiving equitable opportunities for access to curriculum and participation in district programs.

Recommendation 4: Develop and implement a comprehensive system for student assessment and program evaluation that will provide meaningful opportunities to analyze data for decision making and support improved student achievement. Develop, implement, and use results of aligned, formative, and diagnostic assessments at all levels to monitor student learning on a continuous basis and inform individualized, differentiated, and effective instruction. Develop and implement a performance-based budget that allocates resources according to needs determined through program evaluation and provides efficient use of resources.

Effective school districts have a plan that clearly identifies student learning expectations based on the adopted curriculum and state standards. The plan not only identifies the expectations but includes what they look like when mastered, what tools are used to determine mastery of those expectations, how to interpret the data from the assessment tools, and what to do when mastery is not achieved. Additionally, effective school districts have tightly-held district level formal assessments for all subjects and at all grade levels to monitor student mastery of objectives and provide feedback data to inform teaching and learning. Performance-based budgeting allows districts to flexibly allocate funding based on need and to improve productivity.



Conducted Under the Auspices of
Texas Curriculum Management Audit Center
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Expanded Report

A TASA-CMSi Curriculum Audit™ of Lake Travis Independent School District

June 2022

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Date Audit Presented:

May 2022

Members of the Lake Travis ISD Audit Team:

Lead Auditor
Mary Arthur

Auditors
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Approach

Central Question for the Audit:

To what extent has the Lake Travis ISD established a coordinated, valid, and comprehensive system to manage the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of curriculum?

Focus Areas

The auditors have developed five focus areas based on the feedback and data requested by district leaders.

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

District Vision and Accountability

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

Curriculum

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

Consistency and Equity

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

Feedback

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

Productivity

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

District Background

Lake Travis Independent School District is a rapidly growing 6A district, offering a comprehensive curriculum that emphasizes scholastic excellence for more than 11,600 students in grades PK-12. Nestled alongside the south shore of picturesque Lake Travis in the Texas Hill Country, the district is located approximately 25 minutes west of Austin in Travis County. Originally a component of the Dripping Springs school district, Lake Travis ISD was formed on June 12, 1981. At that time, 541 students were enrolled in grades K-12. Lake Travis ISD is now comprised of 11 campuses within a radius of approximately 118 square miles serving families in the municipalities of Bee Cave, Briarcliff, The Hills, and Lakeway. The district's reputation for excellence in academic and extracurricular programs, modern and well-equipped facilities, and dedicated, highly qualified staff are some of the reasons many families consider Lake Travis ISD to be a "destination district."

As a long-standing and active member of the Lake Travis Chamber of Commerce, Lake Travis ISD proudly supports local business, economic development, and community service. With more than 1,400 employees, the district is the area's largest employer. Teachers and support staff provide a safe and nurturing learning environment for students. Year after year, these efforts result in exceptional academic and extracurricular performance district-wide. High school graduates are prepared and poised for success in their choice of college, career, or the military. The district campuses and students have earned multiple awards in fine arts, the National Merit Society, and University Interscholastic League athletics and academics.

District Mission

"The mission of the Lake Travis ISD is to educate all students by teaching a comprehensive curriculum which emphasizes scholastic excellence. The District will serve as a model of educational excellence by making use of the combined skills of students, teachers, support staff, involved parents and citizens through the efficient use of resources. Our graduates will have lifelong problem-solving skills. They will understand that responsibilities accompany the privileges of citizenship and will have the foundation to be successful in their chosen endeavors."

District Strategic Plan

Lake Travis ISD leadership has recently begun work on a long-range strategic plan that consists of five focus areas. Committees have formed for each of the focus areas to develop strategies and action plans. The focus areas of the strategic plan are:

Focus Area 1: Are One Community: We will bring our community together so that a welcoming neighborhood feel ensures all families feel connected, valued, and engaged.

Focus Area 2: Each Belong: We will include all community members and help students discover their interests so that we all feel a sense of connectedness.

Focus Area 3: Provide Best In Class Education: We will demonstrate a commitment to all students so that each child is prepared for life and successful in the path they choose.

Focus Area 4: Grow and Innovate Together: We will support our instructional staff, use data-based decision making, and partner with stakeholders to build off success and continuously improve.

Focus Area 5: Prioritize Wellness: We will make school a great place to be so that the social, emotional, and physical well being of our Lake Travis ISD community is supported.

Superintendent of Schools and Board of Trustees

Lake Travis ISD has had four superintendents over the last 20 years, including one interim. The current superintendent, Mr. Paul Norton, began his service at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. Superintendents and their tenure of service:

- Donald Rockwell "Rocky" Kirk: July 2002—July 2011
- Susan Kolar Bohn (Interim): August 2011—December 2011
- Bradford "Brad" Talmage Lancaster: January 2012—July 2020
- Paul Norton: August 2020—Present

The Lake Travis ISD Board of Trustees currently consists of seven elected members as shown:

Board Member	Year Elected	Office Held
Kim Flasch	2013	
Wlliam Beard	2014	
John Aoueille	2015	President
Bob Dorsett, Jr.	2016	Jr. Vice President
Lauren White	2018	Secretary
Jessica Putonti	2018	
Phillip Davis	2021	

Findings

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

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

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

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

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

What Auditors Expected to Find in Lake Travis ISD:

Focus Area One: District Vision and Accountability

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

Common indicators

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

Overview of What Auditors Found in Lake Travis ISD:

This section is an overview of the findings that follow in the area of **Focus Area One**. Details follow within separate findings.

The Lake Travis Independent School District board policies and regulations overall do not provide a foundation for sound local control of curriculum management. The district has begun to work on a long-range strategic plan, but it is not fully developed to guide decision making. Administrators do not use district and campus improvement plans to inform their daily work. The district's organizational chart and job descriptions show discrepancies and do not provide leadership with the information needed for controlling the deployment of human capital to achieve the district mission and goals. Job descriptions are not regularly updated, causing confusion regarding employee duties and chain of command. Lake Travis ISD has few systems in place to give staff members a clear picture of the expectations and processes for carrying out critical district functions.

Finding 1.1: The Lake Travis Independent School District policies and plans are not comprehensive enough to provide quality control for effective management of curriculum and related district functions.

Policies and written plans are critical documents that establish a foundation for the values and work the school district expects to accomplish. Policies provide a clear framework for making decisions regarding design and delivery of the written, taught, and tested curriculum and outline district philosophy and beliefs about student learning and how best to achieve that learning. Plans establish clear and specific goals, outline when and how these goals will be accomplished, and identify the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. Plans are essential in unifying efforts and increasing efficiency, effectiveness, and continuity. If policy direction is absent, outdated, or unclear, or if it is not specific enough, educational decisions are left to the discretion of individuals. The results of these decisions may or may not be congruent with the intent of the district's school board. Without quality planning, a district's resources will be used less efficiently, and achievement of district goals will be less likely.

To determine the quality and use of policies and plans for the management of curriculum in Lake Travis Independent School District, auditors visited the schools; interviewed administrators, teachers, and board members; surveyed administrators, teachers and parents; and reviewed district policies and documents. Overall, the auditors found that policies and plans do not direct curriculum design and delivery.

Finding 1.1 will address the following related to the management of curriculum:

- Policies
- Plans

Policies

Policies and regulations were provided to the auditors through the district website. The Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) provides the district with legal interpretation of state and federal statutes, resulting in adoption by the board of a legal policy. A local policy reflects language common to many districts, or the district may develop a unique local policy or regulation. The district provided 60 regulations for auditor review in addition to the online legal and local policies. Responsibility for the development of curriculum related policies is found in the job description of the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction: "Coordinates the development of Board policies related to curriculum and instruction to provide direction for effective curriculum management and instructional delivery." The auditors

reviewed legal and local policies and regulations presented for examination. Auditors found that none of the regulations were related to curriculum and instruction or assessment, but were all related to compliance in areas such as student safety and welfare, appraisal systems, use of technology, videos, and fundraising efforts. Auditors selected for further analysis those policies directly related to the curriculum audit standards and criteria applicable to the goals of this audit. The following exhibit displays a list of the policies the auditors reviewed.

Exhibit 1.1.1: Board Policies Reviewed by Auditors

Policy	Legal	Date Issued or Updated	Local	Date Issued or Updated	Policy Title
Basic District Foundations					
AE	X	10/18/2017	X	3/26/2018	Educational Philosophy
AF	X	7/14/2020	X	3/26/2018	Innovation Districts
AIA	X	1/19/2021			Accountability—Accreditation and Performance Indicators
AIB	X	1/19/2021			Accountability—Performance Reporting
AID	X	5/17/2019			Accountability—Federal Accountability Standards
Local Governance					
BF	X	5/17/2019	X	7/14/2020	Board Policies
BJA	X	10/18/2017	X	1/4/2019	Superintendent—Qualifications and Duties
BP	X	10/6/1998	X	3/17/2014	Administrative Regulations
BQ	X	7/14/2020	X	7/25/2016	Planning and Decision-Making Process
BQA	X	7/14/2020	X	3/26/2018	Planning and Decision-Making Process—District Level
BQB	X	7/14/2020	X	3/26/2018	Planning and Decision-Making Process—Campus-Level
Business and Support Services					
CE	X	1/19/2021	X	3/26/2018	Annual Operating Budget
CMD	X	7/14/2020			Equipment and Supplies Management—Instructional Materials Care and Accounting
CQ	X	7/14/2020	X	10/11/2019	Technology Resources
CQC	X	10/11/2019			Technology Resources—Equipment
Personnel					
DMA	X	7/14/2020			Professional Development—Required Staff Development
DNA	X	10/11/2019	X	6/9/2017	Performance Appraisal—Evaluation of Teachers
DNB	X	10/11/2019	X	11/7/2016	Performance Appraisal—Evaluation of Campus Administrators
Instruction					
EA	X	10/11/2019			Instructional Goals and Objectives
EF	X	10/11/2019	X	5/22/2017	Instructional Resources

Policy	Legal	Date Issued or Updated	Local	Date Issued or Updated	Policy Title
EFA	X	10/18/2017			Instructional Resources—Instructional Materials
EHA	X	5/15/2003			Curriculum Design—Basic Instructional Program
EHAA	X	11/4/2021			Basic Instructional Program—Required Instruction (All Levels)
EHAB	X	10/24/2019			Basic Instructional Program—Required Instruction (Elementary)
EHAC	X	10/24/2019			Basic Instructional Program—Required Instruction (Secondary)
EHAD	X	1/4/2019			Basic Instructional Program—Elective Instruction
EHB	X	7/14/2020			Curriculum Design—Special Programs
EHBA	X	5/13/2021			Special Programs—Special Education
EHBB	X	10/11/2019	X	10/11/2019	Special Programs—Gifted and Talented Students
EHBC	X	5/13/2021	X	4/10/1996	Special Programs—Compensatory/ Accelerated Services
EHBD	X	7/16/2018	X	3/26/2018	Special Programs—Federal Title I
EHBE	X	7/14/2020	X	7/8/1991	Special Programs—Bilingual Education/ESL
EHBF	X	10/11/2019			Special Programs—Career and Technical Education
EHBK	X	10/11/2019			Special Programs—Other Instructional Initiatives
EIA	X	10/7/2015	X	10/10/2013	Academic Achievement—Grading/Progress Reports to Parents
EK	X	10/11/2019			Testing Programs
EKB	X	5/13/2021			Testing Programs—State Assessment
EKBA	X	1/19/2021			State Assessment—English Language Learners/LEP Students
EKC	X	7/14/2020			Testing Programs—Reading Assessment
EKD	X	2/19/2010			Testing Programs—Math Assessment
FB	X	7/14/2020	X	7/14/2020	Equal Educational Opportunity
FNCE	X	10/11/2019	X	5/8/2019	Student Conduct—Personal Telecommunications/Electronic Devices
GA	X	10/11/2019			Access to Programs, Services, and Activities

Source: Policies provided by Lake Travis Independent School District website

The auditors analyzed the policies listed in the exhibit above and rated them against the 25 Curriculum Management Improvement Model characteristics related to the audit's 5 focus areas—District Vision and Accountability, Curriculum, Consistency and Equity, Feedback, and Productivity. The next exhibit presents information about the auditors' ratings relative to the characteristics. For adequacy, 18 of the 25 characteristics (70%) must be present. For each focus area, 70% of the characteristics must be present for policies to be adequate. **Appendix E** gives a more detailed explanation for each of the criteria and characteristics for quality policies in focus areas one through five.

Exhibit 1.1.2: Characteristics of Good Policies/Regulations on Curriculum Management

Written Directive Statements—Policies/Regulations which…	Relevant Policy	Auditors' Rating
Focus Area One: DISTRICT VISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY		
1.1 Philosophical statements of the district instructional approach	AE, AIB, AID, EA, EHAA, EIA	X
1.2 A taught and assessed curriculum that is aligned to the district's written curriculum	AE, EHAA, EHAB	
1.3 Board adoption of the written curriculum	AE	
1.4 Accountability for the alignment of the written, taught, and tested (WTT) curriculum through a clearly defined organizational structure and corresponding roles and responsibilities	AE, BJA, DC, DNA, DNB	
1.5 Long-range, system-wide planning	AF, AIA, AIB, BJA, BQ, BQA, BQB	X
Focus Area One Total Met		**2/5**
Focus Area One Total Percentage Met		**40%**
Focus Area Two: CURRICULUM		
2.1 Written curriculum that defines the content that must be learned and provides suggestions for how to support that learning in congruence with district vision	AE, EHAA	P*
2.2 Periodic review/update of the curriculum and aligned resources and assessments	EF, EFA	
2.3 Textbook/resource alignment to curriculum and assessment	EF, EFA	
2.4 Content area emphasis	DMA, EA, EHAA	X
2.5 Program integration and alignment to the district's written curriculum	EHB, EHBA, EHBB, EHBC, EHBD, EHBE, EHBK	
Focus Area Two Total Met		**1/5**
Focus Area Two Total Percentage Met		**20%**
Focus Area Three: CONSISTENCY AND EQUITY		
3.1 Delivery of the adopted district curriculum	AE, EA, EHAA, EHAB	
3.2 Professional development for staff in the delivery of the district curriculum	DMA, EHAA	
3.3 Monitoring, coaching, and supporting the delivery of the district curriculum	DNA	
3.4 Student access to the curriculum, resources, programs, and services	BJA, EHBA, EHBB, EHBD, FB, GA	X
3.5 Equitable and bias-free educational environment	FB, GA	X
Total Met Focus Area Three		**2/5**
Focus Area Three Total Percentage Met		**40%**

Written Directive Statements—Policies/Regulations which…	Relevant Policy	Auditors' Rating
Focus Area Four: FEEDBACK		
4.1 A comprehensive system to assess student learning, monitor progress, and diagnose student learning needs	AIA, AIB, EK, EKB, EKBA, EKC, EKD, EHBA, EHBB	X
4.2 A program assessment process	EHB, EHBA, EHBB, EHBC, EHBD, EHBE	
4.3 Use of data from assessments to determine effectiveness of instruction and programs	EHB, EHBA, EHBB, EHBC, EHBD, EHBE	
4.4 Reports to the board about program effectiveness	EHB, EHBA, EHBB, EHBC, EHBD, EHBE	
Focus Area Four Total Met		**1/4**
Focus Area Four Total Percentage Met		**25%**
Focus Area Five: PRODUCTIVITY		
5.1 Program-centered budgeting that is responsive to planning and system priorities	CE, CMD, CQ, CQC, EF	
5.2 Resource allocation tied to curriculum priorities	CE, CMD, CQ, CQC, EF	
5.3 Environment to support curriculum delivery	AE, CE, CMD, CQ, CQC, EF	X
5.4 Support systems focused on curriculum design and delivery	CE, CMD, CQ, CQC, EF, EFA	
5.5 Data-driven decisions for the purpose of increasing student learning	AIA, AIB, BQ, BQA, BQB, EK, EKB, EKBA, EKC, EKD, EHBA, EHBB	X
5.6 Change processes for long-term institutionalization of district priority goals	AE, EA, EF, EHAA	
Focus Area Five Total Met		**2/6**
Focus Area Five Total Percentage Met		**33%**
Overall Total Met		**8/25**
Overall Total Percentage Met		**32%**
Key: X = Met, P = Partially Met, Blank = Not Met		
*Partial ratings are counted as not met when determining overall percentage of adequacy.		

Overall, 32% of the board policies met characteristics of sound policies for curriculum management. The following analysis is intended to clarify the auditors' ratings within each of the focus areas.

Focus Area One: District Vision and Accountability

Policy AE provides the mission, goals, and objectives for public education in the state of Texas. The local policy states the mission of Lake Travis ISD. The district mission statement calls for the district to serve as

a model of educational excellence and for graduates with lifelong problem-solving skills. One objective is to provide a "well-balanced and appropriate curriculum to all students." *Policy EHAA* describes the purpose of the public school curriculum, specifically requiring the use of founding documents of the United States to be used as part of the instructional materials. The policies do not, however, provide for board adoption of the written curriculum, nor do they require the taught and tested curriculum to align with the written curriculum. Roles are generally described for educators to prepare students and to "keep abreast of the development of creative and innovative techniques in instruction" and "using those techniques to improve student learning," but policies do not require the alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum through a clearly defined organizational structure. *Policy AF* calls for long-range planning for designation as a district of innovation, *Policy AIA* requires a local accountability plan, and *Policy AID* describes a district plan for Title I grants. These plans call for addressing disparities and monitoring students' progress in meeting state standards, but do not address alignment of written, taught, and tested curriculum. *Policy BQ* requires the board to "adopt a policy to establish district- and campus-level planning and decision-making process that will involve the professional staff of a district, parents of students enrolled in a district, business representatives, and community members in establishing and reviewing the district's and campuses' educational programs." Two of the five characteristics (40%) are met. This focus area is not adequately addressed in policy.

Focus Area Two: Curriculum

Policies AE and EHAA list required courses in foundation curriculum as "English language arts and reading, mathematics, science, and social studies." They also list enrichment requirements in languages other than English, health, physical education, fine arts, career and technical education, technology applications, religious literature's impact on history and literature, and personal financial literacy. In addition, digital citizenship and positive character traits are to be taught using the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for those areas. *Policy EHAA* also requires a district to provide instruction in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills at appropriate grade levels. Policies do not provide suggestions for how to support that learning in congruence with district vision. *Policy EF* requires that instructional resources "enrich and support the curriculum," but does not address alignment to assessment or curriculum, nor does it require periodic review or update of the curriculum or instructional materials. Policies describe several special programs and interventions; however, they do not address alignment to the district's written curriculum. One of the five characteristics (20%) is met. This focus area is not adequately addressed in policy.

Focus Area Three: Consistency and Equity

Policy EHAA requires that a district shall "provide instruction in the essential knowledge and skills" and lists courses required to be offered, but does not provide for delivery of the district written curriculum. No provision in policies is present for professional development regarding delivery of the curriculum. *Policy DMA* requires specific training in the areas of technology, health, gifted education, and mental health issues, but does not address delivery of curriculum in academic subjects. *Policy DNA* addresses teacher appraisal in a procedural way, as related to frequency, access, and confidentiality. Other than "how the individual teacher's students progress academically in response to the teacher's pedagogical practice as measured at the individual teacher level by one or more student growth measures," no mention is made of curriculum delivery monitoring or coaching. Several policies address equitable student access to curriculum and programs and bias-free environment for learning, especially *Policy FB* and *Policy GA*. These policies require "equal opportunities for all individuals" and prohibit any employee of the district to "refuse to permit any student to participate in any school program because of the student's race, religion, color, sex, or national origin." Further requirements against discrimination due to

age or disability are also included. Two of the five characteristics (40%) are met. This focus area is not adequately addressed in policy.

Focus Area Four: Feedback

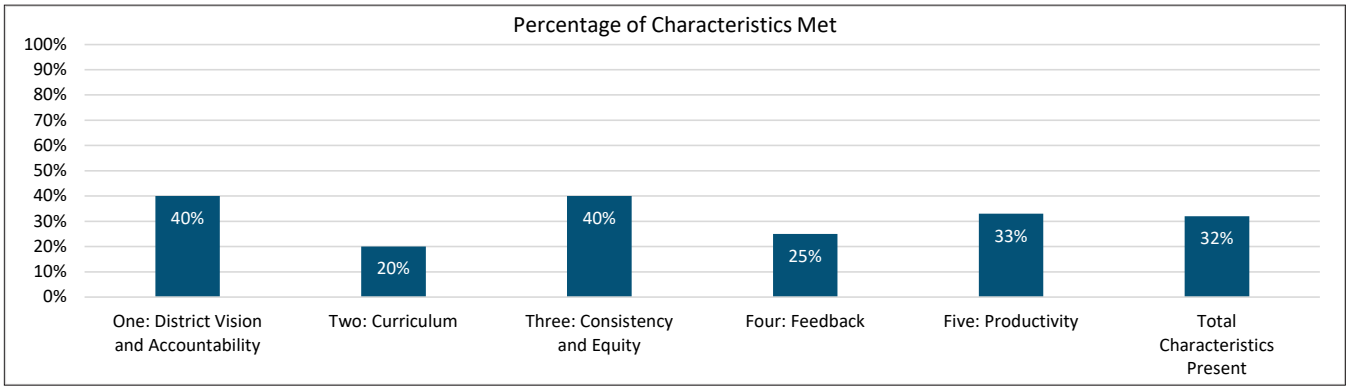
Policies establish testing programs for districts that include state assessments in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies at various grade levels. In addition, screening assessment is required in early grades for dyslexia and related disorders. Students are identified for gifted and talented programming through assessment, and English language learners are also assessed. Policies that require assessment for various groups of students in educational programs do not, however, require program assessment to determine the effectiveness of programs. These policies also do not require reporting to the school board regarding program effectiveness. One of the four characteristics (25%) is met. This focus area is not adequately addressed in policy.

Focus Area Five: Productivity

Policies related to budgeting and programming are procedural in nature and do not address program-centered budgeting or resources tied to curriculum priorities. Data-driven decision making and specific change strategies for improvement are also not required by policy. An objective in *Policy AE* states, "School campuses will maintain a safe and disciplined environment conducive to student learning." *Policy BQ* lists "resources needed to implement identified strategies" as one of the required components of the district improvement plan. *Policy CE (Local)* requires input from district and campus planning committees. The policy does not address budgeting tied to curriculum priorities. Policies also do not address support systems focused on curriculum design and delivery. Policies related to assessment processes do require data-driven decisions for the purpose of increasing student learning. Change processes are not addressed in policies. Two of the six characteristics (33%) are met. This focus area is not adequately addressed in policy.

The next exhibit provides a summary of the auditors' ratings of Lake Travis ISD's board policy by focus area.

Exhibit 1.1.3: Summary Ratings of the Auditors' Analysis of Board Policy to Determine Quality and Degree of Adequacy

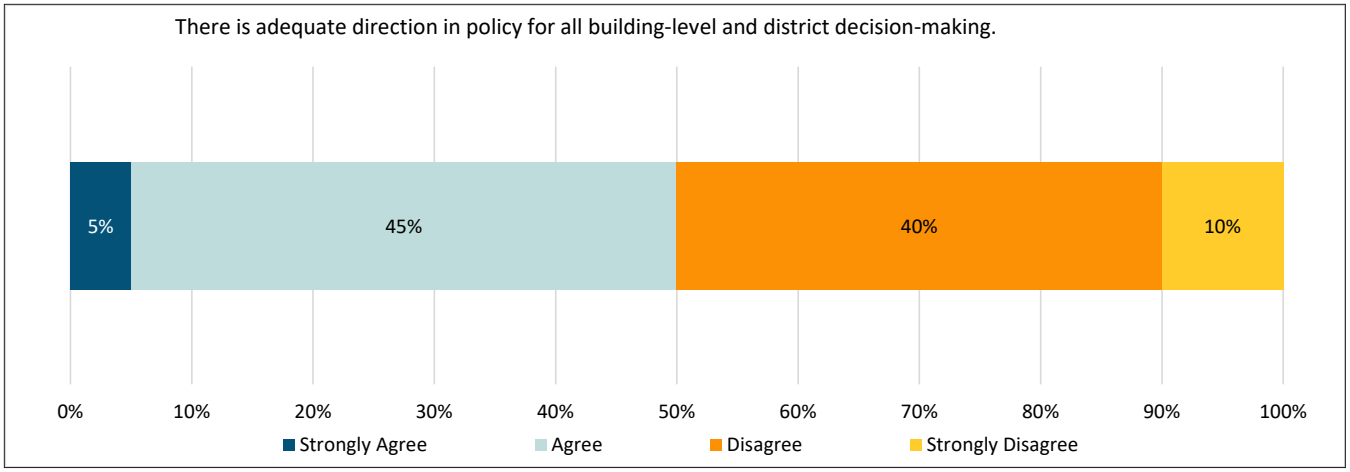


The lowest rating is for Focus Area Two: Curriculum. The highest rating of 40% is for both Focus Area One: District Vision and Accountability and Focus Area Three: Consistency and Equity. The overall rating of Lake Travis ISD's board policies is 32%, below the 70% required for adequacy. Overall, the auditors found that Lake Travis ISD policies do not adequately provide needed guidance for directing a standards-based curriculum and data-driven decision making.

Use of Policies

The auditors learned through interviews that the superintendent presents new policies and changes to policies at board meetings, and the board then takes action to approve them. Information regarding new or changed policies is then disseminated to campus administrators at principals' and assistant principals' meetings led by the department of curriculum and instruction. On the administrator survey auditors distributed during the audit, 42 respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement with the statement, "There is adequate direction in policy for all building-level and district decision making." The following exhibit shows the results.

Exhibit 1.1.4: Administrators' Responses Regarding Adequacy of Direction in Policy for Decision Making



Half of the 42 administrators responding to this survey question agreed and half disagreed that there is adequate direction in policy for making decisions. Comments from administrators related to the survey question follows:

- "I think policy is ok. The need exists more with procedures and practices."
- "This is not clear at all at the district decision-making level."
- "Things are not based on policy."

If policies are not found useful for making decisions, they are likely not used for the purposes of guiding the work of the district. When policies are too broad and do not give enough guidance for administrators, decisions affecting district work become inconsistent and less effective (see **Recommendation 1**).

Planning

Quality planning is a critical component of governance and management leadership in school systems intent on meeting goals for successful learning and achievement, as well as for effective operations across the system. The planning function typically involves a variety of stakeholders who develop goals, strategies, and recommended actions that speak to current data as well as future projections. A quality planning process is based in both board policy and a vision of the future; it is data-driven and in concert with the budgeting process and professional learning; and it must be a collaborative effort requiring deliberate day-to-day fluid decision making.

Effective districts have written plans to address long-range strategic goals and actions, curriculum management, professional development, technology, and assessment processes. For the purposes of

this audit of curriculum and instruction, auditors addressed the long-range strategic plan and district improvement plan in **Finding 1.1**, the curriculum management plan in **Finding 2.1**, professional development plan in **Finding 3.3**, the technology plan in **Finding 5.1**, and the assessment plan in **Finding 4.1**. District job descriptions give the superintendent "administrative responsibility and leadership for the planning and organization" in the district. A responsibility in the job description of the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction is to "develop, implement, and evaluate the District Improvement Plan" to ensure that it is congruent with and supportive of the District's Strategic Plan." Job descriptions for most administrative positions contain references to planning as part of their duties.

To determine the quality, effect, and relevance of district plans within the Lake Travis Independent School District, the auditors reviewed policies and other planning documents and conducted interviews with administrators, board members, and teachers. The following documents were reviewed for this finding:

- Lake Travis ISD Mission and Vision Statements
- Board Policies and Goals
- *Lake Travis ISD Strategic Plan* (summary statement)
- *Lake Travis ISD Strategic Plan Draft*
- *One Community Strategy Planning Canvas*
- *Best In Class Education Strategy Planning Canvas*
- *Lake Travis ISD District Improvement Plan 2022*
- Various campus improvement plans for 2022

Auditors found the *Lake Travis ISD District Improvement Plan 2022* and the campus improvement plans are based upon and include the same goals and strategies as the *Lake Travis ISD Strategic Plan Draft.* District administrators indicate that the *Lake Travis ISD Strategic Plan* is now in a new planning cycle beginning with the *Lake Travis ISD Strategic Plan Draft.* Plans in progress are illustrated in the *One Community Strategy Planning Canvas* and the *Best in Class Education Strategy Planning Canvas.* Auditors used the Curriculum Management Improvement Model (CMIM) criteria to determine the quality of the *Lake Travis ISD District Improvement Plan 2022, Lake Travis ISD Strategic Plan Draft,* and the planning canvases. The next exhibit lists the criteria of quality plans and auditors' ratings. For adequate quality planning, 12 of the 17 (70%) criteria must be met.

Exhibit 1.1.5: CMIM Planning Criteria and Rating of District Strategic Plan

District Improvement or Strategic Planning Criteria	Auditors' Rating
Planning Process:	
1. **Directed by written expectations**: The governing board has placed into policy the expectation that the superintendent and staff collectively discuss the future, and that this thinking should take some tangible form without prescribing a particular template, allowing for flexibility as needed.	X
2. **Responsive to vision:** Leadership has implicit or explicit vision of the general direction in which the organization is going for improvement purposes. That vision emerges from having considered needs and the future changes required, within the context of the organization, and relevant to the teaching and learning process.	X
3. **Based on data:** Data are considered and inform the planning process, vision, and system directions/initiatives.	P*
4. **Drives daily decision making:** Leadership makes day-to-day decisions regarding the implicit or explicit direction of the system and facilitates movement toward the planned direction.	
5. **Is emergent and fluid:** Leadership adjusts to discrepancies between current status and desired status, facilitates movement toward the desired status, and is fluid in planning efforts (emergent in nature).	X
6. **Is collaborative and coordinated:** Staff members are involved in a purposeful way throughout various aspects of the planning processes (in multiple capacities), and are aware of their role in implementing the district vision and direction (goals).	X
Plan Quality and Alignment:	
7. **Clear and measurable:** The plan has focused goals that are clear and measurable, incorporate research, and are focused on the areas of greatest need.	X
8. **Reasonable and feasible:** The plan is reasonable; it has a feasible number of goals and objectives for the resources (financial, time, people) available. The number of strategies and supportive actions are also feasible in the time allotted.	P*
9. **Implementation strategies:** The plan includes specific actions that, based on research, are likely to realize or accomplish the change needed. Actions are explicit; they are clear and measurable and clearly support implementation.	
10. **Capacity building:** The plan clearly delineates supports needed for actions or strategies to be implemented effectively and for the vision to be sustained, such as professional development, coaching, orientation, resources, etc.	
11. **Internal reliability and congruence:** All goals and actions within the plan are congruent with one another and work in coordination to accomplish overarching goals.	X
Plan Implementation and Evaluation:	
12. **Aligned professional development:** Professional development endeavors are aligned to system planning goals and initiatives.	
13. **Budget:** Budget planning for change is done in concert with other planning, with goals and actions from those plans driving the budget planning.	
14. **Accountability:** Each action/strategy is assigned to a specific person or department with a suggested timeline for completion.	

District Improvement or Strategic Planning Criteria	Auditors' Rating
15. **Evaluation plan and implementation:** There is a written plan to evaluate whether the objectives of the plan have been met (not to evaluate whether or not the activities have taken place). Evaluation components of plans are actions to be implemented; plans are evaluated for their effects or results, and they are then modified as needed. There is both frequent formative evaluation and annual summative evaluation, so that plans are revised as needed.	
16. **Monitoring:** Systems are in place and are being implemented for assessing the status of activities, analyzing the results, and reporting the outcomes that take place as the plan is designed and implemented.	
17. **System-wide coordination of effort:** There is evidence that all departments, campuses, and levels of the system are working in congruence toward the shared mission, vision, and goals of the district.	
Total Met	**6/17**
Percentage Met	**35%**
Key: X = Met, P = Partially Met, Blank = Not Met	
*Partial ratings are counted as not met when determining overall percentage of adequacy.	

Six of the 17 (35%) criteria were met, below the 70% needed to be adequate for quality planning. District leadership indicated their intent to continue the development of the strategic plan to include the missing elements. The following analysis is intended to clarify the auditors' ratings.

Section 1: Planning Process

Four of the six criteria in this section are met. *Board Policy BQ* directs the district's planning process and expectations. The district has developed vision and mission statements and the *Lake Travis Strategic Plan Draft.* The planning canvases for two of the goal areas indicate an active planning process. The *Lake Travis ISD District Improvement Plan 2022* as well as campus improvement plans were developed using the strategic plan goals with added performance objectives and strategies. The strategic plan and improvement plans have five focus areas:

Focus Area 1: Are One Community

Focus Area 2: Each Belong

Focus Area 3: Provide Best in Class Education

Focus Area 4: Grow and Innovate Together

Focus Area 5: Prioritize Wellness

The auditors were not presented with evidence that these focus areas were developed based on data; however, the focus areas are also present in the *Lake Travis ISD District Improvement Plan 2022,* which contains performance objectives and strategies based on state testing data. In focus areas 3 and 4, strategies include regularly analyzing data. Because the strategic plan is still in development, no evidence was presented to auditors indicating that it drives daily decision making at this point in time. The plan is emergent and fluid in nature as it is in process of development. In addition, the goals in the district improvement plan for the current year were changed from the previous year to reflect those in the strategic plan. Committees of stakeholders are involved in the development of the plan in an organized and collaborative way as the plan is developing. Future plans include adding tasks to the objectives and strategies, with roles assigned to personnel to implement specific tasks.

Section 2: Plan Quality and Alignment

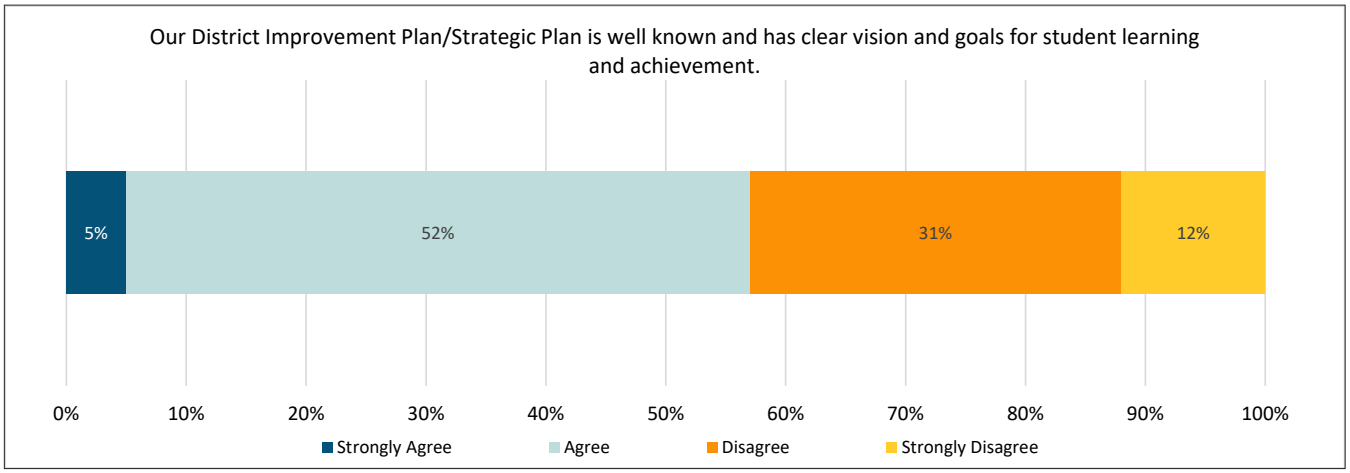
Two of the five criteria in this section are met, and one is partially met. The strategic plan has five broad focus areas listed above in **Section 1.** Each focus area has from one to three performance objectives, and each performance objective has from one to three goals. The goals are clear and measurable. The objectives and strategies are reasonable and feasible as listed in the improvement plans, but are not developed for the strategic plan. Implementation strategies with specific tasks are still to be developed. Planning canvases contain more details regarding actions and success indicators, but these are still broad, using terms such as "increase," "decrease," and "have opportunities" without specificity. The plan does not contain plans for professional development, coaching, orientation, or resources for building capacity and for effective implementation at this point. Goals and actions within the plan are congruent with one another and are incorporated into the district and campus improvement plans for internal reliability.

Section 3: Plan Implementation and Evaluation

None of the criteria in this section are met. The district does not have a professional development plan to ensure alignment of professional development endeavors to the goals and strategies of the strategic plan. There is no evidence that the goals and actions from plans drive budget planning. Strategies are not broken down into tasks nor assigned to a specific person with a timeline for completion. There is no written plan to evaluate whether the objectives of the plan have been met, nor evaluation components of goals or strategies to be implemented. The plan includes strategies with the objectives, but there is no provision for the plan to be evaluated for effects or results or modified as needed. There is no provision in the plan for either frequent formative evaluation or annual summative evaluation for either goals or strategies. Auditors did not find evidence that systems are in place to be implemented for assessing the status of activities, analyzing results, and reporting the outcomes that take place as the plan is designed and implemented.

On the administrator survey, 42 respondents indicated degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement, "Our district improvement plan/strategic plan is well known and has clear vision and goals for student learning and achievement." The following exhibit illustrates the percentage of responses.

Exhibit 1.1.6: Administrator Responses Regarding District Improvement Plan/Strategic Plan



More than half (57%) of the 42 administrators who responded indicated agreement with the statement; 43% indicated disagreement.

Administrators' comments related to this survey item follow:

- "I know about it from being part of the committee, but I haven't seen it communicated in any way since August."
- "I do not know what the plan is."
- "Clear goals, but may not be well known."
- "This has not been a priority for a long time."

In interviews, auditors heard other comments about district planning.

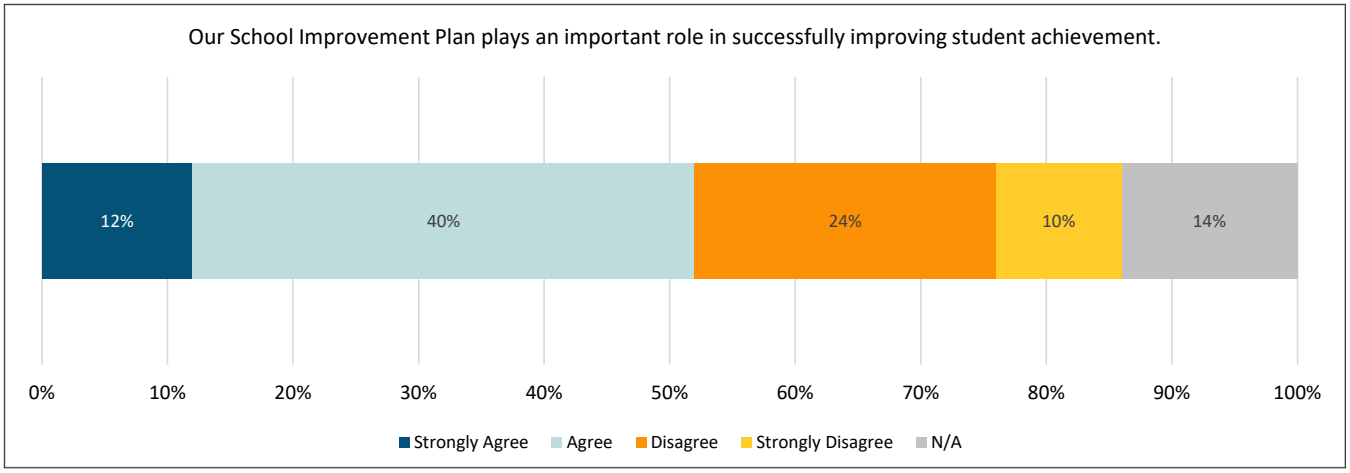
- "I am very excited about the strategic planning because the community drove the definition of the pillars. We will include community members as we develop the plan to make sure we are driving in the right direction." (Board Member)
- "We are exactly like we were 10 to 15 years ago [concerning planning]." (District Administrator)
- "We have the district improvement plan and use it to help meet those goals with our campus improvement plan." (Campus Administrator)

Teachers were posed the same statement on the teacher survey, and the results were very similar, but with slightly lower percentages regarding disagreement or strong disagreement. Instead, 22% of teachers responded, "Don't Know." Many comments from teachers on this survey item were similar to those of administrators. A few typical comments:

- "I have no knowledge of the District Improvement Plan/Strategic Plan."
- "I haven't seen the District Improvement Plan."
- "I don't know what this is referring to."
- "It is well known, but they don't give you the steps to achieve."

Administrators and teachers were also asked on their respective surveys about their school improvement plan's role in improving student achievement. The following two exhibits show the results for administrator and teacher responses, respectively.

Exhibit 1.1.7: Administrator Responses to Survey Prompt on Role of School Improvement Plan

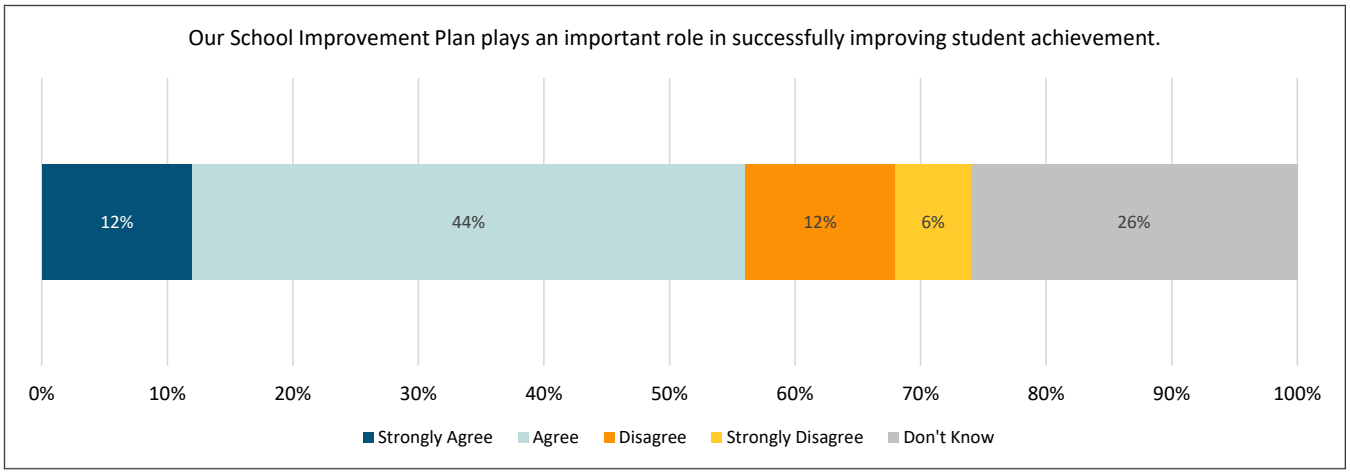


Administrators (42 responses) more often agreed or strongly agreed (52%) than disagreed or strongly disagreed (34%) that their School Improvement Plan plays an important role in improving student achievement. Administrators also provided comments.

- "Historically, the plans have not been leveraged as a useful tool."
- "It is often done as a compliance only and not a living document."
- "The plan is not posted in buildings and is seldom referenced by administration, including myself."
- "This is not communicated to teachers."

Teachers were asked the same question, with 394 teachers responding. The following exhibit shows their responses.

Exhibit 1.1.8: Teacher Responses Related to School Improvement Plan



Teachers also more often responded Agree or Strongly Agree (56%) than Disagree or Strongly Disagree (18%). More teachers didn't know (26%) than did administrators (14% in the previous exhibit). Teachers also provided comments.

- "I'm not sure if our school has one; it's unclear what our school wants to improve on."
- "This has not been shared with us."
- "Student achievement is already good so how much does an improvement plan impact that?"
- "Since it is never talked about, I'm going to say it's not important."
- "If our plan is the 'Learner Centric Model' or the 'Four Pillars'—those are big and theoretical more than concrete, measurable objectives."

Without specificity, long-range plans do not provide enough direction to guide daily decision making in the district. Connectivity among all district plans, such as the strategic plan, the district and campus improvement plans, plans for curriculum management, technology, professional development, and assessment, is critical to effective implementation of the district's goals to impact student achievement. Communication of plans is critical for district administrators and teachers to have an understanding of common goals and direction that influence their daily work and decision-making.

Summary

Overall, the auditors found that policies and plans do not direct curriculum design and delivery of the written, taught, and assessed curriculum. The auditors found that policies did not provide direction for district vision and accountability, curriculum, consistency and equity, feedback, or productivity of curriculum management. Without specificity, long-range plans do not provide enough direction to guide daily decision making in the district. Connectivity among all district plans is critical to effectively implement the district's goals to impact student achievement. Written plans and planning processes ensure continuity of practice from year to year and whenever changes in district staff occur. Communication of the content of policies and plans is critical to achieving common knowledge and practices that lead to consistency and effectiveness of daily decisions (see **Recommendation 1**).

Finding 1.2: The personnel organizational chart and job descriptions do not provide a clearly defined organizational structure with corresponding roles and responsibilities. Systems are not in place to direct critical district functions.

Human capital is a school district's most strategic resource. An organizational chart gives district leaders a view of how the district's human capital is structured. With a well-designed organizational chart, leaders can determine if the workforce is strategically deployed to accomplish the educational mission and can monitor and maintain the structure in support of the mission. Job descriptions give substance to the information on the organizational chart. Well-written job descriptions give leaders a basis for assuring each position in the district is strategically defined to play a unique and necessary role in the overall educational mission. Systems and procedures provide personnel with direction and ensure coordination and continuity across critical functions of the district.

To determine the adequacy of Lake Travis Independent School District (ISD) organizational structures, auditors reviewed board policy, organizational charts, job descriptions, and planning documents. They also interviewed and surveyed staff about their roles and job descriptions. The information gathered was rated against Curriculum Management Improvement Model (CMIM) principles of sound organizational management.

Overall, auditors found Lake Travis ISD places a high value on the quality of their employees as indicated by staff during interviews and on surveys when asked about strengths of the district.

- "We have some great leadership in curriculum and instruction." (Teacher)
- "We have rock star teachers and rock star administrators." (Board Member)
- "The staff is well trained and has high expectations for their own performance." (Campus Administrator)
- "Strong teachers, supportive community, and excellent students." (Campus Administrator)
- "Human resources, including staff, students, and community." (District Administrator)

However, the district's organizational chart and job descriptions do not provide leadership with the information needed to manage personnel efficiently and effectively. Systems and procedures are not in place to ensure critical district functions are carried out in the most efficient and effective way and continuity is maintained when changes in personnel occur.

Finding 1.1 (Exhibit 1.1.2) indicates auditors did not find policy requiring an organizational chart or job descriptions. *Policy DC (Local)* requires the Superintendent to "define the qualifications, duties and responsibilities of all positions and shall ensure that job descriptions are current and accessible to

employees and supervisors." Policies provide for long-range, system-wide planning, but do not specify systems and procedures to be in place for guiding district functions.

The remainder of this finding consists of three sections:

- Organizational Charts
- Job Descriptions
- Systems

Serene Hills Elementary kindergarten teacher with small group

Organizational Charts

Auditors were provided with a district organizational chart consisting of a main page showing departments and seven pages depicting each department's chart in more detail. Charts were consistently formatted, but did not include all positions, such as teachers or assistant principals.

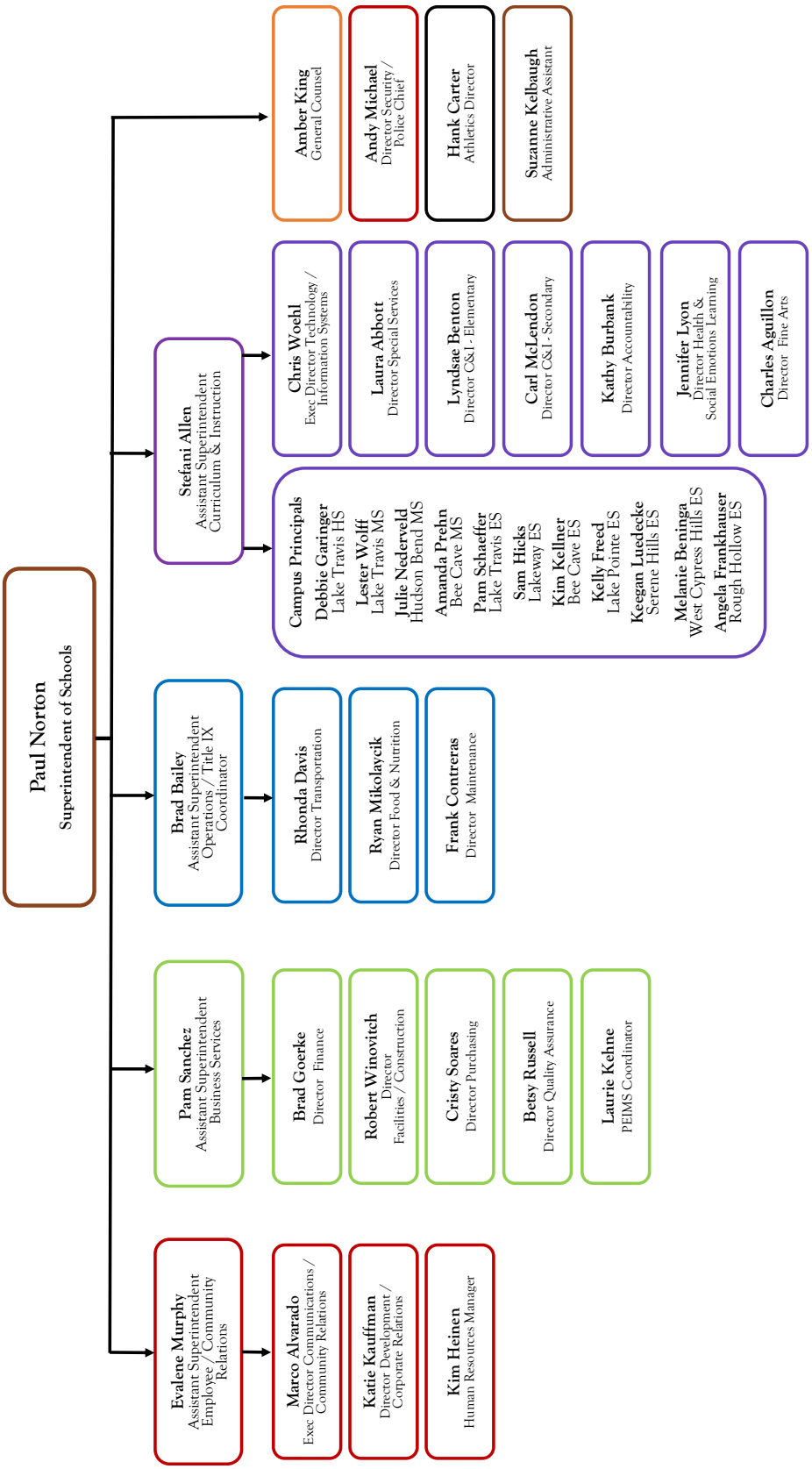
The following exhibit lists the eight charts provided to auditors, including the title of the department represented at the top of each chart and the charts selected for review.

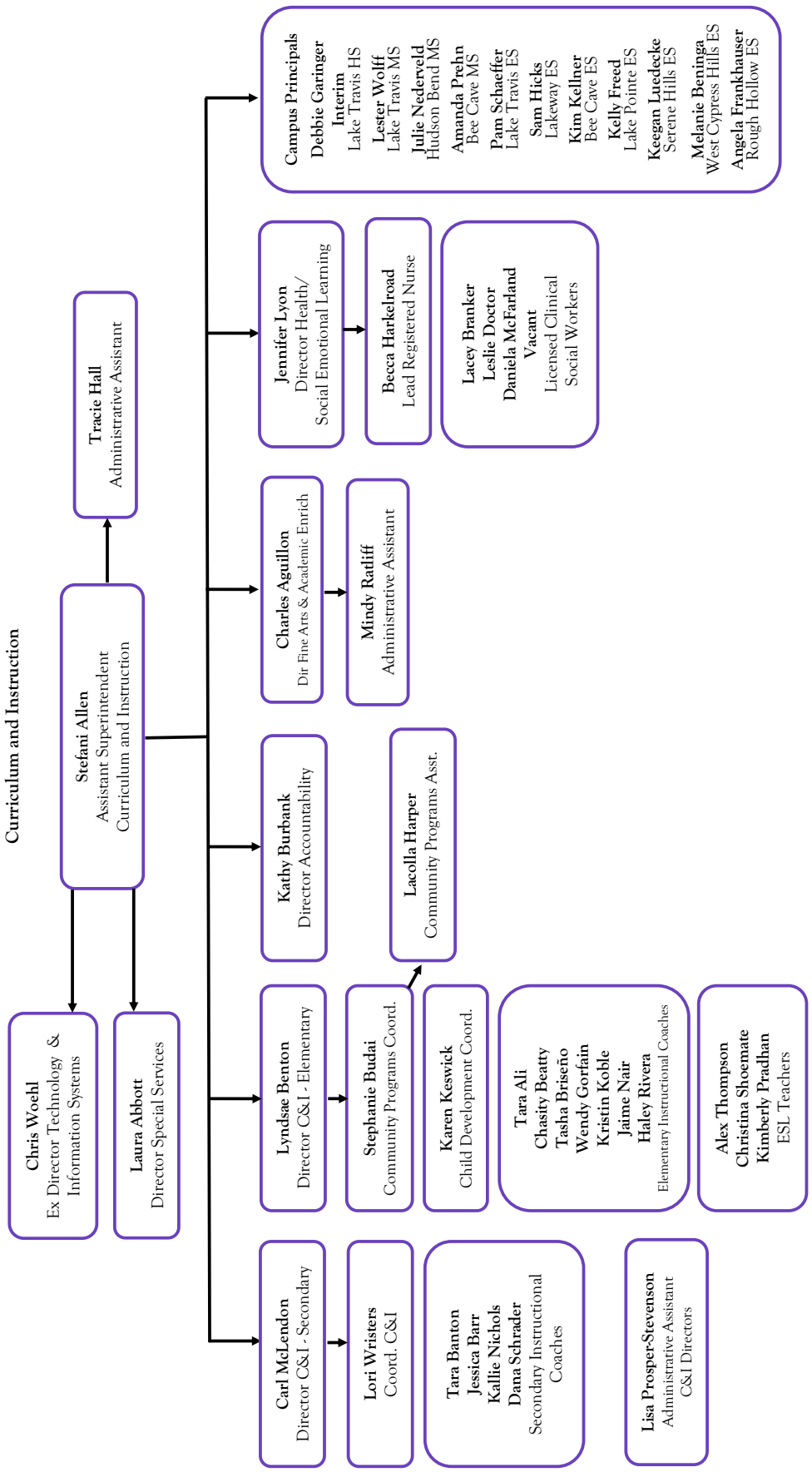
Exhibit 1.2.1: Organizational Charts Provided to Auditors

Leadership Position	Chart Provided	Chart Selected for Review
Superintendent of Schools	X	X
Employee and Community Relations	X	
Business Services	X	
Operations and Safety	X	
Curriculum and Instruction	X	X
Technology and Information Systems	X	
Special Services	X	
Athletics	X	

The Superintendent of Schools and the Curriculum and Instruction organizational charts selected for analysis are shown in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 1.2.2: Organizational Charts Selected for Analysis




Curriculum and Instruction
Stefani Allen
Assistant Superintendent
Curriculum and Instruction
Tracie Hall
Administrative Assistant
Chris Woehl
Ex Director Technology & Information Systems
Laura Abbott
Director Special Services
Campus Principals
Debbie Garinger
Interim
Lake Travis HS
Lester Wolff
Lake Travis MS
Julie Nederveld
Hudson Bend MS
Amanda Prehn
Bee Cave MS
Pam Schaeffer
Lake Travis ES
Sam Hicks
Lakeway ES
Kim Kellner
Bee Cave ES
Kelly Freed
Lake Pointe ES
Keegan Luedecke
Serene Hills ES
Melanie Beninga
West Cypress Hills ES
Angela Frankhauser
Rough Hollow ES
Jennifer Lyon
Director Health/ Social Emotional Learning
Becca Harkelroad
Lead Registered Nurse
Lacey Branker
Leslie Doctor
Daniela McFarland
Vacant
Licensed Clinical Social Workers
Charles Aguillon
Dir Fine Arts & Academic Enrich
Mindy Radliff
Administrative Assistant
Kathy Burbank
Director Accountability
Lacolla Harper
Community Programs Asst.
Lyndsae Benton
Director C&I - Elementary
Stephanie Budai
Community Programs Coord.
Karen Keswick
Child Development Coord.
Tara Ali
Chasity Beatty
Tasha Briseño
Wendy Gorfain
Kristin Koble
Jaime Nair
Haley Rivera
Elementary Instructional Coaches
Alex Thompson
Christina Shoemate
Kimberly Pradhan
ESL Teachers
Carl McLendon
Director C&I - Secondary
Lori Wristers
Coord. C&I
Tara Banton
Jessica Barr
Kallie Nichols
Dana Schrader
Secondary Instructional Coaches
Lisa Prosper-Stevenson
Administrative Assistant
C&I Directors

To assess the quality of the district's organizational charts, auditors analyzed the Superintendent of Schools chart and the Curriculum and Instruction chart against the CMIM principles of sound organizational management shown in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 1.2.3: Curriculum Management Improvement Model Principles of Sound Organizational Management

Principle	Explanation
Span of Control	The range of superiors to subordinates should be 7-12 as a maximum number of persons who are supervised on a daily face-to-face-basis.
Chain of Command	A person should have only one superior to avoid their being placed in a compromised decision-making situation.
Logical Grouping of Functions	The clustering of similar duties/tasks is employed in order to keep supervisory needs to a minimum (ensuring economy of scale).
Separation of Line and Staff Functions	Those administrators carrying out the primary mission of the district are not confused with those supporting it. Also, note that in reporting relationships, line administrators report only to other line administrators, never staff administrators. This keeps the line of accountability for the primary mission of the district uncomplicated.
Scalar Relationships	Roles of the same title and remuneration should be depicted graphically on the same general horizontal plane.
Full Inclusion	All persons working within the district carrying out its essential functions should be depicted on the table of organization.
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The auditors' analysis of the district's organizational chart is explained below. Comments refer to both the Superintendent of Schools and the Curriculum and Instruction charts.

Span of Control

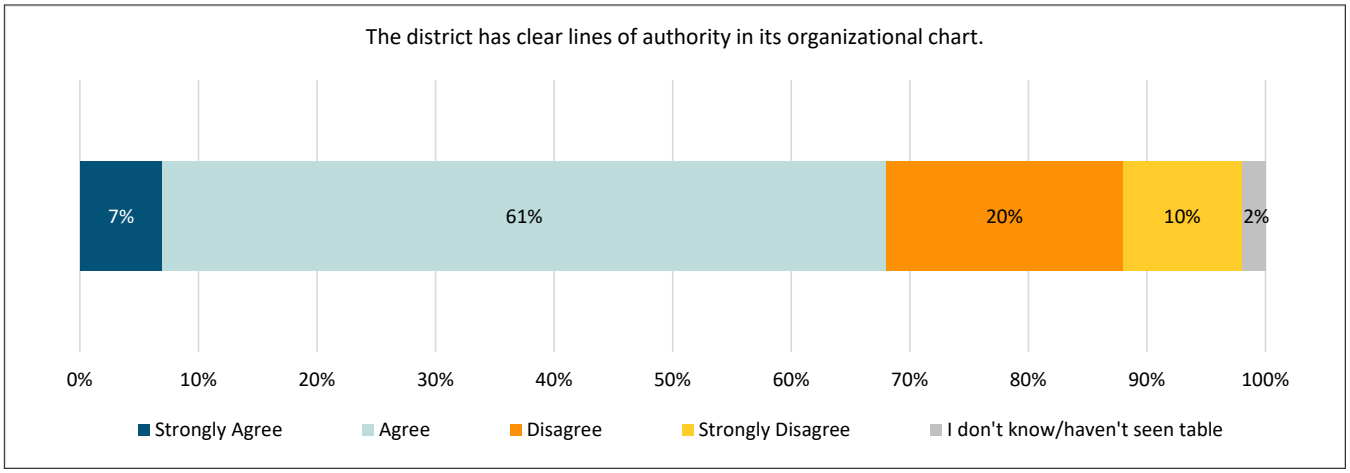
To determine the span of control, auditors counted the number of immediate subordinate positions shown for each position on the Superintendent of Schools and on the Curriculum and Instruction organizational charts. The range is from 3 to 18 subordinate positions. One position, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, exceeded the standard maximum of 12 direct reports. The Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction supervises 1 Executive Director, 6 Directors, and 11 principals, totaling 18 subordinate positions. Director positions supervise subordinate positions ranging from 0 to 12. The Director of Fine Arts and Academic Enrichment and the Director of Accountability have no subordinate positions, while the Director of C & I for Elementary supervises 12 positions, including 2 coordinators, 7 instructional coaches, and 3 ESL teachers. The Director of C & I for Secondary supervises five positions including one coordinator and four instructional coaches. The district's organizational chart was rated as not meeting the CMIM principle for span of control.

Chain of Command

The display of departments under cabinet-level administrators on the organizational charts represents the chain of command; however, the lack of links between some staff groups causes some confusion about to whom a group reports. For example, the group of elementary instructional coaches appear in a block that is not connected to another block. It could appear they report to the position represented immediately above them, the Child Development Coordinator, when they actually report to the Director of C & I Elementary. This lack of links between groups of positions is also true on other charts not included in the analysis, such as Technology and Special Services.

Staff perceptions of the organizational chart were mixed. In online surveys, 41 district and campus administrators responded to questions about the organizational chart. The following exhibit shows the percentages of responses to each level of agreement.

Exhibit 1.2.4: Administrator Responses to Survey Prompt Regarding Organizational Chart



Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents agreed, but 30% disagreed that the district has clear lines of authority in its organizational chart. A few (2%) said they did not know or had not seen the chart. Comments regarding the organization chart included the following:

- "I think there are still several misconceptions about who to contact when and who oversees which operations in the district."
- "There is an organizational table but there is still confusion."
- "We are still in a period of transition. Some lines of authority are not clear."
- "The chart has changed multiple times since I've been with the district."
- "We need a clear chain of command for administrators."

The district's organizational chart was rated as not meeting the CMIM principle for chain of command.

Logical Grouping of Functions

Departments are grouped on the organizational charts according to their functions. Positions with similar tasks and duties are grouped with departments that reflect those tasks. One exception is the Executive Director of Technology and Information Systems who reports to the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction when all positions shown on the Technology and Information Systems organizational chart are engineers, systems administrators, and technicians. With no instructional technologists in the department, it would be better positioned with operations. If there is a plan in the district to add instructional technologists who would support teachers in instructional applications of technology in classrooms, the department is correctly positioned with Curriculum and Instruction. The district's organizational chart was rated as not meeting the CMIM principle for logical grouping of functions.

Separation of Line and Staff

Line administrators connect the superintendent to staff who execute the district's central mission, and staff administrators support line functions. In Lake Travis ISD, line and staff positions both report to the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction enroute to the Superintendent. In rating the principle of separation of line and staff functions, auditors also consider the number of administrative levels between the superintendent and the principals. With each additional level, the district's control over effective delivery of curriculum is weakened. The current organizational structure has one level, the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. In a district of a little over 11,000 students, auditors consider one intermediary level optimal. The district's organizational chart was rated as not meeting the CMIM principle for separation of line and staff.

Scalar Relationships

There are several instances on the organizational charts where positions that are not equal in title or responsibility are shown on the same general horizontal plane. On the Superintendent of Schools organizational chart, Executive Directors and Directors are depicted side by side. Principals are depicted on the same plane as both Executive Directors and Directors. On the Curriculum and Instruction chart, Executive Directors and Directors are also depicted side by side, and Coordinators are on the same horizontal plane as Lead Registered Nurse and Administrative Assistant to the Director of Fine Arts. Instructional Coaches for elementary and secondary are not side by side, and secondary Instructional Coaches are on the same plane as Clinical Social Workers. The district's organizational chart was rated as not meeting the CMIM principle for scalar relationships.

Full Inclusion

Teachers are omitted from both the Superintendent of Schools and the Curriculum and Instruction charts, resulting in an incomplete line of authority from the superintendent to the point of curriculum delivery in classrooms. Assistant Principals are also omitted from the charts, although they provide essential functions to the schools and teachers. The district's organizational chart was rated as not meeting the CMIM principle for full inclusion.

District Administrative Positions

Auditors noted in survey questions and interviews the impression that more administrative positions are needed in the district to enable critical functions to more effectively meet the district's mission and goals. When asked about areas that need to improve, comments included:

- "There should be an Executive Director of Special Services position created that can be a part of the cabinet meetings." (District Administrator)
- "We have so many hats, so if some of those hats could be shared so we can focus on coaching. Creating more positions would help." (Instructional Coach)
- "We need additional positions for C & I, including professional development, campus tech support, and curriculum writers." (District Administrator)
- "We could improve by creating positions like a curriculum team and content area directors to take the load off of instructional coaches. We are doing things that are not on our job description." (Instructional Coach)
- "We could improve by hiring more employees as the workload for administrators is full." (Campus Administrator)

In summary, the district's personnel organizational charts do not provide adequate control of human capital. Organizational charts did not meet the six principles for sound organizational management: span of control, chain of command, logical grouping of functions, separation of line and staff functions, scalar relationships, or full inclusion. District personnel expressed the need for additional positions to better address district needs. The charts did not meet the principles of span of control, chain of command, scalar relationships, or full inclusion. District personnel expressed the need for additional positions to better address district needs.

Job Descriptions

The responsibility for maintaining job descriptions in Lake Travis ISD lies with the Assistant Superintendent for Employee/Community Relations and the Human Resources Manager. The job descriptions provided to auditors follow a district-developed template. The district does not have written guidelines for maintaining records when positions are added or removed or when the title, rank, reporting relationship, or responsibilities of a position are changed.

Auditors were given 38 job descriptions in March 2022 and compared the job descriptions to positions on the Superintendent of Schools organizational table for senior leadership (auditors asked only for positions related to curriculum and instruction) and the Curriculum and Instruction department organizational table. Several job descriptions for the Special Education department were provided, but not analyzed for this finding.

The next exhibit lists the positions on the two organizational tables for which auditors requested job descriptions and indicates whether a job description was provided to auditors.

Exhibit 1.2.5: Job Descriptions for Superintendent of Schools and Curriculum and Instruction Leadership Teams Requested by Auditors

Leadership Team Positions	Has Job Description
Superintendent of Schools	In *Policy BJA Legal*
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction	X
Executive Director Technology/Information Systems	X
Director Special Services	X
Director C & I – Elementary	X
Director C & I – Secondary	X
Director Accountability	X
Director Health & Social Emotions Learning	
Director Fine Arts & Academic Enrichment	
Coordinator C & I	X
Secondary Instructional Coaches	X
Elementary Instructional Coaches	X
Community Programs Coordinator	
Child Development Coordinator	
ESL Teachers	X
Lead Registered Nurse	
Licensed Clinical Social Workers	
Elementary Principal	X

Leadership Team Positions	Has Job Description
Middle School Principal	
High School Principal	X
Elementary Assistant Principal *	
Middle School Assistant Principal*	
High School Assistant Principal*	X
Teacher*	X
Key: X = job description provided to auditors; blank = job description not provided to auditors;	
*These positions are not on the organizational charts, but require a job description	
Source: Lake Travis ISD Organizational Charts	

Several district positions in leadership and Curriculum and Instruction were missing job descriptions. In addition, some job descriptions provided did not appear on any organizational chart, and some job descriptions had different titles than appeared on the organizational chart. In addition, several job descriptions listed the position reporting to a position that was titled differently than the actual position the person reported to. The following examples provide details:

- Director Accountability title on the organizational chart is Director of Accountability and Achievement on the job description. Interview schedule titled this position Director of Accountability and Assessment.
- Director C & I has one job description for both elementary and secondary, although the positions have some differing responsibilities.
- Director C & I job description indicates "under the direction of the Senior Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction," which is a position that does not exist, and Director of Special Services is "under the direction of the Assistant Superintendent for Learning and Teaching," which is a different title than the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction.
- Title of Assistant Superintendent Curriculum & Instruction on Superintendent of Schools organizational chart and job description is "Assistant Superintendent Curriculum & Assessment on the Curriculum and Instruction organizational table.
- Coordinator C & I on curriculum and Instruction organizational table is titled Coordinator of Learning & Teaching – Secondary on the job description. In addition, that position is listed as "under the direction of the Learning and Teaching Director – Secondary," which is a different title than Director of C & I - Secondary that this position does report to.
- Principals' job description states, "under the direction of the Deputy Superintendent," which is a job that does not exist. Principals are shown on the organizational table to be supervised by the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction.
- There is an additional job description for Associate Principal that is identical to the job description for Assistant Principal High School.
- There is a job description for Curriculum Designer, a position that does not exist.
- There is one job description for Instructional Coach, although elementary and secondary coaches have differing responsibilities. The job descriptions says, "under the direct supervision of the Director of Learning and Teaching," which is different than Director C & I who coaches actually report to.

Because the district does not have written protocols for managing changes to the staffing structure, some of these discrepancies may involve discontinued positions or positions planned for the future. However, revision dates are not in the job descriptions, so this could not be confirmed.

Auditors selected the 12 available job descriptions related to curriculum and instruction for more detailed analysis. For each selected job description, auditors rated the four components expected, using the five ratings as shown on the following exhibit:

Exhibit 1.2.6: Job Description Components and Curriculum Management Audit Rating Indicators

Job Description Components Expected	
1. Qualifications, 2. Links to the chain of command, 3. Responsibilities/functions/duties of the job, and 4. Relationship to the curriculum/curriculum design, alignment, and delivery responsibilities.	
Rating	**Explanation**
Missing	No statement made.
Inadequate	A statement made, but incomplete and missing sufficient detail.
Adequate	A more or less complete statement usually missing curricular linkages or sufficient detail regarding curricular linkages/alignment.
Strong	A clear and complete statement, including linkages to curriculum where appropriate or, if not appropriate, otherwise quite complete.
Exemplary	A clear, complete statement with inclusive linkages to curriculum indicated in exemplary scope and depth.
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If all four elements are rated adequate, strong, or exemplary, a job description is considered adequate to provide the district with control of the position's key functions. The next exhibit lists the selected job descriptions and the auditors' ratings for the four components and whether the job description is adequate overall.

Exhibit 1.2.7: Ratings of the Quality of Selected Job Descriptions

Title	Date	Qual	Chain	Duties	Curric	Adeq Overall
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction	7/1/21	Exem	Adeq	Exem	Exem	X
Executive Director Technology/Information Systems	Undated	Adeq	Adeq	Strong	Adeq	X
Director Special Services	8/5/15	Adeq	Inadeq	Strong	Strong	
Director C & I	11/6/17	Adeq	Inadeq	Strong	Strong	
Director Accountability	Undated	Adeq	Adeq	Adeq	Adeq	X
Coordinator C & I	11/14/19	Adeq	Inadeq	Adeq	Inadeq	
Instructional Coaches	6/21/21	Strong	Inadeq	Adeq	Adeq	
ESL Teachers	5/15/19	Strong	Adeq	Adeq	Adeq	X
Elementary Principal	4/16/18	Adeq	Inadeq	Strong	Strong	
High School Principal	4/16/18	Adeq	Inadeq	Strong	Strong	
High School Assistant Principal	4/13/18	Inadeq	Adeq	Adeq	Inadeq	
Teacher	3/9/18	Adeq	Adeq	Strong	Adeq	X
Number Adequate, Strong, or Exemplary		**11**	**6**	**12**	**10**	
Percent Adequate, Strong, or Exemplary		**92%**	**50%**	**100%**	**83%**	**42%**

Data Source: Lake Travis Independent School District job descriptions provided to auditors, March 2022

Of the 12 job descriptions analyzed, 42% (five) are adequate, strong, or exemplary for all four components. The strongest component is the description of duties, with all the job descriptions rated as adequate, strong, or exemplary. The lowest rating is for chain of command. All but two of the job descriptions were dated, but revision dates ranged from two to over six years ago for all except two that were revised in 2021. Without regular revision, staff cannot efficiently maintain an accurate set of current job descriptions, resulting in a limitation of the district's control of the delegation of key responsibilities. Below are observations related to the auditors' ratings of the 12 selected job descriptions:

Qualifications

The statement of qualifications was rated as exemplary, strong, or adequate for 92% of the job descriptions. Most descriptions had a lengthy list of knowledge and skills expected for the job that included references to curriculum and instruction. An exception was the high school assistant principal description that had only a brief very generic list of qualifications unrelated to curriculum or instruction, such as communication skills, interpersonal skills, and operation of a computer. Those job description rated adequate contained still generic qualifications, but related more specifically to the job, such as a working knowledge of curriculum and instruction, knowledge of current statewide CTE initiatives, ability to evaluate instructional program and teaching effectiveness, or knowledge of the individual needs of special needs persons. Job descriptions rated strong or exemplary included more specific references to curriculum and instruction, such as knowledge of sound theory and best practices related to curriculum and instruction, assessment, staff development, technology, special education, planning, and evaluation.

Chain of Command

The statement of chain of command relationships was rated as adequate for 50% of the job descriptions. All job descriptions rated as inadequate for chain of command listed an incorrect job title as "under the supervision of." None of the job descriptions identify the position's immediate subordinates. For

that reason, auditors did not rate any job description as strong or exemplary for chain of command. However, some descriptions contain generic descriptions of supervisory responsibility, such as "evaluates and trains assigned staff" or "supervise departmental staff."

Duties

The list of duties was rated as adequate or better for all of the selected job descriptions. Those that were not rated as strong or exemplary listed duties relying heavily on boilerplate items, with a minimally adequate list of duties distinctive of the position. Most job descriptions grouped duties into categories such as Instructional Management, Student Management, Professional Growth and Development, School Community Relations, School Climate, or School Improvement, among others.

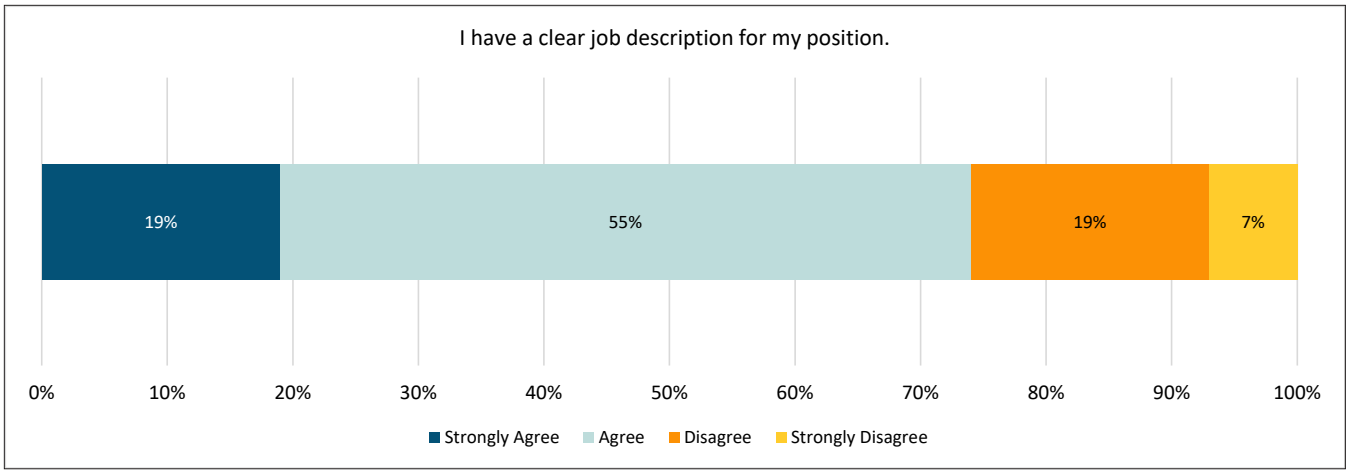
Curricular Linkage

The inclusion of curricular linkage was rated as exemplary, strong, or adequate in all but two of the selected job descriptions. The Coordinator C & I description lists responsibilities related to program management for CTE, but no references to curriculum or instructional responsibilities. The High School Assistant Principal job description also has no curriculum or instructional responsibilities listed. Other job descriptions have some reference, such as "support curriculum and instructional initiatives in support of student academic success," or "directs instructional and curriculum services to meet students' needs." Other statements are much more specific, such as "Works with appropriate staff to develop, maintain, and revise curriculum documents based on systematic review and analysis."

Use of Job Descriptions

When job descriptions are not available or current and are not used for managing and evaluating staff, they do not provide control of district functions. In online surveys of district and campus administrators, respondents answered questions about the availability and use of job descriptions. Their responses to the questions are shown in the next two exhibits**.** The first shows administrator responses about their own job description.

Exhibit 1.2.8: Administrator Responses to Survey Prompt Regarding Their Job Description



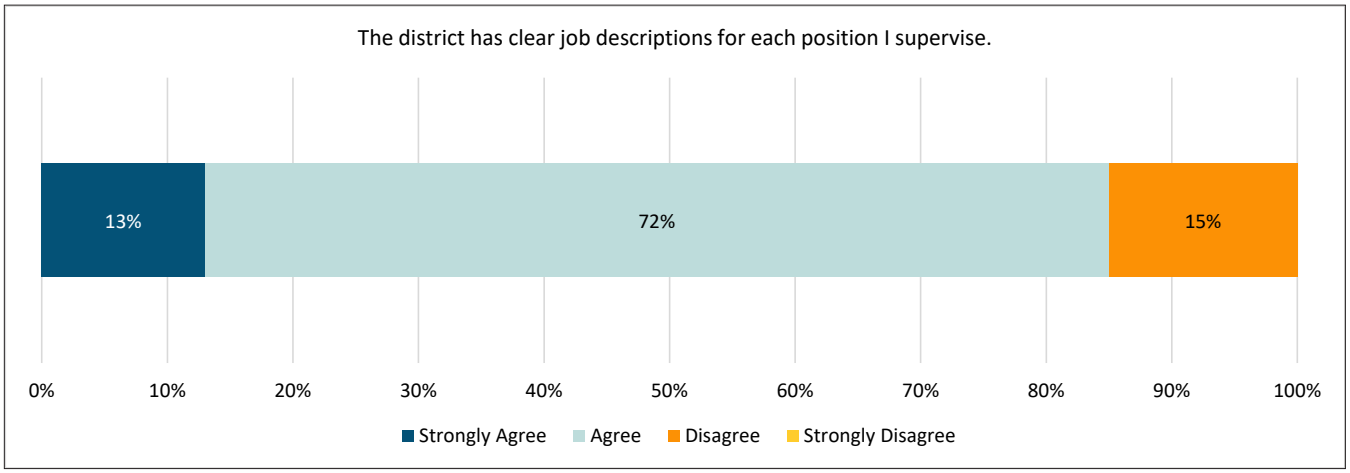
Most (74%) of the administrators strongly agreed or agreed that they have a clear job description for their position. Some administrators (26%), however, disagreed or strongly disagreed. Some comments were also written regarding this question, as shown:

- "I'm having so many 'hats' in this job, it is very difficult to prioritize tasks."

- "My position seems to be 'other duties as assigned' or make up what you think you should do."
- "I know the role I am supposed to play as an admin, but there is little to no framework about how to do things according to policy."

The second exhibit shows the administrators' responses to a question about job descriptions for positions they supervise.

Exhibit 1.2.9: Administrator Responses to Survey Prompt Regarding Job Descriptions for Positions They Supervise



Most administrators strongly agreed or agreed (85%) that they have clear job descriptions for the positions they supervise. Some sample comments given on the survey follow:

- "We update some descriptions, but then sometimes old ones get posted with vacancies."
- "Many are very general in nature and may not adequately describe what the person really does."
- "Job descriptions for most positions have not been updated for 20 years."
- "These positions and duties have not been conveyed to school staff and community."

In reviewing the district's job descriptions, auditors found most do not meet the Curriculum Management Improvement Model criteria for adequacy. The content of job descriptions relies heavily on boilerplate text, and few job descriptions have references to curriculum and instruction responsibilities that are specific to the position. Most job descriptions are not updated each year to ensure they accurately depict the job responsibilities the person in the position is actually doing. There are numerous discrepancies between the job descriptions and the organizational chart. Administrators are sometimes unclear about their own job description or about the job descriptions of the personnel they supervise. Without clear, current job descriptions, personnel can be confused about their roles and responsibilities, and essential functions of the district can be performed less efficiently.

Systems

Having systems in place that define and clarify procedures helps district personnel to understand the expectations of their jobs and the tasks they are expected to accomplish throughout the school year. Every critical function of a school district can be clarified and improved through having a concrete system in place that is well-communicated and followed by all personnel. Such systems may include:

- Policy and plan development, revision, evaluation, and implementation

- Hiring of personnel and other human resources processes, such as mentoring, evaluations, growth plans, and non-renewals
- Public information communication
- Organizational chart and job description development, revision, evaluation, and communication
- Internal chain of command – processes for communication and questions, supervision, reporting, and evaluation
- Curriculum development, revision, evaluation, and implementation
- Development of instructional practices expectations, training, implementation, and evaluation
- Monitoring processes for curriculum implementation, instructional practices, and student work products
- Processes for selecting, adopting, purchasing, implementing, and evaluating the effectiveness of educational resources and programs such as textbooks and supplemental resources, including a cost-benefit analysis for each
- Processes for ensuring equity in all programs
- Intervention processes, including processes for implementation of special programs such as ESL and Special Education
- Technology purchases, evaluation, and implementation processes
- Professional development processes
- Summative and formative assessment processes, expectations, tools, purposes, and use of resulting data
- Budgeting, facilities, maintenance, transportation, and other operations

This is not an all-inclusive list, but provides a look at the extent of the processes and procedures that make a district run smoothly when systems are in place for their implementation. Each of the findings and recommendations in this audit report will inform the district of criteria and components to consider in the development of the various systems listed above through developing written plans and guidelines. Each of these systems may have multiple functions that need written processes in place to guide personnel in making decisions and taking action. Systems that are included in written plans (see **Finding 1.1**) and are well-communicated, expected to be followed, and evaluated regularly for effectiveness can help all district personnel confidently perform their assigned duties more efficiently and effectively, and ensure the systems all link to the district's mission and goals. Written systems also ensure continuity when changes in personnel occur. Without these systems, personnel can be confused and critical functions can be performed less effectively or missed altogether. Auditors noted in multiple interviews and on survey comments that systems are not in place in Lake Travis Independent School District that give staff the confidence they are doing their jobs effectively. Multiple comments were made at the campus and district levels.

Some of those comments were about specific programs or areas needing systems:

- "We need a strong ESL system." (District Administrator)
- "Covid years brought to light the need for admin leaders who know how to streamline the systems and processes. We need a streamlined system for looking at data." (Teacher)

- "We have issues with adequate staffing and how decisions are made including posting, selection, etc." (Campus Administrator)
- "MTSS meetings are very different at each campus. The expectations are different, and tiers are different. We haven't spent a lot of time understanding that system." (Instructional Coach)

Other comments were about systems in relation to the growth of the district:

- "We are still trying to run under a small system, and we have changed a lot." (Campus Administrator)
- "We are a 6A district with 4A systems at best." (District Administrator)

Finally, some comments addressed the need for systems overall:

- "Campuses have the skills but do not have clearly designed systems." (Campus Administrator)
- "Systems are hit and miss. Autonomy is the best thing ever until it's not. Teachers are crushed under the weight of not knowing what to do." (Teacher)
- "We do not have a lot of systems in place [district-wide]." (District Administrator)
- "Systems are our biggest need." (Campus Administrator)

One comment was positive, noting the district beginning work in establishing systems:

- "Overall, having district systems in place is happening little by little this year. That is encouraging." (District Administrator)

Clearly, systems development is a critical need for Lake Travis Independent School District. As systems are developed, communicated, implemented, and evaluated for effectiveness, district personnel can see improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of staff performance and decision making in the daily functions of the district.

Summary

In summary, the district's personnel organizational charts did not meet the six principles for organizational management. District personnel also expressed the desire for additional positions to better address the needs of the district.

Most of the district's job descriptions do not meet the Curriculum Management Improvement Model criteria for adequacy. Few of the job descriptions have references to curriculum and instruction responsibilities that are specific to the position. Most job descriptions are not updated each year to ensure they accurately depict the job responsibilities the person in the position is actually doing. Administrators are sometimes unclear about their own job description or about the job descriptions of the personnel they supervise.

District personnel recognize that systems development is a critical need for Lake Travis Independent School District. As systems are developed, communicated, implemented, and evaluated for effectiveness, personnel should see improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of staff performance in the daily functions of the district (see **Recommendation 1**).

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

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

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

What Auditors Expected to Find in Lake Travis ISD:

Focus Area Two: Curriculum

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

Common indicators

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

Overview of What Auditors Found in Lake Travis ISD:

This section is an overview of the findings that follow in the area of **Focus Area Two**. Details follow within separate findings.

In reviewing documents, auditors found a few policies and job descriptions that referenced various curriculum functions; however, collectively, these were inadequate to direct the design, delivery, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and revision of curriculum.

Auditors found the scope of the written curriculum to be inadequate in both core and non-core courses. The quality of written curriculum guides was also found to be inadequate. Documents were inconsistent and did not have specificity necessary to support teachers in planning for student learning. In addition, there was no expectation that teachers use the district curriculum.

Finding 2.1: The Lake Travis Independent School District does not have a comprehensive curriculum management plan that establishes a systemic process for designing, developing, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and revising an aligned written curriculum for student learning.

A school district with a strong focus on improving student learning has a comprehensive plan with guidelines and procedures that facilitate the design and delivery of curriculum. The plan directs the who, what, why, where, when, and how of curriculum development, review, and evaluation and is the only plan that focuses on the most critical work of the district—teaching and learning. A written curriculum that is comprehensive, useful, and up to date serves as the foundation for a school system where growth in student learning is the norm. A planning process secured in policy institutionalizes district philosophy, ensuring that personnel changes will not affect the curriculum management system.

To determine the quality of curriculum management planning in Lake Travis Independent School District, auditors examined district documents, including school board policies and job descriptions, and interviewed district administrators, campus administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches. They visited classrooms in 11 schools and conducted online surveys of administrators and teachers with questions related to curriculum management.

As indicated in **Finding 1.1,** auditors were not presented with board policy that requires a curriculum management plan. Job descriptions assign the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction with responsibility to "coordinate the development of Board policies related to curriculum and instruction and to provide direction for effective curriculum management and instructional delivery." In addition, the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction is also directed to "work with appropriate staff to develop, maintain, and revise curriculum documents based on systemic review and analysis." Auditors were presented *Policy AE* regarding educational philosophy and *Policy EHAA Legal* regarding the basic instructional program required. However, these policies did not specify a plan or system for curriculum management.

Overall, auditors did not find a comprehensive written plan to coordinate the development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and revision of curriculum. Auditors reviewed documents provided by the district for characteristics of a quality management plan. Although they found some elements that provide direction, collectively, they are inadequate to comprehensively direct the design, delivery, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and revision of curriculum.

To rate the adequacy of the Lake Travis Independent School District's approach to curriculum management planning, auditors compared the district's written direction to the Curriculum Management Improvement Model's (CMIM) 15 characteristics of a comprehensive curriculum management plan. These characteristics and the auditors' ratings of the district's documents are shown in the following exhibit. Because this finding examines the district's directives for curriculum planning rather than district practices, the auditors' ratings are based on evidence that the district has established an official expectation in writing for each of the 15 characteristics, not on evidence that the characteristic is found in practice. To meet the audit requirement for adequacy, the district's planning process must demonstrate 11 or more of the 15 characteristics, or 70%.

Exhibit 2.1.1: Curriculum Management Plan Characteristics and Auditors' Assessment of District Approach

Characteristics:	Auditors' Rating
1. Describes the vision and philosophy for instruction. Establishes a framework for the design of the curriculum, including such directives as standards-based, results-based, or competency-based; the alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum; and the approaches used in delivering the curriculum.	P*
2. Directs how state and national standards will be included in the curriculum. This includes whether or not to use a backloaded approach, in which the curriculum is derived from high-stakes tested learnings (topological and/or deep alignment), and/or a frontloaded approach, which derives the curriculum from national, state, or local learnings.	P*
3. Defines the steps and stages/phases of the curriculum development process.	
4. Specifies the roles and responsibilities of the board, central office staff members, and school-based staff members in the design, development, and delivery of curriculum.	X
5. Presents the required format and components of all curriculum and assessment documents.	
6. Requires for every content area a focused set of precise (measurable) student objectives/ student expectations and standards that are reasonable in number, so the student has adequate time to master the content.	X
7. Directs that curriculum documents not only specify the content of the student objectives/ expectations, but also define the contexts and cognitive types that must be included for mastery to be assured.	
8. Directs curriculum to be designed so that it supports teachers' differentiation of instructional approaches and selection of student objectives at the right level of difficulty. This ensures that those students who need prerequisite concepts, knowledge, and skills are kept on-level and moved ahead at an accelerated pace, and that students who have already mastered the objectives are also appropriately challenged.	
9. Identifies the timing, scope, and procedures for a periodic cycle of review of curriculum in all subject areas and at all grade levels.	
10. Specifies the overall beliefs and procedures governing the assessment of curriculum effectiveness. This includes curriculum-based diagnostic assessments and rubrics (as needed). Such assessments direct instructional decisions regarding student progress in mastering prerequisite concepts, skills, knowledge, and long-term mastery of the learning.	
11. Describes the procedures teachers and administrators will follow in using assessment data to strengthen written curriculum and instructional decision making.	P*
12. Outlines procedures for conducting formative and summative evaluations of programs and their corresponding curriculum content.	P*
13. Requires the design of a comprehensive staff development program linked to curriculum design and its delivery.	P*
14. Presents procedures for monitoring the delivery of curriculum.	
15. Establishes a communication plan for the process of curriculum design and delivery.	
Total Met	**2/15**
Percentage Met	**13%**
Key: X = Met, P = Partially Met, Blank = Not Met	
*Partial ratings are counted as not met when determining overall percentage of adequacy.	

The exhibit shows that 2 of 15 (13%) characteristics for curriculum management planning were fully met, less than the 70% required for adequacy. Five characteristics were partially met, but partial ratings are not counted as met when determining overall percentage of adequacy. The following narrative explains the auditors' ratings.

Characteristic 1: Describes the philosophical framework for the design of curriculum (Partially Met)

As noted in **Finding 1.1**, several policies provide general references and statements related to required courses in the foundation curriculum. The district's mission statement, which refers to educational philosophy, is also provided. However, auditors found no policy or plan that established a framework for curriculum design. Nor did they find policy or plans addressing the alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum.

Characteristic 2: Directs how the state and national standards will be considered in the curriculum (Partially Met)

Policy EHAA (Legal) requires districts to provide instruction in the essential knowledge and skills at appropriate grade levels. However, no local policy addressed the approach by which the state standards would be included in the curriculum (backloaded or frontloaded approach).

Characteristic 3: Defines and directs the stages of curriculum development (Not Met)

The stages of curriculum development and revision were not addressed in any of the documents reviewed by the auditors.

Characteristic 4: Specifies roles and responsibilities for the design and delivery of curriculum (Met)

Auditors were presented job descriptions that referred to roles responsible for various aspects of curriculum design and delivery. Specifically, the Assistant Superintendent is assigned the responsibility for developing the curriculum and revising curriculum based on systemic review and analysis. According to the teacher job description, teachers are responsible for developing and implementing lesson plans that fulfill the district's curriculum program.

Characteristic 5: Presents the format and components of all curriculum, assessment, and instructional guide documents (Not Met)

Auditors did not find direction in policy regarding design of the written curriculum.

Characteristic 6: Requires for every content area a focused set of content objectives (Met)

Policy EHAA (Legal) requires districts to provide instruction in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. In addition, it also directs districts to ensure sufficient time is provided within a designated scope and sequence for teachers to teach and students to learn.

Characteristic 7: Directs that curriculum documents not only specify the content of the student objectives/student expectations, but also multiple contexts and cognitive types (Not Met)

No documents were presented that referenced the use of multiple contexts or cognitive types, including policies or curriculum documents provided to teachers.

Characteristic 8: Directs the curriculum to be designed to support teacher differentiation (Not Met)

Auditors did not find expectation in policy or job descriptions that curriculum be designed to support teacher differentiation in how students practice their learning or demonstrate content mastery,

Characteristic 9: Identifies the timing, scope, and procedures for curriculum review (Not Met)

No documents presented to auditors provided guidance regarding curriculum review.

Characteristic 10: Specifies the overall beliefs and procedures governing the assessment of curriculum effectiveness (Not Met)

There were no local policies regarding assessment and the procedures for utilizing assessment to determine curriculum effectiveness.

Characteristic 11: Describes the procedures teachers and administrators will follow in using assessment data to strengthen the written curriculum and in instructional decision making (Partially Met)

No policies presented to auditors outlined procedures for using data to strengthen written curriculum and instructional decision making, although there was a job description that referred to this characteristic. The job description for the Director of Curriculum and Instruction requires that the director "obtains and uses evaluative findings (including student achievement data) to examine curriculum and instruction program effectiveness." Although the role responsible for this characteristic is established, there is no policy regarding the process to do so.

Characteristic 12: Outlines procedures for conducting formative and summative evaluations of programs (Partially Met)

No policy was presented regarding the use of procedures for conducting formative and summative evaluations of programs. According to the job description, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction "develops and implements a program development cycle to assess program status/ quality on a regular basis. However, there was no plan or policy regarding the procedures for program evaluation (see also **Finding 4.1**).

Characteristic 13: Requires the design of a comprehensive staff development program (Partially Met)

Policy DMA (Legal) states staff development "shall be predominately campus-based, related to achieving campus performance objectives, and developed and approved by the campus-level committee." No plan was provided to auditors regarding the design for the staff development program (see also **Finding 3.3)**.

Characteristic 14: Presents procedures for monitoring the delivery of curriculum (Not Met)

Auditors found no policy that directs building principals or central office staff to monitor the delivery of the district curriculum. Principal and Assistant Principal job descriptions include responsibilities for evaluating teacher performance, but do not address monitoring curriculum delivery (see also **Finding 3.3**).

Characteristic 15: Establishes a communication plan for the process of curriculum design and delivery (Not Met)

Auditors found no policy that refers to a communication plan for the process of curriculum design and delivery.

Summary

Lake Travis Independent School District has inadequate written direction for the critical functions of curriculum design, development, delivery, and assessment. Job descriptions indicate the roles responsible for some of these plan components, but there are no policies or plans that provide specifics. *Policy EHAA (Legal)* provides some guidance regarding the use of state standards and the required basic instructional program but does not have the components to serve as a curriculum management plan. Lake Travis

Independent School District does not have a comprehensive written Curriculum Management Plan to direct the management of curriculum in the district. Without a plan, curriculum design, development, delivery, and assessment become inconsistent and less effective. Without clear, specific written plans, there also can be no continuity of practices from year to year when changes in staff occur (see **Recommendation 2**).

Finding 2.2: The scope and quality of the Lake Travis Independent School District written curriculum is inadequate to provide direction for planning, teaching, and learning and to ensure alignment of the written, taught, and assessed curriculum. Use of the district's written curriculum is limited.

Clear, comprehensive, and current curriculum documents provide direction for teachers concerning the specific objectives to be taught, align the objectives with the tested curriculum, and identify the context for evaluation of student attainment of objectives. The documents also identify prerequisite skills that are required prior to new learning, and suggest strategies, activities, and resources teachers can use to deliver that learning. These documents provide guidance for instruction so there is horizontal coordination and vertical articulation district-wide. The expectation is that all courses have written curriculum documents. It is also expected that all teachers will use the district's curriculum to guide their instruction. Without high quality curriculum documents, instruction is likely to vary and be fragmented across grades, courses, and classrooms, leading to unpredictable student learning and achievement.

This finding will address the following related to the written curriculum:

- Scope of Written Curriculum
- Quality of Written Curriculum
- Use of Written Curriculum

Scope of Written Curriculum

The scope of the curriculum is defined as the percentage of the courses taught that have a corresponding written curriculum document to direct teaching. The audit expectation is that every course has a written curriculum. When the district curriculum is taught at all grade levels for all courses, students have equitable access to consistent and focused learning opportunities. When written curriculum is unavailable, teachers depend on inconsistent sources to guide instruction, which can result in a lack of coordination and articulation, as well as inadequate alignment to the standards.

For the scope analysis, the auditors examined board policies, curriculum documents presented to them through the Curriculum and Instruction hub, master schedules, and the high school course catalog to determine if every course (core and non-core) taught in Lake Travis Independent School District has a written curriculum. For the curriculum scope to be adequate, 100% of core content areas (English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) and 70% of the non-core areas must have written curriculum to guide instruction. The scope of the written curriculum analysis examines whether a written curriculum document exists for each course, without regard to the content or quality of the documents. The scope answers the question, "Is it there?" Auditors confirmed that the curriculum scope and sequence documents contained in the Curriculum and Instruction hub were the most current documents, and those were used for this analysis.

Policy EHAA (Legal) requires districts in Texas to offer a foundation curriculum that includes English language arts and reading; mathematics; science; and social studies consisting of Texas, United States, and world history; government; geography; and economics with emphasis on the free enterprise system

and its benefits. Districts should also offer an enrichment curriculum that includes languages other than English; health; physical education; fine arts; career and technical education; technology applications; religious literature; and personal financial literacy. The following three exhibits show the scope of the written curriculum for the elementary, middle, and high school grade ranges.

Exhibit 2.2.1: Scope of Written Curriculum for Grades K-5

Courses Offered	Grade Level						Courses Taught	Grades/Courses with Curriculum
	K	1	2	3	4	5		
Core Content Courses								
English Language Arts	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	6
Spanish Language Arts	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	6
Mathematics	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	6
Science and Tech Apps	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	6
Social Studies	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	6
Totals Core Courses							**30**	**30**
Scope of Core Courses for Elementary								**100%**
Non-Core Content Area Courses								
Art	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
Physical Education	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
Library	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
Music	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
Totals Non-Core Courses							**24**	**0**
Scope of Non-Core Courses for Elementary								**0%**
Total Core and Non-core Courses							**54**	**30**
Total Percent of Core and Non-core Courses with Written Curriculum								**56%**
X = Courses offered with curriculum guide available, 0 = No curriculum guide presented								
Data source: District provided curriculum guides, master schedules								

As noted in the exhibit above, all core content areas for grades K-5 had a corresponding curriculum guide, representing 100% scope. No curriculum guides were presented for non-core courses. To be considered adequate in scope, 100% of core courses and at least 70% of non-core courses must have curriculum guides.

The next exhibit shows the scope of the curriculum for all courses offered in grades 6-8.

Exhibit 2.2.2: Scope of Written Curriculum for Grades 6-8

Courses Offered	Grade Level			Courses Taught	Grades/ Courses with Curriculum
	6	7	8		
Core Content Courses					
English Language Arts	X	X	X	3	3
Honors ELA	0	0	0	3	0
Mathematics	X	X	X	3	3
Honors Mathematics	X	X	*	2	2
Honors Algebra	*	*	X^	1	1
Honors Geometry	X^	X^	X^	3	3
Science and Tech Apps	X	0	0	3	1
Honors Science	*	0	0	2	0
Social Studies	X	X	X	3	3
Honors Texas History	*	0	*	1	0
Honors U.S. History	*	*	0	1	0
Totals Core Courses				**25**	**16**
Scope of Core Courses for Middle Schools					**64%**
Non-Core Content Area Courses					
Reading Enrichment	0	0	0	3	0
Art	0	0	0	3	0
PE/Dance/Athletics	0	0	0	3	0
Music/Band/Choir	0	0	0	3	0
Theater	0	0	0	3	0
Student Leadership	*	*	0	1	0
Tech Apps	0	0	0	3	0
Spanish 1	*	*	0	1	0
Computer Science/Fund CS	0	0	0	3	0
Video Broadcast/AV Tech/Digital Media/ Graphic Design	0	0	0	3	0
Engineering	*	0	0	2	0
Discovery	0	0	0	3	0
Totals Non-Core Course				**31**	**0**
Middle School Scope of Non-Core Courses					**0%**
Total Core and Non-core Courses				**56**	**16**
Total Percent of Core and Non-core Courses with Written Curriculum					**29%**
X= Courses offered with curriculum guide available, 0= Grades in which course was offered with no written curriculum, * Indicates course not offered in this grade level, ^ Indicates one course is offered to multiple grade levels					
Data source: District provided curriculum guides and master schedules					

As noted in this exhibit, 64% of core courses taught had accompanying curriculum guides but did not meet the audit requirement of 100% for core courses. Curriculum documents were not present for any science courses except for 6th grade science. Curriculum documents were available for honors courses

in mathematics, but not available for any other core honor courses. No curriculum documents were presented for non-core courses. The total scope for middle school curriculum was inadequate at 29%.

The exhibit below presents the scope of the curriculum for all courses offered in grades 9-12.

Exhibit 2.2.3: Scope of Written Curriculum for Grades 9-12

Courses Offered	Dual Credit Courses	Lake Travis Courses	Courses Requiring Curriculum	Courses with Curriculum	Scope of Content Areas
Core Content Area Courses					
English	3	24	27	4	15%
Mathematics	6	22	28	14	50%
Science	2	28	30	0	0%
Social Studies	7	22	29	6	21%
Totals of Core Content Area Courses	**18**	**96**	**114**	**24**	
Scope of Core Courses for HS					**21%**
Non-Core Content Area Courses					
Languages Other Than English	1	28	29	0	0%
General Electives	0	25	25	0	0%
Career and Technical Education	0	143	143	83	58%
Fine Arts	1	41	42	0	0%
Athletics/PE	0	20	20	0	0%
Totals of Non-Core Courses	**2**	**257**	**259**	**83**	
Scope of Non-Core Courses for HS					**32%**
Total Core and Non-Core Courses	**20**	**353**	**373**	**107**	
Total Scope of HS Courses					**29%**

Sources: Curriculum documents, master schedule, and course catalog presented by Lake Travis ISD.

As shown in the exhibit, the scope of curriculum in high school core courses was inadequate at 21%. Curriculum documents were available in foundational English classes, but not available for honors classes or English electives. Curriculum documents were available for 50% of all mathematics courses offered, including honors classes. Social studies had accompanying guides available for six of their courses, and no curriculum guides were presented for any science course.

In examining the non-core high school courses, there were no curriculum guides presented for Languages other than English, general electives, fine arts, or athletics and physical education. Only career and technology education (CTE) provided written documents for 58% of the courses offered. The total scope for all high school courses offered was 29%.

The following exhibit summarizes the information from the previous three exhibits.

Exhibit 2.2.4: Summary of Curriculum Scope, Grades K-12

Grade Level	Guides Expected	Guides Available	Scope
Core Courses			
Elementary K-5	30	30	100%
Middle School 6-8	25	16	64%
High School 9-12	114	24	21%
All Levels Core Courses	**169**	**70**	**41%**
Non-Core Courses			
Elementary K-5	24	0	0%
Middle School 6-8	31	0	0%
High School 9-12	259	83	32%
All Levels Non-Core Courses	**314**	**83**	**26%**
Data Source: Curriculum documents, master schedules, course catalog			

As noted in exhibit above, the district-wide scope of the curriculum does not meet the audit requirement for adequacy. To be considered adequate, curriculum guides must be present for 100% of core classes offered and at least 70% of non-core courses offered.

The following statements from Lake Travis Independent School District teachers and campus leaders illustrate the scope of available written curriculum documents:

- "We do not have a district developed curriculum in our subject area." (Teacher)
- "I would love some good art curriculum especially since I have no other art teachers at my campus to collaborate with." (Teacher)
- "I don't have a district developed curriculum." (Teacher)
- "A housed curriculum needs to be established. Teachers don't have an established curriculum that they can rely on, and they have to make things up as they go." (Campus Administrator)
- "We welcome this curriculum audit because we have no curriculum." (Campus Administrator)

Quality of Written Curriculum

Quality curriculum documents include instructional resources, suggestions of approaches of how to teach key concepts, and student practice activities or assignments for the instructional components. These components are loosely-held, which allows teachers flexibility in planning to meet students' needs and how students will interact with the curriculum while offering students on-level learning opportunities. The loosely-held components must be aligned with the tightly-held functions of curriculum objectives and outcome expectations, aligned assessments, program guidelines, and the district's vision and goals (see **Appendix F**). A well-designed written curriculum provides teachers with what students are to learn, how students should demonstrate their learning, and how students will be assessed so they can plan high quality implementation of the curriculum. The quality component of this audit answers the question, "Is it good?"

Auditors reviewed the written curriculum documents for the 56 courses created by Lake Travis Independent School District and presented to them on shared drives set up for audit documents. Course guides typically included a scope and sequence document for the year that listed objectives and the state

standards to be taught during that unit or grading cycle. Course guides were not consistent across grade level bands or content areas, but typically included references to textbooks or links to resources, including digital resources. Eighty-five course documents were also presented from the Career and Technology Department (CTE), but these were analyzed separately as they were not developed by district personnel.

The quality of the written curriculum was determined by rating each curriculum document using the Curriculum Management Improvement Model (CMIM) minimal components criteria. The curriculum documents were rated on a scale from 0-3 on each criterion with a score of 3 representing the highest rating. A total score was determined by adding the ratings for the six criteria. To be considered adequate on the minimum components, a score of 14 is required. The exhibit below explains the rating system.

Exhibit 2.2.5: Curriculum Management Improvement Model Frame One Analysis: Minimal Basic Components for Curriculum Document Quality and Specificity

Criterion Descriptors	Value
Criterion One: Clarity and validity of standards	
No standards present	0
Vague delineation of standards	1
Specifically states tasks to be performed or skills/concepts to be learned	2
States for each instructional objective the what, when (sequence within course/grade), how actual standard is performed, and the amount of time to be spent learning (requires rewrite or refining of the original language of the standard). The number of instructional objectives is feasible for the time allotted.	3
Criterion Two: Congruence of the curriculum to the testing and evaluation program	
No assessment approach	0
Some approach of student assessment stated	1
States some specific skills, knowledge, concepts that will be assessed at some point (not all objectives are addressed)	2
Each instructional objective or cluster of objectives has a corresponding formative assessment, and priority or essential standards/objectives have a summative assessment, with rubrics/ evaluation scales provided if required (as with performance-based assessment)	3
Criterion Three: Delineation by grade of the essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes (may be a scope and sequence, but score is related to specificity in the objectives or standards described/noted)	
No mention of required skill	0
States general knowledge students should have acquired from some prior grades/courses	1
States prior general experience/standards needed for the intended grade level standards (may not note when it was acquired, but does specify what prior knowledge/skills are needed)	2
States specific, documented prerequisite or description of discrete skills/concepts required prior to this course (specificity in the objective wording is required, such as a “3” for Criterion One)	3
Criterion Four: Delineation of the major instructional tools in the form of [multiple] textbooks and supplementary materials	
No mention of instructional resources	0
Names instructional resources for some instructional objectives (less than 50%)	1
Names instructional resources for most instructional objectives (more than 50% but less than 100%)	2
States for each instructional objective or cluster* of objectives the “match” between the basic resources and instructional objectives (100%)	3

Criterion Descriptors	Value
Criterion Five: Suggested strategies and approaches for classroom use (teacher strategies and modeling)	
No approaches cited for classroom use	0
Overall, vague statements on how to approach the content in the classroom (address less than half of the content objectives)	1
Provides general suggestions for approaches; gives general suggestions for at least half of the learner objectives	2
Provides specific examples, by instructional objective or cluster* of objectives, on how to teach, model, or engage students with key concepts/skills in the classroom	3
Criterion Six: Suggested Student Work/Activities classroom use	
No inclusion of suggestions for student [practice] activities, projects, or work	0
Suggests student practice activities or assignments for some instructional objectives (less than half); activities may be the same for all students or allow for differentiation	1
Suggests some student practice activities or assignments (same or differentiated) for most instructional objectives (more than half but not all)	2
Suggests for all instructional objectives in the guide, by objective or cluster* of objectives, student practice activities, assignments, or projects that can be differentiated for content, process, and product.	3
* In the case of assessments, instructional tools and resources, and suggested strategies and approaches, these may be clusters. For example, one suggested approach may address multiple objectives, such as a cluster of objectives.	

The following exhibits show the auditors' ratings for the 56 curriculum guides created by district staff and presented by grade span.

The first exhibit shows the auditors' ratings for the core curriculum guides presented for grades K-5. No curriculum documents were available for elementary non-core courses.

Exhibit 2.2.6: CMIM Frame One Curriculum Analysis: Auditors' Ratings of Curriculum Documents in Grades K-5

Curriculum Document Title	Date	1 Obj.	2 Asmt.	3 Prereq.	4 Res.	5 Strats.	6 Act.	Total Rating
Kindergarten ELA	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Kindergarten Math	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Kindergarten Social Studies	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Kindergarten Science	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
First Grade ELA	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
First Grade Math	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
First Grade Social Studies	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
First Grade Science	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Second Grade ELA	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Second Grade Math	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Second Grade Social Studies	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Second Grade Science	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Third Grade ELA	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Third Grade Math	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Third Grade Social Studies	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**

Curriculum Document Title	Date	1 Obj.	2 Asmt.	3 Prereq.	4 Res.	5 Strats.	6 Act.	Total Rating
Third Grade Science	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Fourth Grade ELA	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Fourth Grade Math	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Fourth Grade Social Studies	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Fourth Grade Science	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Fifth Grade ELA	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Fifth Grade Math	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Fifth Grade Social Studies	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Fifth Grade Science	21-22	1	0	0	1	1	1	**4**
Mean Rating for Each Criterion		**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**4**
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As noted in the exhibit above, the elementary curriculum guides averaged a mean rating of 4 for every guide presented. To meet audit standards, a mean rating of 14 is required. Auditors noted a common template was utilized for all curriculum guides. No guides included an approach to assessment or mentioned prerequisite skills needed for the intended grade level standards.

The next exhibit illustrates the auditors' ratings of curriculum documents for grades 6-8 courses.

Exhibit 2.2.7: CMIM Frame One Curriculum Analysis: Auditors' Ratings of Curriculum Documents in Grades 6-8

Curriculum Document Title	Date	1 Obj.	2 Asmt.	3 Prereq.	4 Res.	5 Strats.	6 Act.	Total Rating
ELA Grade 6	21-22	2	2	0	2	3	2	**11**
ELA Grade 7	21-22	2	0	0	3	3	2	**10**
Math Grade 6	21-22	2	0	2	2	2	2	**10**
Math Grade 7	21-22	2	0	2	2	2	2	**10**
Math Grade 8	21-22	2	0	2	2	2	2	**10**
Honors Math Grade 6	21-22	2	0	2	2	2	2	**10**
Honors Math Grade 7	21-22	2	0	2	2	2	2	**10**
Honors Algebra	21-22	2	0	2	2	2	2	**10**
ELA Grade 8	21-22	1	2	0	2	2	2	**9**
Social Studies Grade 8	21-22	2	0	0	2	2	2	**8**
Social Studies Grade 6	21-22	1	0	0	2	1	2	**6**
Social Studies Grade 7	21-22	1	0	0	2	1	2	**6**
Honors Geometry	21-22	1	1	0	0	1	1	**4**
Science and Tech Apps Grade 6	21-22	2	0	2	0	0	0	**4**
Mean Rating for Each Criterion		**1.7**	**.36**	**1**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**8.4**
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As noted in the exhibit above, the average quality rating for grade 6-8 curriculum documents was 8.4, below the required 14 points for adequacy. Sixth grade English Language Arts scored the highest at 11 points.

The next exhibit shows the auditors' ratings of curriculum documents in grades 9-12, except for CTE courses, which were scored separately.

Exhibit 2.2.8: CMIM Frame One Curriculum Analysis: Auditors' Ratings of Curriculum Documents in Grades 9-12 Core Courses

Curriculum Document Title	Date	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total Rating
		Obj.	Asmt.	Prereq.	Res.	Strats.	Act.	
English II	21-22	2	1	0	2	2	3	**10**
English I	21-22	1	1	0	2	2	2	**8**
English IV	21-22	2	0	0	2	2	2	**8**
English III	21-22	1	0	0	2	1	2	**6**
Algebra I PreAP	21-22	1	0	0	2	0	2	**5**
Algebra II	21-22	2	1	0	1	0	1	**5**
Algebraic Reasoning	21-22	2	1	0	1	0	1	**5**
AP Calculus A/B	21-22	2	1	0	1	0	1	**5**
Algebra II Honors	21-22	2	0	0	1	0	1	**4**
Geometry	21-22	1	1	0	2	0	0	**4**
Pre-Calculus Honors	21-22	1	1	0	1	0	1	**4**
AQR	21-22	1	1	0	1	0	1	**4**
Geometry PreAP	21-22	0	1	0	2	0	0	**3**
Algebra I	21-22	1	0	0	0	0	0	**1**
AP Calculus C/D	21-22	1	0	0	0	0	0	**1**
College Prep	21-22	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Statistics and Business Decision Making	21-22	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
AP Statistics	21-22	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Mean Rating for Each Criterion		**1.1**	**.5**	**0**	**1.1**	**.4**	**.9**	**4.1**
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As shown in this exhibit, the core courses in grades 9-12 scored an average of 4.1 for quality, which is below the 14 points necessary for adequacy. The English II guide scored the highest at 10 points. College Prep, Statistics and Business Decision Making, and AP Statistics scored a 0 as the documents only contained the names of the units to be taught during the year.

The exhibit below displays a summary of mean ratings by criterion for all K-12 curriculum guides analyzed.

Exhibit 2.2.9: Summary of Average Score of Ratings by Criterion

Criterion	Mean Rating
One: Clarity and Specificity of Objectives	1.3
Four: Resources and Materials	1.3
Six: Student Work and Activities	1.2
Five: Strategies and Approaches	1.1
Two: Assessment	.3
Three: Prerequisites	.3
Average Overall Rating	**5.5**

As seen in this exhibit, the average rating for all documents in Lake Travis Independent School District is 5.5. The highest ratings earned were for objectives and resources at 1.3 each. The lowest criteria ratings were for the use of assessments and including prerequisite skills, both scoring at .3.

It was noted that the use of a common template was inconsistent throughout the district. Elementary courses did utilize a common template, but the template lacked several key components. Secondary templates varied widely in content. The following is a discussion of the auditors' review of the criteria of a quality curriculum document with examples from the district's written curriculum.

Criterion 1: Clarity and Validity of Standards

This criterion was the first to be reviewed and scored 1.3 overall. The approach to providing clear standards was very inconsistent throughout the documents. The elementary documents commonly listed a few TEKS numbers with no verbiage along with a few essential questions for each week. How the standard is performed and the amount of time to be spent were not clearly addressed. Complex TEKS were not broken down into manageable chunks for teaching and learning.

Secondary curriculum guides did not use a common approach to defining clear learning standards. For example, 8th grade ELA documents listed the TEKS numbers only, while Algebra II included the verbiage for the TEKS in the document. The English I document listed driving questions, targeted content and concepts, as well as academic and soft skills. TEKS numbers were also listed.

Criterion 2: Congruity of the Curriculum to Assessment

This criterion addresses approaches the district has taken to assessing the learning expectations of the curriculum. Assessment scored .3 and was rarely addressed within the curriculum documents. When it was addressed, the document typically referred to a quiz, which was not contained in the curriculum hub. The 6th grade ELA document is one example.

Criterion 3: The Delineation of the Prerequisite Essential Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes

This criterion scored a .3 and was not addressed in most documents. The exception to this was intermediate math courses. In this case, the document referred to the TEKS scaffolding guide.

Criterion 4: Delineation of the Major Instructional Tools

Most documents referred to the adopted resource for their course. Most often a code was used to refer teachers to the text. For example, in 7th grade math, "HMH module 1" referred teachers to the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt textbook, module 1. Some guides, such as 7th grade ELA, included links to resources such as slide shows and projects for students to complete. This criterion was rated a 1.3.

Criterion 5: Clear Approaches for Classroom Use

The guides that scored highest for this criterion were ELA middle school guides. In these guides, an abundance of videos and activities were provided for use by for teachers. The elementary documents all included one video per week per content referred to as a "focus strategy." The focus strategy was typically a generic strategy that could be used in a variety of situations and was not tied to a specific learning objective. In most of the documents, teachers were referred to the teaching resource. Some documents referred to specific pages, especially in the middle school ELA guides, where it is inferred that teaching strategies could be found. This criterion scored 1.1.

Criterion 6: Suggested Student Work/Activities for Classroom Use

This criterion scored overall at a 1.2. The middle school guides were the strongest in this area and averaged a 1.8. Again, approach was inconsistent across grade spans and content areas. Often the resource was referenced for teachers to use for student work ideas. High School math courses most frequently referred teachers to Edgenuity lessons by number.

Completeness of Written Curriculum Guides

Comments shared with auditors during interviews indicated that Lake Travis Independent School District did not have district produced written curriculum guides until the need arose from the recent pandemic. It was noted while scoring the guides for quality that many of the documents are not complete. For example, high school math courses, including AP Statistics, College Prep Math, and Business and Decision Making did not have templates filled in for the second semester. Kindergarten Spanish ELA documents were missing weeks 29-37. In addition, elementary documents often included "flex weeks" with no teacher guidance. For example, kindergarten documents did not include any academic guidance for the first two weeks of school and also included four "flex weeks" for a total of six weeks with no planned instruction.

Quality of Career and Technology Written Curriculum

The auditors were presented with 85 documents from the CTE department. Some of the documents were lists of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills provided by the state of Texas. Most of the documents were scope and sequence documents supplied by the Texas Education Agency CTE department. Auditors did not score all of the state provided documents but did score a sampling of these in order to provide information to the district in the event they would want to enhance these documents in the future.

The next exhibit shows the ratings of a sample of state developed CTE scope and sequence documents.

Exhibit 2.2.10: CMIM Frame One Curriculum Analysis: Auditors' Ratings of a Sample of CTE Documents Provided by TEA

Curriculum Document Title	Date	1 Obj.	2 Asmt.	3 Prereq.	4 Res.	5 Strats.	6 Act.	Total Rating
Livestock Production	2017	3	0	0	0	0	0	**3**
Interior Design I	2017	3	0	0	0	0	0	**3**
Commercial Photography I	2017	3	0	0	0	0	0	**3**
Principals of Health Science	2017	3	0	0	0	0	0	**3**
Mean Rating for Each Criterion		**3**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**3**

As shown in the exhibit above, the CTE documents provided by TEA achieved the maximum score of 3 for clarity of the learning standards. The documents did not address any of the other elements necessary to score at an adequate level.

The following teacher and administrator comments addressed curriculum quality:

- "We need more ideas for hands-on activities to get away from the excess of using worksheets."(Teacher)
- "Our curriculum has nothing. We're given the TEKS and names of resources that are not aligned well." (Teacher)
- "I feel we look at resources as curriculum here." (Campus Administrator)

In summary, the written curriculum for the Lake Travis Independent School District does not have all the required components at the level of specificity necessary to adequately support teaching and learning. Without quality written curriculum, teachers must rely upon themselves to prioritize objectives, determine appropriate cognitive rigor, and find quality, aligned resources, which is most difficult for new teachers. This can result in inconsistent opportunities for student learning across grade levels, courses, and campuses, resulting in inequities across the district. Not having quality written curriculum also prevents continuity in the system when staff changes occur.

Lake Travis Middle School engineering class

Use of Written Curriculum

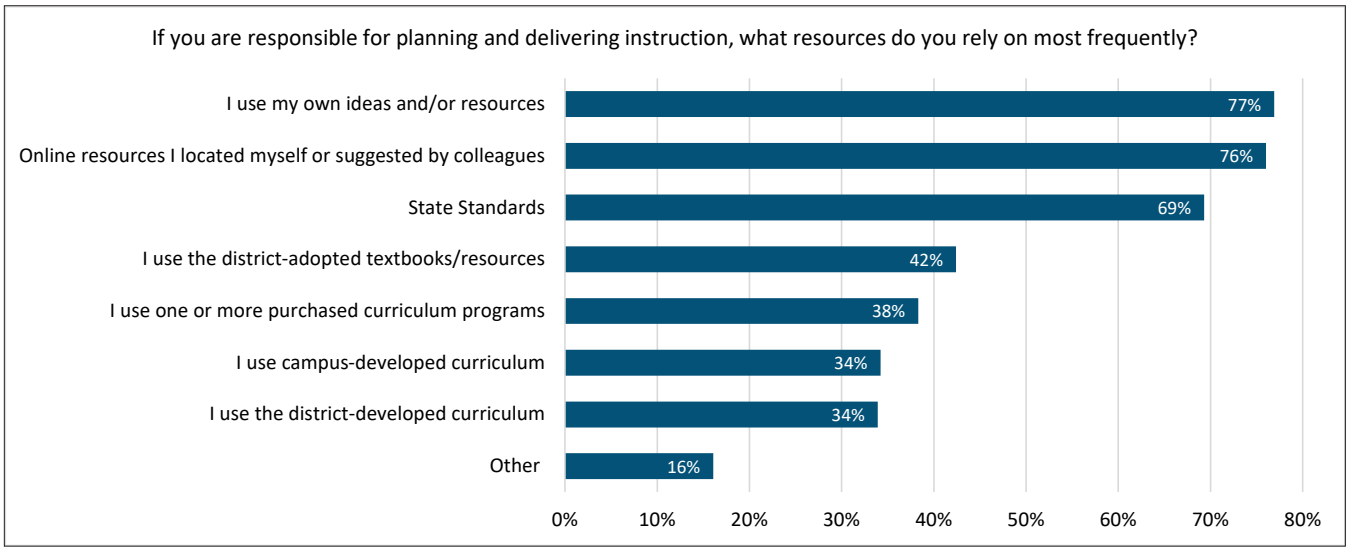
This section concerning the written curriculum addresses the question, "Is it being used?" Consistent utilization of quality curriculum documents to support teaching and learning in classrooms is critical to establishing quality control of the education program of a school district. For students to have equal opportunities for achievement, teachers at all grade levels and subject areas should have access to and use of high-quality curriculum guides and adopted primary and supplementary resources, all of which are a critical part of a quality written curriculum.

Auditors reviewed board policies, minutes of weekly Curriculum and Instruction Directors meetings, and curriculum documents to determine district expectations for use of written curriculum. There was no policy or reference found to direct teachers to teach the district curriculum (see **Finding 1**.) In interviews with district and campus administrators, and survey data from teachers, it was confirmed that there is no expectation that teachers teach the district curriculum.

- "We have a free-for-all regarding curriculum. We had a scope and sequence, but teachers did not have to use it if they didn't want to." (Campus Administrator)
- "I do not have the authority or the backing of principals to have teachers do uniform practices." (District Administrator)
- "Our district gives teachers autonomy and allows them to be creative. Teachers being autonomous can also be a weakness." (Instructional Coach)
- "I use curriculum from other districts I taught in previously." (Teacher)
- "We had a wide variance of what was taught and when it was taught at the elementary level, but there has to be some consistencies." (District Administrator)

This lack of expectation for using the written curriculum was also confirmed by teachers in online surveys. According to teacher survey data, the auditors found that teachers use a variety of resources to plan instruction. In response to the survey question, "What instructional resources do you use most frequently?", teachers could select multiple answers from seven response choices. Results are presented in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 2.2.11: Teacher Response: Most Frequently Used Resources

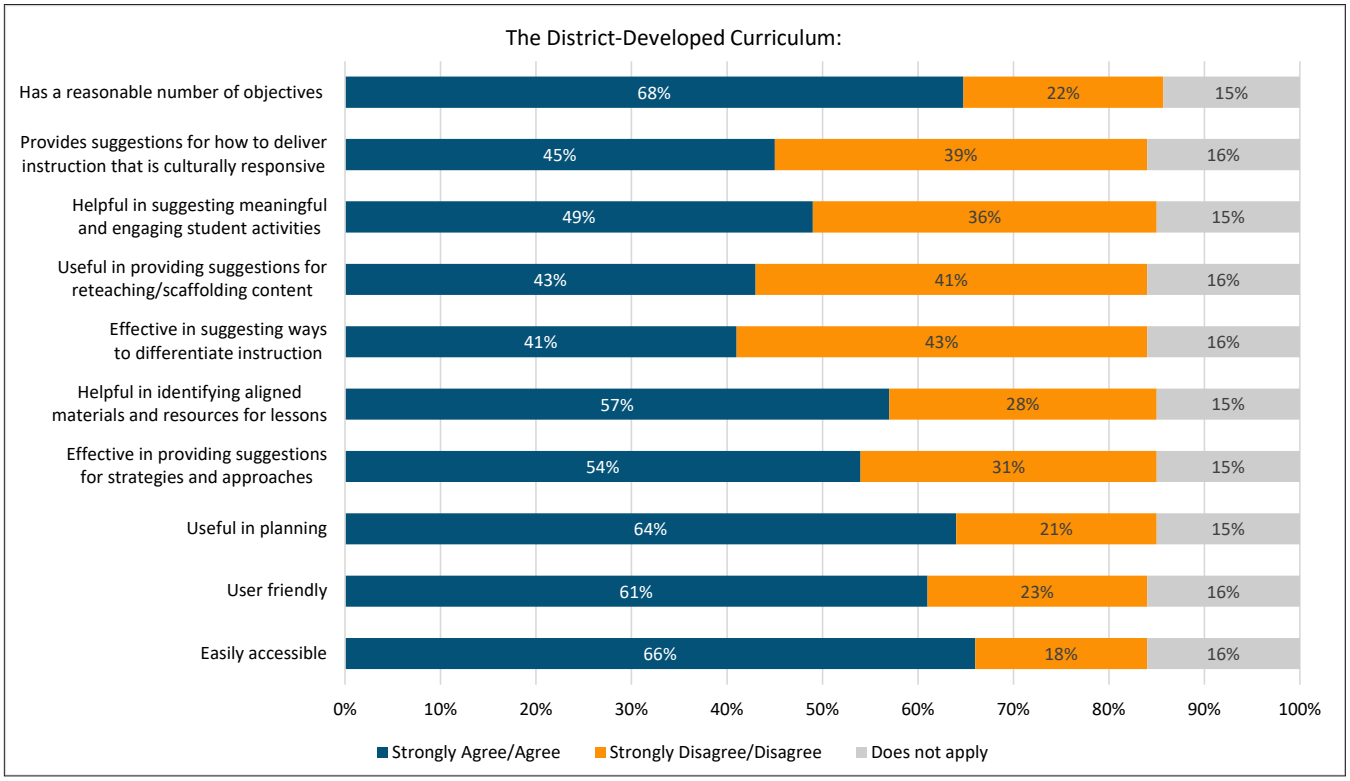


The above exhibit displays responses regarding the resources used most frequently for teaching. The respondents could select more than one answer, so the percentages do not total 100%. The most frequent response was the use of individual teacher ideas and/or resources at 77%, followed by 76% of teachers indicating they rely on online resources they find themselves or are suggested by colleagues. Thirty four percent of teachers indicated they rely on district-developed curriculum.

Most students in Lake Travis Independent School District have performed well on high stakes tests in the past without a high quality, aligned, written curriculum. However, as the state and district's demographics change, reliance on cultural capital will not be sufficient. It is incumbent on the district to take action to ensure every student has access to the advantages of a deeply aligned curriculum.

In another survey question, teachers were asked to indicate features that describe the current district-developed curriculum. Their responses are shown in the exhibit below.

Exhibit 2.2.12: Teacher Response: District Developed Curriculum



This exhibit graphically displays teacher responses to features of the district-developed curriculum. Respondents could select more than one answer, so the percentages are based on the number of responses to each question individually. The highest percentages of agreement were given to statements that the district curriculum is easily accessible and has a reasonable number of objectives.

The responses with the highest percentages of disagreement were given to the statements conveying a need for more suggestions for reteaching or scaffolding content, and for suggestions in how to differentiate instruction. Teachers also indicated a need to make instruction more culturally responsive and relative to students.

Overall, most teachers indicated they use resources other than the district-developed curriculum to support planning for instruction. While they find the district-developed curriculum easily accessible and containing a reasonable number of objectives, they find it lacking in ways to support differentiation as well as ways to reteach and scaffold learning for students. Teachers tend to depend on themselves or their team to plan for instruction.

Summary

In summary, the scope of the written curriculum was found to be inadequate with 41% coverage in the core content areas and 26% coverage in the non-core courses. The only non-core curriculum documents presented were CTE scope and sequence documents furnished by the state. No guides were available in other non-core courses, including fine arts, athletics, and languages other than English. Additionally, the written curriculum was found to be inadequate in quality, scoring a 5.5 out of a necessary 14 to be considered adequate. Curriculum documents produced were inconsistent across contents and grade spans, and all were missing one or more important criteria to be considered adequate for guiding teachers. Teacher surveys also indicated that only 34% of teachers use the current district developed curriculum and rely instead on their own ideas and resources. Without high-quality, written curriculum, a district cannot ensure every student receives equal access to instruction that is consistently aligned to rigorous standards (see **Recommendation 2**).

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

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

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

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

What Auditors Expected to Find in Lake Travis ISD:

Focus Area Three: Consistency and Equity

Under Focus Area Three, auditors review the design and delivery of the educational program to determine equity, connectivity, and overall alignment. A successful school system meeting Focus Area Three will demonstrate a highly-developed, articulated, and coordinated curriculum (programs and services) in the organization that is effectively monitored by the administrative and supervisory staffs at the central and site levels.

Common indicators

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

Overview of What Auditors Found in Lake Travis ISD:

This section is an overview of the findings that follow in the area of **Focus Area Three**. Details follow within separate findings.

Auditors visited 269 classrooms and found instructional delivery did not meet the expectations defined in the Learner Profile. Auditors noted instruction that was based on a teacher-centered approach with low rigor and limited differentiation of instruction. Auditors noted most students as compliant rather than engaged and working directly with course content. Auditors recorded teachers assisting or monitoring students if they were not directly providing instruction.

Auditors found disparities in rigor among schools and in access to formal, academic writing. Artifacts showed multiple interpretations of mastery and overlaps in content in science and social studies and a lack of alignment to standards and to the demands of *STAAR* 2023. Cognitive demand of artifacts was mostly low, and contexts were the least engaging types. Literature used in ELA and social studies did not reflect the diversity of the district or that of the wider United States.

Auditors noted limited connection between professional development and monitoring of instruction by administrators, missing the opportunity to build instructional capacity and leadership capacity in the district. Professional development is not guided by a written plan, leaving the selection and implementation of PD without a formal process or system. Finally, auditors noted some areas of concern regarding equity. Issues are starting to reveal themselves as district student demographics begin to change and become more diverse.

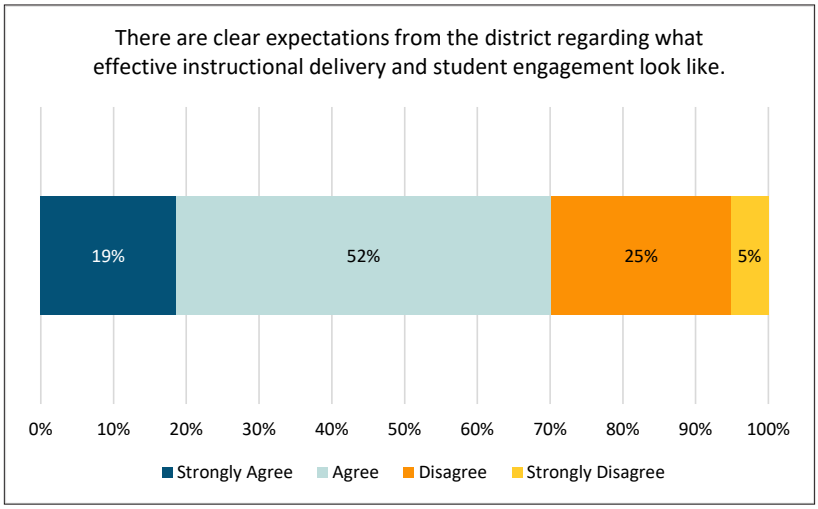
Finding 3.1: District leaders are in the process of implementing the Learner Profile throughout Lake Travis Independent School District. Even so, auditors noted classroom instruction that does not reach the levels expected within the Learner Profile. Auditors noted classrooms with low rigor, teacher-centered instruction, and little differentiation.

Quality classroom instruction is the key to a teacher's ability to influence student achievement positively. Differentiating approaches to the delivery of curriculum and the wide use of research-based instructional strategies, active student engagement, and varied instructional approaches to levels of cognition promote increased student achievement for all students regardless of ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status. District leaders and building principals have the responsibility to establish and communicate the desired classroom practices for quality instruction and then monitor that instruction for effective implementation (see **Finding 3.3)**. Auditors compare district stakeholders' expectations to the instructional strategies they observe in the classroom. Effective school leaders communicate expectations for instructional strategies and develop the skills of both teachers and administrative staff in using and identifying effective classroom activities that are shown to engage students in learning. This finding focuses on classroom practices and teaching strategies observed during the auditors' brief classroom visits to all schools in the district. The intention is to provide a snapshot in time of observed teaching strategies during these classroom visits. If this snapshot reflects a typical teaching moment during any instructional day or time within the classroom, it can serve to provide the organization with data to guide improvement efforts at all levels of the school system. One factor that could affect the representation of the observed activities is that the teachers and principals were aware that outside reviewers would be visiting classrooms at predetermined times during the week of the system audit.

Auditors reviewed board policies, job descriptions, walk-through documents, and district guiding documents to determine district expectations for classroom instructional practices. Auditors also visited all district campuses and 269 classrooms in which instruction occurred during the site visit. District leaders began work on creating the Learner Profile in 2019 before the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic, and they recently have continued efforts to identify what a learner in Lake Travis Independent School District can expect. Leaders created the learner profile around four pillars: Learning is Social, Learning is Inspiring, Learning is Dynamic, and Learning is Empowering. This document provides an expectation of how instruction can meet a learner's needs. Even so, auditors found low rigor in classrooms with most teachers either assisting students individually or working in large groups. While auditors found some instances of high rigor, most classrooms displayed low rigor for instructional delivery. Auditors noted little differentiation to meet the needs of various learners.

To understand expectations of instructional delivery, auditors surveyed teachers concerning clear expectations for what instructional delivery and engagement should look like in Lake Travis Independent School District. The following exhibit displays responses from 312 teachers.

Exhibit 3.1.1: Teacher Responses to Survey Prompt on Instructional Expectations

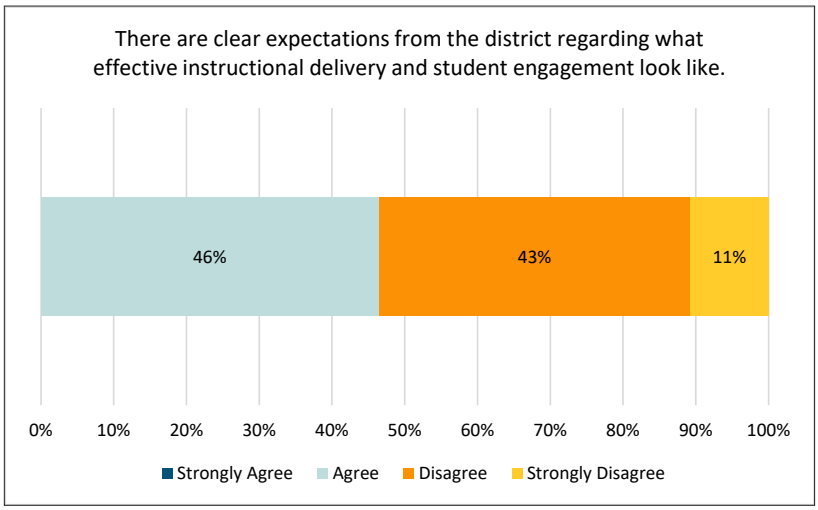


Data Source: Online teacher survey

As illustrated in the exhibit, 70% of the teachers stated they either strongly agree or agree, and 30% disagree or strongly disagree that there are clear expectations for instructional delivery and student engagement from the district level. Auditors allowed teachers to leave comments on the survey, and many referenced the learner-centric model. A few teachers expressed concern for what effective instructional delivery would look like in the period of COVID.

Auditors posed the same prompt to administrators. The next exhibit displays the responses of 44 administrators.

Exhibit 3.1.2: Administrator Responses to Survey Prompt on Instructional Expectations



Data Source: Online administrator survey

In contrast with teachers' perceptions, administrators' perceptions of clear expectations for instructional delivery and student engagement either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement at a range of 54%. The other 46% who responded agreed with the statement, but none stated that they strongly agreed. Auditors allowed administrators to leave comments on the survey. One administrator stated, "Clear expectations exist, but they aren't well known or embraced perhaps," while another commented, "Tier 1 protocol exists, but is not referenced or reinforced." These comments may explain the discrepancy in teacher and administrator response.

When asked what they look for when in classrooms, typical responses included student-centered learning, engagement, higher-order questions and conversations, collaboration, students working in groups, learning alignment to standards, and rigorous instruction.

Lakeway Elementary PE

Classroom Observations

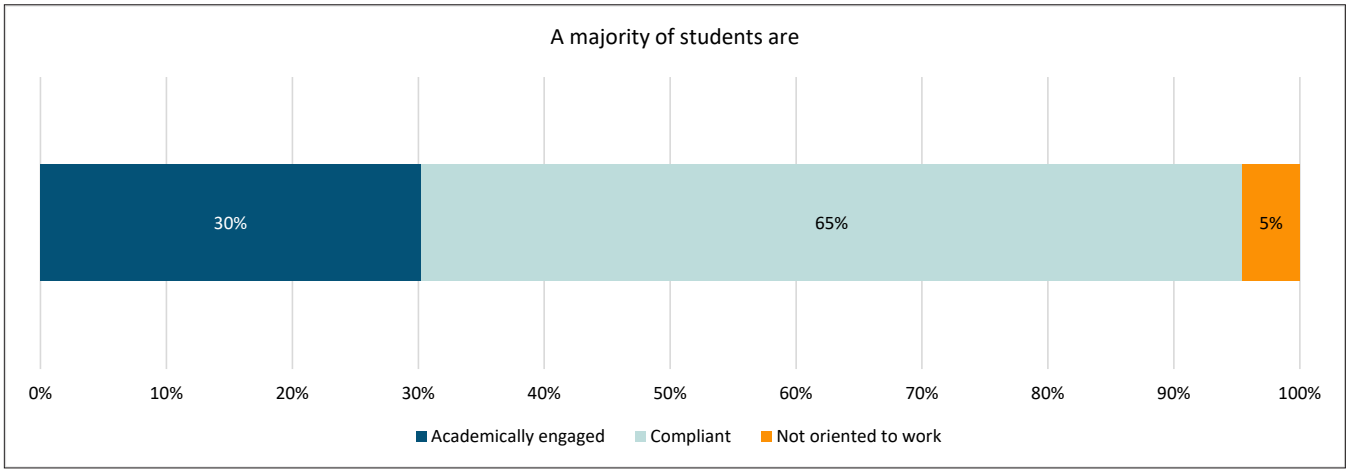
To determine how instructional expectations outlined in documents and responses from administrators previously noted matched actual observed classroom activities, auditors visited 269 classrooms during the school site visits and noted information from each observation. The data gathered from these visits provide a snapshot view of instruction in most classes at that point in time. Classroom observation data are not intended to be evaluative; instead, the intent is to reflect what auditors observed and compare the observations with district expectations for instructional practices. Note that auditors were not able to visit every classroom due to circumstances such as testing, teachers on conference periods, or substitute teachers fulfilling duties.

In every classroom visited, the auditors observed and recorded student engagement, the dominant teacher/student behaviors, and the use of technology by teachers and students (see **Finding 5.1** for information on instructional technology). Auditors recorded evidence of high yield strategies and cognition levels of observed lessons. Auditors also noted evidence of differentiation of lessons. Additionally, auditors recorded student arrangement and looked for a posted statement of the intended objective being taught.

Teacher and Student Behaviors Noted

In determining student engagement, auditors looked for students who were engaged (actively working and interacting with the content, asking questions, collaborating with classmates about content, working independently, or doing some type of research); compliant (working independently with the need for assistance, passively sitting at their desks and listening to the teacher); or not oriented to their work (sitting and not working nor listening to the teacher—may have their heads down on their desks). The following exhibit displays the results for all 269 classrooms visited.

Exhibit 3.1.3: Percentage of Students Oriented to Work



Data Source: Auditor classroom visits

As illustrated in the exhibit, auditors found students compliant in almost two-thirds of the classrooms (65%) and another 30% academically engaged. Auditors observed students not oriented to their work in only 5% of the classrooms visited.

During classroom visits, auditors noted predominant teacher behaviors and student behaviors. The next exhibit displays the descriptors used by auditors during classroom visits to record their observations.

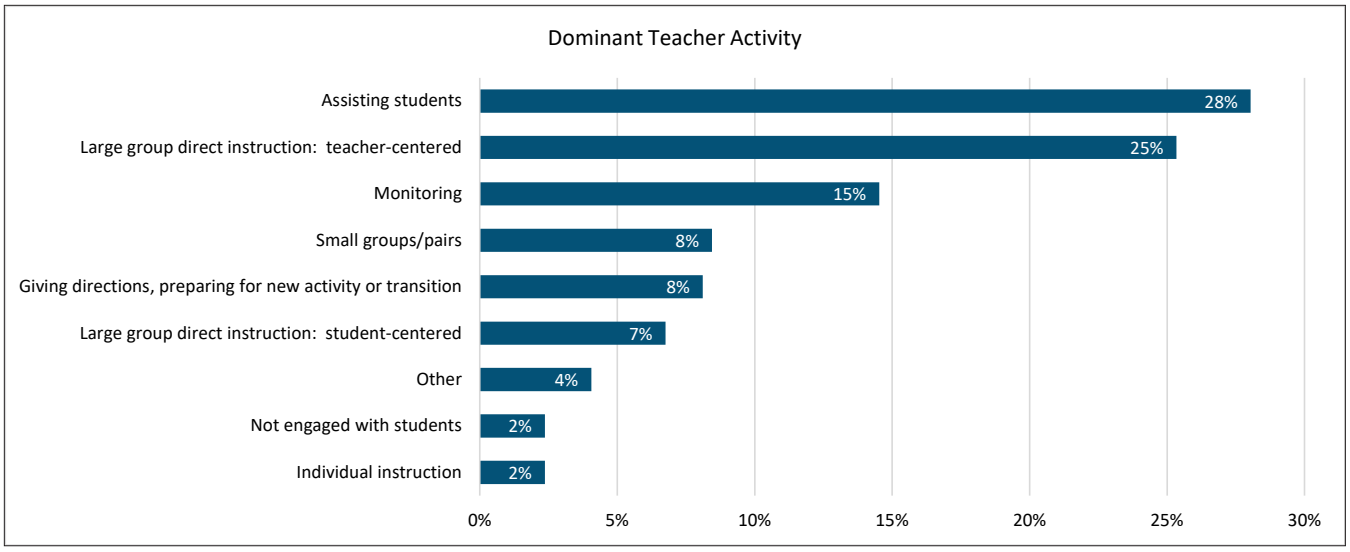
Exhibit 3.1.4: Descriptors of Recorded Classroom Teacher Behaviors and Student Behaviors

Predominant Teacher Instructional Behavior	
Assisting Students	Refers to a teacher working with students in pairs, small lab groups, or individually about specific steps or actions the student(s) should take, not simply providing praise or feedback.
Direct instruction: Student-centered	Refers to the teacher conducting whole group activities where students are actively engaged in discussion or generating and answering high-level questions.
Direct instruction: Teacher-centered	Refers to the teacher verbally leading the entire class through a learning activity, e.g., lecture, demonstration, overhead projector, or low-level questions and answers.
Giving directions	Refers to the teacher orally giving directions to the whole group or a small group of students for an upcoming classroom activity.
Individual instruction	Refers to a teacher sitting with one student, teaching, reteaching, or otherwise meeting a student's individual needs.
Monitoring students	Refers to the teacher circulating about the classroom, visually monitoring the students as they work, but not interacting with them.
Not engaged with students	Refers to the teacher seated at his/her desk without students, e.g., correcting papers, taking attendance, reading, or doing other paperwork or computer work.
Small group/pairs	Refers to the teacher working with a group that is less than approximately one-third of the total number of students in the classroom. Examples include reading groups, centers, etc.

Predominant Student Learning Behaviors	
Computer work	Refers to more than half the class actively using computers as part of their lessons.
Lab/hands-on	Refers to students completing a science lab procedure or other hands-on type of learning experience. Not limited to only science lab procedures.
Listening (passive)	Refers to students listening to a lecture or directions given by the teacher without opportunity to actively participate in a discussion. Includes situations where the teacher is asking low-level questions that require only short, factual answers.
Listening (active and participating)	Refers to students listening to the teacher or other students while actively involved in discussion and meaningful questioning. Includes opportunities where students are allowed to discuss with their peers such as "turn and talk" before answering whole group.
Practice activity (problem solving)	Refers to students practicing or problem solving what they learned during instruction.
Project (high level)	Refers to learning as a building process designed to give students the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills through engaging projects set around challenges and problems they may face in the real world.
Reading (whole class or small groups)	Refers to at least two-thirds of the students in the class reading the same book silently or in small groups.
Reading (individual choice)	Refers to at least two-thirds of the students in the class reading a book of their choice.
Small group collaborative work	Refers to students working collaboratively in a group that is less than approximately one-third of the total number of students in the classroom. Examples include reading groups, centers, students in groups trying to solve mathematical or science problems by deciphering information or analyzing data, or the teacher tutoring a small group.
Speaking (presenting, answering, high-level questions)	Refers to an oral presentation that can be given as an individual or as part of a group. It also might add components of technology such as a slide show, video clip, or audio recording. Visual aids and teaching tools are used to further enhance the spoken words.
Taking test	Refers to students taking a test.
Transition	Refers to students transitioning from one activity to another, such as putting away materials or moving to another location in the room to begin another activity.
Warm-up/review	Refers to students working on a warm-up activity at the beginning of a class period or reviewing previously learned objectives.
Watching video	Refers to students passively sitting and watching a video.
Working with manipulatives or models	Refers to students, typically in pairs or small groups, using manipulatives or models such as foldables or math manipulatives to explore concepts.
Worksheet (low level)	Refers to students completing a prepared worksheet.
Worksheet (high level)	Open-ended, graphic organizer, etc.
Writing (low level)	Refers to students either copying from the board or from a book.
Writing (high level)	Refers to at least two-thirds of the students in the class writing independently or in small groups. Writing refers to sentence, paragraph, or essay writing; not completing worksheets

The next two exhibits display the results of the data the audit team collected on teacher and student behaviors during the brief visits to the 269 classrooms across the district. The percentage of frequency was based on the number of classrooms where auditors collected data. This exhibit shows the predominant teacher instructional behaviors auditors observed in all classrooms visited.

Exhibit 3.1.5: Predominant Teacher Instructional Behaviors Observed by Auditors

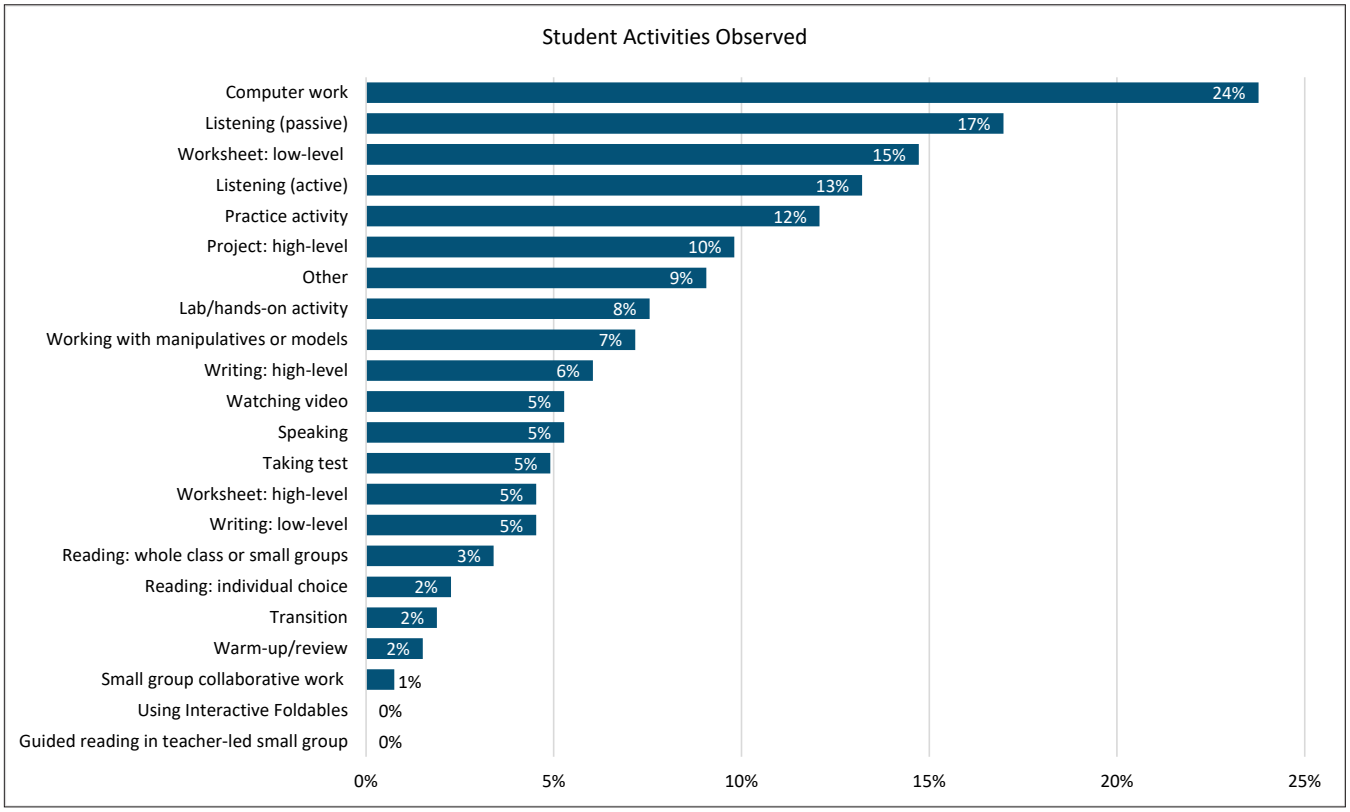


Data Source: Auditor classroom visits

The previous exhibit displays observations with two primary activities observed in more than half the classrooms observed. Auditors observed teachers assisting students in 28% of the classrooms visited; in another 25% they observed teachers working in large group, teacher-centered environments. Auditors noted teachers monitoring students as the third most frequently observed instructional behavior in 15% of the classrooms. The remaining behaviors all accounted for less than 10% each. Auditors rated 4% of classrooms as "other," which included teachers sitting at their desks and in one case, a teacher not in the room. The next exhibit displays the results of observed student activities during classroom visits. If auditors noted more than one specific activity prominent in the classroom, the auditors marked all that applied. Therefore, the total percentage sums to more than 100%.

Lake Travis High School biology class

Exhibit 3.1.6: Dominant Student Activities Observed by Auditors



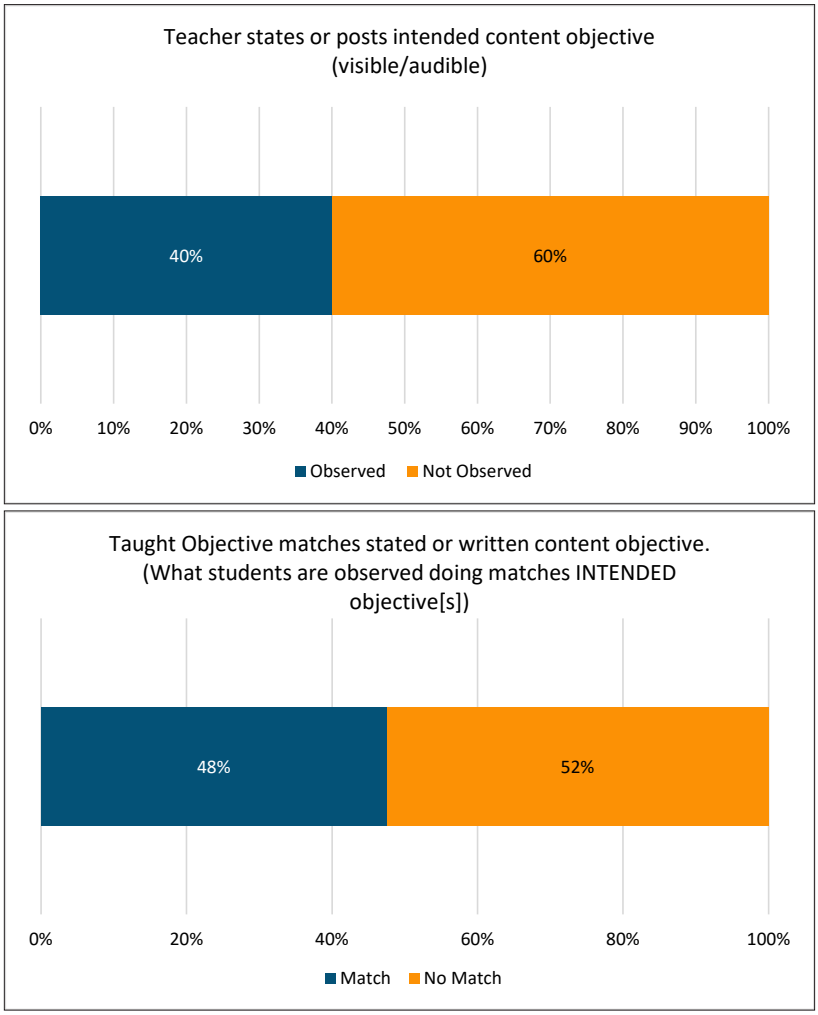
Data Source: Auditor classroom visits

As illustrated in the above exhibit, in the 269 classrooms visited across the district, auditors observed computer work as the dominant student activity in 24% of the classrooms. The next most observed student activities were listening passively (17%), completing low-level worksheets (15%), listening actively (13%), and practicing activities (12%). Auditors observed the remaining activities in 10% or less of the classrooms. Some activities noted as "other" included students playing educational games, physical activities such as dancing, and catching up on missing work.

Effective Instructional Strategies

The taught curriculum in effective school districts aligns with the written and assessed curriculum (see **Finding 2.2**). One key aspect of the written curriculum directly observed in classroom observations is the learning objective guiding instruction for the day. A common practice is for teachers to post the daily objectives for students to understand the learning target for the day. Auditors recorded if teachers posted objectives in their classrooms on the board, wall, or projector (if observed). Auditors then examined the lesson being taught and noted if the taught lesson matched the objective posted. The next exhibit displays the results of objectives posted and match to the taught lesson observed.

Exhibit 3.1.7: Posted Objective and Matched Lesson Observed



Data Source: Auditor classroom visits

As noted by auditors in this exhibit, 40% of the classrooms visited had daily objectives posted. Auditors realize some teachers may have displayed the daily objective in an opening slide with the overhead projector at the beginning of class when auditors were not present, and this could not be recorded. Of the 40% of the classrooms in which auditors did see a objective posted for the day, 48% of those matched with the lesson being taught. Here, auditors noted some classrooms in which teachers included objectives for an entire week, and while the lesson observed may have been included in the weekly objectives, it was not the taught objective on the day visited.

The written curriculum not only provides objectives to guide the taught curriculum, but the written curriculum should also provide suggested strategies for teacher approaches to delivering the content along with suggested differentiated student activities (see **Finding 2.2**). Auditors collected data on effective instructional strategies during the 269 classroom visits. The following table describes a range of strategies along with some specific high-yield strategies auditors looked for during classroom visits.

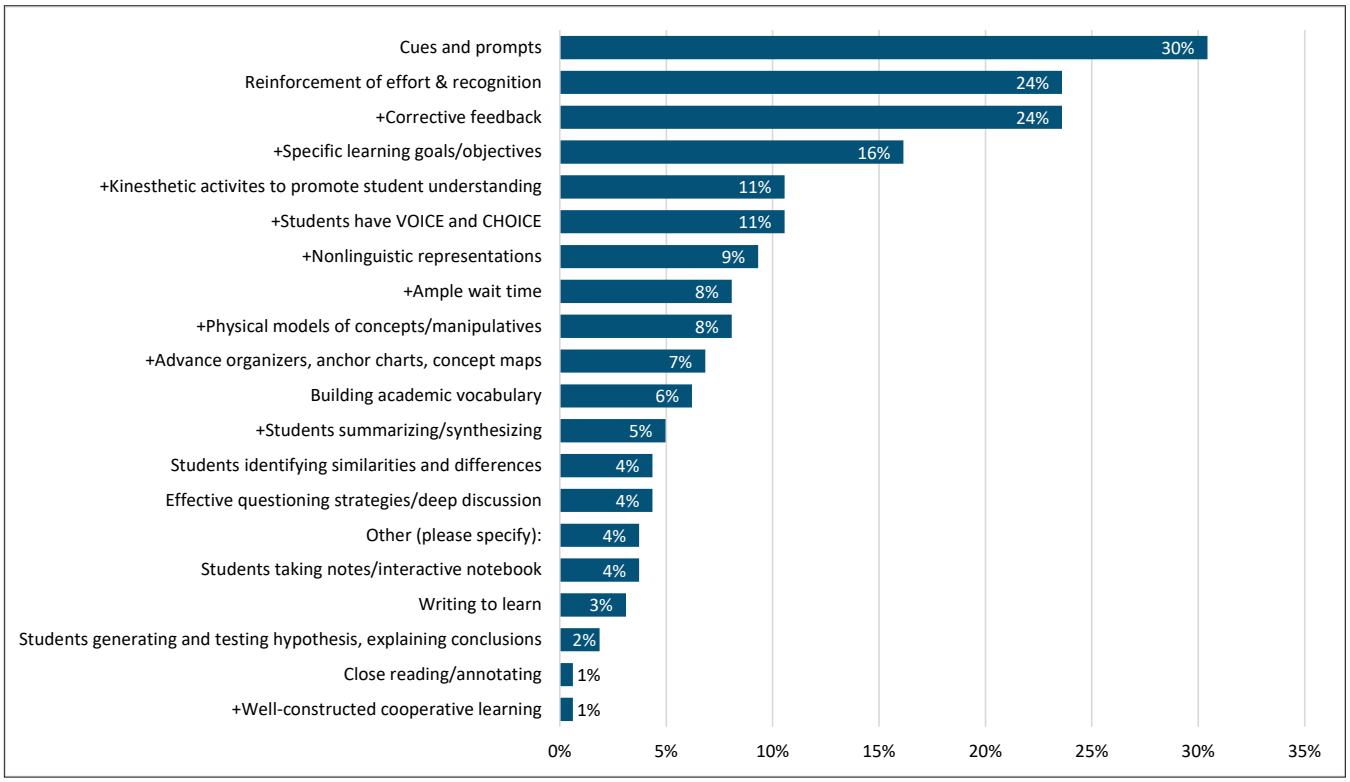
Exhibit 3.1.8: Descriptors of Effective Instructional Strategies

Strategy	Definition
Advanced organizers, anchor charts, concept maps	Refers to a tool for teachers to help students understand, retain, and remember new learning material. Students create a graphic representation, such as a web or concept map, which allows them to perceive relationships between concepts through diagramming key words representing these concepts.
Ample wait time	Refers to providing sufficient or ample time for the student to process information and/or respond to questions.
Building academic vocabulary	Refers to developing vocabulary that is not necessarily common or frequently encountered in informal conversation.
Close reading annotating	Refers to an instructional strategy where students are required to fill in the blanks within a passage with correct words from a word bank and build a better understanding of text and stories through annotations.

Strategy	Definition
Corrective feedback	Refers to approaches for providing students with specific information about their learning and how their performance ranks relative to the performance expectations.
Cues and prompts	Refers to instructional approach for guiding students' learning through the use of cues and questions that focus on the content that is most important and helping students analyze information (high order questioning).
Effective questioning strategies/deep discussion	Refers to questions asked for the purpose of guiding student learning rather than testing students' knowledge. High-level questions are based on Bloom's Taxonomy at the levels of analyzing, evaluating, or creating or based on Depth of Knowledge at levels 3 or 4.
Generating and testing hypothesis, explaining conclusions	Refers to instructional approaches designed to deepen students' understanding of key concepts through an inquiry process that includes opportunities for students to engage in asking good questions, generating hypotheses and predictions, investigating through testing or research, making observations, and analyzing and communicating results.
Kinesthetic activities to promote student understanding	Refers to learning taking place by the students carrying out physical activities, rather than listening to a lecture or watching demonstrations.
Nonlinguistic representations	Refers to strategies that help students acquire and store information and enhance their understanding of the content through the use of visual imagery, aesthetic or whole-body modes, or auditory experiences. The strategies may take many forms, including use of graphic organizers, concept maps, idea webs, pictures or pictographs, mental pictures, concrete representations, or dramatizations.
Other	Indicates that other strategies not listed above were observed during the brief classroom visit.
Physical models of concepts/manipulatives	Refers to using objects to model concepts, the object being modeled may be small (for example, an atom) or large (for example, the solar system).
Reinforcement of effort and recognition	Refers to strategies for improving students' beliefs about their abilities to understand the relationship between effort and achievement. Recognition involves providing students specific praise contingent upon successful completion of identified level of performance.
Similarities and differences	Refers to classroom practices that include comparison tasks, classifying tasks, and the use of metaphors and analogies.
Specific goals and objectives	Refers to strategies or implementation of steps to attain the identified goals.
Summarizing	Refers to tasks that involve students putting into their own words a shortened version of written or spoken material, citing the main points, and leaving out material considered not essential. Note-taking strategies may include use of informal outlines, graphic representations, or a combination of the two.
Taking notes/interactive notebook	Refers to a tool used to strengthen student learning through increased student participation. A way for students to write down information given by the teacher (through notes, vocabulary, and foldables).
Well-constructed cooperative learning	Refers to a teaching method where students of mixed levels of ability are arranged into groups and rewarded according to the group's success, rather than the success of an individual member.
Writing to learn	Refers to writing-to-learn activities that are short, informal writing tasks that help students think through key concepts or ideas central to a course.

The auditors recorded effective instructional strategies in each classroom visited based on the definitions in the above exhibit. Auditors recorded more than one strategy in a classroom when they observed multiple strategies; therefore, the frequencies add to more than 100%. Auditors recorded one or more of the listed strategies in 161 of the 269 classrooms observed (60%). The next exhibit displays the frequency rates of the strategies recorded in the 161 classrooms where auditors observed one or more strategy.

Exhibit 3.1.9: Effective Instructional Strategies Observed by Auditors



Key: + denotes Marzano high-yield strategies
Data Source: Auditor classroom visits

As indicated in the exhibit, in almost one-third (30%) of the classrooms in which they observed effective instructional strategies, auditors noted cues and prompts. The next two strategies at 24% each were reinforcement of effort & recognition and corrective feedback. Auditors noted sporadic use of high-yield practices throughout the district with most of them occurring in around 10% or less of classrooms.

The varied use of instructional strategies in the classrooms may indicate no expressed approach to instruction coming from the district level, and teachers being left to use their best judgment.

Levels of Cognition

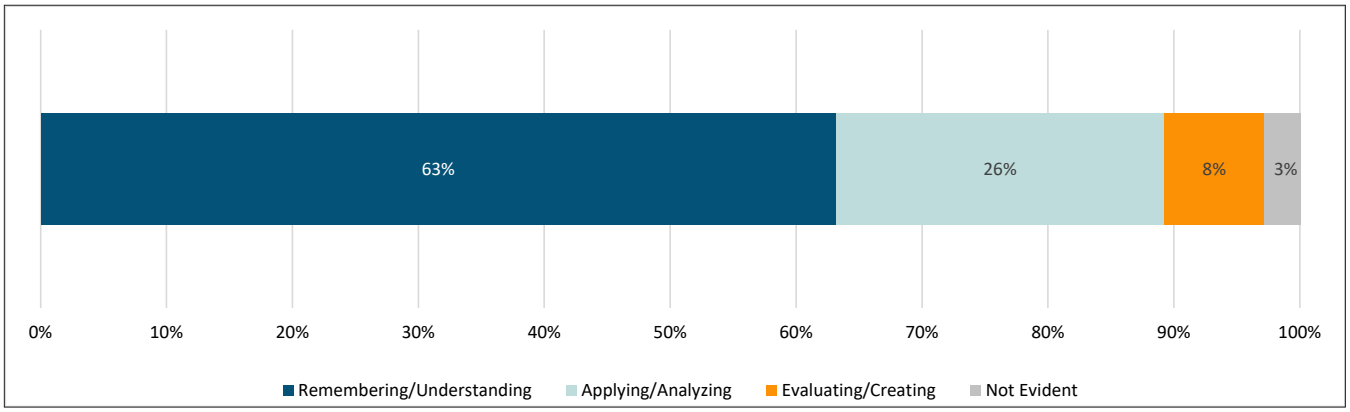
Alignment between the taught and tested curricula takes into account cognition levels of instruction and student work (see **Finding 3.2** for an analysis of student work). It is important that cognition levels of instruction within classrooms meet or exceed the cognition levels on high-stakes tests and any other state or national assessments. As part of their observations, auditors collected classroom snapshot data on the cognitive levels that reflect rigor using Bloom's Revised Taxonomy. The exhibit below displays the descriptions used to categorize the levels of cognition observed in classrooms.

Exhibit 3.1.10: Descriptors for Bloom's Revised Taxonomy

Cognition Level	Definition
Low Levels of cognition	
Remembering	Recalling facts, terms, basic concepts, and answers.
Understanding	Organizing, comparing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions of facts and/or ideas.
Mid Levels of cognition	
Applying	Solve problems in new situations by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques, and rules in a different way.
Analyzing	Examine and break information into parts by identifying motives or causes. Find evidence to support generalizations.
High Levels of cognition	
Evaluating	Present and defend opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas, or quality of work based on a set of criteria.
Creating	Compile information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions.

During classroom observations, auditors collected data on levels of cognition required of students through classroom instruction, assignments, and activities students were participating in at the time auditors were present. The next exhibit illustrates the results of those observations.

Exhibit 3.1.11: Levels of Cognition Observed During Classroom Observations of Instruction



Data Source: Auditor classroom visits

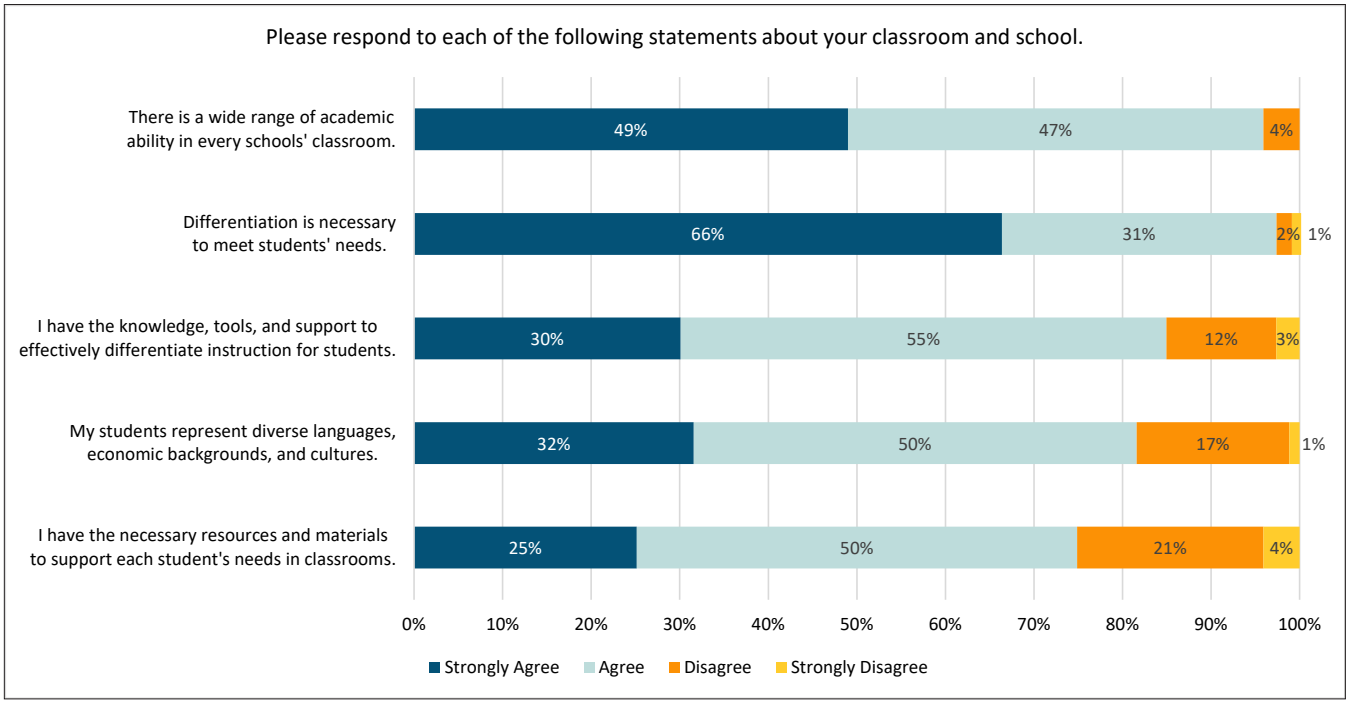
As noted in the exhibit, auditors rated the cognition levels in almost two-thirds (63%) of the classrooms at the lowest levels of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy – remembering and understanding. Auditors rated slightly over one-quarter of classrooms (26%) at the mid levels of applying and analyzing. Auditors noted 8% of the classrooms contained instruction at the highest levels of evaluating and creating. Auditors understand these data represent a snapshot of what happens in classrooms throughout Lake

Travis Independent School District. When levels remain in low categories during classroom instruction, students are not prepared for higher levels of thinking on high-stakes state or national level testing, and overall student achievement and learning is affected. While having access and opportunity to think in cognitively complex ways is important for all students' academic success, it is especially significant for students from low socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds and those who are emergent bilinguals (EBs). Low SES exposure to complex concepts prepares students for future academic access and opportunity. Without this preparation in the classroom, all students, but especially low SES students, will have much more difficulty understanding and performing adequately on high-stakes testing as most questions on those assessments are cognitively challenging. While the previous exhibit displays the level of cognition noted by auditors concerning instruction, **Finding 3.2** addresses cognition types related to work artifacts presented to auditors for analysis.

Differentiation

A quality written curriculum contains suggestions for differentiation of instruction in content, product, and process. It is important that classroom instruction allow for differentiation during the learning process so that students who need additional support are provided that support and so that those students who can excel can do so. Auditors surveyed teachers concerning differentiation of instruction, and 342 responded. This exhibit displays survey results.

Exhibit 3.1.12: Teacher Responses to Survey Items Concerning Differentiation

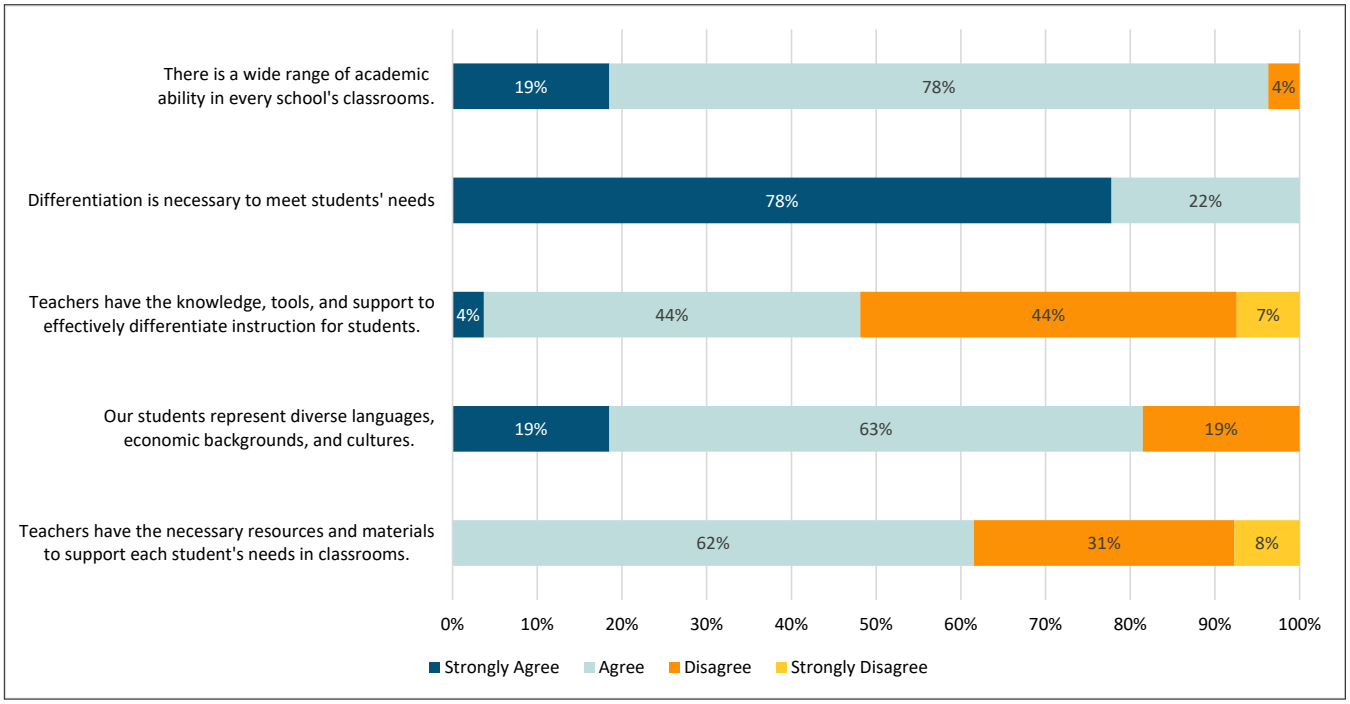


Data Source: Online teacher survey

As noted from the exhibit, 96% of teachers stated they strongly agree or agree they have a wide range of abilities in their classrooms, and 97% stated differentiation is necessary to meet student needs. Another 82% stated their students represent diverse learning opportunities, and 85% stated they have the knowledge and tools to differentiate instruction for students. Finally, 75% stated they have the resources to support each student's needs.

Auditors asked administrators to respond to the same items regarding students and teachers in their buildings. The next exhibit displays those results.

Exhibit 3.1.13: Administrator Responses to Survey Items Concerning Differentiation



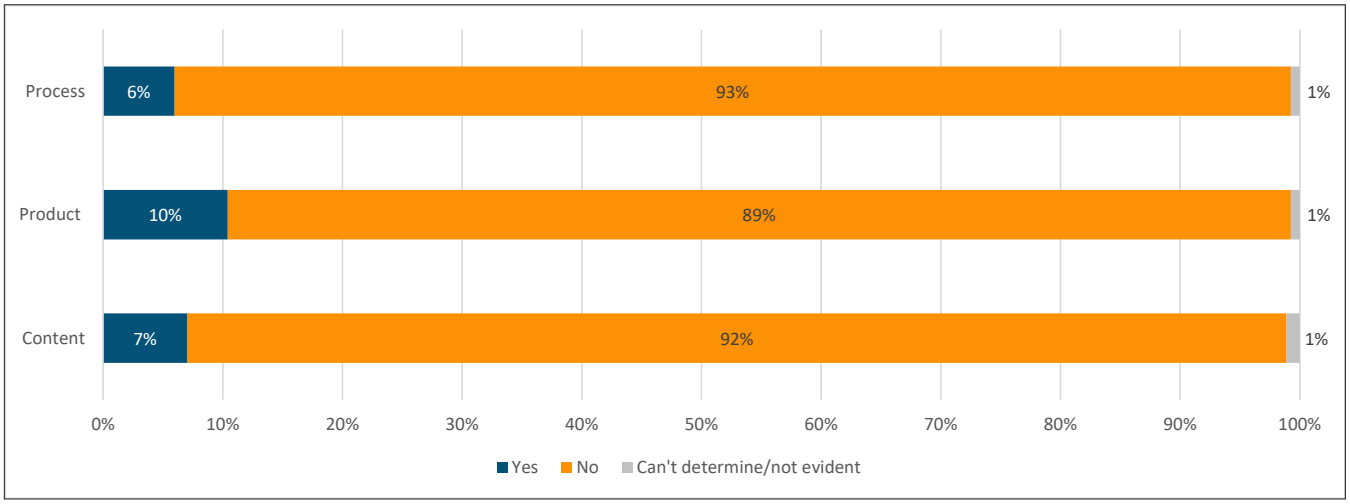
Data Source: Online administrator survey

Rough Hollow Elementary 1st grade large group science

Similar to teacher responses, the exhibit above shows 97% of administrators strongly agree or agree there is a wide range of academic ability in classrooms. All administrators stated differentiation is necessary. While only 48% of administrators stated teachers have the knowledge, tools, and support to differentiate instruction, teachers claimed they have these skills at a rate of 85%. Finally, 62% of administrators stated their teachers have the resources to provide such differentiation.

Auditors looked for evidence of differentiation during classroom visits. Differentiation can be evident in content, product, or process type. Content is defined as what is being taught. Product refers to options about how to express required learning. Process refers to how students understand or make sense of what is being taught or delivered. The next exhibit displays the results of the auditors' collection of data regarding types of differentiation observed during the 269 classroom visits. Auditors noted "Cannot Determine," if the short amount of time in classrooms did not allow them an opportunity to see differentiation in instruction.

Exhibit 3.1.14: Evidence of Differentiation Observed by Auditors



Data Source: Auditor classroom visits

As demonstrated in the exhibit, auditors observed very little differentiation in the 269 classrooms they visited. Auditors noted the most differentiation in product at 10%. Differentiation in content (7%) and process (6%) were observed less frequently.

Auditors interviewed district administrators, campus administrators, teachers, and board members. The following comments are an example of what auditors heard concerning classroom instruction:

- "Our kids can sit and listen, and they will do okay on any tests." (District Administrator)
- "I'm concerned about how much time children are spending on computers and not on conversation and discussion, which I think is a result of overspending on programs." (Instructional Coach)
- "We have 38 or 39 in some English classes at the high school. You can't keep the rigor up and writing practice if they have too many students." (Teacher)
- "We believe there is a lack of rigor, and our kids can handle more." (District Administrator)
- "Teachers have the autonomy to choose the strategies they use." (Campus Administrator)

Summary

Auditors visited 269 classrooms across Lake Travis Independent School District. During these snapshot observations, auditors recorded a number of data points to provide a general scenario of what they observed concerning instructional delivery. District leaders continue to implement the Learner Profile first developed before the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic. Auditors observed classrooms with most students compliant, working on computers, doing independent work, or listening passively to teachers. Auditors observed teachers assisting individual students or working with large groups of students using a teacher-centered approach. Most often observed teaching strategies were cues and prompts and reinforcement of effort. While auditors noted about one-third of classroom instruction (34%) at the mid or high levels of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, they noted 63% at low levels. Finally, while teachers noted the need for differentiation, auditors observed little differentiation in classrooms (see **Recommendation 3**).

Finding 3.2: Student work artifacts showed disparities in access to curriculum and issues with coordination and articulation between schools. Cognitive demand was mostly low, and contexts used were mostly the least engaging types. Special Education artifacts did not have the same rigor and engagement as regular artifacts. Some resources did not reflect the diversity of the district.

Student work artifacts—the activities students are asked to perform to demonstrate mastery of curriculum objectives—provide valuable information to school districts about how the written curriculum is being delivered. Since this work is ultimately what is assessed to determine student achievement, it has repercussions for the entire system. Artifacts must address the same content as the assessment, but if the student work artifacts don't meet and exceed the cognitive demands of the external tests in use, or if the artifacts aren't aligned to the contexts and content of the most difficult test items to provide practice of those modes before test day, then students will be far less likely to perform well, however much content they have memorized. Artifacts can also reveal whether district expectations for student learning are being met; whether students are being given engaging, challenging work requiring critical thinking skills will be readily apparent in the work they are asked to do. Depending on the sample collected, artifacts can also indicate disparities in access to curriculum among schools and show districts places where content is either overlapping or missing.

Schools were instructed to select artifacts from the four core areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies at each grade level, PK-12. Collected artifacts are meant to be activities that assess mastery of a standard without being tests. Auditors also asked that some of the artifacts be from recognized subpopulations: ELL, SPED, and advanced students. Altogether, auditors received 1,598 artifacts, PK-12, for evaluation.

Key Findings:

- Artifacts showed disparities in access to challenging curriculum among schools and a lack of access to formal, academic writing across grade levels and academic tracks.
- Multiple interpretations of mastery and overlaps in content were evident among artifacts in social studies and science. Some artifacts were not aligned to standards or to the demands of the new *STAAR* 2023 test.
- Cognitive demand was higher and contexts more engaging in ELA, but other content areas showed lower cognitive demand and used the least engaging contexts.
- ELA and social studies literature and activities do not reflect the diversity of the district and the wider United States.

Objective Content Analysis

Objective content forms the building blocks of the curriculum, specifying what will be taught and when it will be taught. It must be clearly placed within a scope and sequence that prevents gaps and overlaps in the vertical articulation of skills and concepts, and it must clearly delineate for teachers what the expectations for mastery are for each objective. Without this level of specificity, the district can't guarantee that students in different schools are getting the same curriculum, nor can they guarantee that all students are being held to the same standard for mastery. As a general rule, state standards are not enough to form a true curriculum since they lack this kind of specificity. The TEKS, in particular, range from the very broad to the oddly specific and are sometimes virtually identical from grade level to grade level. As such, they are not sufficient to clarify what mastery should look like for teachers, nor to ensure

that content is spiraled appropriately between grade levels. This is why it is incumbent on the district to refine state standards into local objectives designed to meet local expectations and needs.

In order to assess objective content, auditors examined: types of content taught in individual schools and at specific grade levels; evidence of multiple interpretations of mastery; gaps and/or overlaps in content between grade levels and among schools; and alignment to standards or standard intent. It should be noted that alignment to standards is not nearly as important as aligning district objectives to the external tests in use in all three dimensions: content, context, and cognitive demand. This is going to become much more important for districts with the implementation of *STAAR 2.0* in the coming years because the cognitive demand and contexts of the new test are much more difficult than the former *STAAR* tests.

Auditors found that there were differences among teachers and schools in how they defined mastery of objectives, overlap in content within and between grade levels in some content areas, a potential lack of access to formal, academic writing across grade levels, and artifacts that were not aligned to standards or to the upcoming *STAAR 2.0*.

Types of Writing in Language Arts by Grade Level

Auditors noted the types of writing students were asked to do to identify differences among schools. Auditors noted that the types of writing were different from school to school, as were the expectations for the finished products. The following exhibit shows this analysis.

Exhibit 3.2.1: Types of Writing and Writing Expectations in ELA 1-5

School	1	2	3	4	5
Bee Cave EL	Personal Narrative; summer vacation; informal style	Seasonal Sensory Poem; uses imagery, sensory detail, structure	Creative Writing, mimicking a piece of literature	Book Synopsis Paragraph; informal style	Informal Letter
	Write About It Paragraph; informal style		Personal Narrative: informal style		
	Personal Narrative; winter holidays; informal style		Informational Presentation; formal style		

School	1	2	3	4	5
Lake Pointe EL		Acrostic Poem Cinquain Poem		Poetry Collection of 15 Types of Poetry: Haiku, Shape Poem, Acrostic, Concrete Poem, 5 Senses, Narrative, Limerick, Riddle Poem, Cinquain, Color Poem, Emotions Poem, Current Event Poem, Winter Holiday Poem, Couplet Poem	
		Personal narrative, Parasailing; 3 paragraphs, informal style			
Lake Travis EL	Informative Procedural Writing: How to Draw a Person; 5 sentences, informal style.	Poetry: Haiku	Informal Letter; A book I have read. One paragraph.	Poetry: Limericks	
				Expository Essay, The Grand Canyon; 3 paragraphs, formal style	
Lakeway EL	Personal Narrative; informal style		Fractured Fairy Tale; informal style	Descriptive Essay; informal style	Persuasive Essay; informal style
Rough Hollow EL	Diamond Poem; uses structure, sensory detail	Biography; informal style	Expository Essay; author biography; formal Style	Informal Letter/ Persuasive: Dear Santa	Informational Writing: All About _____(animal); formal style
	I Am Paragraph; informal style	Letter summarizing what was learned; informal			Undetermined (could be personal narrative or persuasive) Best Part of Me; informal style
Serene Hills EL	Sensory Poem; Spring; uses sensory details, imagery	Snow globe paragraph; informal style		Paragraph using figurative language; informal Style	
				Expository Paragraph; informal style	
				Personal Narrative; informal style	
				Informational Poem; no specific poetic structure or technique	
				Poem; used stanza, rhyme, rhythm	

School	1	2	3	4	5
West Cypress EL	All about Me Poem; no poetic structure, no sensory detail or imagery, no rhyme or rhythm	Acrostic Poem			
		Poem; uses onomatopoeia, repetition			
		Color Poem; uses simile, sensory detail			

This exhibit illustrates several things, first of which is little opportunity is given students to practice a formal, academic style. This means they learn to write pieces without using first or second person. This type of academic writing is very important to prepare students for more advanced writing in middle and high school and ultimately for college and should begin to appear by grade 4 or 5. Some issues with when the various types of writing are being addressed indicate a possible problem with both articulation and coordination. The exhibit below is a short analysis of the poetry standards for grades 1-5. This should help the district see how the poetry artifacts presented didn't align well to the standards or articulate properly from grade level to grade level.

West Cypress Elementary GT project

Exhibit 3.2.2: Poetry Strand Analysis ELA 1-5

Grade	1	2	3	4	5
Standard Language	Dictate or Compose Poems Discuss rhyme, rhythm, repetition, and alliteration in a variety of poems	Compose Poems Explain visual patterns and structures in a variety of poems	Compose Poems Explain rhyme scheme, sound devices, and structural elements such as stanzas in a variety of poems	Compose Poems Explain figurative language such as simile, metaphor, and personification that the poet uses to create images	Compose Poems Explain the use of sound devices and figurative language and distinguish between the poet and the speaker in poems across a variety of poetic forms

NOTES:

- The standards are relatively vague and make it difficult for teachers to discern the pattern of articulation.
- Some things lend themselves more readily to certain grade levels: rhyming poetry in grade 1, poems with clear visual structure (like shape poems, diamond poems, concrete poems, and acrostics) in grade 2, poems with stanzas in grade 3, poems with figurative language that contributes to imagery in grade 4, and poems with distinct speakers in grade 5. However, the standards never specify which poetry should be used in which grades, so teachers are interpreting the standards in a variety of ways with no coordination across schools.
- Auditors noted a wide variety of poetry types appearing across grade levels. One artifact in grade 4 had students compose 15 different types of poetry. Two of those types had already been done in grade 2 in that school. Of the 15 types of poetry the artifact listed, 5 are not recognized poetic forms but rather just poetry topics. Another poem from grade 4—the Informational Poem—is also not a recognized poetic form. Some of these poetry artifacts came from internet resource sites, which are seldom vetted for correctness.
- Although the standards state that students should "compose poetry" at nearly every grade level, much more weight is given to students' ability to **interpret** poetry and **analyze** how the poet conveys meaning through a variety of techniques. This doesn't mean students can't write poetry or attempt a variety of forms; but the language of the standards implies that analysis of poetry from recognized poets is more important than being able to compose poetry oneself.
- The district will need to determine which types of poetry (haiku, acrostic, cinquain, etc.) and which poetry concepts (forms, structures, devices) should be taught at which levels and what, specifically, students will need to do to demonstrate mastery of the entirety of the standard.

Auditors also analyzed released test items from the upcoming *STAAR* 2023 test that specifically pertained to mastery of poetry concepts. That analysis can be found in **Exhibit D.6** in **Appendix D**. Auditors concluded that the artifacts submitted did not offer students any practice in the types of activities and thinking skills they would need to be successful on poetry items in this test.

Auditors performed a similar analysis of writing artifacts for grades 6-12. The results of that are shown in the next exhibit.

Exhibit 3.2.3: Writing in Grades 6-12

Type of Writing	Grade Level Where It Appears						
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Expository Essay: Informational writing, informal style	X						
Personal Narrative: Informal style, 2+ pages, typed.	X*						
Creative Writing: various lengths	X				X		X
Informational Writing: Advertising Techniques. 1 Paragraph, typed. F**ormal** style		X					
Paraphrase: Informative Text, ranged from 1 paragraph (on-level) to 4 paragraphs (honors)			X/X*				
Literary Response: A Christmas Carol (video). **Formal** style, one paragraph.		X*					
Timed Writing: Variety of Topics, 1+ page, handwritten; both formal and informal style.			X/X*				X*
Thematic Analysis: 1 Paragraph			X				
Holocaust Presentation: group project, multiple paragraphs			X				
Informal Letter to Teacher on Novel: 7 paragraphs, typed				X**			
Quote Analysis: half page typed, informal style			X	X			X
Character Analysis: All the Light We Cannot See; several paragraphs spread throughout a packet – a lot of writing but no cohesive essay. May be preliminary activities for an essay. Typed.					X		
Annotated Bibliography: 2 pages, typed, informal style					X**		
Literary Analysis: Sensory details and Theme. 1 page, typed. **Formal** style.					X**		
Literary Analysis: Rough Draft, 2 pages handwritten. No discernible thesis.							X/ X**
Annotated Bibliography: Descriptions of resources used for research. Multiple paragraphs, typed. Informal style.					X**		
Micro-theme Analysis: George W. Bush's Address to the Nation 9/11. Typed, 1+ pages single spaced.						X	
Persuasive Research Paper: 4+ pages typed, uses external sources. Multiple examples of this type of writing, some using formal, academic style and others using informal style. Both regular and AP. Number of sources varied from 2 to 9.						X	X
Film Synopsis and Review: One page, typed. Informal style.						X	
Compare Contrast Essay; 4 pages, typed**.** Compares a movie and a novel dealing with the same historical event. **Formal** style.							X
*Honors **AP/Pre-AP							

In spite of the high proportion of artifacts requiring writing at this level, only five required formal, academic style (no first or second person), were of an extended length, and were typewritten. Very few writing activities were solely formal and academic in style; if an activity appeared in multiple classes, it tended to vary by class as to whether students wrote formally or informally. Of those that used formal

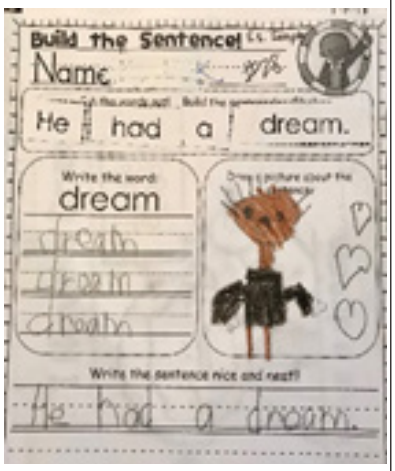
academic style, 40% came from AP/Pre AP or Honors activities. This lack of formal writing is of concern because practice with this kind of academic writing is important for students to have access to and success in higher education.

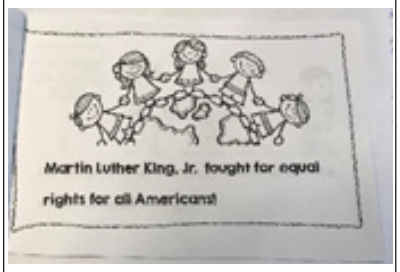
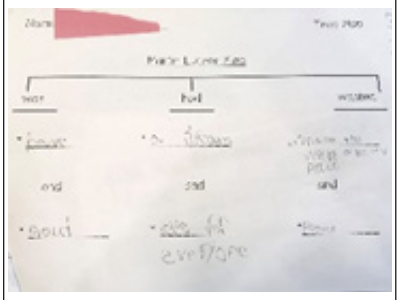
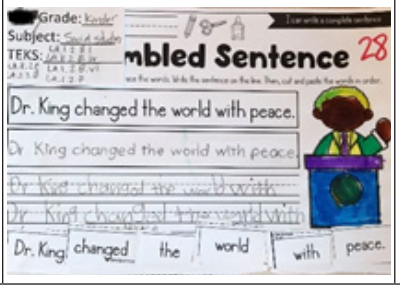
Differences in Mastery Interpretation and Content Coordination

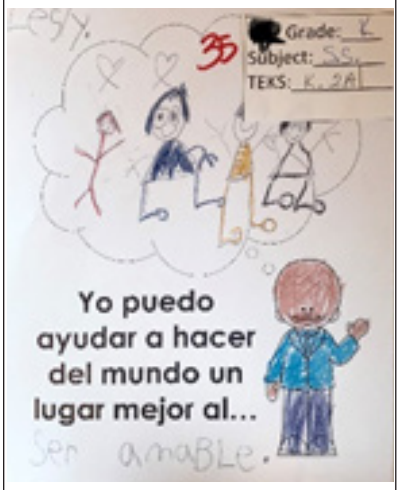
Auditors noted a number of differences in expectations for mastery and alignment to grade level standards in social studies and science K-5 and issues with content coordination between grade levels and schools in science.

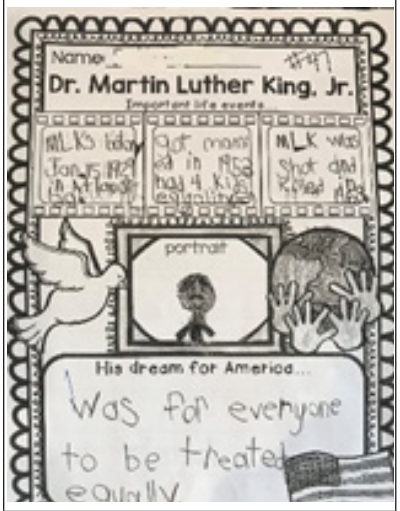
Auditors analyzed Social Studies artifacts for mastery expectations. A sample of that analysis is shown in the exhibit below. The full exhibit may be found in **Exhibit D.4** in **Appendix D**.

Exhibit 3.2.4: Differences in Mastery Expectations K-5 Social Studies

Grade Level	Standard	Artifact	Notes
K	K.1 History. The student understands that holidays are celebrations of special events. The student is expected to: (A) identify national patriotic holidays such as Constitution Day, Presidents' Day, Veterans Day, and Independence Day; K.2: History. The student understands how historical figures helped shape the state and nation. The student is expected to identify contributions of historical figures, including Stephen F. Austin, George Washington, Christopher Columbus, and José Antonio Navarro, who helped to shape the state and nation.	1.  2.  	These artifacts were all about Martin Luther King, Jr., and were presumably for MLK Day in January or possibly part of Black History Month in February. The standards for kindergarten Social Studies do not mention Dr. King. Dr. King is mentioned in grade 1 Social Studies standards. While it's not bad to include this material a year early, the question teachers must ask is, what is it that students must know or do to master this standard in grade 1? And does what we are doing in kindergarten align with what students will do next year? Part of the grade 1 standard requires students to identify contributions from Dr. King and others and explain how they shaped the state and nation. What is done in kindergarten should work toward that understanding. The artifacts vary widely in purpose and some present inaccurate information. Artifact 1 has the student work on sentence word order and practice handwriting, not addressing any Social Studies standard. Artifact 2 has students draw a picture of how they can be a friend. (This description of Dr. King's dream is incorrect.)

Grade Level	Standard	Artifact	Notes
K (Cont.)		3.  4.  5.  6.  	Artifact 3 has students write their own dream. (Personal dreams are not the point of the *I Have a Dream* speech.) Artifact 4 is a coloring book, and Artifact 5 is a graphic organizer for details of the speech. There is no indication of what the teacher is using to give students information on the speech prior to filling out the 'tree.' Artifact 6 is a Social Studies artifact but is labeled with ELA standards. The activity is putting the words in correct sentence order.

Grade Level	Standard	Artifact	Notes
K (cont.)		7.  	Artifact 7 has the prompt (in Spanish) "I can help make the world a better place by…" and gives space for the child to write or draw their answer. The only connection to Dr. King is in the illustration. Only Artifact 7 requires any higher-order thinking to complete; most of the artifacts do not rise above Understanding, and many are just Remembering. Some, like the coloring book, require some motor skills but virtually no cognitive demand. Six of the seven artifacts are from internet sites such as *Teachers-Pay-Teachers* or similar. The illustrations of these artifacts are of very low quality and seem almost to obscure the fact that Dr. King was Black. Artifact 4 has the caption "Martin Luther King, Jr. fought for equal rights for all Americans!" (which obscures the fact that he was fighting for equal rights for people of color), but every child in the accompanying illustration appears to be White. Many of the artifacts would require some companion material in order for students to be able to complete the activity with accuracy. It's not possible to know what teachers used or even if they used any such materials. Some artifacts like the coloring book or the handwriting/ sentence order activities could be completed without any reference to Dr. King. This underscores the essential question: What should children know or be able to do?

Grade Level	Standard	Artifact	Notes
1	1.2 History. The student understands how historical figures helped shape the state and nation. The student is expected to: (A) identify contributions of historical figures, including Sam Houston, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and **Martin Luther King Jr.**, who have influenced the state and nation; and (B) compare the lives of historical figures who have influenced the state and nation.	1.  2.  	**Note:** Both of these artifacts came from the same school, showing that the expectations for mastery are different classroom to classroom. The grade 1 standard for Martin Luther King, Jr., requires students to **identify** his contributions, **understand** how he helped shape the state and nation, and **compare** him to other historical figures. The standard is relatively vague – *understanding* could be shown in a multitude of ways with varying degrees of cognitive demand and engagement. *Compare* is essentially obscure – Compare how? For what purpose? To show what? Comparison doesn't occur in a vacuum; it must have a point. What should mastery look like for this part of the standard? *Identify* is clearer but is the lowest level of cognition, Remembering. The MLK artifacts from grade 1 vary in cognitive demand and engagement. Artifact 1 is a graphic organizer where students can identify key life events for Dr. King and summarize his *I Have a Dream* speech. Artifact 2 is a letter to Dr. King in which the student explains with some detail why s/he admires him. Artifact 2 represents far greater cognitive demand and engagement because it requires the child to synthesize information they have learned into a new form (the letter) while filtering that information through their own lens (why they believe he is admirable). Both artifacts require some external source of information, which is not specified. Neither artifact addresses how Dr. King shaped the state/nation or compares him to other historical figures. Both artifacts appear to be from internet resource sites. The quality of illustration is better for these artifacts than the K artifacts, but this underscores the point that internet resources can vary widely in quality and accuracy and require careful vetting.

Coordination of Elementary Science Content

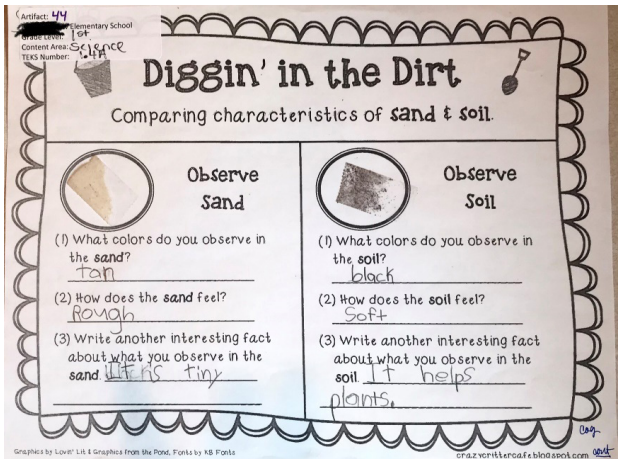
Auditors noted content that appeared at different grade levels in different schools. Some artifacts were identical or had only minimal differences between grade levels and schools. When this occurs, it may be an indication of a coordination and/or articulation problem within the district, or it may be a problem with the standards themselves. Auditors pulled some elementary strands of science concepts to illustrate issues districts and teachers may have with the standards. A sample of that analysis is shown in the exhibit below. **Exhibit D.5** in **Appendix D** shows the full analysis of these strands.

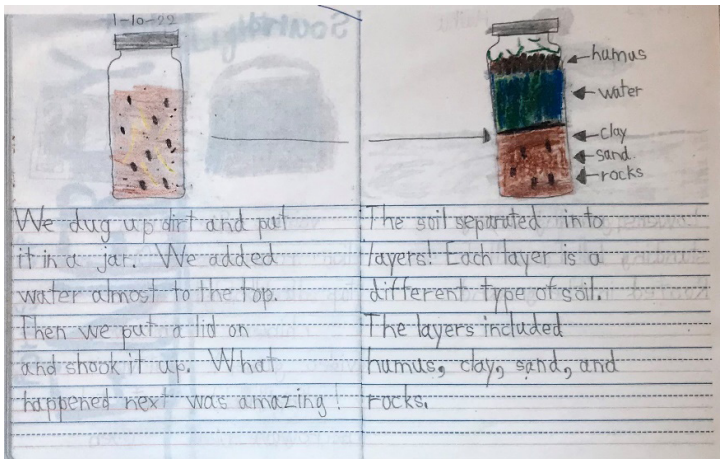
Exhibit 3.2.5: Analysis of K-5 Science Standards

Strand	Notes
K.5 Matter and energy. (A) observe and record properties of objects, including bigger or smaller, heavier or lighter, shape, color, and texture; and (B) observe, record, and discuss how materials can be changed by heating or cooling.	Most of the artifacts about matter were States of Matter—Solids, Liquids, Gases—and required the student to classify matter as a solid, liquid, or gas. These artifacts appeared in kindergarten and grade 2. However, the actual requirement to classify by the three states of matter doesn't appear in the standards until grade 3. The K standard requires observing and recording properties like size, weight, shape, color, and texture and how materials can be changed by heating or cooling. The teacher has to guess here what materials to use and what changes from heating/cooling to focus on. Grade 1 is almost identical to K except it adds predicting changes to materials through heating/cooling and classifying objects by materials. This is not explained, but might include metal, wood, liquids like water or juice, plastics, bones, etc. Again, the teacher has to guess. Grade 2 adds more distinctions: temperature, flexibility, solids and liquids. Students must now compare changes due to heat/cooling. They must also demonstrate ways they can change the physical properties of something and use a combination of materials to build a structure, justifying their selection of materials based on their properties. Justifying implies a written product of some sort to go with the physical structure. Grade 3 adds testing properties—mass, magnetism, density and students are asked to classify matter as solid, liquid or gas. Approaches to this are not clear, and no way of demonstrating mastery is offered.
1.5 Matter and energy. (A) classify objects by observable properties such as larger and smaller, heavier and lighter, shape, color, and texture; (B) predict and identify changes in materials caused by heating and cooling; and (C) classify objects by the materials from which they are made.	
2.5 Matter and energy. (A) classify matter by physical properties, including relative temperature, texture, flexibility, and whether material is a solid or liquid; (B) compare changes in materials caused by heating and cooling; (C) demonstrate that things can be done to materials such as cutting, folding, sanding, and melting to change their physical properties; and (D) combine materials that when put together can do things that they cannot do by themselves such as building a tower or a bridge and justify the selection of those materials based on their physical properties.	

Strand	Notes
3.5 Matter and energy. (A) measure, test, and record physical properties of matter, including temperature, mass, magnetism, and the ability to sink or float; (B) describe and classify samples of matter as solids, liquids, and gases and demonstrate that solids have a definite shape and that liquids and gases take the shape of their container; (C) predict, observe, and record changes in the state of matter caused by heating or cooling such as ice becoming liquid water, condensation forming on the outside of a glass of ice water, or liquid water being heated to the point of becoming water vapor; and (D) explore and recognize that a mixture is created when two materials are combined such as gravel and sand or metal and plastic paper clips.	Grade 4 requires students to compare and contrast physical properties like mass, volume, states, temperature, magnetism and density. Including mass and volume implies that teachers must include liquids and solids. Magnetism implies metals and non-metals. Grade 5 has students classify matter based on mass, magnetism, physical state, relative density, solubility in water, and conductivity for thermal/electric energy. The implication here is that students now have multiple tools they can use to classify matter; it further implies that teachers must not only teach them how to use the tools but also when to use them and for what purpose. It would be helpful to students (and teachers) to understand how and why actual scientists use classification. This strand is somewhat specific, with enough information to inform teachers of the content under study. However, there is little direction (other than verbs used) on what mastery of this strand would look like at every grade level. What should students be able to do?
4.5 Matter and energy. (A) measure, compare, and contrast physical properties of matter, including mass, volume, states (solid, liquid, gas), temperature, magnetism, and the ability to sink or float; and (B) compare and contrast a variety of mixtures, including solutions.	
5.5 Matter and energy. (A) classify matter based on measurable, testable, and observable physical properties, including mass, magnetism, physical state (solid, liquid, and gas), relative density (sinking and floating using water as a reference point), solubility in water, and the ability to conduct or insulate thermal energy or electric energy; (B) demonstrate that some mixtures maintain physical properties of their ingredients such as iron filings and sand and sand and water; and (C) identify changes that can occur in the physical properties of the ingredients of solutions such as dissolving salt in water or adding lemon juice to water.	

Auditors noted that specificity varied widely among science standards and there were many places where teachers had to interpret the language or guess at what mastery of the standard might look like. In such cases, coordination and articulation become extremely important to ensure that all students get the same high quality education with the same expectations for mastery no matter what school they are in or what teacher they have for any given content area. Unless the district prioritizes standards and clarifies expectations for mastery, it can't guarantee equal access to curriculum.





Illustrated are two 1st grade science artifacts showing different expectations for Real World investigations. In the first, the students are prompted on what they should observe and describe. There is minimal space for extended description or answers. In the second, students had to explain how they conducted their investigation and describe the results, including illustrations. The first artifact is less cognitively demanding than the second, which requires a considerable amount of writing. The contexts of the two artifacts are also very different, with the first being a Classroom context unlikely to occur outside of a classroom and the second more closely resembling how scientists describe and report actual experiments – a Real World context.

Auditors noted overlaps among science topics and standards across elementary schools, indicating a potential problem with coordination. The next exhibit details the overlaps of some artifacts submitted for elementary science.

Exhibit 3.2.6: Coordination Issues in Science K-5

Grade Level/School	K	1	2	3	4	5
Bee Cave EL	States of Matter	Properties of Soil	Graphing Local Weather	Today's Weather Types of Energy	Properties of Soil	Electrical Circuits
Lake Pointe	Types of Energy	Today's Weather	Water Cycle			
Lake Travis EL	States of Matter	Soil Layers in the Ground	Water Cycle Graphing Local Weather		Soil Layers in the Ground Electrical Circuits	Types of Energy Earth/ Landform Changes
Lakeway		Soil Layers in the Ground	States of Matter		Properties of Soil	Types of Energy Earth/ Landform Changes
Rough Hollow	States of Matter	Properties of Soil		Tracking Weather in Other Places	Electrical Circuits	Water Cycle

Grade Level/School	K	1	2	3	4	5
Serene Hills	States of Matter Graphing Local Weather		Today's Weather Tracking Weather in Other Places	Soil Layers in the Ground	Properties of Soil Electrical Circuits Earth/ Landform Changes	
West Cypress	Today's Weather		Graphing Local Weather	Tracking Weather in Other Places	Properties of Soil Soil Layers in the Ground	

Many of the science topics appeared at multiple grade levels with little difference in the student activities. Soil Layers appeared in grades 1, 3 and 4; Today's Weather appeared in grades K, 1, 2, and 3; States of Matter appeared in grades K and 2 but not 1, which is where it appears in the standards. Since this degree of overlap occurred during the short period when artifacts were collected, there may be other problems with objective articulation and/or coordination.

Content Misalignment

Auditors noted several examples of content misalignment in ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies. Several activities were labeled with standards but did not actually measure mastery of those standards, and others were tied to standards from another grade level. Examples included:

ELA

- **Kindergarten:** An artifact from social studies about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was labeled with six ELA standards, possibly indicating integration of content areas. The activity of the artifact was to read a sentence, trace the words of the sentence, copy the sentence twice, and then cut out the words of the sentence and paste them in order beneath the tracing/copying. The standards listed are: LA.K.2E, LA.K.2Biv, LA.1.2Bi, LA.1.2.Bvi, LA.1.2F, and LA.3.7B. Three of the listed standards are from grade 1 and one is from grade 3. Of the six standards, only LA.K.2E and LA.1.2F are met by the activity. These are handwriting standards. Students are told to read the sentence, but nothing in the rest of the activity measures whether they read the words correctly, understood them, were able to break them into syllables, or were able to read high frequency words. The only high frequency words in the sentence are *the* and *with*. The 1st grade standards address decoding, but this activity can't be construed as measuring mastery of decoding unfamiliar words because there's no way to determine which words might be unfamiliar and whether the student was able to decode them. The grade 3 standard requires students to "*write a response to a literary or informational text that demonstrates an understanding of a text.*" This artifact in no way measures mastery of that standard. A photograph of this artifact may be seen in **Exhibit D.4** in **Appendix D**.

Mathematics

- **Kindergarten:** Artifacts had students identifying numbers using base 10 blocks. Using base 10 blocks is part of the grade 1 standard. It can be introduced in kindergarten, but what students should know or be able to do at this level needs to be clearly specified, and the activities should support but not duplicate those in grade 1. This activity was virtually identical to some grade 1 artifacts.

- **Grade 2:** Students were required to survey class members about their favorite subject. They recorded the people they asked and the responses, and graphed the results. Then they wrote questions that could be answered by the data. While this measures part of the grade 2 standard, it doesn't go far enough to measure mastery of the whole standard. Mastery of the standard requires students to interpret their data and draw conclusions from it. Drawing conclusions from collected and graphed data is required, beginning in kindergarten. Auditors noted many examples of students collecting and graphing data, but no examples of students drawing conclusions about the results in mathematics artifacts. There were two examples of predictions being made from graphed data in 4th/5th grade science, but this was explicitly tied to a science standard related to predicting weather patterns. Data analysis and interpretation has been cited as a deficient area in U.S. mathematics as a whole.
- **Grades K-5**: Auditors noted bar graphs and pictographs in mathematics artifacts. The issue here is that by grade 3, students are expected to be competent enough in a variety of chart types (frequency table, dot plot, pictograph, or bar graph) that they can select the appropriate chart to best represent a particular data set. By grade 4 they need to know how to represent data with stem-and-leaf plot marked with whole numbers and fractions; by grade 5 they need to be able to do this with decimals, and should know how to construct a scatterplot with paired data. It's possible that the collection period for artifacts simply didn't capture other types of graphs and charts, but the lack of these formats may indicate a need to examine the vertical articulation of this standard. Auditors also noted that pictographs typically represent more than one item – e.g., a pictograph of population using small human figures might have a key indicating that each figure represents 10,000 people. None of the pictographs from the artifacts used objects that represented more than one item, a situation that virtually never occurs in real-world pictographs.
- **Grade 9 Geometry**: Artifact entitled *If I Go to the Beach* contained a number of if/then statements such as, "If you go swimming, then you get tired; If you get tired, then you get hungry," following a pattern similar to *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*. The standards marked on the artifact were G.4A and B. (Implied activities are in bold for emphasis.)
    - *(4) Logical argument and constructions. The student **uses the process skills with deductive reasoning to understand geometric relationships.** The student is expected to:*
        - *(A) **distinguish between** undefined terms, definitions, postulates, conjectures, and theorems;*
        - *(B) **identify and determine the validity** of the converse, inverse, and contrapositive of a conditional statement and recognize the connection between a biconditional statement and a true conditional statement with a true converse;*

    Although the student is constructing if/then statements and perhaps using deductive reasoning, the deductive reasoning is not connected to geometric relationships. Nowhere does the student have to distinguish between types of statements or terms, and nowhere is the student determining the validity of the reasoning. This is not a bad activity, and it might be part of the process for understanding and mastering this standard, but it doesn't measure mastery.

Science

- **Grade 1:** The following standards were listed by the teacher on a *Scholastic News* reading sheet about snow monkeys. (Verbs are in boldface to highlight the expected activity.)
    - 1.2A *Scientific investigation and reasoning:* ***ask questions*** *about organisms, objects, and events observed in the natural world;*
    - 1.9B *Organisms and environments:* ***analyze*** *and* ***record*** *examples of interdependence found in various situations such as terrariums and aquariums or pet and caregiver;*
    - 1.10A *Organisms and environments:* ***investigate*** *how the external characteristics of an animal are related to where it lives, how it moves, and what it eats.*

  The activity of the handout was to read an article about snow monkeys, read a brief insert about winter survival strategies for three other animals, take a four-question multiple-choice comprehension quiz over this information, and complete a six-clue crossword puzzle on snow monkeys. None of these activities is cognitively rigorous, and none require the student to enact the verbs present in the standards. This artifact cannot be considered a mastery activity.

Social Studies

- **All Grades:** Auditors noted several artifacts with standard numbers that did not correspond to the TEKS for their grade levels. This happened frequently enough that it is possible teachers are using an old version of the TEKS.
- **Kindergarten:** Artifact about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was labeled with six ELA standards. The activity of the artifact was to read a sentence, trace the words of the sentence, copy the sentence twice, and then cut out the words of the sentence and paste them in order beneath the tracing/copying. This doesn't meet the Social Studies standard (which is from grade 1) that requires students to identify how MLK shaped the state and country. An analysis of how well it met the listed ELA standards may be found in the ELA section above.
- **Kindergarten:** Artifact required students to identify personal goals. This did not correspond to any standard. The source of the worksheet was an internet site. This is fine as an ancillary activity; it just doesn't measure mastery of any social studies standards.
- **Grade 1:** Multiple artifacts covered producers and consumers, which is a grade 2 standard.
- **Grade 1:** Artifact compared Hannukah and Christmas in a Venn Diagram. This was identical to a grade 2 artifact from the same school. Comparing cultural celebrations among communities appears in the grade 2 and grade 3 standards; comparing cultural traditions between families is a kindergarten standard. There is no corresponding grade 1 standard.
- **Grade 1:** Multiple artifacts asked students to categorize objects as either needs or wants. Distinguishing between needs and wants is a kindergarten standard.
- **Grade 2:** Multiple artifacts required students to cut out events (provided for the student) from a famous person's life and arrange them correctly to form a timeline. While this technically is "creating a timeline," specified in 2.16D, it is much less cognitively demanding than reading material and pulling out information from that text to create a timeline. These artifacts required only Remembering/Understanding, while pulling information from a text and arranging it would require Analyzing/Evaluating.

- **Grade 2:** Multiple artifacts focused on Martin Luther King, Jr., either for Black History month or MLK Day. Auditors also found MLK artifacts in kindergarten and grade 1. MLK is mentioned specifically in the grade 1 standards. The concern here is that teachers may be defaulting to one African American person for Black History activities rather than exploring the many African Americans who have done amazing things in the United States. In particular, auditors noted no women among Black history artifacts and no person more modern than MLK.
- **Grade 5:** Artifact on Cause and Effect in the Industrial Revolution was labeled with 22 standards and substandards. Upon examination, the artifact only assessed one substandard. A picture of this artifact may be seen in **Exhibit D.4** in **Appendix D**.

Auditors noted a high proportion of resources from internet sites such as *Teachers Pay Teachers*. While teachers need to be free to use the resources that best meet the needs of their students, internet resources are not always accurate in terms of information, spelling, and grammar, and should be carefully vetted prior to use. They can be very low cognitively and can sometimes pose problems with insensitive portrayals of non-White people. A high proportion of these types of resources raises the question of whether teachers have access to high quality resources for these two content areas.

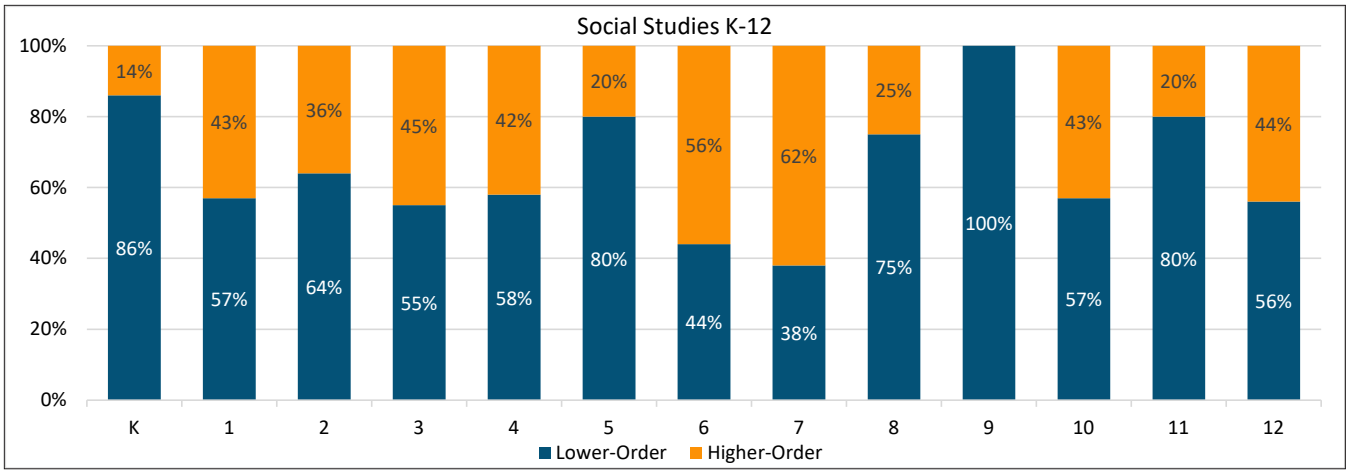
Cognitive Type Analysis

Cognitive Type is an indicator of the sort of thinking required to carry out a given task. Auditors expect the cognitive types of the written, taught and tested curriculum to be congruent so that students are not surprised by any of the cognitive demands placed on them in high-stakes testing situations. The various assignments and activities collected in classrooms across the system should reveal a range of cognitive demands, so that students have ample opportunity to practice the cognitive skills they will need to be successful on national, state, and local assessments. A strong body of research shows that students who are the lowest performing improve dramatically when they are engaged in problem solving, critical thinking, and decision-making activities. In the simplest terms, the more students are asked to do cognitively, the more they achieve. The reverse is also true: the less students are asked to do cognitively, the less they will achieve. They may still achieve at reasonable levels, especially those from higher income brackets, but they won't achieve as highly as they would with appropriate challenge. All students need activities that require higher-order thought, but high-achieving students, in particular, require more of these activities, both to avoid becoming bored and to show growth.

Cognitive type is analyzed against Bloom's New Taxonomy, which may be found in **Appendix D**, along with a discussion of the various cognitive types. The findings are grouped by higher-order thinking skills (Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating) and lower-order thinking skills (Remembering, Understanding, Applying). For the purposes of this analysis, auditors grouped secondary courses by grade level according to generally followed patterns. For high school, some courses in grade 9 also appeared in grade 8 among accelerated students. A table showing the courses included at each high school grade level is found in **Appendix D**.

Auditors found that ELA artifacts mostly required higher-order thinking skills to complete, but mathematics, science, and social studies (with a few exceptions) required lower-order thinking skills more frequently. The next four exhibits show the proportions of higher- and lower-order thinking skills in all four core content areas K-12.

Exhibit 3.2.7: Comparison of Lower- to Higher-Order Thinking Skills in Artifacts



In ELA, higher-order thinking skills comprised the majority of artifacts, mainly because of the high proportion of activities requiring writing. Only kindergarten and grade 2 did not show a majority of artifacts requiring higher-order thinking. In mathematics, the majority of thinking skills required was lower-order. Most mathematics artifacts were procedural in nature, seldom rising above Applying. Where there was more writing to explain reasoning or justify an answer, the cognitive demand increased. In science, the majority of elementary and middle school artifacts required only lower order thinking skills to complete, while in high school the majority required higher-order thinking. However, it should be noted that the number of science artifacts in grades 6-12 for each grade level was small; it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about artifacts from this sample. In social studies, the majority of artifacts required lower-order thinking to complete, with the exception of grades 6 and 7 where the majority of artifacts required higher-order thought. The number of samples for social studies in grades 6-12 was very small for some grades, so these percentages can only be regarded as a snapshot of classroom activity rather than a firm pattern.

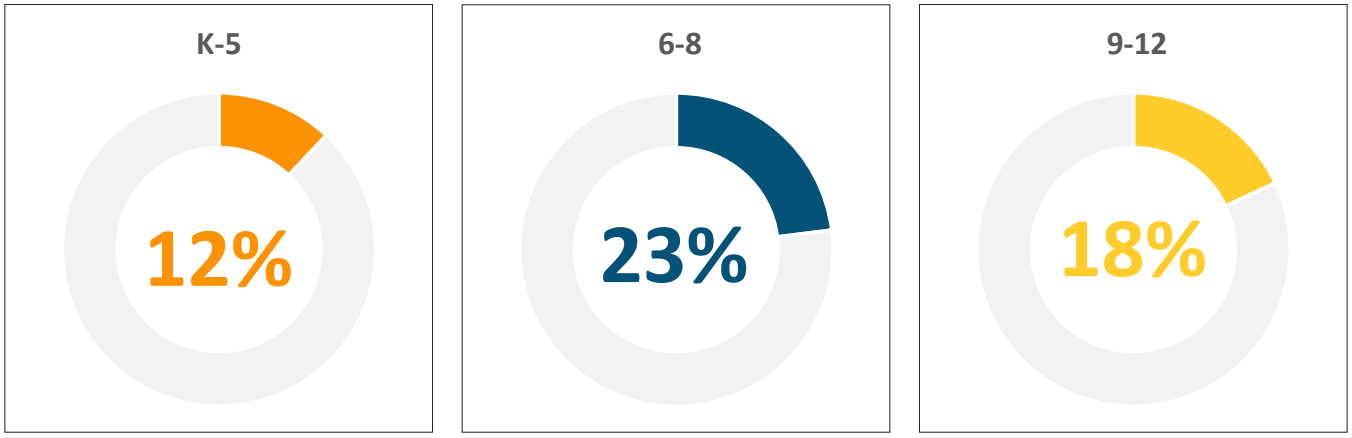
Writing and/or Justification in Mathematics

Writing and/or the ability to justify a process or product is a critical skill in mathematics and one that is appearing more frequently on external tests. Students must now do more than just solve equations; they must demonstrate the ability to explain in writing why they used the method they did, or why they believe their answer is the best one, or how they know that someone else's solution is right or wrong. Writing about a mathematics problem forces the brain to verbalize quantitative processes, opening another path for both understanding and retention of learning. Justification lets students know that there are many routes to the same answer and all routes are acceptable as long as their efficacy can be justified or defended. Of importance in mathematics learning is awareness that problems don't have single solutions but rather many possible solutions, though their efficiency may vary. This type of writing is becoming increasingly common on external tests, and districts wishing to do well on those assessments must provide ample practice of this level of cognitive demand so students aren't surprised by the test.

Auditors noted some artifacts that required students either to write about their mathematics solutions or justify their solutions or processes in some way, such as recording themselves explaining how they got a particular answer or writing to explain how they knew their answer was correct or incorrect. Both activities require higher-order thinking skills to complete and raise the level of cognitive demand for the activity. There is no benchmark for this type of activity, but more is better, and auditors would expect to see levels increasing as students move up the grade levels and improve their written expression. This analysis measures *opportunities* to write, not actual writing. This is an important distinction given what

auditors found in the artifacts. The following exhibit illustrates the proportion of artifacts in elementary, middle school, and high school mathematics that required either writing or justification or both.

Exhibit 3.2.8: Writing and Justification in Mathematics: K-5, 6-8, and 9-12



Auditors noted opportunities to write about mathematics processes or justify strategies or solutions in 12% of artifacts at the elementary level. These mainly occurred in grades 3, 4 and 5, which is to be expected as students gain more ability in written expression. In middle school artifacts, the incidence of writing in mathematics increased to 23%, but in high school, the percentage decreased. Auditors noted that the more complex the mathematics, the less likely the artifact would require writing or justification. All the artifacts requiring writing came from courses like Mathematics Models, College Mathematics, etc.

Overall, cognitive demand was generally high in ELA, but generally low in mathematics, science, and social studies.

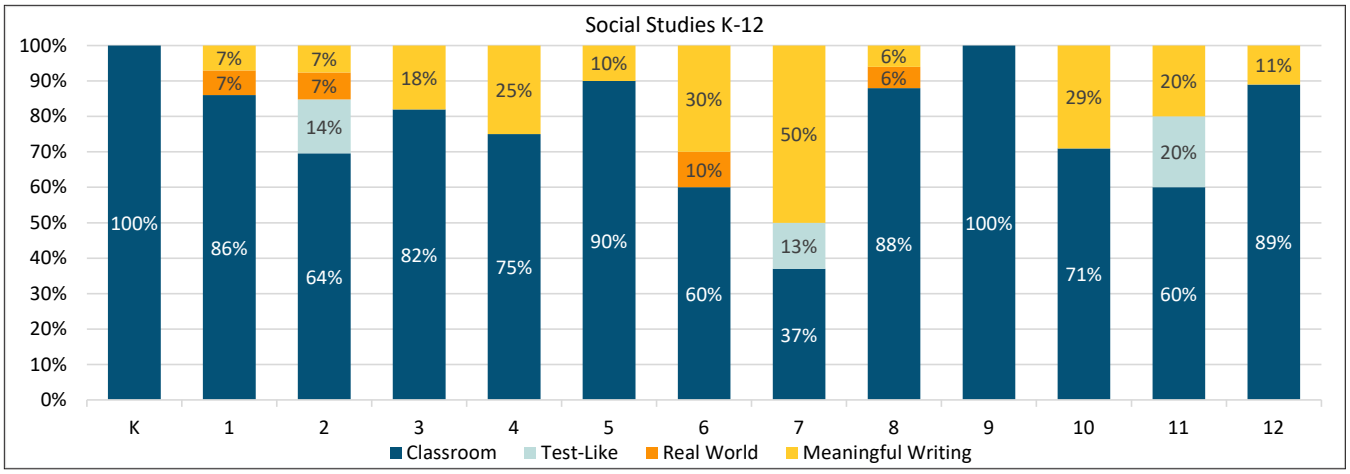
Context Analysis

Context is the way in which mastery of an objective is demonstrated – the *how* of assessment. A multiple choice item differs significantly from an essay question or a portfolio project. Context is also a powerful determiner of student engagement, with certain types of contexts providing more relevance and intrinsic engagement for students than others. In general, the more relevant and applicable the context is to a student, the more engaging s/he will find it and the more easily s/he will learn, retain, and transfer new concepts and information. How a student should demonstrate mastery is often open to interpretation between teachers and schools. Without specific expectations for instructional delivery from the district, teachers are free to deliver content any way they like, even though it may not conform to district goals and desires. This doesn't mean that the district micromanages delivery; rather, it means that the district sets expectations for how it wants to see content delivered, such as extensive use of critical thinking, use of extended writing, more real world situations, and so on.

Auditors analyzed student work artifacts and categorized them by context type, categorizing them as either Classroom, Test-Like, Real World, or Meaningful Writing. Auditors would expect to see all context types in a body of artifacts, but a higher proportion of the more engaging artifacts (Real World and Meaningful Writing) are more desirable because they produce deeper learning and greater retention. A fuller explanation of context types and their categories can be found in **Appendix D.**

Overall, auditors found that ELA artifacts used more engaging contexts (mainly Meaningful Writing) but mathematics, science, and social studies (with the exception of a few grade levels) employed the least engaging contexts (Classroom and Test-Like). The following four exhibits show the distribution of contexts for the four core content areas by grade level.

Exhibit 3.2.9: Distribution of Context Types by Content Area and Grade Level



In ELA, the majority of artifacts used the less engaging contexts, i.e., Classroom, meaning the activity of the artifact would be unlikely to occur outside of a classroom setting, or Test-Like. Meaningful Writing was used extensively across grade levels, especially in grades 6 and 12. In mathematics, Classroom contexts were the overwhelming majority. There was some incidence of Real World contexts in grades K-2, 5, 7, and 8. Real World contexts are highly relevant to students and, therefore, highly engaging. In science, Classroom contexts predominated except for grades 6, 11, and 12 where the majority of artifacts were Real World. In social studies, Classroom contexts were by far the most common.

Overall, contexts tended to be the least engaging types—Classroom and Test-Like—with the exception of ELA, which had higher levels of Meaningful Writing, and science, which had higher levels of Real World contexts.

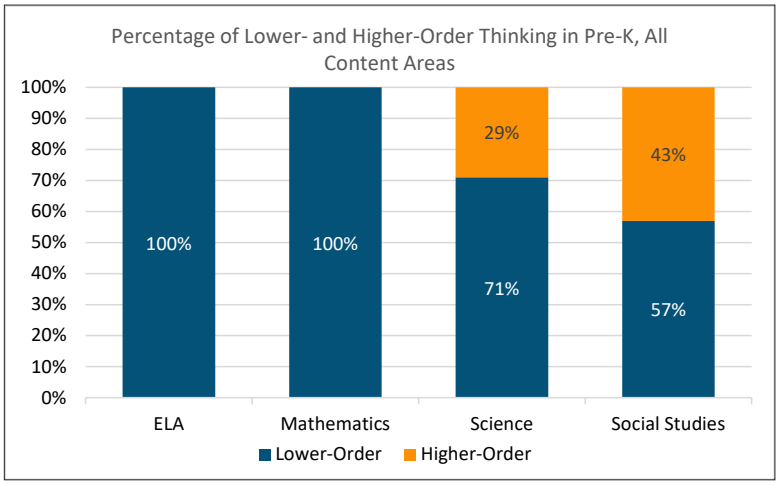
Special Populations and Pre-Kindergarten

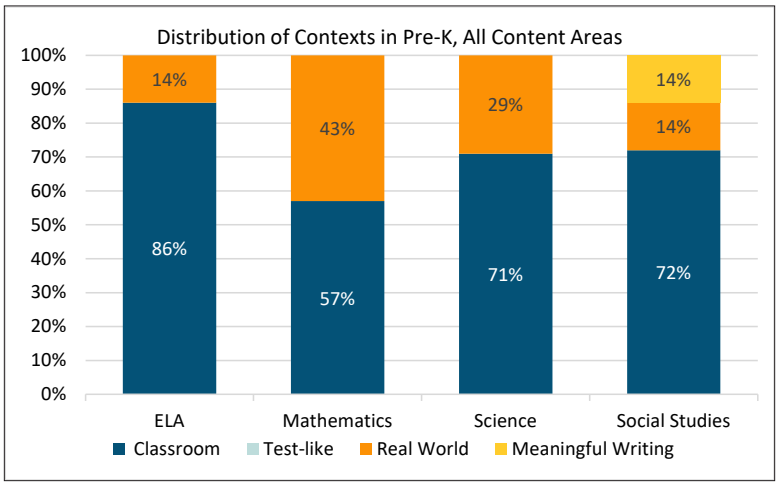
Auditors examined artifacts from recognized special populations—Special Education (SPED), English Language Learners (ELL), and Gifted and Talented (GT)—and Pre-Kindergarten. All artifacts were analyzed for cognitive demand and contexts; special education artifacts were compared to artifacts from regular education classrooms to determine differences in cognitive demand and/or contexts in use.

Pre-K

Auditors compared the cognitive demand and contexts of artifacts for Pre-K. These artifacts came from two Pre-K programs in the district. The next two exhibits show the results of that comparison.

Exhibit 3.2.10: Analysis of Cognitive Demand and Context for Pre-K





In Pre-K, most artifacts required only lower-order thinking skills (Remembering, Understanding, Applying) to complete. Only science and social studies artifacts required higher-order thinking skills to complete. Contexts among Pre-K artifacts were mostly Classroom, one of the least engaging types. Mathematics utilized a high proportion (43%) of Real World contexts, mainly measurement and hands-on activities requiring counting or ordering. Science and social studies also used Real World contexts, and social studies used Meaningful Writing as well, which at this level is a combination of writing and/or dictation and drawing. These are the most engaging contexts for students and promote retention of concepts. Auditors did find evidence of exploratory activities in science, activities that integrated multiple content areas (mathematics and ELA; ELA and social studies; social studies, art, and ELA), and activities that used highly engaging contexts such as writing the letters of one's name in shaving cream spread on a table.

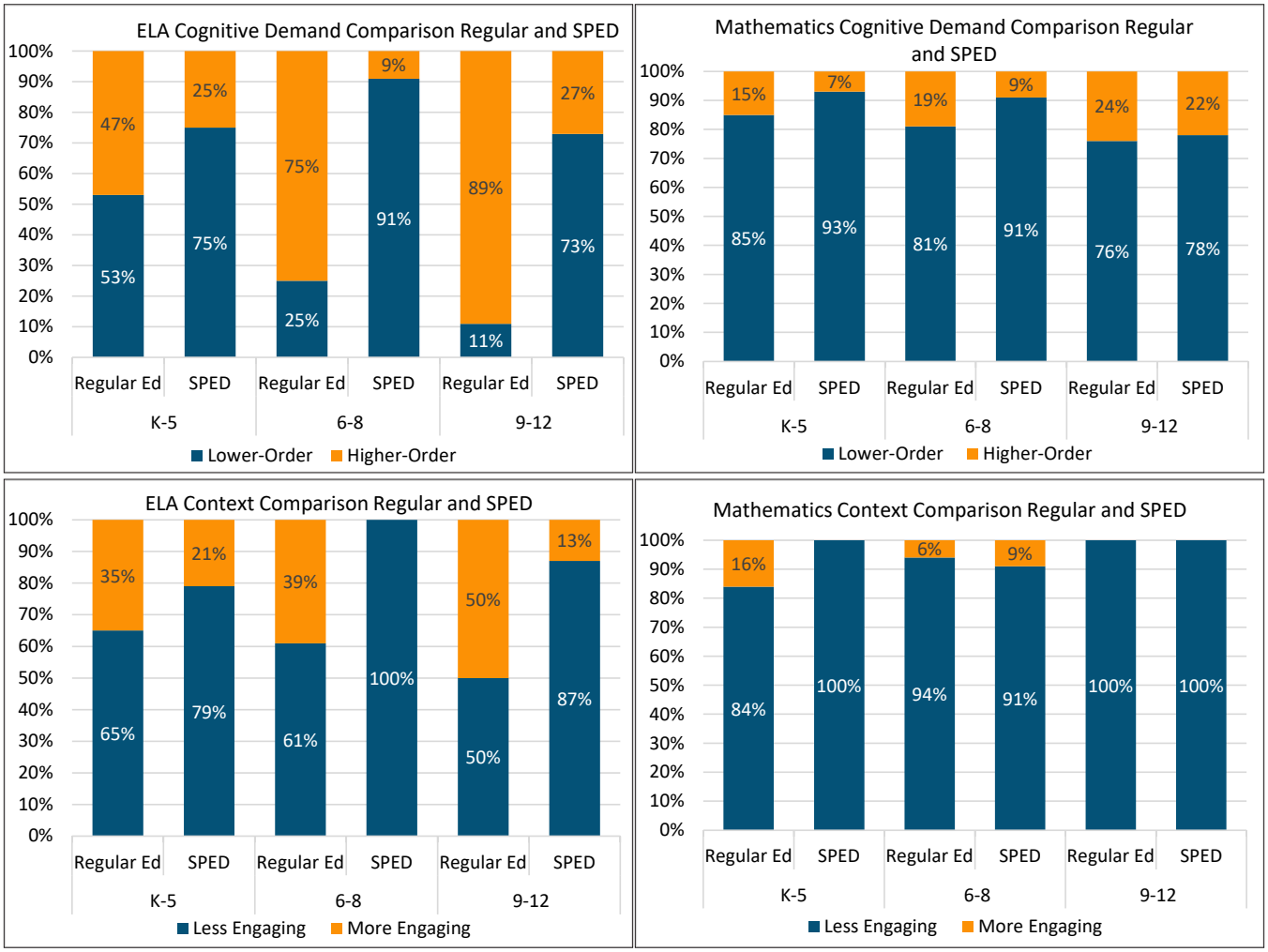
Auditors noted that a high proportion (68%) of Pre-K artifacts came from internet sites like *Teachers Pay Teachers*. While a few of these artifacts required higher level thinking, most were overwhelmingly either coloring sheets or highly repetitive activities such as identifying the number 15 in a series of iterations or writing the letters of one's name over and over. Some of this is important for hand-eye coordination and fine motor control, but emerging research in early childhood education shows that an excessive focus on worksheets and academic activities rather than on exploratory play can actually have a detrimental affect on students' achievement as they move up the grade levels, particularly for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds[1]. While the reasons for this are not yet well understood, the conclusion is that real-world exploration, play, and ample opportunities to choose activities of interest should comprise the majority of the Pre-K school day. The study made note of the fact that parents with more financial resources who send their children to private schools expect this type of curriculum.

1 Durkin, K., Lipsey, M. W., Farran, D. C., & Wiesen, S. E. (2022). Effects of a statewide pre-kindergarten program on children's achievement and behavior through sixth grade. *Developmental Psychology.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001301

Special Education

Auditors examined K-12 artifacts from Special Education (SPED). The cognitive demand and contexts of these artifacts were compared with those from regular education to identify disparities. Because of the number of artifacts, auditors elected to group them by larger grade level bands to create a bigger sample. It should be noted that the samples, overall, were considerably smaller than the pool of regular education samples, so may not fully represent the range of activities in SPED. Also, it's important to note that Special Education includes a wide spectrum of abilities and needs, some of which—like Dyslexia—have clearly defined intervention protocols that are effective but that don't "score" well on rubrics attempting to measure rigor and engagement. Some artifacts were clearly marked as dyslexia interventions, and others appeared to have come from interventions meant for students with more severe intellectual disability or possibly students who had issues with verbal or written communication. These are still included in the pool of SPED artifacts, but, in general, the students who are receiving "resource" help are those for whom these data may be most applicable and important. The next four exhibits show the cognitive demand comparisons and the context comparisons for ELA and mathematics K-12.

Exhibit 3.2.11: Cognitive Demand and Context Comparison for Regular and SPED in ELA and Mathematics K-12



In ELA and mathematics, SPED artifacts consistently required fewer higher-order thinking skills than regular education artifacts—sometimes considerably fewer. The only exception to this was in high school

mathematics where the use of higher-order thinking skills was about equal. In ELA, SPED did not use more engaging contexts as frequently as regular education artifacts, with the most obvious example being Middle School where SPED artifacts used no engaging contexts against 39% of regular artifacts. In mathematics, the biggest disparity in engagement was at the elementary level where regular education used engaging contexts 16% of the time and SPED used them not at all. Among all the SPED artifacts, those labeled as "resource" tended to be more rigorous than dyslexia interventions or interventions for communication issues. The sample was too small to represent differences, but that was the tendency that auditors observed. Auditors also noted that among all the artifacts for SPED mathematics, only a small percentage (8%) required writing to explain how the student arrived at an answer or to defend a solution, all those artifacts were at the secondary level.

Overall, SPED students are not getting the same levels of rigor and engagement as regular students.

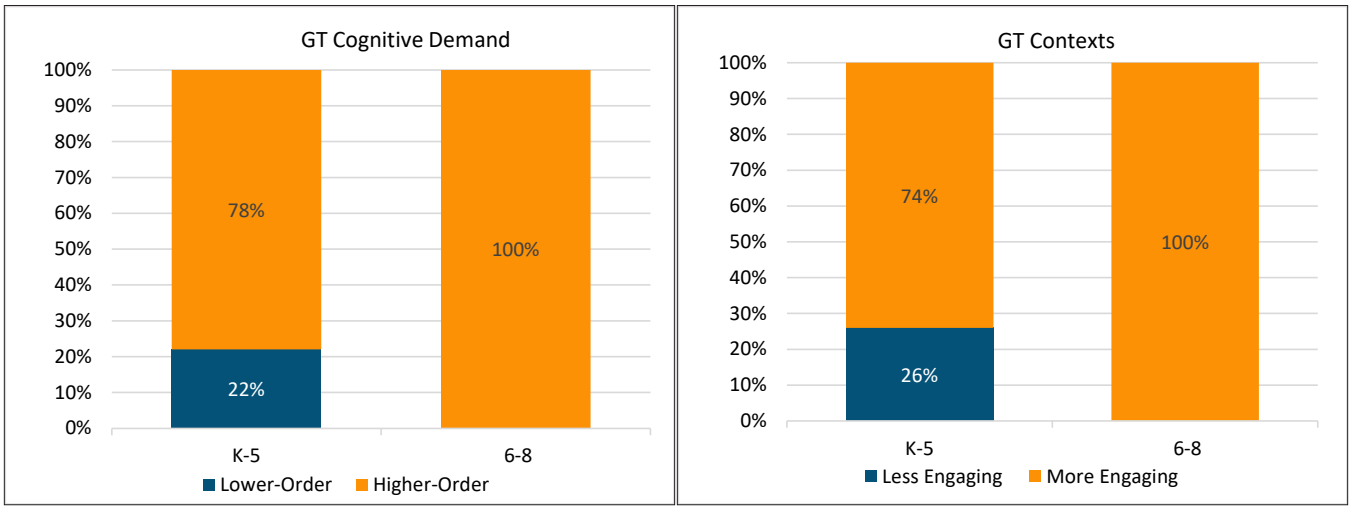
English Language Learners

Auditors noted that English Language Learners make up 6% of the student population—around 660 students, PK-12. Unfortunately, the number of artifacts provided to auditors from ELL was too small to permit analysis.

Gifted and Talented

Auditors received artifacts K-12 for GT programing. Auditors would expect to see artifacts requiring higher-order thought and utilizing the most engaging contexts, artifacts offering students an array of options for discovering content and demonstrating mastery, and artifacts that allow for multiple types of intelligence. The two exhibits below show the proportions of higher-order thinking and engaging contexts for GT artifacts. Note that the sample for middle school came from one building and was extremely small. As such, results for this area cannot be construed to constitute a pattern.

Exhibit 3.2.12: Cognitive Demand and Contexts for Gifted and Talented Instruction K-12



A substantial number of elementary artifacts were written in both English and Spanish, which is a good indication that some Hispanic students are being identified for GT services. Auditors found that GT artifacts overwhelmingly required higher-order thinking skills and utilized the most engaging contexts.

Some activities were a bit repetitive—build a raft, build a house, build a chair with a variety of materials; build a kite, build a different kind of kite, build a hot air balloon; multiple Lego-robotic activities, etc. One artifact had students build a skateboard park for a marble, an activity that closely paralleled a regular

education artifact requiring students to build a roller coaster for a marble. Some of these were for the purposes of comparing differing structures. Sometimes the instructions for the project removed the need for the student to conduct any research. The skateboard park project provided pictures of the types of jumps and structures that the students would find in a park rather than asking them to research those structures and choose which ones to include.

Auditors noted two things about GT artifacts at the K-5 level. First, there appeared to be a lack of student choice in GT projects. One of the hallmarks of GT instruction is the prevalence of student choice—the opportunity for students to go more deeply into areas of interest. While these activities were very hands-on and potentially very engaging, they did not appear to be student choice activities because all the students in the program were doing the same activity. A high proportion of activities were building activities. In one school the building activities were tied to a book or story, but in others they were not. About 75% of artifacts K-5 were designing/building activities, and the remaining 25% involved writing. Building is engaging and can require Creating, Evaluating, and Analyzing, but many other activities that require these higher-order thought processes should be available so that students can explore other types of intelligence and other forms of creativity. Auditors also did not find any activities that allowed the students to make meaning of their building projects in any way—such as explaining or justifying the choices the student made in their construction or material selection, ways they might change the structure now that they have seen how it performed, analysis of why certain aspects didn't work as they thought they would, and so on.

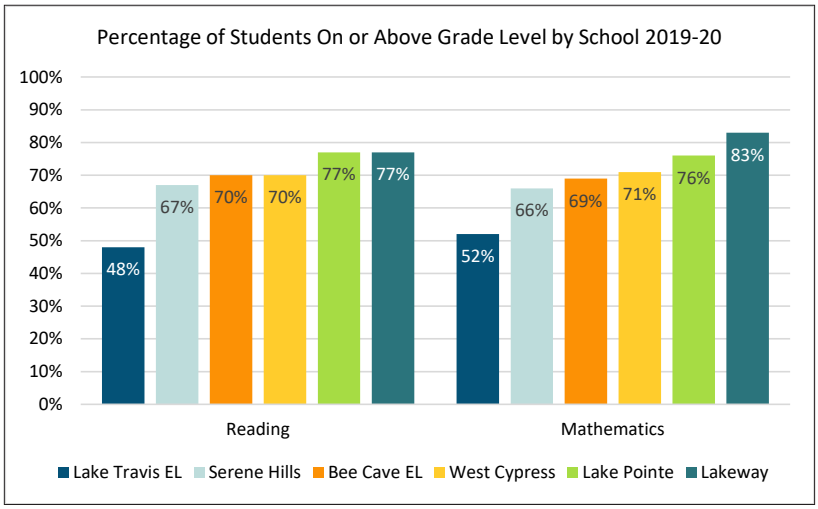
Second, auditors noted the presence of very early elementary artifacts for GT. This is concerning because children entering kindergarten do not do so from the same starting point; even children with similar socio-economic status and backgrounds will come that first day with a range of abilities. Developmentally, they are all over the board. Identifying students for GT in kindergarten captures one moment in the very fluid continuum of that development. Many, many children make rapid progress in kindergarten and grades 1 and 2, and there must be a process in place to ensure that all students have the opportunity to be identified. Providing focused enrichment to a few students beginning in kindergarten will not necessarily produce gifted children; rather, it will offer concerted cultivation of skills that will allow students to *appear* gifted when in actuality they have simply had more and better access to focused instructional opportunities. All students should be treated as gifted in grades K-2, and multiple enrichment activities should be provided for all learners so that teachers are continually assessing potential giftedness in multiple content areas, while also offering enrichment to students who may show aptitude in one content area but not another. The enrichment benefits all students and allows the teacher to identify those who truly need GT services.

Overall, Pre-K artifacts were less cognitively demanding and less engaging with a focus on repetitive academic worksheets. Expectations for SPED artifacts appeared low, with a lower incidence of cognitive demand and far fewer engaging contexts. GT artifacts showed evidence of higher expectations, with cognitively demanding and engaging artifacts designed to spark interest. These activities may be somewhat lacking in choice for some students for whom engineering-based projects are of less interest.

Disparities Between Schools

When schools within a district show differences in achievement rates, auditors conduct a comparison between artifacts from those schools to see whether there are differences in cognitive demand and/or contexts. Because of achievement differences between Lake Travis Elementary and the other elementary schools, and because Lake Travis Elementary has the highest populations of Hispanic, ELL, and Economically Disadvantaged students, auditors elected to compare Lake Travis Elementary to the other elementary schools as a whole. The following exhibit shows the achievement disparities in reading and mathematics for 2019-20 among elementary schools.

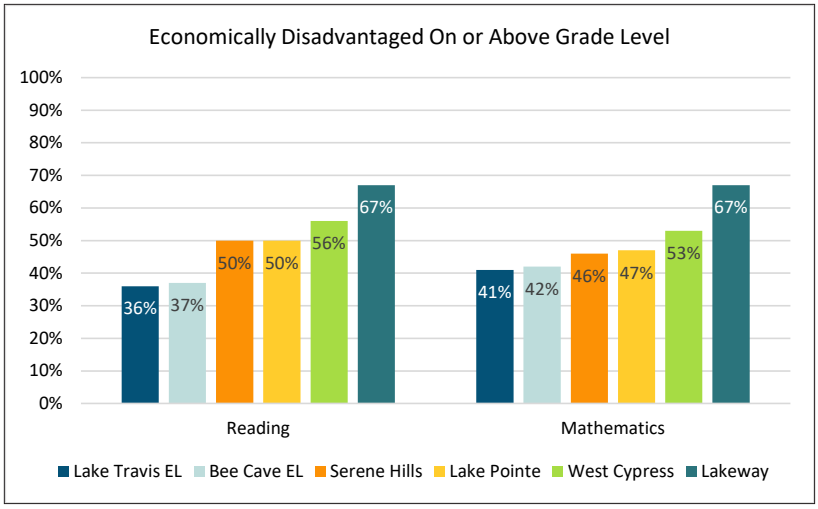
Exhibit 3.2.13: Achievement Disparities for Reading and Mathematics by School



Note: Rough Hollow is not included in this exhibit absent data for this school prior to 2020.

The TEA report groups students Meeting, Mastering, and Approaching grade level together, but those Approaching are actually below grade level, so this grouping gives a skewed impression of student achievement. In 2018-19, in both reading and mathematics, Lake Travis Elementary had the lowest percentage of students Meeting or Mastering grade level material on the *STAAR*—hovering around just half of all students. This is a single year, and it can in no way be construed as a pattern, but the difference in achievement between Lake Travis Elementary and the other elementary schools is striking. Auditors also compared the achievement of economically disadvantaged students by school. This is shown in the following exhibit.

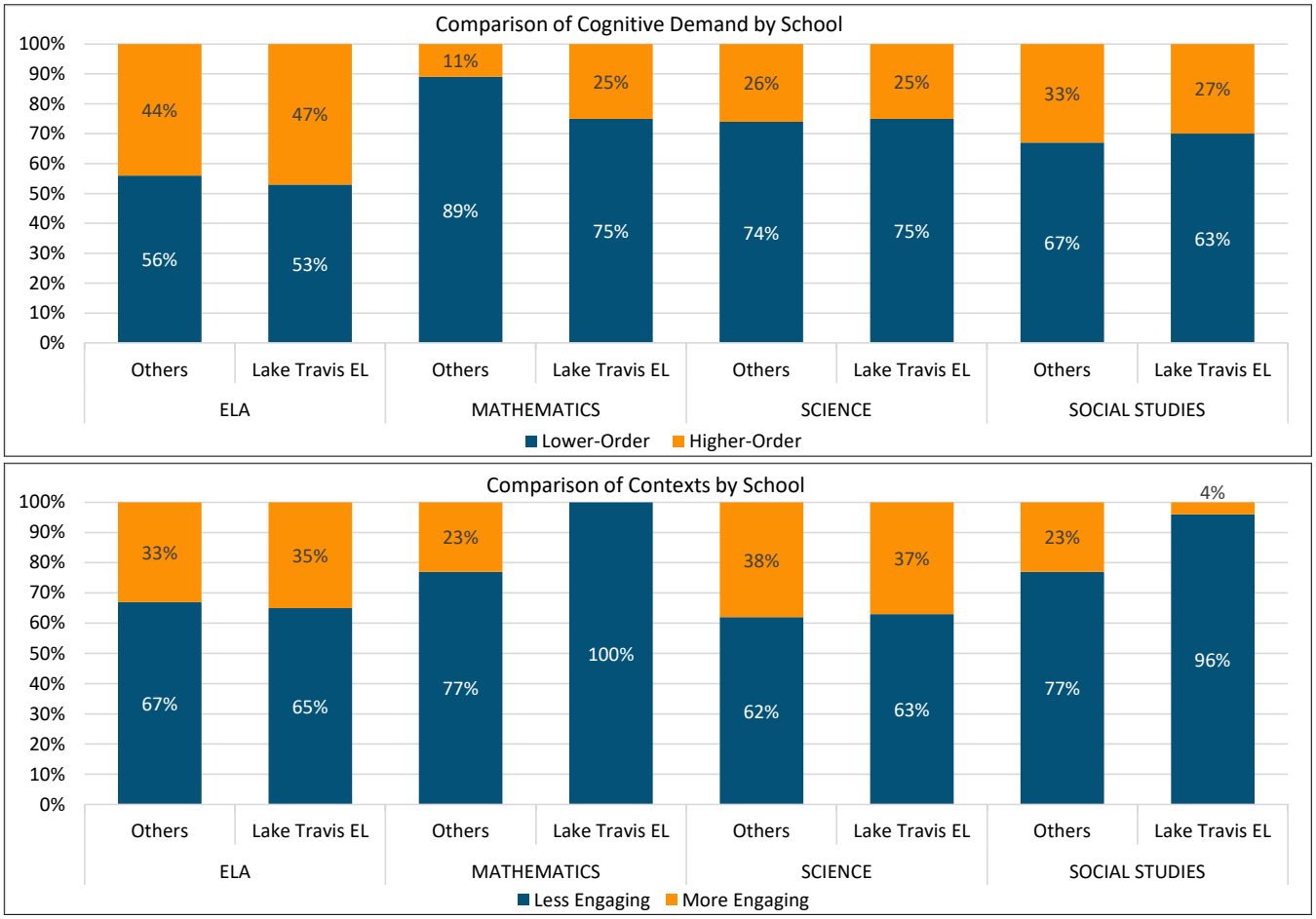
Exhibit 3.2.14: Economically Disadvantaged Achievement by School



In both reading and mathematics, Lake Travis students had the lowest achievement in the district. Although Bee Cave Elementary, Lakeway, and West Cypress had similar percentages, the total number of economically disadvantaged students who took the tests in those schools was much smaller—19, 32, and 24, respectively, against 146 at Lake Travis Elementary. Auditors conducted a similar comparison with ELL students with similar results showing Lake Travis Elementary with the lowest rates of achievement among schools for this group. Auditors elected not to include this data because the number of students at the other elementary schools is small enough to permit recognition and violate student privacy.

Next, auditors compared cognitive demand of artifacts and contexts used between Lake Travis Elementary and the other schools in the sample. These results are shown in the next two exhibits.

Exhibit 3.2.15: Cognitive Demand and Context Comparisons for Elementary Schools



Auditors noted very few differences in either cognitive demand of artifacts or the engagement level of contexts between Lake Travis Elementary and other elementary schools. Lake Travis Elementary artifacts showed less cognitive demand than other schools in social studies and less engaging contexts in mathematics and social studies but were otherwise the same or even exceeded the cognitive demand and engagement of the other schools.

When this occurs, districts need to look further to determine reasons for lower achievement. Some possibilities may include:

- **Differences in expectations for mastery between schools.** When there is no clear consensus on what mastery looks like, teachers may interpret mastery of a standard with less rigor than the district expects. Sometimes this is discernible from artifacts, but not always. Auditors noted many variations of what mastery should look like in social studies, ELA, and science artifacts, and differences in expectations for writing among academic tracks and schools.
- **Activities that focus on poorly designed test-prep.** Test-prep materials for the *STAAR* tend to be of very low cognitive demand and use the least engaging contexts. Many districts elect to suspend instruction the month before the *STAAR* and focus solely on test preparation. Since test prep materials tend to be multiple-choice worksheets—sometimes large packets of worksheets—this can have the opposite effect the district wants. Students taught to go low (using only lower-order thinking) will not be able to go high (using higher-order thinking) when asked to do so. Students taught to go high (especially with lots of writing) will always be able to go low.

- **Content not well aligned to external tests.** Students from wealthier backgrounds have many experiences and supports to fill in the blanks left by poorly aligned content. Those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds don't have the same resources or experiences; if they don't get it at school, they aren't going to get it at all. Because of this, districts need to be vigilant about ensuring that content and mastery expectations are aligned to the external test in use and go *beyond the demands of the test* to be more rigorous and engaging. The test measures only a fraction of all the learning that occurs in the classroom; limiting instruction to what's on the test is like making the floor your ceiling. Auditors noted in one strand analysis for ELA (Poetry) that the student work artifacts were not aligned to the most rigorous released items on the new *STAAR* 2023.
- **Inappropriate focus on "the basics.**" There is a prevalent myth that some students—particularly poor students, ELL students, and SPED students—need to acquire "the basics" before they can do higher-order thinking and reasoning. Students end up with low-level, boring seatwork and/or repetitive exercises and are not afforded opportunities to choose activities of interest, explore topics, challenge their thinking, or engage in long-term projects with multiple ways to demonstrate mastery. There is ample evidence that students can engage in higher-order thought if tasks are carefully designed, and teachers offer appropriate scaffolding to support learning. Auditors noted that SPED artifacts did not reflect the same level of rigor as regular education artifacts.
- **Overemphasis on individual achievement.** Students from some cultural backgrounds learn better in cooperative settings where they can get help from their peers or where they can offer help to their peers. This is particularly true in mathematics, where the focus is often on individual, positional achievement. Placing these students in carefully designed cooperative instruction groups can greatly improve learning.

Overall, auditors noted disparities in achievement among elementary schools and between economically disadvantaged students and ELL students. These disparities were not reflected in or explained by the rigor and engagement of artifacts from the various elementary schools.

Diversity and Inclusion Concerns

About 30% of Lake Travis ISD is non-White. In a district with this level of diversity, culturally relevant instruction, coupled with a diverse and inclusive curriculum and equitable access to appropriately rigorous academic coursework, is necessary to ensure students remain engaged in the learning, retain information and concepts, and are prepared for higher education. Auditors made note of patterns within the artifacts that may indicate areas where these requirements are not being fulfilled.

English Language Arts (ELA)

Auditors noted all the literature and literary resources mentioned in the artifacts and categorized them as either Diverse, Neutral, Not Diverse, or Undetermined. Diverse literature has either authors or main characters who are people of color or people from a marginalized group (such as someone with a disability). A White author with characters who are diverse would fall into this category. Neutral literature typically has main characters that are animals or objects (like crayons or seeds). Not Diverse literature has authors and/or main characters who are White, though there may be supporting characters of color or from marginalized groups. Undetermined means the auditors could not identify the piece from the information given or were not able to assess its diversity. This analysis is presented in **Exhibit D.7** in **Appendix D**.

Overall, the majority of literature used K-12 was Not Diverse. Auditors noted that in grades K-5, the proportion of Diverse texts was 28%. Non-diverse books with White authors and protagonists made up 44% of texts. In middle school, Diverse texts made up 39% of the total, while Non-Diverse texts made up 56% and Neutral texts made up 5%. In high school, 64% of texts were Non-Diverse and 36% were Diverse. There may be more diversity than is shown in this analysis; this is only a snapshot of literary and informational pieces from a single point in time and not representative of everything used in the ELA curriculum over the course of the school year. It does offer the district enough evidence of a potential issue with the diversity and inclusion of the ELA curriculum K-12 that the district may benefit from a review of all the literature in use to ensure students see themselves, their culture, and their backgrounds represented in the work they are asked to do in district classrooms. Diverse texts should also comprise a substantial proportion of social studies texts, and contributions to mathematics and science by people of color should also be represented in those curricula. Attention to diversity and inclusion in the curriculum is vital in improving and ensuring engagement and promoting retention of learning.

Elementary Social Studies

- **Grade 4:** Some schools are using *A Paradise Called Texas* by Janice Schefelman. This is an old book from 1987 that details a German immigrant family's journey to a new home and future in Texas. While this book explains why many European immigrants left their homes and offers a setting that is very specific to Texas, how it portrays Native Americans needs to be carefully considered, including the terms used about them and the characteristics attributed to them. This book views Native Americans through the lens of a White settler rather than presenting any Native American perspective or allowing for Native American voices. If this book continues to be used, it should be paired with a text offering an indigenous perspective of similar events, such as *Soft Rain*, by Cornelia Cornelisson.
- **Elementary Grades:** Some classes were using *Texas Studies Weekly*, a newspaper-like color hand out with articles and short activities pertaining to social studies and history. This resource also has accompanying worksheets for students to complete using information from the articles. This resource has a number of problems with rigor: very low cognitive demand, a high prevalence of less-engaging contexts, and content poorly aligned to state standards and not at all aligned to external tests in use. It also has serious problems with diversity and inclusion. Articles tend to be overwhelmingly focused on White, male subjects and heavily focused on the Founding Fathers and the Colonial period, even in grades where those figures and that period are not part of the content. People of color are mentioned only fleetingly, and in some cases, the resource obscures non-White ethnicity completely. For example, in one handout, an article about Paleoamericans includes a cartoon drawing of these earliest residents of North and South America that makes them appear to be hairy White cave people. Instead, archaeologists and facial reconstruction experts show these individuals with facial characteristics similar to modern Native Americans or Asians. The sample of the resource reviewed by auditors also included no Latino or Hispanic figures, nor were there any Native American or Asian figures noted. Auditors have extensive familiarity with this resource from other audits and note that the content is constrained enough to merit a critical review for diversity and inclusion and for cognitive and contextual alignment.
- **All Grades:** Multiple artifacts on Martin Luther King, Jr., possibly (since these were collected in February) for Black History month, occurred at multiple grade levels, including high school. The concern here is that teachers are defaulting to one person for Black History activities rather than exploring the many African Americans who have done amazing things in the United States. In

particular, auditors noted no women among Black history artifacts and no person more modern than MLK. While these artifacts capture only a moment in a year of instruction, the high proportion of MLK artifacts is potentially cause for concern that the full spectrum of Black accomplishments is not being represented in the curriculum. The district needs to provide specific resources to assist teachers in broadening the focus to include other figures in Black History like Ida B. Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer, Sojourner Truth, and Bessie Coleman and modern Black figures like Amanda Gorman, Simone Biles, Jordan Peele, Shirley Chisholm, Katherine Johnson, President Obama, and Lonnie Johnson.

Overall, the majority of ELA literature did not offer enough opportunity for students of color to see themselves and their backgrounds and voices represented. Elementary social studies utilized some potentially insensitive literature and some resources that offered little in the way of accurate representations of or contributions from people of color, or diverse perspectives for historical events.

Summary

Artifacts showed disparities in access to challenging curriculum between schools and overlaps in objectives between grade levels. Coordination among schools was not consistent, and there were multiple interpretations of mastery in evidence. Artifacts in ELA, social studies, and science were sometimes not aligned to standards or sufficient to provide practice for the most difficult released items on the upcoming *STAAR* 2023. Cognitive demand was generally low in mathematics, science, and social studies, and contexts were of the least engaging type. Disparities in achievement among elementary schools may be tied to alignment and/or mastery interpretation issues. ELA and social studies artifacts did not reflect the rich diversity of the district (see **Recommendation 3**).

Finding 3.3: District leaders do not have a plan to guide professional development activities for improved effectiveness. Instructional monitoring is viewed as a means for formal evaluation rather than improved performance.

Professional development is an important part of quality control and ongoing improvement in a school system. The primary purpose of professional development activities for teachers is to improve teacher instructional capacity and, thereby, increase student achievement. For administrators at all levels, the primary purpose of professional development is to increase leadership capacity to aid teachers or whomever they supervise in improving their practice. Effective professional development is research-based and driven by multiple forms of data, individualized to allow for differentiation for both the teacher and the learner, and provides all staff members with the skills and knowledge needed to meet the needs of a diverse student population. A high-quality professional development program is guided by a comprehensive plan that is linked to the goals of the district's long-range planning efforts (see **Finding 1.1**). Such a plan is approved by the board of trustees, based on identified needs, offers a variety of professional development models, incorporates sufficient follow-up and support to ensure effective classroom use, and provides training for staff at all levels of the district. Professional development needs to be well defined and coordinated at the district level to provide guidance across the school system with a limited number of focus areas at any given time, and opportunities to revisit key areas of training from one year to the next to deepen the learning. This ensures that administrators and teachers have sufficient time to master the learning and make it part of their daily practice. Furthermore, an effective professional development program includes a systematic feedback process and multiple evaluation methods to evaluate success in terms of results attained.

Successful professional development programs share commonalities, and the most effective programs consistently articulate and communicate a clear, focused mission and vision to all stakeholders. Professional development begins with a careful analysis of data and a comprehensive needs assessment to determine strengths and weaknesses in curriculum delivery. Training should be job embedded and offer a variety of delivery models that will mirror expectations for delivery of classroom instruction with attention focused on providing training that is at the depth and complexity necessary to meet the expectations of state and/or national standards for any given subject area. Professional development offered in response to identified needs should begin with a clear purpose of the intended outcome, must be relevant and meaningful, and be flexible with the delivery approach based on the training that is needed. High quality professional development requires policy guidance and should be inclusive of all employee groups. It includes a monitoring component to effectively measure the success of the training and its impact on student achievement measures that are based on multiple forms of data, including classroom visits and analysis of student work (see **Findings 3.1** and **3.2**).

Overall, auditors found no formal professional development (PD) plan in place, but numerous PD activities happening throughout Lake Travis Independent School District. One major example is the annual Learning Together Conference. With no plan in place, there are no formal processes to determine how PD activities are developed. Overall, teachers and administrators tend to feel comfortable with the PD they receive with a few teachers looking for more individualized PD to match their specific fields. Professional development is not derived from monitoring of the curriculum. The goal of monitoring is primarily for evaluative purposes and misses the connection of building instructional capacity in teachers and leadership capacity in administrators.

Professional Development

To determine the adequacy and effectiveness of the professional development program in Lake Travis Independent School District, auditors examined board policies, district and campus planning documents, professional development planning documents, job descriptions, and other relevant district documents. In addition, auditors visited all sites and interviewed board members, district administrators, building principals, and surveyed school administrators and teachers regarding professional development plans, procedures, and course offerings within the district. Some board policies note the need for professional development, but they are vague on what this looks like or the processes involved. Auditors also reviewed job descriptions and noted the frequent references to professional development for many positions.

District leaders did not provide auditors with a comprehensive professional development plan. In the absence of a plan, auditors seek to find characteristics of a quality professional development plan within the documents reviewed. Auditors' analysis and ratings of the characteristics of professional development program and planning in the Lake Travis ISD are displayed in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 3.3.1: Curriculum Management Improvement Model Professional Development Characteristics and Auditors' Assessment of Staff Development Program and Planning

Characteristics	Auditors' Rating
Policy	
1. Has policy that establishes the expectation that professional development focus primarily on the improved delivery of curriculum	P*
2. Fosters an expectation for professional growth and requires planning to support growth for the improvement of student learning	P*
3. Is for all employees	
Planning and Design	
4. Is based on a careful analysis of data and is data-driven	
5. Provides for system-wide coordination and has a clearinghouse function in place	P*
6. Has a current plan that provides a framework for integrating initiatives in professional development with the mission, vision, and curriculum implementation	
7. Has a professional development mission in place	
8. Is built using a long-range planning approach	
9. Provides for organizational, unit, and individual development in a systemic manner	
10. Focuses on organizational change—professional development efforts are aligned to district goals	
Delivery	
11. Is based on proven research-based approaches that have been shown to increase productivity	
12. Provides for three phases of the change process: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization	
13. Is based on human learning and development and adult learning research	
14. Uses a variety of professional development approaches	
15. Provides for follow-up coaching and on-the-job application, which are necessary to ensure change in practice	
16. Expects each supervisor to be a staff developer of staff supervised	
Evaluation and Support	
17. Provides the necessary funding to carry out professional development goals	P*
18. Requires an evaluation of process that is ongoing, includes multiple sources of information, focuses on all levels of the organization, and is based on actual change in behavior	
Total Met	**0/18**
Percentage Met	**0%**
Key: X = Met, P = Partially Met, Blank = Not Met	
*Partial ratings are counted as not met when determining overall percentage of adequacy.	

As illustrated in the exhibit, auditors rated 0 of the 18 curriculum management improvement model (CMIM) characteristics as "met." Auditors' comments about each section follow:

Policy

Even though several policies mention professional development and establish the expectation that professional development occurs throughout the district, the policies are not specific enough in nature to directly link the need for professional development to improvement in the curriculum and/or student learning.

Planning and Design

No policies or plans require that professional development be based on a careful analysis of data or that a clearinghouse function be in place. Even so, there is a clearinghouse function that contains professional development activities for the Learning Together annual conference on the Curriculum and Instruction Department website. With no formal plan in place, the overall mission for professional development and professional development activities are not currently based on long-range planning.

Delivery

Auditors did not rate any of the CMIM criteria for delivery as "met." Board policies did not address the delivery of professional development. There are no requirements for a research-based approach to professional development or incorporating the three phases of change through professional development. There is also no requirement or mention of professional development based on adult learning or follow-up coaching and on-the-job application to ensure change in practice.

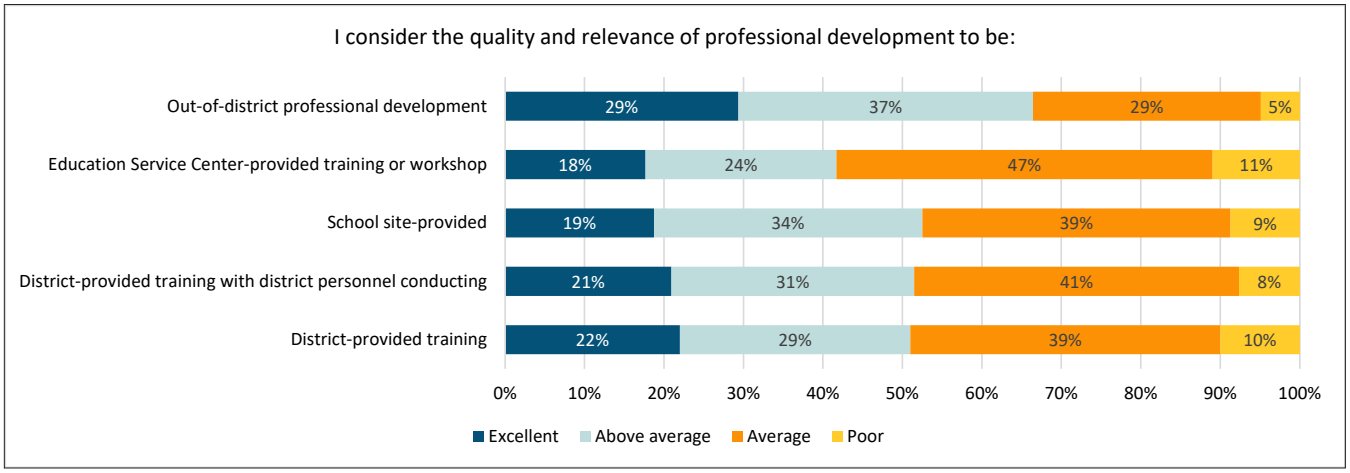
Evaluation and Support

No policies or documents require the evaluation of professional development. District leaders provided auditors with the calendar for the 2022 Learning Together professional development days held in February. In addition, auditors also reviewed the Curriculum and Instruction Department website that houses professional development. Professional development activities such as Learning Together are clearly supported with funding.

Auditors surveyed campus administrators and teachers and asked numerous questions regarding professional development. The next five exhibits display the results of these survey items. A total of 43 administrators and 415 teachers responded to their respective surveys.

The first exhibit displays teacher responses regarding quality and relevance of professional development.

Exhibit 3.3.2: Teacher Survey Response Concerning Relevance of Professional Development



Data Source: Online Surveys

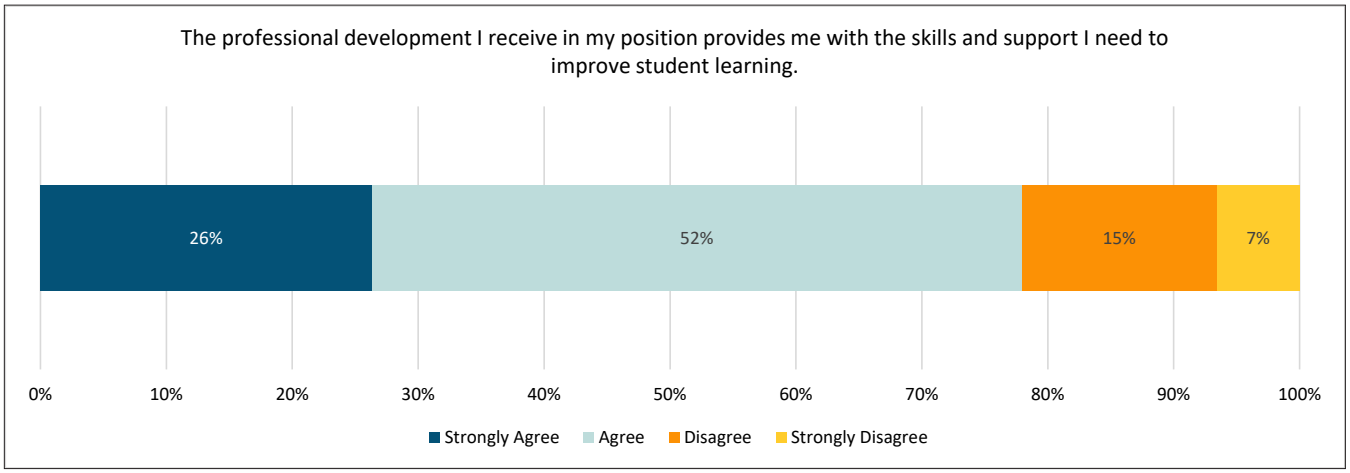
The exhibit shows that most professional development falls within acceptable ranges of average to excellent ratings. The out-of-district professional development had the fewest ratings of poor and the strongest responses for excellent and above average at a total of 66%. All other professional development activities had similar approval ratings.

Auditors allowed teachers to leave comments regarding professional development. Teachers who responded left a total of 21 comments. The few comments centered on a few themes encapsulated in the following:

- "For the best PD, I've had to go find it myself and search for topics that actually are related to my students."
- "LT conference is excellent, Trauma Informed Training was poor and took 4 hours; sometimes it feels like district scheduled PD doesn't honor teacher needs."
- "The amount of professional development offered to the math dept is very limited. It is basically up to the individual to seek out workshops, conferences, etc."
- "I LOVE our yearly conference, really great."

The teacher survey asked teachers to respond to the prompt, "I receive the trainings and support I need most to improve my teaching." The following exhibit displays the responses.

Exhibit 3.3.3: Teacher Survey Response Concerning Training in Support of Their Position

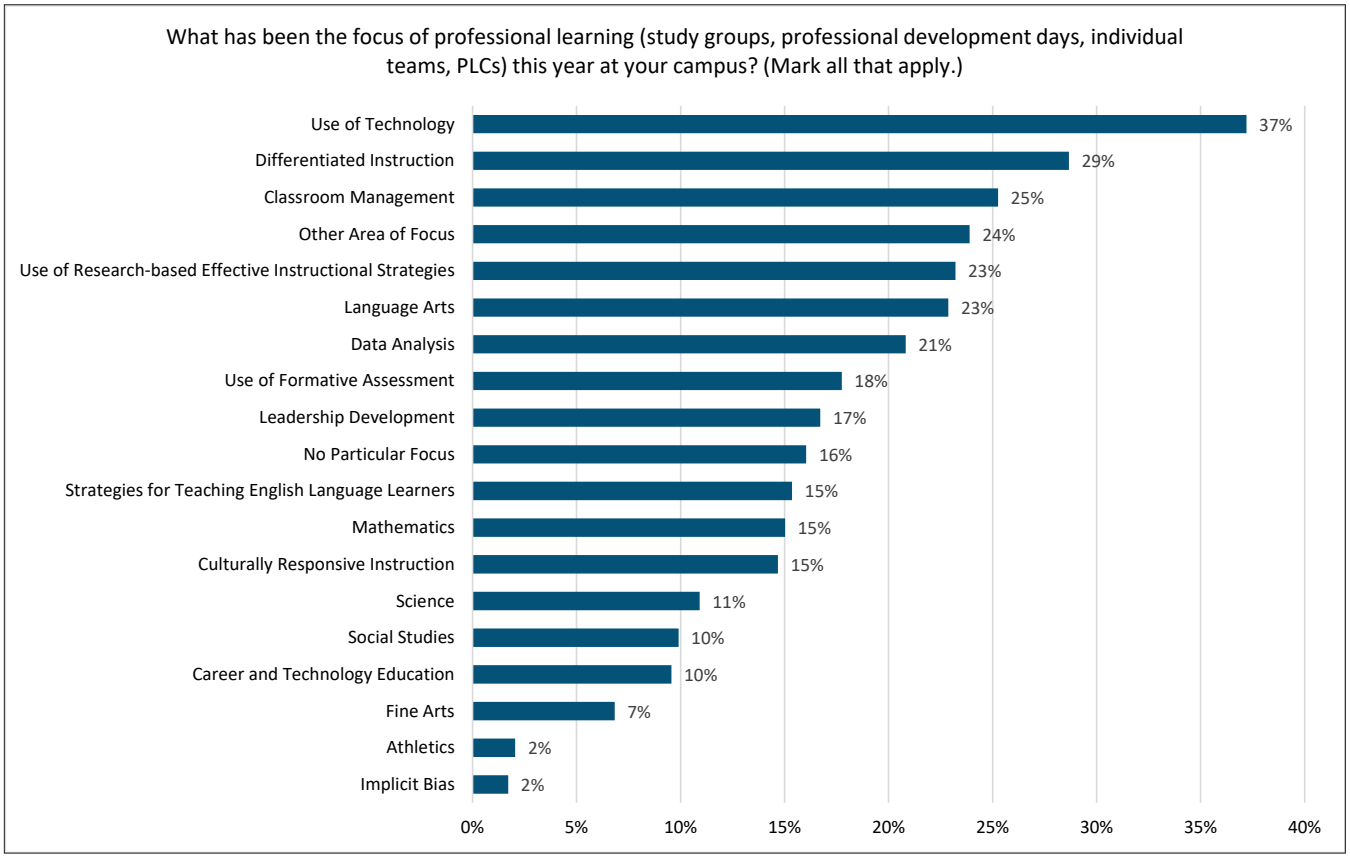


Data Source: Online Surveys

The exhibit shows almost four-fifths (78%) of teachers agree with this statement. Again, auditors allowed teachers to leave comments. The 27 comments received centered around some larger themes, one of which was limited opportunities for specialized areas: "Most of the PD [professional development] I receive doesn't apply to my content area." Also, "We have some great PD [professional development] but are lacking in some areas like ESL [English as second language]." Other comments highlighted the yearly conference: "The Learning Together Conference is one thing that LTISD really gets right."

Auditors asked teachers about the focus of professional development at their specific campuses. The next exhibit displays those responses. Note that teachers could mark more than a single category.

Exhibit 3.3.4: Teacher Survey Response to Focus of Campus Professional Development

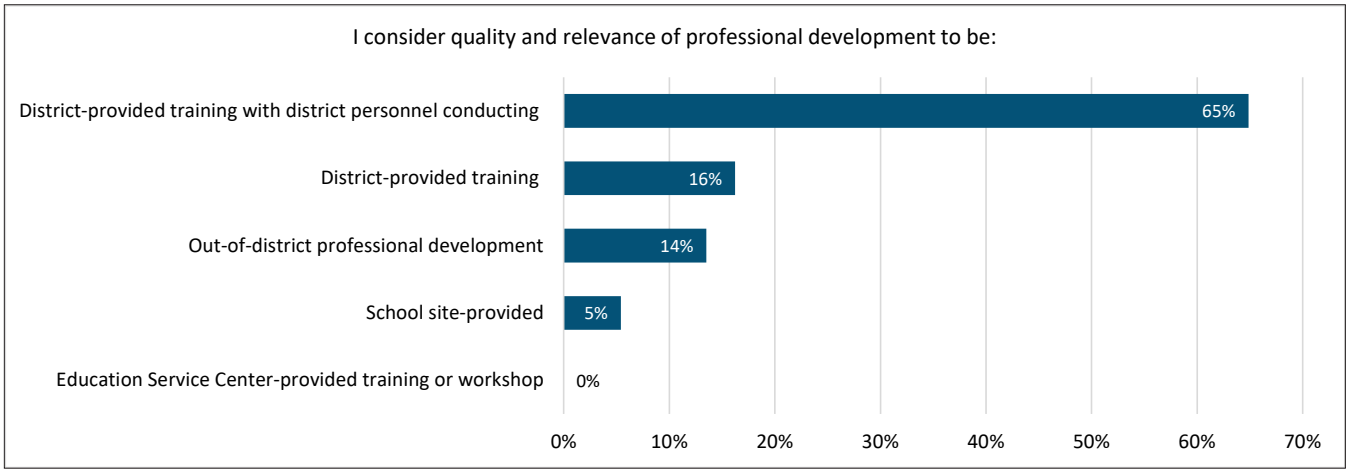


Data Source: Online Surveys

This exhibit illustrates the most common campus-based professional development focused on use of technology with 37% teachers responding. In addition to use of technology, other primary areas noted for campus professional development included differentiated instruction (29%), classroom management (25%), and then other areas of focus (24%). Additionally, use of effective instructional strategies (23%), language arts (23%), and data analysis (21%) were noted as focus areas. The least areas of focus tended to be subject-oriented, such as athletics (2%), fine arts (7%), CTE (10%), social studies (10%), and science (15%).

Auditors also asked administrators a range of questions concerning professional development. The first question corresponded to the teacher survey found in **Exhibit 3.3.2** concerning the relevance of professional development from the administrator perspective. The following exhibit displays the results.

Exhibit 3.3.5: Administrator Survey Response Concerning Preference of Professional Development

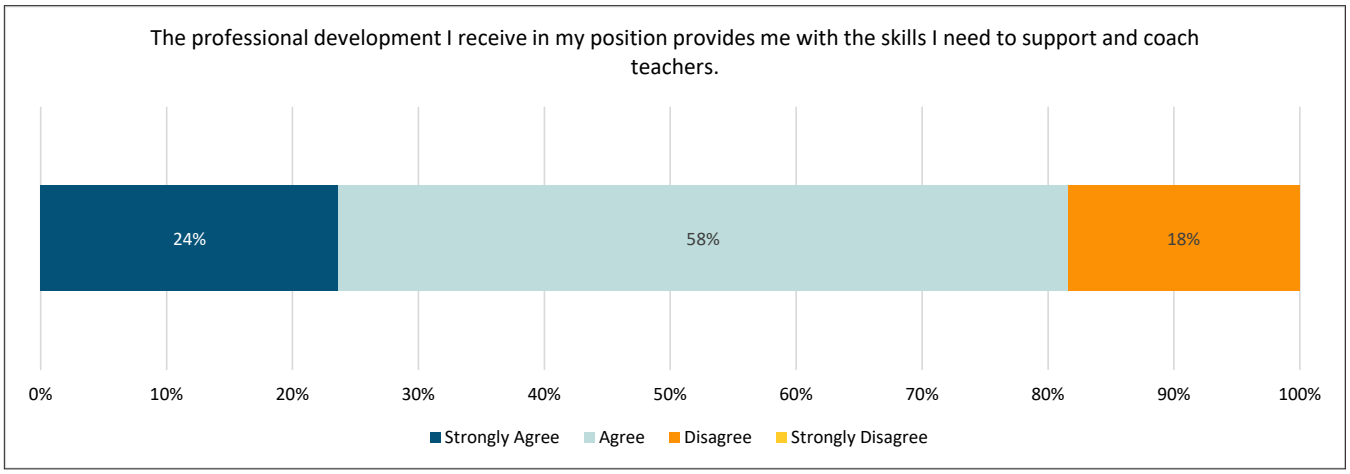


Data Source: Online Surveys

Similar to **Exhibit 3.3.2**, auditors asked administrators questions concerning professional development. Auditors asked administrators to rank their preference for professional development and the exhibit illustrates administrators prefer the district-provided professional development. Whether asked to rank professional development as auditors did of administrators or to rate the quality of professional development as auditors did of teachers, both groups illustrate that district provided professional development is perceived to be adequate.

Auditors then asked administrators specifically about the professional development they receive in their role as administrators. The next exhibit displays the results of this survey item.

Exhibit 3.3.6: Administrator Survey Response Concerning Professional Development



Data Source: Online Surveys

The exhibit above shows 82% of administrators who responded stated they either strongly agree or agree with the statement indicating support for their own professional development.

Auditors interviewed board members, district administrators, and building principals and asked questions concerning professional development. The following are examples of what auditors heard:

- "We need structured PD. There is no plan driving PD now." (District Administrator)
- "PD is last minute. Principals have some say." (District Administrator)
- "We have pretty much been left to figure out our own PD." (Campus Administrator)

Summary

There is no formal plan in place to guide professional development. Even so, teachers and administrators generally agree they enjoy the professional development they receive. The biggest professional development activity is the Learning Together annual conference, and both teachers and administrators generally agree the activities are appropriate with some exceptions. There is no connection between professional development and monitoring.

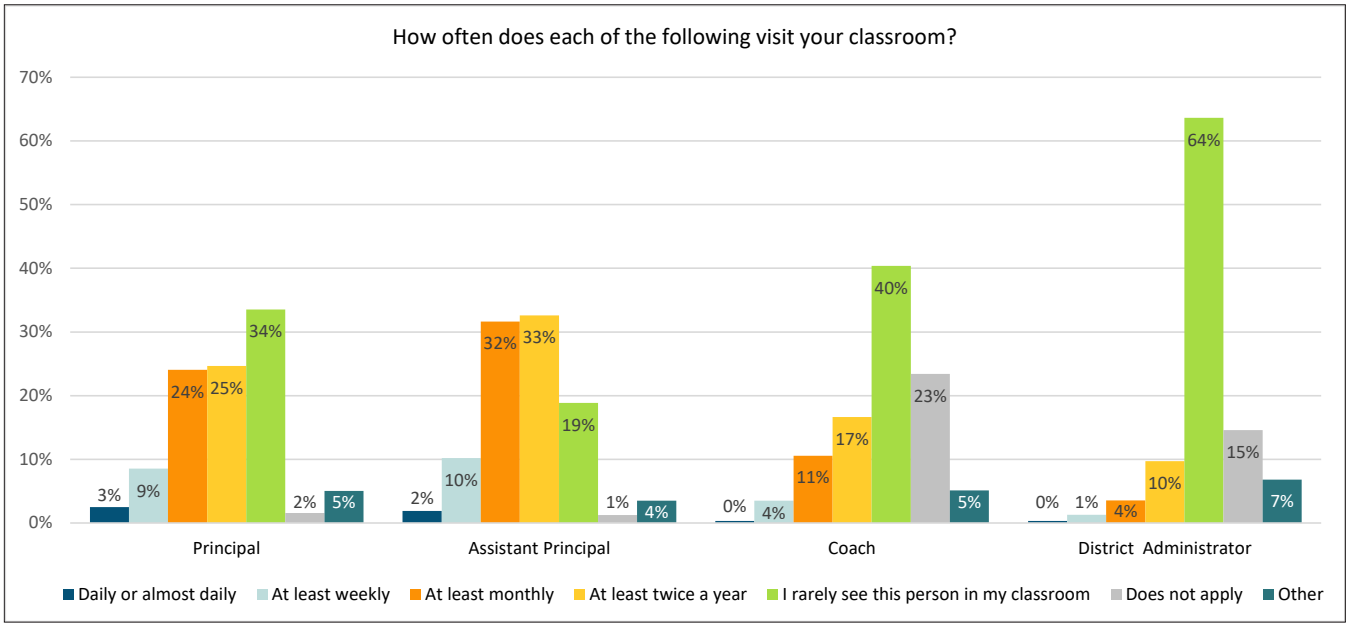
Monitoring

Academic success for students depends on having a quality curriculum available to teachers (see **Finding 2.2**) and effective instructional delivery of that curriculum (see **Finding 3.1**). To ensure effective instructional delivery of a high-quality curriculum, how well that delivery is aligned to state standards, and that the instruction is being differentiated to meet individual needs, it must be monitored on a consistent basis throughout the district. The results of monitoring should be used to inform professional development activities at all levels of the system. Although teacher appraisals are one facet of monitoring instruction, they are usually evaluative in nature and do not allow for instructional development of teachers. Non-evaluative monitoring provides immediate critical feedback for the improvement of instruction. As instructional leaders, building principals are the first line of accountability and support for the effective and aligned delivery of the curriculum. To effectively monitor delivery, administrators need a clearly defined curriculum aligned to state and/or national standards at the appropriate depth and complexity and a specific instructional model as a guide (see **Focus Area Two**).

Monitoring involves multiple practices. Lesson plans should be monitored to ensure linkage to curriculum scope and sequence when available for the subject and grade level taught. Instruction should be monitored to verify that the appropriate objectives are being taught; research-based instructional strategies are being used; assessments are used and varied; and assessment results are being used to differentiate instruction and to improve student achievement. Resources should be calibrated to ensure content is on level and students are cognitively engaged in learning that promotes critical and higher-level thinking. To determine the expectations for monitoring the district's curriculum and instruction, the auditors examined board policies, job descriptions, appraisal instruments, district and campus improvement plans, and other district documents and data. The auditors also visited campuses and interviewed building principals, district administrators, and had teachers and administrators complete online surveys.

Using the online surveys, auditors asked building principals and teachers about the frequency of administrator visits to classrooms. The following exhibit displays the responses from teachers who responded to that survey question.

Exhibit 3.3.7: Frequency of Classroom Visits by Building Principals as Reported by Teachers

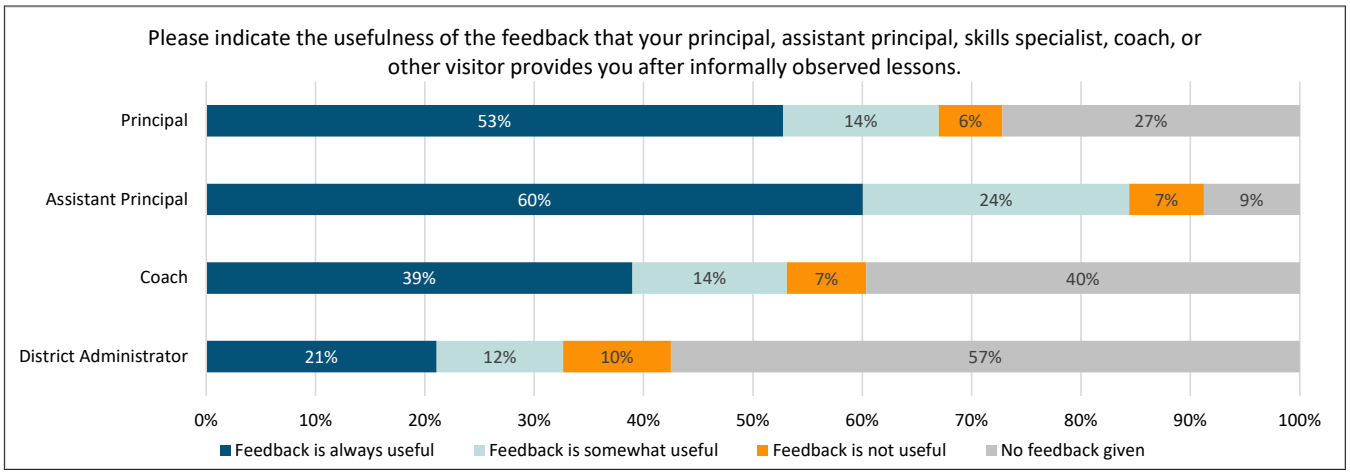


Data Source: Online Surveys

The above exhibit illustrates it is not until the category of "at least monthly" that auditors begin to see potential visits by principals (24%) and/or assistant principals (32%). Similar responses show teachers see principals (25%) and assistant principals (33%) at least twice a year. More than one-third (34%) of teachers stated they rarely see principals in their classroom, and 19% stated they rarely see their assistant principal in their classroom. Some teachers left comments and stated they can have coaches in their classrooms as needed. Others stated they never see their principals or assistant principals in their classrooms.

The next exhibit displays the responses from teachers when auditors asked how useful the feedback is they receive from classroom visitations, no matter how often.

Exhibit 3.3.8: Usefulness of Feedback as Reported by Teachers

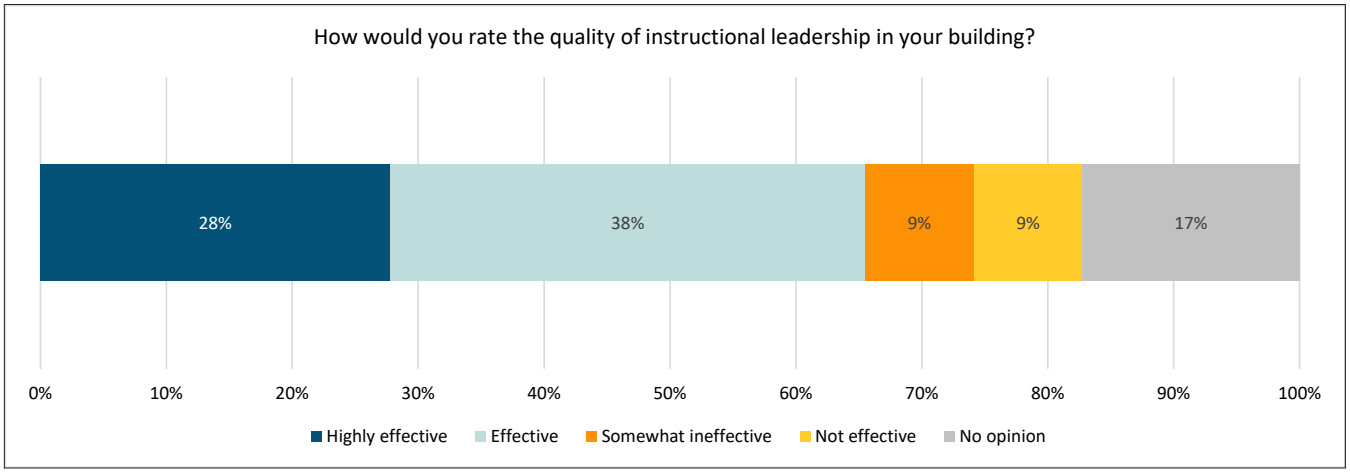


Data Source: Online Surveys

This exhibit shows the majority of feedback by both principals (53%) and assistant principals (60%) is useful when provided. When combined with the somewhat useful category, assistant principals clearly provide more useful feedback at 84% compared to principal feedback at 67%.

Auditors followed up the question about usefulness of advice by asking about the quality of instructional leadership in their buildings. The following exhibit displays the results of this survey question.

Exhibit 3.3.9: Quality of Instruction in Buildings Reported by Teachers

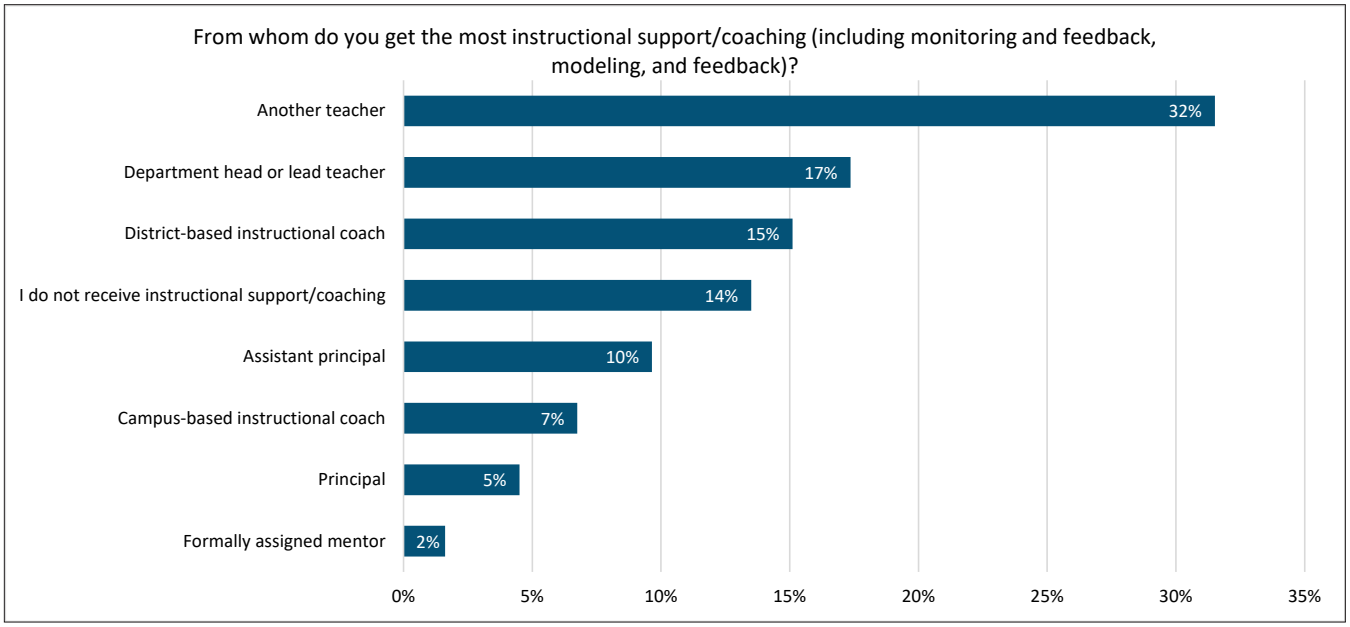


Data Source: Online Surveys

The above exhibit shows two-thirds (66%) of the respondents stated the instructional leadership in their buildings is either highly effective or effective. Another 35% reported differently. Comments teachers left appeared as divided as the survey question results were. This result indicates a possibility of varied administrator effectiveness from campus to campus.

Auditors followed up this question to teachers with another question asking from whom they receive the most instructional support. The next exhibit displays the results.

Exhibit 3.3.10: Teacher Responses Regarding from Whom They Receive Instructional Support

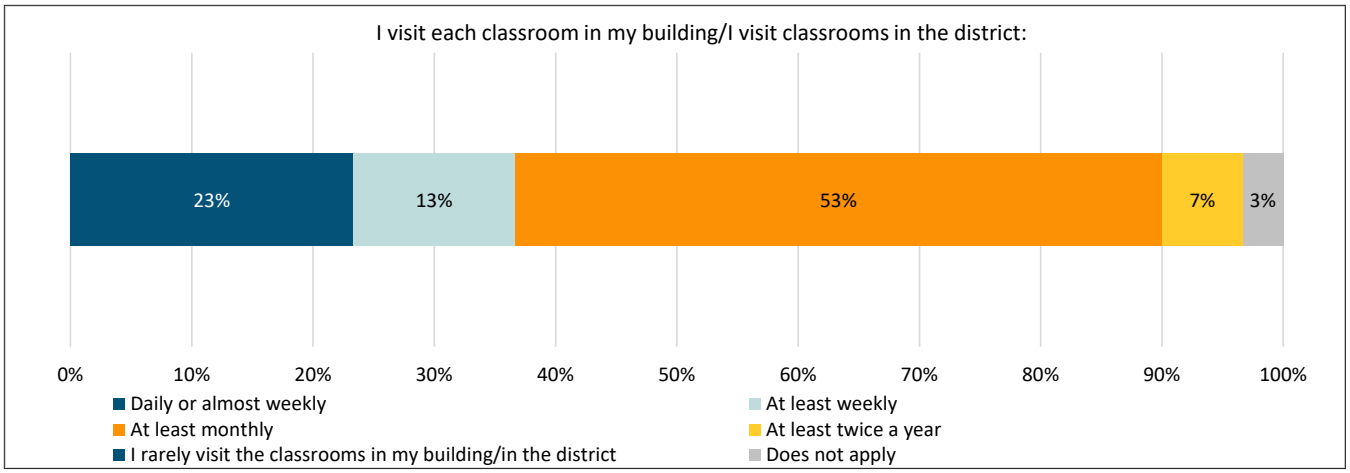


Data Source: Online Surveys

This exhibit confirms previous teacher survey responses, showing teachers receive their most instructional support from another teacher (32%) or their department head or lead teacher (17%). Teachers reported receiving instructional support from assistant principals at 10% and principals at 5%.

To understand the connection between teacher perceptions and administrator perceptions regarding monitoring, auditors asked similar questions to administrators regarding similar topics about monitoring. The following exhibit displays the responses of administrators when asked about frequency of classroom visitations.

Exhibit 3.3.11: Administrator Responses to Frequency of Classroom Visitations

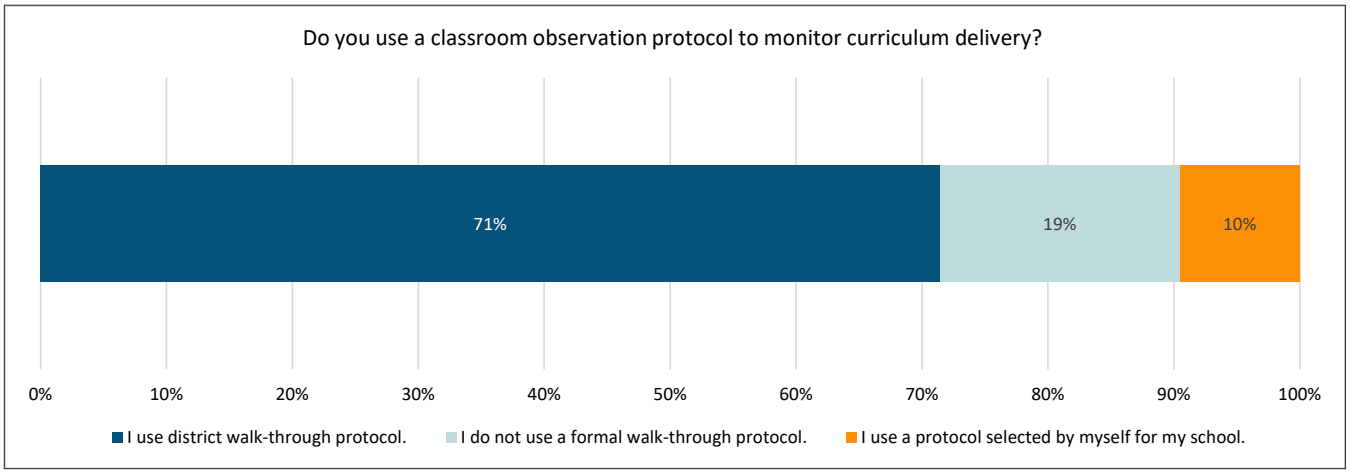


Data Source: Online Surveys

The exhibit above shows more than half of administrators (53%) reported being in classrooms at least monthly. Almost a quarter (23%) stated they are in classrooms daily or almost weekly. This is in contrast to teacher responses in **Exhibit 3.3.7**. This may be attributed to individual teachers seeing administrators infrequently, but administrators actually being in classrooms sporadically, not uniformly.

Auditors asked administrators if they use a district-created protocol when doing classroom observations. The exhibit below displays the results of this survey item.

Exhibit 3.3.12: Building Principal Response to Use of Protocols



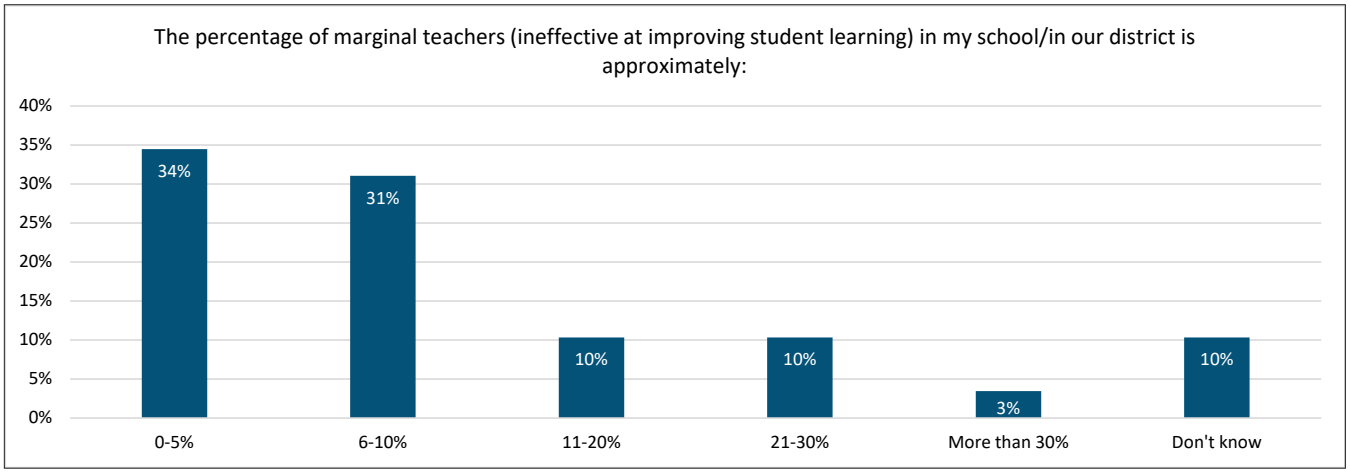
Data Source: Online Surveys

As seen in this exhibit, 71% of the respondents stated they use the district walk-through protocol. Administrators surveyed included principals, assistant principals, and instructional coaches. Comments indicated the remaining 29% include some respondents who do not conduct walk-throughs, which implies that when walk-throughs are done, they are done using the district-approved protocol. The

auditors found the district walk-through form to be related to the teacher evaluation system, however, and not an informal walk-through form used to monitor curriculum and instructional practices.

A primary reason for monitoring, especially using walk-throughs, is to be able to work with teachers to improve their instructional capacity through targeted coaching and professional development. A primary drive of targeted coaching and professional development is the critical feedback provided in non-evaluative walk-throughs. To better understand how the process works in Lake Travis Independent School District, auditors asked administrators how many marginal teachers they had in their buildings. They then requested a random sample of any evaluations formal/or informal on which they searched for critical feedback. The following exhibit displays the administrator responses to the percentage of teachers in their respective building they consider marginal.

Exhibit 3.3.13: Administrator Response to Percentage of Marginal Teachers in Their Buildings



Data Source: Online Surveys

The exhibit above shows that while almost two-thirds (65%) stated they have 10% or less marginal teachers in their buildings, another 23% stated they have between 11% to more than 30%.

Auditors reviewed the sample evaluations and noted 95 formal evaluations and 5 walk-through evaluations. The T-TESS Summative evaluations serve as the formal observations. Teachers are rated in four domains in one of five categories: Distinguished, Accomplished, Proficient, Developing, Improvement Needed. Each domain has room for feedback to the teacher. Auditors noted very few marks below Proficient in the 95 summative evaluations. Comments were overwhelmingly positive. The informal walk-throughs provide opportunities for reviewers to also leave feedback, and this is typically critical feedback to help focus teachers on the reflection of their practice. While four of the five walk-throughs presented did contain feedback with questions, auditors did not consider the questions to be critical feedback but queries regarding what would happen next in a lesson or sequence of lessons. Questions on these walk-through forms generally lacked a reflective aspect, such as asking teachers why they did what they did.

During interviews with district and campus administrators, auditors learned instructional coaches tend to be seen as the instructional capacity builders in buildings and administrators as formal evaluators.

Summary

With no comprehensive professional development plan in place, the impact on learning that professional development is having in Lake Travis Independent School District may be limited. Monitoring of the curriculum is occurring but done so primarily as a formal process with limited critical feedback provided to improve instruction and to inform professional development activities (see **Recommendation 3**).

Finding 3.4: Student demographic data show inequities exist in enrollment in special programs such as gifted and talented, special education services, and emergent bilingual.

The objective of educational equity is to provide all students with the services that best meet their individual needs in order to level the playing field. District leaders need to allocate resources equitably to support unique student abilities while also ensuring equal access. "Equal" and "equity" are different. "Equal" means "exactly the same." Resources include fiscal and human resources. "Equity" means that resources are allocated to students according to their needs, rather than being broadly distributed without taking into consideration that students come to the educational setting with different experiences and backgrounds. District leaders additionally need to actively monitor equal access and equity to ensure that societal disadvantages are not perpetuated in and by the system.

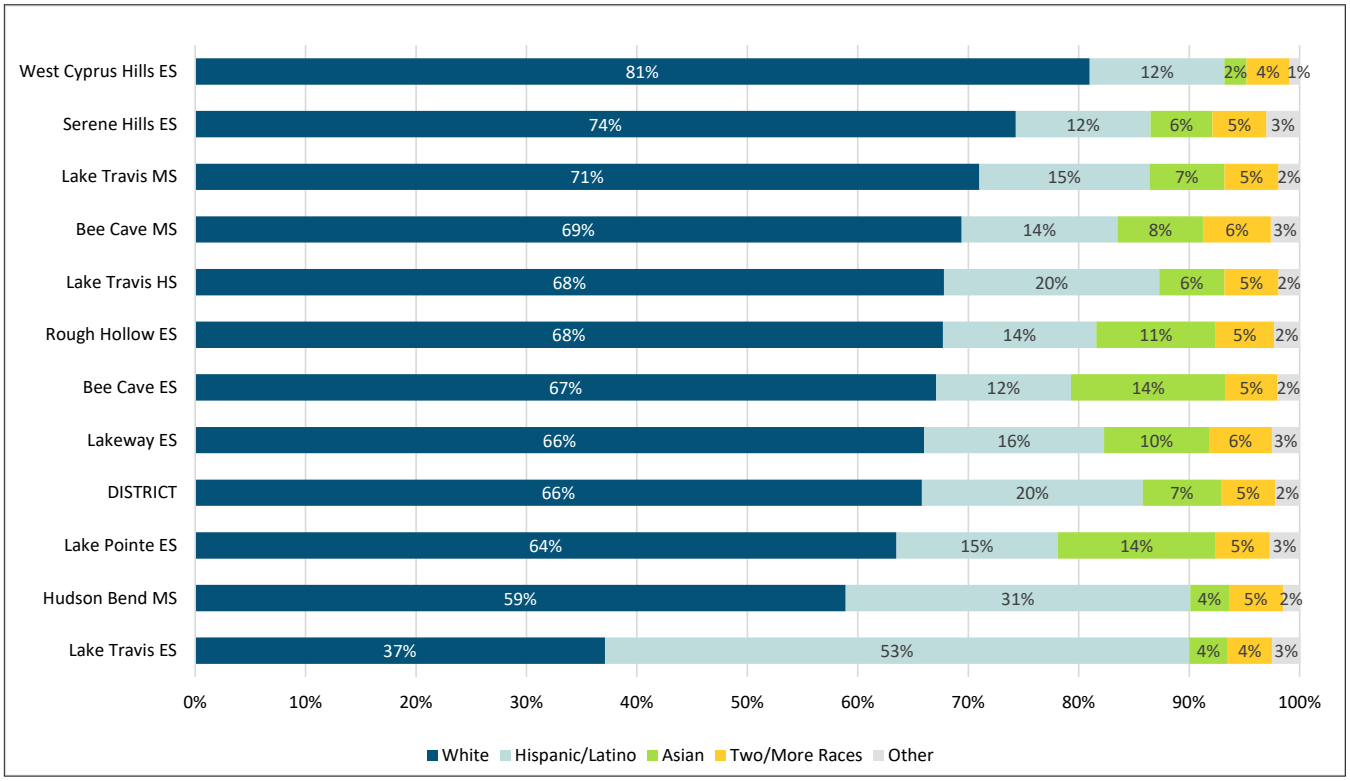
To determine the state of equity in Lake Travis Independent School District, auditors reviewed board policies, job descriptions, district improvement plans, and campus improvement plans. Auditors also analyzed a number of areas typically examined for equity concerns: Special program enrollment data, library book counts, school staffing counts, master schedules, and survey data in addition to class size reports, discipline reports, retention reports, and other documents pertaining to enrollment. While policies generally agree all students should have access to an education, policies establish no formal processes to investigate equity concerns as they begin to arise in the district.

When comparing district enrollment in various programs to individual campus enrollment, auditors noted some extremes that may warrant further investigation by district leaders. These include enrollment of at-risk students, economically disadvantaged students, emergent bilingual students, gifted and talented students, and students receiving special education services. When compared to district averages, some campuses have extreme numbers in the areas noted. Demographics are changing in Lake Travis Independent School District, and the district is slowly becoming more diverse. As the enrollment of marginalized students continues to increase, it is important to note that equity is not an event, rather a journey. Equity work has no ending until system leaders reach the point whereby student demographics and/or any other marginalizing aspects do not predict student achievement. With that in mind, this finding addresses areas that appear to be emerging as equity concerns.

Students Subgroup Representation in Special Education and Gifted and Talented

Auditors examined specific programs for the purposes of equity and expected to find similar numbers in each group as in the general population: at-risk, economically disadvantaged, emergent bilingual students, students receiving special education services, and students identified as gifted and talented. District leaders provided auditors with data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) concerning October 1 counts for the 2020-21 school year. These data only break school enrollment down by gender and not by identified programs. Leaders are encouraged to examine program enrollment by gender in addition to demographics. The following exhibit serves as a baseline, showing campus enrollment by ethnicity compared to the district average.

Exhibit 3.4.1: Campus and District Enrollment by Ethnicity

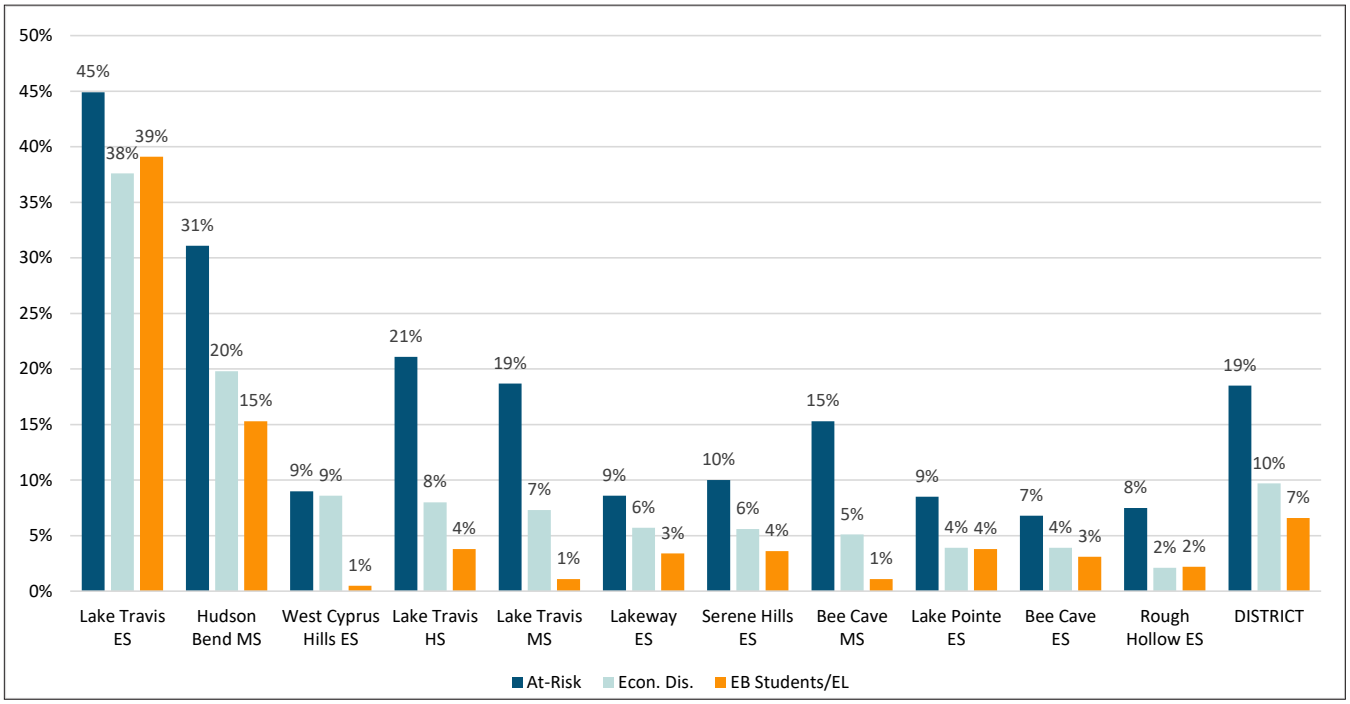


Data Source: TEA 2020-21 Student Information provided by district leaders

As illustrated in the previous exhibit, the district enrollment average by ethnicity shows 66% of all students enrolled are classified as White with 20% Hispanic, 7% Asian, 5% Two or More Races, and the remaining 2% all other ethnicities. Most campuses have averages that are similar to the district average with a few exceptions. West Cyprus Hills Elementary School and Serene Hills Elementary School tend to be less diverse with more White students and less minorities, while Lake Travis Elementary School has almost half the White students than the district average, but more than twice as many Hispanic students. These data are important to understand the concept of equity where campuses with more marginalized students should receive additional support to ensure those students achieve at similar rates as non-marginalized students. These additional supports can take on many forms from additional monies to programmatic support such as those programs examined in the rest of this finding.

With an understanding of baseline ethnic demographics, auditors examined populations of at-risk, economically disadvantaged, and emergent bilingual students by campus and compared each campus to the district average. The next exhibit displays this comparison. For the definition of at risk, auditors referred to the TEA website: http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/peims/standards/1314/e0919.html, which includes 13 different definitions of an at-risk student.

Exhibit 3.4.2: Campus and District Program Comparisons: At-Risk, Economically Disadvantaged, and Emergent Bilingual



Data Source: TEA 2020-21 Student Information provided by district leaders

As illustrated in the previous exhibit, similar to the exhibit Campus and District Enrollment by Ethnicity, a few sites stand out when compared to district averages. Rough Hollow Elementary School, Bee Cave Elementary School, and Lake Pointe Elementary School all have averages considerably lower than the district averages in all three categories. Lake Travis Elementary School and Hudson Bend Middle both show higher percentages of all three groups when compared to the district averages. Understanding equity, as this finding discussed earlier, when examining at-risk, economically disadvantaged, and emergent bilingual students by campus, it is important for district leaders to identify campuses where the percentages of these marginalized students stand out so they can provide the additional support needed to help these students be successful.

Interviews with district leaders and campus leaders revealed concerns over the emergent bilingual program (EB) and access to adequate support. The following exhibit illustrates EB instructional coach support by schools.

Exhibit 3.4.3: Emergent Bilingual Instructional Coach by Elementary School

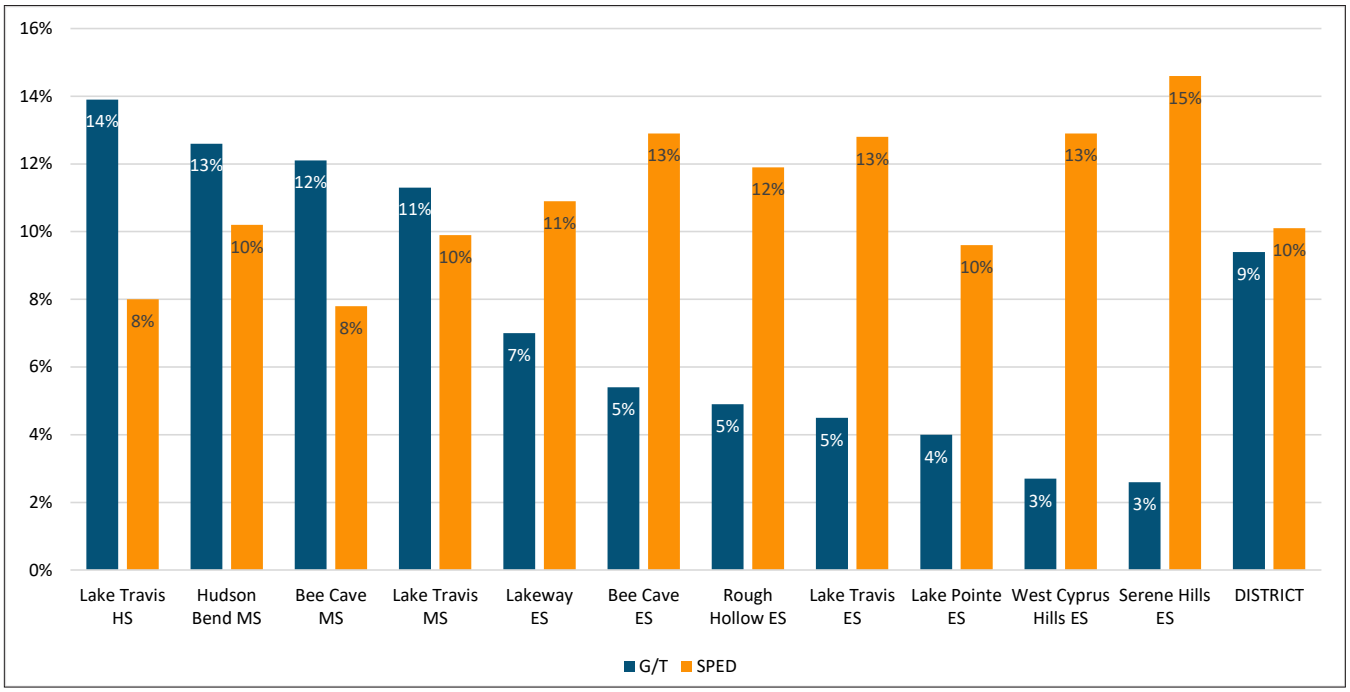
Elementary School	# of ESL Instructional Coaches	# of Emergent Bilingual Students	Ratio of EB Students to Instructional Coaches
Rough Hollow ES	1	16	35:1
Lakeway ES		19	
Lake Pointe ES	1	27	30:1
West Cypress Hills ES		3	
Bee Cave ES	1	24	46:1
Serene Hills ES		22	
Lake Travis ES	1	305	305:1

Data Source: TEA 2020-21 Student Information provided by district leaders

The previous exhibit shows the district has four EB instructional coaches, and they are assigned to elementary schools. Three coaches each have two schools they support with the final coach assigned to Lake Travis Elementary School. The data from the October 1, 2021, counts illustrate EB students at Lake Travis Elementary School may be lacking in equitable support to reach their potential. Auditors asked district leaders for information regarding staffing formulas, but did not receive this information. One campus administrator told auditors, "There is absolutely no one who speaks Spanish at the other six campuses. For this reason, Spanish speaking students attend Lake Travis Elementary School." More importantly, this exhibit shows there are dedicated coaches for elementary schools, but auditors noted that these services are extremely limited in middle school and high school.

Similar to the three categories noted in the previous exhibit, auditors looked for participation in specific programs to identify any equity concerns. The next exhibit displays comparisons of district enrollment in gifted and talented (GT) and students receiving special education services (SPED) percentages by campus.

Exhibit 3.4.4: Comparison of GT and SPED Percentages by District and Campus

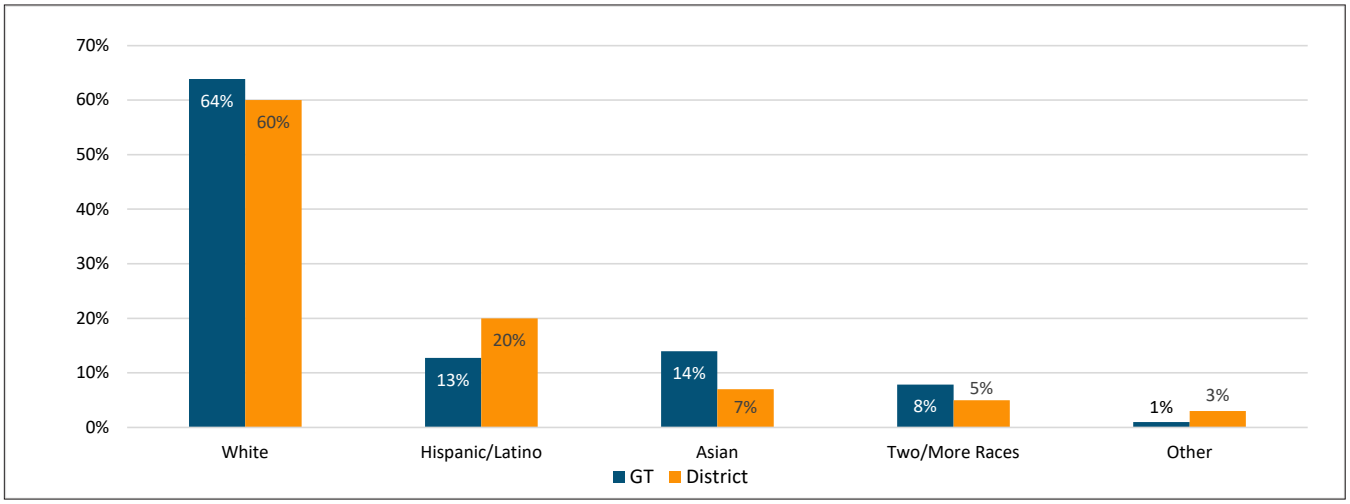


Data Source: TEA 2020-21 Student Information provided by district leaders

The previous exhibit shows the district average for participation in GT is 9%, and 10% of students receive special education services. In general, the exhibit illustrates an inverse relationship between GT and SPED identification by campus. The higher GT percentages, the lower SPED and vice versa. The elementary schools, in general, show low percentages of GT students and much higher percentages of SPED students.

Auditors further investigated the individual programs with an expectation that ethnic enrollment in programs is similar to that in the district as noted in **Exhibit 3.4.1**. The following exhibit compares the ethnicity of students in the GT program to the overall district enrollment by ethnicity.

Exhibit 3.4.5: Comparison of GT Students by Ethnicity to District Enrollment

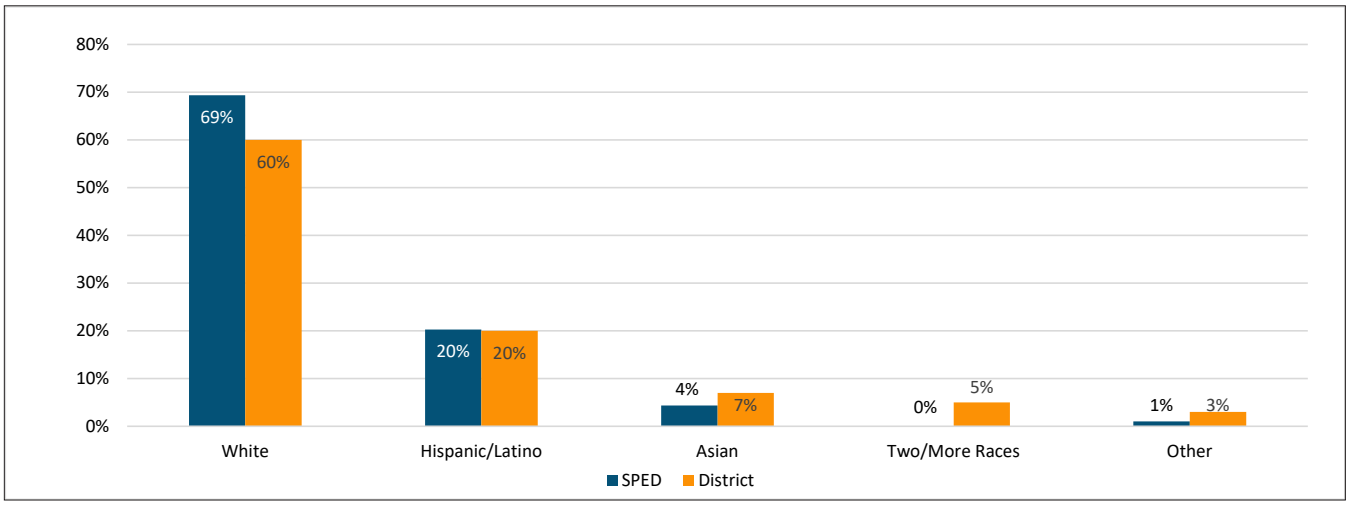


Data Source: Student Information provided by district leaders

As noted in the exhibit, there are some differences noted when comparing ethnicities in the GT program with the district enrollment. Specifically, the largest discrepancy lies with GT enrollment being 7% less for Hispanics and 7% more for Asians in GT. Other data indicate White is 4% more in GT and Two/More Races is 3% more while all others are 2% less.

Auditors did the same comparison with students receiving special education services. The following exhibit illustrates this comparison.

Exhibit 3.4.6: Comparison of Special Education Students by Ethnicity to District Enrollment

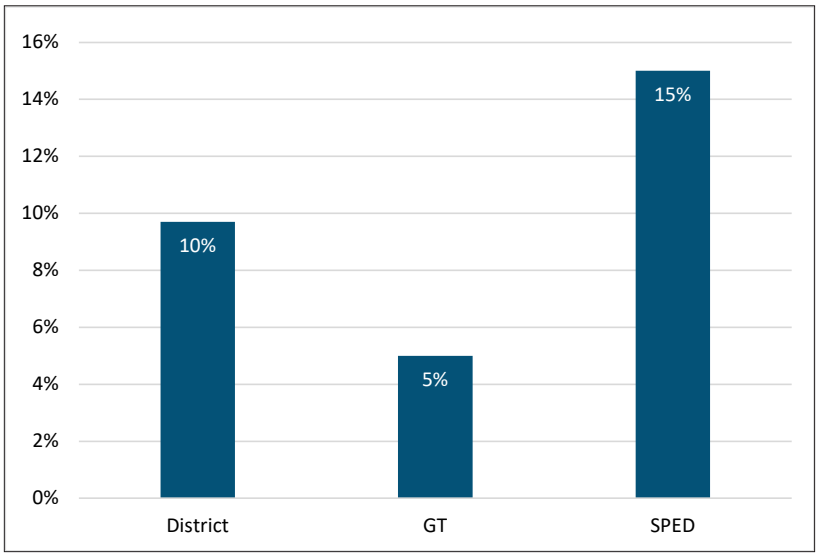


Data Source: Student Information provided by district leaders

As illustrated in the exhibit, while Hispanic students are equally represented as students receiving special education services, there is no report of students classified as Two/More Races receiving special education services. White students are represented 9% more and Asian students 3% less than are represented in the district.

Finally, auditors examined student data for both the GT and the SPED programs and compared that to the district average for students receiving free and reduced lunches. The following exhibits displays these percentages.

Exhibit 3.4.7: District Comparison of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunches to the Gifted and Talented and the Special Education Programs



Data Source: Student Information provided by district leaders

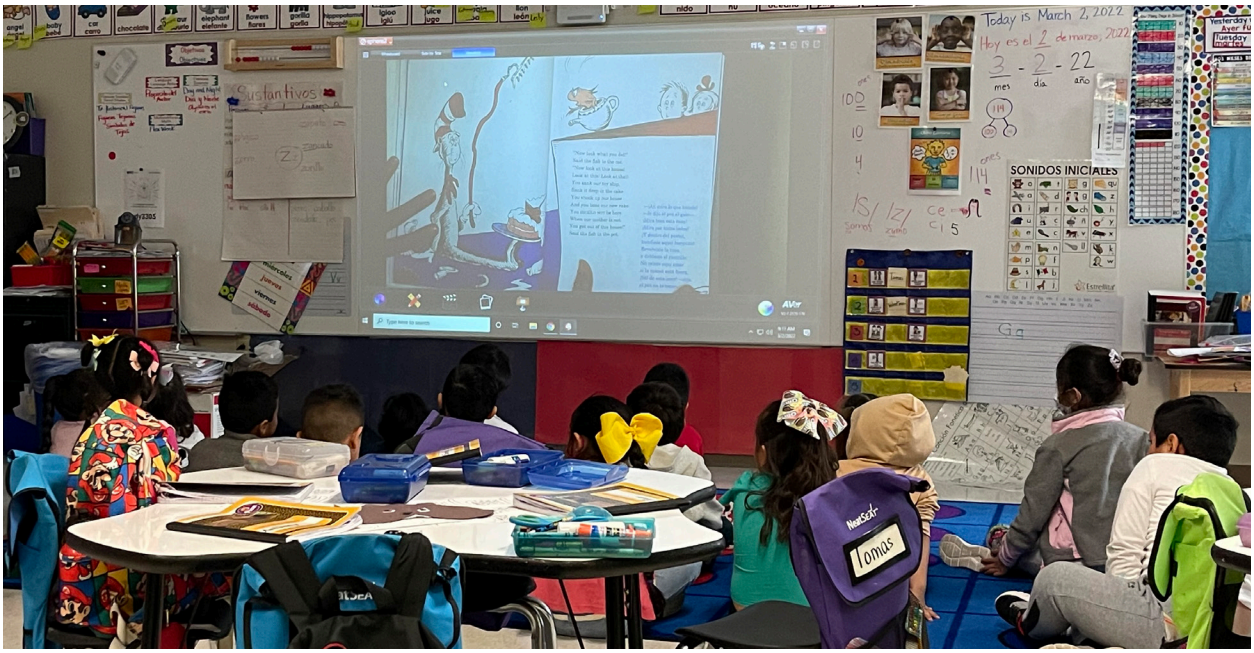
As noted in the previous exhibit, the district average for students receiving free or reduced lunches is 10%. Only 5% of the students in the gifted and talented program are receiving free or reduced lunches while 15% of the students receiving special education services are receiving free or reduced lunches. This illustrates inequities as students who are receiving free or reduced lunches may be more likely to be recommended for special education services as opposed to gifted and talented. One's socio-economic status should not dictate one's placement in such programs.

Auditors interviewed board members, district administrators, campus administrators, and teachers and asked questions about equity concerns in the district. Practically, all answers revolved around the EB program. The following are samples of what auditors heard:

- "We have been growing in our special populations. We started at about 7%, and we are not up to 11% now at the state average." (District Administrator)
- "Our bilingual is okay at best. The program just kind of stops. We can provide equity to those kids who need it." (District Administrator)
- "ESL is an area that can grow. We have pull out support for them, but I have a student who only speaks Russian. I am trying to do Google translate with him, so he does not have a lot of support." (Teacher)
- "Everybody in middle school and high school go to ESL teachers. They try to support them, but there are no systems, period." (District Administrator)
- "I feel like student achievement [for ESL students] is put on the shoulders of the ESL teachers." (District Administrator)

Summary

Auditors examined several data points specifically looking for areas of equity concern. Auditors expect campus enrollment in special programs to mirror the demographics of the district. Discrepancies exist among campuses when it comes to at-risk students, economically disadvantaged students, and emergent bilingual (EB) students. Specifically, many EB students could be limited in the support they are receiving due to no staffing formula used for allocation of staff. There appears to be an inverse relationship between enrollment in GT programs and students receiving SPED services by campus. Many elementary campuses have high SPED populations compared to GT populations. Examination of individual programs show Hispanic students are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs while White and Asian students are overrepresented. White students are overrepresented in special education services while those who classify as two or more races are not represented. Discrepancies appear in both the gifted and talented program and special education program related to students receiving free or reduced lunches (see **Recommendation 3**).



Lake Travis Elementary kindergarten ESL class listening to teacher read aloud

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

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

What Auditors Expected to Find in Lake Travis ISD:

Focus Area Four: Feedback

Under Focus Area Four, the auditors examine the overall scope and quality of the assessment system in providing data (feedback) for use in decision making at all levels of the system: classroom, building, and district. A school system meeting Focus Area Four has designed a comprehensive system of assessment/testing and uses valid measurement tools that indicate how well its students are achieving designated priority learning goals and objectives.

Common indicators

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

Overview of What Auditors Found in Lake Travis ISD:

This section is an overview of the findings that follow in the area of **Focus Area Four**. Details follow within separate findings.

Lake Travis ISD does not currently have a comprehensive student assessment plan to guide decision making for the continuous improvement of student achievement. Therefore, the district lacks several components of assessment planning critical in providing clarity of expectations regarding the design and implementation of student assessment.

Tightly-held assessments aligned to curriculum and administered to all students in all courses taught are absent. Therefore, the scope of formal, tightly-held, district-wide assessments of the written curriculum is inadequate to support the monitoring of student achievement and to guide instructional decision making.

Data use in Lake Travis ISD is not focused through cohesive processes that target agreed outcomes for the district, departments, programs, campuses, classrooms, or individual students. Data use in the district is primarily for the identification of students who will receive multi-tiered systems of support. Procedures for using data to evaluate programs and to direct resource allocation are not in place.

Although district results are higher than the state average, data trends related to student achievement indicate stagnant or slightly declining performance in mathematics and English language arts/reading since 2016. Since the Covid 19 pandemic, economically disadvantaged, at-risk, and special education students are experiencing a sharper decline in achievement than their non-identified peers.

Finding 4.1: Direction for student assessment planning is inadequate, making it difficult for administrative staff and teachers to make appropriate decisions for improved learning of all students in Lake Travis Independent School District.

An effective student assessment system ensures that students are being assessed appropriately. Educators use the information gleaned from those assessments to make informed decisions that positively influence student learning. An effective system provides information for use at all district levels, from officials making large-scale budgeting decisions and principals allocating resources to individual teachers modifying instruction for individual students. When a school district does not have an effective approach for student assessment at all levels—classroom, grade-level, department, and district—decision-makers lack the data needed to make informed decisions and must rely on past practice or instinct

A comprehensive assessment system includes a clear plan for assessing students and the use of information. The plan expects students to be assessed in all content areas, using diverse, curriculum-based formative and summative measures that provide educators with the diagnostic information needed to adapt and improve instruction for their students. Additionally, an effective assessment system provides procedures and information for evaluating academic programs to determine their effectiveness for continuation, modification, or termination. The desired impact of an effective student assessment program is the ongoing improvement of student achievement over time with sustainability.

To determine the adequacy of district planning for student assessment, auditors reviewed board policy, job descriptions, assessment planning documents, curriculum documents, and student assessment data. The auditors also interviewed district administrators, school administrators, instructional support staff, and teachers to gain further information regarding the district's student assessment system.

Board policy and other governing documents share minimal expectations regarding the purposes and use of formative and diagnostic assessment tools (see **Finding 1.1**) and the role of assessment data in district and school level instructional decision making. There were no local policies outlining expectations for student assessment or the role of assessment data at the district- or school-level.

Overall, auditors found that the district does not have an assessment plan, and board policies, job descriptions, and other documents collectively do not provide adequate direction for effective student assessment planning. Written direction for student assessment is limited to the assessment timelines for diagnostic assessments in reading and math along with state-mandated assessments.

Although the legal policy and other documents provided by the district give some guidance for student assessment, collectively, no document fully meets any of the 16 characteristics of assessment planning. The following exhibit provides a reference for district administrators as they design a future comprehensive student assessment and evaluation plan.

Exhibit 4.1.1: Characteristics of a Comprehensive Student Assessment and Program Evaluation Plan

Characteristic (The plan…)
1. Describes the philosophical framework for the design of the student assessment plan and directs both formative and summative assessment of the curriculum by course and grade in congruence with board policy. Expects ongoing formative and summative program evaluation; directs use of data to analyze group, school, program, and system student trends.
2. Includes an explicit set of formative and summative assessment procedures to carry out the expectations outlined in the plan and in board policy. Provides for regular formative and summative assessment at all levels of the system (organization, program, student).
3. Requires that formative, diagnostic assessment instruments that align to the district curriculum be administered to students frequently to give teachers information for instructional decision making. This includes information regarding which students need which learner objectives to be at the appropriate level of difficulty (e.g., provides data for differentiated instruction).
4. Provides a list of student assessment and program evaluation tools, purposes, subjects, type of student tested, timelines, etc.
5. Identifies and provides direction on the use of diverse assessment strategies for multiple purposes at all levels—district, program, school, and classroom—that are both formative and summative.
6. Specifies the roles and responsibilities of the central office staff and school-based staff for assessing all students using designated assessment measures, and for analyzing test data.
7. Directs the feedback process; assures the proper use of assessment data at all levels.
8. Specifies the connection(s) among district, state, and national assessments.
9. Specifies the overall assessment and analysis procedures used to determine curriculum effectiveness.
10. Requires aligned student assessment examples and tools to be placed in curriculum and assessment documents.
11. Specifies how equity issues will be identified and addressed using data sources; controls for possible bias.
12. Identifies the components of the student assessment system that will be included in program evaluation efforts and specifies how these data will be used to determine continuation, modification, or termination of a given program.
13. Provides for appropriate trainings for various audiences on assessment and the instructional use of assessment results.
14. Delineates responsibilities and procedures for monitoring the administration of the comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation plan and/or procedures.
15. Establishes a process for communicating and training staff in the interpretation of results, changes in state and local student achievement tests, and new trends in the student assessment field.
16. Specifies creation of an assessment data system that allows for the attribution of costs by program, permitting program evaluations to support program-based cost-benefit analyses.

A discussion of the 16 characteristics and what the auditors found follows:

Characteristic 1: Describes the philosophical framework

To meet this characteristic, a district must have a philosophical framework for the design of a student assessment plan and direct both formative and summative assessment of the curriculum by course and grade congruent with board policy. The auditors found no policy that requires the superintendent or designee to manage the student assessment program aligned with the state assessment system and other appropriate assessment methods and instruments, including norm- and criterion-referenced achievement tests, aptitude tests, proficiency tests, and district or teacher-developed tests.

Auditors found no policy requiring the creation of common assessments or their use across all courses and grades.

To establish a philosophical framework, policy should require the assessment process to include formative and summative measures. These measures should span all courses and grades (not limited to grades and subjects assessed at the state level). Assessments should be rigorous in content, context, and cognitive type, in alignment with high-stakes assessments. Board policy should also require trend analysis of student performance data and ongoing data analysis to determine group, school, program, or system trends.

Characteristic 2: Includes an explicit set of formative and summative assessment procedures

Auditors look for an explicit set of formative and summative assessment procedures to carry out the expectations outlined in an assessment plan and in board policy. Those procedures should provide for regular formative and summative assessments at all system levels (organization, program, and student). In addition, assessment procedures must include a plan for training staff members at all levels on using data as feedback for instructional planning and continued student growth (see **Finding 3.3**). Lake Travis ISD did not provide auditors with a comprehensive plan outlining procedures for developing common formative and summative assessments across the system, deeply aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for all subjects, and closely reflecting the levels of cognition and type of student performance desired by the district. However, the auditors did review the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support manual.

The Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) manual guides the use of nationally normed assessments for benchmarking/screening, diagnostics, additional use of data for monitoring, and summative evaluations. The MTSS manual prescribes the use of data from these assessments primarily for intervention and remediation. The MTSS manual does not state requirements for the explicit alignment of these assessments to the taught curriculum nor expected curriculum-based outcomes.

Characteristic 3: Requires formative and diagnostic assessments aligned to the district's curriculum

To meet this characteristic, auditors would expect to find requirements that formative assessment instruments aligned to the district curriculum be administered to students frequently to give teachers information for instructional decision making. This includes information regarding the specific learner objectives needed at the appropriate levels of difficulty, providing information critical in planning for differentiated learning. As stated in Characteristic 2, Lake Travis ISD uses the MTSS process primarily to determine interventions and remediation based on national norms. The practice of using curriculum-based measures with explicit instruction regarding their design or use has not been established as articulated by district personnel in the following quotes:

- "The expectation is we progress monitor, but there is no information on what this looks like." (District Administrator)
- "We don't have common assessments. Each teacher writes their own test, but they don't analyze as a team." (Campus Administrator)
- "There are no district-wide curriculum-based assessments." (District Administrator)
- "We moved away from common assessments. I would like to see them come back. There are pockets of it, but it's not consistent." (District Administrator)

District and school staff informed auditors that the *State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness* (*STAAR*) *Beginning of Year* (*BOY*), and interim assessments from the Texas Education Agency, along with *mCLASS* and *Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress* (*NWEA MAP*), are the district assessment instruments used to determine groups of students for Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Teachers are required to administer these assessments at the benchmarks required three times a year (beginning, middle, and end).

Characteristic 4: Provides a list of student assessment and program evaluation tools

To meet the expectation for this characteristic, the district must provide a list of assessments, subjects, types of students tested, and timelines. Some elements of this characteristic exist in the district assessment overview and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support guide. The assessment overview outlines the windows for assessments expected to occur during the school year. This list, however, does not include assessments for all core subject areas (specifically science, social studies, and electives, and at all grade levels).

Characteristic 5: Identifies and provides direction for diverse assessment strategies

The assessment overview outlined assessments (screeners/benchmarks, state and national assessments) used by school personnel. However, auditors did not find explicit requirements related to district, campus, or teacher-level assessments or the aggregation of data for multiple purposes.

Characteristic 6: Specifies roles and responsibilities

Job descriptions provide another source of direction for student assessment. The Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction is charged with coordinating the development of a student assessment program that is an adequate guide to teaching and learning and to develop and implement a program development cycle to assess program status/quality on a regular basis. Director, Curriculum and Instruction job description states this role is responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating instructional programs with teachers and principals, including learning objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment techniques. In addition to this responsibility, multiple responsibilities are directly related to the evaluation of curriculum and program effectiveness using student achievement data. Auditors also found that the Director of Accountability and Achievement is given the responsibility for organizing district and state assessments; providing leadership in the implementation and disaggregation of local assessment data; and assisting in the design of local assessments. Although, several job descriptions address assessment within the outline of their responsibilities, no one job description addresses coordinating the creation of assessments and then administering and analyzing the data.

Characteristic 7: Directs the feedback process and use of assessment data

No documents provided to auditors showed evidence of feedback to adjust core instruction beyond providing interventions or remediation. Steps for adjusting instruction are not clearly defined beyond

providing small group instructional arrangements through multi-tiered systems of support. The district did not present the auditors with a comprehensive plan for the consistent and ongoing use of data at all levels of the system.

Characteristic 8: Specifies the connection(s) among district, state, and national assessments

The assessment overview presented to the auditors listed dates and testing windows to administer *mCLASS*, *NWEA MAP*, *STAAR* assessments, and national assessments (*PSAT*) as appropriate.

The district administers *mCLASS* and *NWEA MAP* assessments to students at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. The beginning, middle, and end of year assessments for *NWEA MAP* are computer-adaptive online assessments used for math and reading in grades 1-8, Algebra I, and English 1 that provide teachers, school leaders, and district staff with an estimation of a student's instructional level and measure growth throughout the school year. School staff indicated that *NWEA MAP* data is used to group students for multi-tiered systems of support and primarily to determine how students respond to interventions. Although most staff indicated during interviews with the auditors the use of data to place students in MTSS for targeted instruction is well known, the use of strategies for instructional delivery aligned to and at the rigor of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills is not clear. Auditors found no documentation of a process where teachers, instructional coaches, or school administrators use *mCLASS* or *NWEA MAP* data to intentionally address curriculum and instruction deficits required to increase student achievement.

Characteristic 9: Specifies assessment and analysis procedures

For a district to meet the expectation of this characteristic, auditors look for a clear connection between assessment results and the effectiveness of the curriculum. Without requirements in place for the development and administration of tightly-held district-created formative assessments aligned to curriculum documents, student mastery of learning standards and grade level concepts is not likely to be determined.

Lake Travis ISD has established processes outlined in their MTSS guide for the use of data from nationally normed *mCLASS* and *NWEA MAP* assessments to group students for targeted instruction. However, the district did not share any specific expectations outlining the rigor and alignment of instruction within the taught curriculum. Further, the district did not provide evidence of clear guidelines to address the use of formal, tightly-held curriculum-based measures to determine student mastery of taught learning standards and grade-level concepts.

Characteristic 10: Requires aligned student assessment examples

Auditors examined the Lake Travis ISD Curriculum and Instruction hub for evidence of aligned student assessment examples. Auditors did not find sample assessment items within the curriculum guides. Most of the curriculum guides listed the standards to be assessed without examples of district or state assessment items to support instructional practices and rigor.

Characteristic 11: Specifies how equity issues will be addressed

Lake Travis ISD *Board Policy BQ: Planning and Decision-Making Process* dictates the development of district and campus improvement plans. Auditors noted in **Exhibits 4.2.13 - Exhibit 4.2.16** the achievement gap between students identified as economically disadvantaged, at-risk, or special education, and their non-identified peers. However, in the CMSi online survey, Lake Travis ISD teachers stated that district and campus improvement plans are not well known, and strategies to meet goals are not given or enforced. To meet the expectations for this characteristic, district planning documents must address

how data analysis is used to identify and address potential equity issues and controls for possible bias in instructional practices and assessment outcomes.

Characteristic 12: Identifies components of a student assessment system that will be included in program evaluation

Program evaluations should assess needs, provide information for planning, indicate areas of strength and weaknesses in the district's instructional programs, and provide data related to student progress and mastery of objectives. The district did not provide auditors with evidence of a process for completing program evaluations.

Characteristic 13: Provides appropriate training

Professional development opportunities provided by the district are based on observations during campus visits, teacher or principal feedback, and scheduled opportunities to review data following beginning, middle, and end of year benchmarks. The MTSS guide linked protocols and cut-scores from nationally normed benchmarks to be used when making decisions related to intervention supports. However, no specific documents were provided regarding professional development strategies linked to specific instructional content delivery beyond the instructional arrangement and frequency of progress monitoring. Auditors did not find specific reference to providing training for teachers and leaders in the analysis of data to improve instruction.

Characteristic 14: Delineates responsibility for monitoring the assessment program

Responsibilities for monitoring the administration of assessments are outlined in job descriptions as presented below:

- Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction: Provides for systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the instructional program and supervises the use of formative assessment practices to encourage skilled teaching and higher-level learning.
- Director of Curriculum and Instruction: Obtains and uses evaluative findings (including student achievement data) to examine curriculum and instruction program effectiveness.
- Director of Accountability and Achievement: Provides leadership, development, maintenance, evaluation, and effective use of student achievement data and tracking systems.
- Instructional Coach: Assists classroom teachers in analyzing multiple sources of data, including student work, to reflect on student growth and determine appropriate instruction.

Auditors concluded that no one position holds sole responsibility for developing, implementing, and monitoring student assessment and program evaluation.

Characteristic 15: Establishes a communication process

Lake Travis ISD's MTSS guide provides processes for the communication, analysis, and use of nationally normed benchmark data at the district, school, or classroom levels for tiered instructional interventions. Although the MTSS guide provides specific benchmark cut scores for determining the level of student intervention, auditors did not find evidence of a process to ensure that staff members are receiving training in the interpretation of results, changes in assessments, or trends in the field of student assessment.

Characteristic 16: Specifies creation of an assessment data system

The auditors were not presented with documents outlining an assessment data system that tracks costs by program and permits program evaluations to support program-based cost-benefit analysis. However, Lake Travis does store and collect data in a consistent school-wide format through Eduphoria.

In summary, Lake Travis Independent School District currently does not have a comprehensive student assessment plan to guide decision making to improve student achievement. Although the district has some legal policies and district processes that address some aspects related to assessments, the policies and procedures provide insufficient oversight to manage the assessment program and bring cohesion. Job descriptions do not clearly define the roles and responsibilities for developing, implementing, and monitoring a quality student assessment program. Legal policy and other documents provide some direction, but these documents collectively do not fully meet the 16 characteristics used by auditors to determine the adequacy of assessment planning. Elements of assessment planning found in the MTSS guide are primarily used to support the direction of student interventions and remediation based on nationally normed benchmark results given three times a year. Neither tightly-held, curriculum-based, formative assessments nor processes for their development are evident for use to effectively support a cohesive system of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practice.

Summary

Lake Travis ISD does not have an assessment plan to guide decision making for the improvement of student achievement. The district's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support manual provides some guidelines to assist with the use of district-mandated benchmarks to guide instructional interventions and remediation. Written direction for student assessment is limited to the assessment timelines for diagnostic assessments in reading and math along with state mandated assessments. A formal student assessment plan is needed to prevent inconsistent practice and questionable reliability of outcomes in student achievement (see **Recommendation 4**).

Finding 4.2: The scope and quality of formal student assessment is inadequate to provide systematic, valid, and consistent information to influence decisions and planning at the classroom, school and district levels that promote student achievement.

An effective student assessment program allows the district to measure the efficacy of the written and taught curriculum. Formative and summative assessment data provide the basis for curriculum design and delivery decisions through evidence of student achievement across grade levels and content areas. Ongoing and timely student achievement data verify the alignment between the written, taught, and tested curriculum by measuring the extent to which students have reached desired performance levels. Utilizing tightly-held, district-created assessments, aligned to state standards and district curricula, is critical to measuring student progress and evaluating the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. **Finding 4.2** will address the following areas:

- Scope of Student Assessment
- Quality of Student Assessment
- Use of Assessment Data
- Trends in Student Achievement

Scope of Student Assessment

Without a comprehensive assessment program, district leaders cannot make informed decisions concerning the effectiveness of its curriculum and instruction. The audit expectation is that formative and/or summative assessments (with preference to formative) exist for 100% of courses in core content areas (English language arts/reading, mathematics, science, and social studies).

Formal assessment is defined as an administratively mandated standardized assessment for all district students in grade level or course and may be considered formative and/or summative. Formal formative assessments include assessments such as, *mCLASS* for kindergarten, *NWEA MAP*, and *Texas Education Agency's Beginning of Year* (*BOY*) and Interim assessments. Data from the formal formative assessments should be used to make determinations on interventions for students. State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness is considered a formal summative assessment and measures the mastery of standards for the grade levels and courses in which they are given. Results for the formal assessments are available at the district level and utilized for decision making. State and national tests are considered formal assessments if administered to all students in a grade level. Teacher-made or district-created assessment open for modification at the school and classroom levels are not regarded as formal assessments.

To determine the scope of formal assessment within Lake Travis Independent School District, the auditors examined board policy and lists of course offerings. They also interviewed district administrators, school administrators, and teachers to gather information regarding the scope of the district's assessments. As part of their data collection process, auditors posed interview questions to teachers, school administrators, and district administrators regarding the use of common assessments for each course and grade level and the expectations for analyzing the data in order to monitor student progress.

Overall, auditors found that students are assessed in English language arts/reading and mathematics using *mCLASS* for kindergarten, *NWEA MAP* as the formal assessment to determine the need for intervention in grades 1-8, English 1 and Algebra I, and *Texas Education Agency's Beginning of Year* (*BOY*) and interim assessments derived from the state assessment for tested grade levels. The *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness* (*STAAR)*, is the formal summative assessment for English language arts/reading, mathematics, science, and social studies for tested grade levels. The overall scope (11%) of formal assessments was inadequate to provide sufficient data to monitor instruction and guide instructional decision making (see **Exhibit 4.2.7**).

To determine the scope of assessment, auditors examined district-provided assessment information to identify formal tests administered in the district. The following three exhibits detail the auditors' findings regarding which assessments are administered to which students.

Exhibit 4.2.1: Subject Level Formal Assessments Administered in Grades K-5

Assessment	Description	Grade Level					
		K	1	2	3	4	5
mClass DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills)	Assesses the acquisition of early literacy skills and identifies students showing characteristics of dyslexia	X	X	X			
Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)	Assessment for measuring growth in reading, language usage, math, and science		X	X	X	X	X
District Benchmark (ELAR) Interim Assessments	Comprised of released STAAR Assessment Tests				X	X	X

Assessment	Description	Grade Level					
		K	1	2	3	4	5
District Benchmark (Math) Interim Assessments	Comprised of released STAAR Assessment Tests				X	X	X
District Benchmark (Science) Interim Assessments	Comprised of released STAAR Assessment Tests						X
TELPAS/TELPAS Alternate (Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System)	Assesses the progress that Emergent Bilingual (EB) students make in learning the English language.	S	S	S	S	S	S
STAAR & STAAR Alt 2 (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) Reading/Language Arts	State of Texas required assessments				X	X	X
STAAR & STAAR Alt 2 (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) Mathematics	State of Texas required assessments				X	X	X
STAAR & STAAR Alt 2 (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) Science	State of Texas required assessments						X
Key: X = administered to most/all students at that grade level, S = administered to selected students							
Sources: Lake Travis ISD Assessment Overview, Texas Education Agency							

Exhibit 4.2.2: Subject Level Formal Assessments Administered in Grades 6-8

Assessment	Description	Grade Level		
		6	7	8
Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)	Assessment for measuring growth in reading, language usage, math, and science	X	X	X
District Benchmark (ELAR) Interim Assessments	Comprised of released STAAR Assessment Tests	X	X	X
District Benchmark (Math) Interim Assessments	Comprised of released STAAR Assessment Tests	X	X	X
District Benchmark(Science) Interim Assessments	Comprised of released STAAR Assessment Tests			X
District Benchmark (Social Studies) Interim Assessments	Comprised of released STAAR Assessment Tests			X
TELPAS/TELPAS Alternate (Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System)	Assesses the progress that Emergent Bilingual (EB) students make in learning the English language.	S	S	S
STAAR & STAAR Alt 2 (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) Reading/Language Arts	State of Texas required assessments	X	X	X
STAAR & STAAR Alt 2 (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) Mathematics	State of Texas required assessments	X	X	X
STAAR & STAAR Alt 2 (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) Science	State of Texas required assessments			X

Assessment	Description	Grade Level		
		6	7	8
STAAR & STAAR Alt 2 (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) Social Studies	State of Texas required assessments			X
Key: X = administered to most/all students at that grade level, S = administered to selected students				
Sources: Lake Travis ISD Assessment Overview, Texas Education Agency				

Exhibit 4.2.3: Subject Level Formal Assessments Administered in Grades 9-12

Assessment	Description	Course				
		HS ELA Eng I	HS ELA Eng II	Algebra I	Biology	US History
Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)	Assessment for measuring growth in reading, language usage, math, and science	X		X		
District Benchmark (ELAR) Interim Assessments	Comprised of released STAAR Assessment Tests	X	X			
District Benchmark (Math) Interim Assessments	Comprised of released STAAR Assessment Tests			X		
District Benchmark (Science) Interim Assessments	Comprised of released STAAR Assessment Tests				X	
District Benchmark (Social Studies) Interim Assessments	Comprised of released STAAR Assessment Tests					X
TELPAS/TELPAS Alternate (Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System)	Assesses the progress that Emergent Bilingual (EB) students make in learning the English language.	S	S	S	S	S
STAAR & STAAR Alt 2 (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) Reading/Language Arts	State of Texas required assessments	X	X			
STAAR & STAAR Alt 2 (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) Mathematics	State of Texas required assessments			X		
STAAR & STAAR Alt 2 (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) Science	State of Texas required assessments				X	
STAAR & STAAR Alt 2 (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) Social Studies	State of Texas required assessments					X
Key: X = administered to most/all students at that grade level, S = administered to selected students						
Sources: Lake Travis ISD Assessment Overview, Texas Education Agency						

These exhibits reflect the availability of formal district assessments in reading for grades K-8, English I, and Algebra I; and formal summative assessments for grades 3-8, English I, English II, and Algebra I. State science assessments are available for students in grades 5, 8, and Biology. State social studies assessments are available for students in grade 8 and U.S. History. Assessments are also available for state-tested subjects to students with severe cognitive disabilities and to determine placement for English language learners. Further, district and/or campus personnel may design and administer curriculum-based measures in any content.

Auditors next compared courses offered to assessments given in each grade level to determine the scope of formal assessment. This step answers the first audit question, "Is it present?" The audit expectation is that students are assessed in every course offered at every grade level.

The next three exhibits show the scope of formal assessment district-wide, K-12, in core subjects (English language arts/reading, mathematics, science, and social studies). These exhibits do not speak to the quality of the assessment or whether the assessment was formative or summative. The first exhibit shows the results of the auditors' analysis of assessment scope at grades K-5 followed by the assessment scope at grades 6-8 and scope at grades 9-12.

Exhibit 4.2.4: Scope of Core Curriculum Formal Assessments in Grades K-5

Core Academic Courses	Courses Offered by Grade Level						Total Courses Taught	Total Courses Assessed	Percent Assessed
	K	1	2	3	4	5			
Core Content Area Courses									
English Language Arts/Reading	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	100
Mathematics	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	6	100
Science	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	1	17
Social Studies	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0
Totals (Core Courses)							**24**	**13**	
Percent of Core Courses Assessed									**54%**
Key: 1= Course offered at grade level and assessed, O = Course offered, no assessment									
Data Source: Curriculum Documents presented by district personnel, district assessment calendars, Texas Education Agency									

The overall scope of core curriculum assessed for grades K-5 is 54%. Students in kindergarten through grade 2 are assessed in reading using *mCLASS*. All grade levels are assessed in English language arts/reading and mathematics using *NWEA MAP* and the *STAAR* in grades 3-5. Science is formally assessed in grade 5 using the *STAAR*. Social studies is not formally assessed in grades K-5.

Exhibit 4.2.5: Scope of Core Curriculum Formal Assessments in Grades 6-8

Core Academic Courses	Courses Offered by Grade Level			Total Courses Taught	Total Courses Assessed	Percent Assessed
	6	7	8			
Core Content Area Courses						
English Language Arts/Reading	2	2	2	6	6	100
Mathematics	3	3	2	8	4	50
Algebra I	-	-	1	1	1	100
Science	1	2	2	5	2	40
Social Studies	1	2	2	5	2	40

Core Academic Courses	Courses Offered by Grade Level			Total Courses Taught	Total Courses Assessed	Percent Assessed
	6	7	8			
Total Core Courses				**25**	**15**	
Percent of Core Courses Assessed						**60%**
Key: - = course not offered at this grade level						
Data Sources: Curriculum Documents presented by district personnel, district assessment calendars, Texas Education Agency						

The overall scope of core curriculum assessed for grades 6-8 is 60%. All grade levels are assessed in English language arts/reading and mathematics using *NWEA MAP* and the *STAAR*. Science and social studies are assessed in grade 8 using the *STAAR*.

Exhibit 4.2.6: Scope of Core and Non-Core Curriculum Formal Assessments in Grades 9-12

Core Academic and Non-Core Education Courses	Number of Courses Offered	Number of Courses Formally Assessed	Percent of Courses Formally Assessed
English Language Arts	27	9	33
Mathematics	28	3	11
Science	30	3	10
Social Studies	29	5	17
Non-Core Content Areas	259	0	0
Totals (Core/Non-Core Content Area Courses)	**373**	**20**	
Percent of Core/CTE Content Area Courses Assessed			**5%**
Data Sources: Curriculum Documents presented by district personnel, district assessment calendars, Texas Education Agency			

The overall scope of core academic and non-core education courses assessed in grades 9-12 is 5%. English I and Algebra are assessed using *MAP Growth* and the *STAAR*. English II, Biology, and U.S. History are assessed using the *STAAR*. No other courses are formally assessed in grades 9-12.

The following exhibit provides a summary of the scope of formal assessments administered in all grade levels, K–12.

Exhibit 4.2.7: Summary of Scope of Formal Assessments Administered in Grades K-12

Core Academic and Career and Technical Education Courses,	Grades/ Courses Requiring Assessment	Grades/ Courses Assessed	Percent Assessed
Elementary (Grades K-5) English Language Arts/Reading	6	6	100
Elementary (Grades K-5) Mathematics	6	6	100
Elementary (Grades K-5) Science	6	1	17
Elementary (Grades K-5) Social Studies	6	0	0
Grades 6-8 English Language Arts/Reading	6	6	100
Grades 6-8 Mathematics	8	4	50
Grades 6-8 Science	5	2	40
Grades 6-8 Social Studies	5	2	40
High School (Grades 9-12) English Language Arts/Reading	27	9	33
High School (Grades 9-12) Mathematics	28	3	11
High School (Grades 9-12) Science	30	3	10
High School (Grades 9-12) Social Studies	29	5	17

Core Academic and Career and Technical Education Courses,	Grades/ Courses Requiring Assessment	Grades/ Courses Assessed	Percent Assessed
High School (Grades 9-12) Non-Core	259	0	0
Total Percent of Core and Non-Core Courses Formally Assessed, PK-Grade 12	**421**	**47**	**11%**
Data Source: Curriculum Documents presented by district personnel, district assessment calendars, Texas Education Agency			

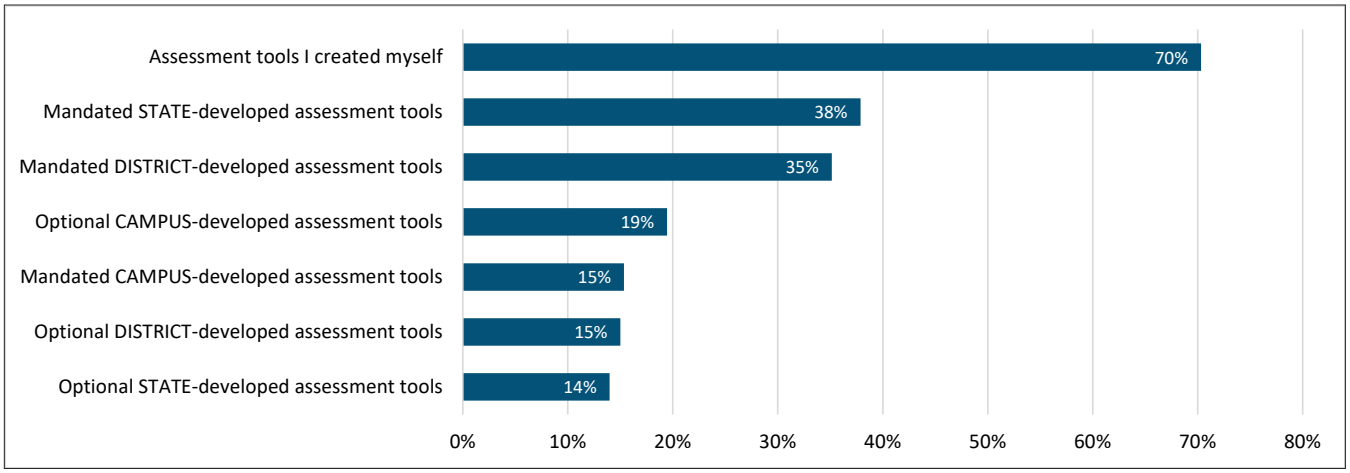
The overall scope of formal assessment in Lake Travis ISD for core (English language arts/reading, mathematics, science, and social studies) and non-core courses at the high school is 11%, less than the audit expectation of 100% for core subjects and 70% for non-core subjects Formal assessments occur in reading and math for grades K-8, English 1 and Algebra; science in grades 5, 8, and Biology; and social studies in grade 8 and U.S. History. These assessments are through the *NWEA MAP* assessment and the *State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness*.

Auditors found that the district assessment documents do not reflect the administration of locally developed common formative assessments designed to facilitate student progress toward mastery of all curriculum. When formative assessment information is absent or not used, teachers are left to use their instincts or past practice when making instructional decisions. The absence of standardized formative data aligned to curriculum documents and state standards (required for all students across all grade levels) results in the reliance on summative assessment data to identify student weaknesses. This forces teachers and district staff to respond reactively by designing remediation plans to help ensure students master the curriculum. These reactive efforts often leave students without prerequisite knowledge for subsequent learning, leading to further need for reteaching. Such a cycle becomes challenging to overcome and leaves student achievement below levels of expected academic growth.

Auditors found very little evidence of formal assessments in use at Lake Travis ISD beyond *NWEA MAP* and mandatory state assessments. During interviews and after reviewing the documents, auditors found that there are no tightly-held formal standardized formative assessments strictly tied to the curriculum and utilized to determine student mastery of the curriculum administered at the district level.

In an online survey, Lake Travis ISD teachers reported the various kinds of assessments they use to assess learning. The results of their responses are shown in the exhibit below:

Exhibit 4.2.8: Tools Used for Student Assessment



Data source: online teacher surveys

Given multiple choices to select assessment types, 70% of teachers reported using assessments tools they created themselves. The practice of using teacher created assessments as the approach to formal assessments is problematic in the sense that these are not guaranteed to be valid or reliable. Without validity or reliability in the assessments administered to students, predictions regarding student learning could be inaccurate and possibly indicate students are performing at an acceptable level, when remediation is needed. The opposite could also be true, students could be identified as needing remediation, when in reality students are learning at an appropriate level. Nearly 40% utilize mandated state-developed assessments, which are only available for grades 3-8 in English language arts/reading and math, grades 5 and 8 for science, grade 8 for social studies, and at the grade 9-12 level, English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology, and U.S. History. Mandated district-developed assessments were selected by 35% of teachers completing the survey. Assessments mandated and developed at the campus level were reported used by 15% of the teachers, along with optional assessments developed by the state (14%) or district (15%).

Even without formal systems in place, stakeholders presented evidence in interviews that data are being used at the campus level. Auditors explored these avenues to determine the extent of data use and the degree of consistency present in that use. In **Exhibit 4.2.8,** teachers (70%) expressed that "assessments I created myself" are the most commonly used, followed by "mandated (38%) state-developed" assessments. Teachers in kindergarten use data from *mCLASS* and teachers in grades 1-8, English I, and Algebra use data from *NWEA MAP* for English language arts/reading and math. These data are used as benchmarks to assess student learning three times a year against nationally normed criteria. A bank of assessment questions is available for core subjects that are assessed through the state-mandated assessment *STAAR*. Further, the potential exists for the development of additional assessments for other subjects using the Eduphoria assessment system.

Auditors use the Curriculum Management Improvement Model (CMIM) rubric provided in the following exhibit to rate the presence of minimum basic components of formative assessment in a school system. Auditors rate each of the five criteria, with three points being the highest rating for each. With a maximum rating of 15 points, a district must receive a rating of at least 12 points for formative assessment to be considered adequate. Since none of the criteria were fully met, the exhibit shows the five criteria without ratings, and the explanations for each criterion follow.

Exhibit 4.2.9: Formative Assessment Analysis Frame 1: Minimal Components

1. Formal formative student assessments for all curriculum standards/objectives are available for teacher use in determining students' initial acquisition of content	
0	No district formative student assessments to determine initial acquisition of learning are in place for any of the curriculum standards.
1	Formative assessments to determine students' initial acquisition of learning are in place for some of the curriculum, including at least two or three academic core areas at a minimum of six grade levels.
2	Formative student assessments to determine initial acquisition of learning are in place for all required core academic courses (mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies) in grades 2-12.
3	Formative assessments are in place to determine students' initial acquisition of learning for all required and elective subject areas and all grades/courses.
2. Informal formative assessments are available for all appropriate course/grade standards/objectives for teachers to use prior to teaching a standard to determine if students possess necessary prerequisites (the concepts, knowledge, and skills that are required before students can successfully master the intended standard or objective)	
0	No district formative student assessments to determine whether prerequisite knowledge of learning are in place for any of the curriculum standards.

1	Formative student assessments to determine student prerequisite knowledge of learning are in place for some of the curriculum, including at least two or three academic core areas, at a minimum of six grade levels.
2	Formative student assessments to determine student prerequisite knowledge of learning are in place for all required core academic courses (mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies) in grades 2-12.
3	Formative student assessments to determine student prerequisite knowledge of learning are in place for all required and elective subject areas and all grades/courses.
3. Informal formative assessments for all standards/objectives are in place for teachers to use prior to teaching a standard to determine prior student mastery	
0	No district formative student assessments to determine students' prior mastery of learning are in place for any of the curriculum standards.
1	Formative student assessments to determine prior mastery of learning are in place for some of the curriculum, including at least two or three academic core areas at a minimum of six grade levels.
2	Formative student assessments to determine students' prior mastery of learning are in place for all required core academic courses (mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies) in grades 2-12.
3	Formative student assessments to determine students' prior mastery of learning are in place for all required and elective subject areas and all grades/courses.
4. Pools of informal student assessment items for all curriculum standards/objectives are available for teachers to use during their ongoing instruction to diagnose students' current status of learning—both initial acquisition and sustained mastery	
0	No district item pools for informal district formative student assessments are available for teachers' use as part of their ongoing instruction around the standards.
1	Item pools for informal formative student assessments are available to determine student learning for some of the curriculum, including at least two or three academic core areas at a minimum of six grade levels.
2	Item pools for informal formative student assessments are available to determine student learning for all required core academic courses (mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies) in grades 2-12.
3	A variety of informal formative student assessments are available to determine student learning for all required and elective subject areas and all grades/courses.
5. Formative student assessments are treated as diagnostic tools rather than summative tools	
0	Formative student assessments are generally seen as summative in nature, or the distinction between the two is not reflected in their use.
1	Some formative student assessments are used appropriately, but most are seen and/or used as summative instruments. Grades are often assigned for scores.
2	Many formative student assessments are being used appropriately, but there is some use of the assessments in a summative way. In some cases, grades are assigned for scores.
3	Formative student assessments are generally used appropriately as diagnostic tools. No grades are given on the assessments; rather, teachers use the information from these assessments to guide their instructional decisions regarding each student's needs.
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Criterion One: Formal Formative Assessments for Initial Acquisition of Learning

The audit expectation for this criterion is that formal formative assessments are in place to determine students' initial acquisition of learning for each objective in all required and elective courses at all grade

levels. Such assessments for all curriculum standards/objectives are administered after adequate opportunity has been provided to learn and practice initial acquisition of an objective. These assessments are only considered formative if they are used for diagnostic purposes to determine if further reteaching is needed and/or if the need exists for future distributed practice to reinforce mastery. The district uses *mCLASS* for kindergarten, and *NWEA MAP* for English language arts/reading and math in grades 1-8, English I, and Algebra as a beginning, middle, and end of year benchmark. *NWEA MAP* is not available for all grades levels, nor is there evidence that the assessments are aligned with each objective for every subject of the taught curriculum.

Criterion Two: Informal Formative Assessment to Determine Prerequisite Knowledge

This criterion sets the expectation that at all grade levels and for all courses, the system possesses informal formative assessments for all appropriate standards/objectives, enabling teachers to determine if students have mastered prerequisite concepts, knowledge, and skills required before they can successfully master the intended standards/objectives of the course. These are considered informal assessments because the system provides the assessments for teachers to use as needed to guide instruction. Although the expectation is that tightly-held assessments for prerequisite knowledge are provided at the district level, the auditors found no evidence of assessments for determining prerequisite knowledge.

Criterion Three: Informal Formative Assessments to Determine Prior Mastery of Learning

The audit expectation is that formative student assessments to determine students' prior mastery of learning are in place for all required and elective courses at all grade levels. These assessments provided by the district for teachers' to use are critical for determining when differentiation of instruction is needed. Auditors did not find evidence of any informal assessment at any grade level with pre-tests and post-tests.

Criterion Four: Informal Formative Assessments Items for Use During Ongoing Instruction

This audit expectation refers to the presence of pools of informal student assessment items for all curriculum standards/objectives. The expectation is that these are available for teacher use during ongoing instruction. Informal assessments using these items are intended to assist teachers in diagnosing the current state of learning by assessing individual student performance on the way to sustained mastery of given knowledge and skills. It should be noted that these are informal assessments since the system provides the assessment items or questions for teachers to use in creating an assessment to guide instruction. An example would be a data management system with pools of questions from an item bank, previously vetted for alignment, for teachers to use when creating a short, formative assessment to check for learning. Auditors learned that Lake Travis ISD has Eduphoria, an assessment system that provides informal assessment items that teachers may use. Assessments are not tightly-held at the district level, nor consistently used by teachers, nor are they available for all subjects.

Criterion Five: Formative Student Assessments for Use as Diagnostic Tools

The audit expectation is that student assessment tools provide diagnostic information system-wide and at all grade levels. In Lake Travis ISD, district data are provided for diagnostic use only from *mCLASS* in kindergarten, and *NWEA MAP* for English language arts/reading and math in grades 1-8, English I, and Algebra. These data, as stated earlier, are used as a form of benchmark tool at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year.

In summary, auditors found the scope of assessment (11%) in Lake Travis ISD to be inadequate to evaluate the taught curriculum when viewed across all grade levels and courses for English language arts/reading, mathematics, science, social studies, and non-core courses. In Lake Travis ISD, the scope of assessment is

limited to *NWEA MAP* for reading (1 -8 and English I) and math (1-8 and Algebra), and the State of Texas Assessment for Academic Readiness *BOY* assessment, interim assessment and summative assessment. *STAAR* only assesses grades 3-8 in reading and math, grades 5 and 8 in science, grade 8 in social studies, English I and II, Algebra, Biology, and U.S. History.

Quality of Student Assessment

Regarding assessment, auditors typically first ask the question, "Is it there?" The follow-up question that auditors attempt to answer is, "How good is it?" Auditors found that Lake Travis ISD primarily utilizes *NWEA MAP* to benchmark student achievement for instructional grouping and intervention. Auditors were not given local assessments created by the district or campus and used at the teachers' discretion. However, when assessment items are available for a quality analysis, one way to determine assessment quality is to analyze the degree of alignment between locally developed assessments and the state standards. Auditors check for alignment in three dimensions:

- Content: the knowledge, skill, and processes tested
- Context: the format or situation in which students are asked to perform, such as multiple choice versus writing in an answer or having tools available to use
- Cognitive Type: the type of thinking required to answer the question

When items are out of alignment in the content dimension, students may answer an item correctly without actually knowing the facts or skills required in the learning standard. In content alignment but not cognitive alignment, students can answer a question successfully by demonstrating their knowledge or comprehension of a certain event or skill; however, they may be unable to answer a question asked at the cognitive level of the learning standard.

Context alignment considers how students are expected to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Students can demonstrate their knowledge in numerous contexts at the classroom level, such as quizzes and tests, writing assignments, projects, and lab activities. However, when considering assessments, the contexts are typically limited to various types of assessment items such as multiple-choice, fill in the blank, short answer, grid-response, and composition. For local assessments to provide reliable information that helps students with meaningful preparation for state assessments, students must have opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in ways that are consistent with what they will be expected to do on the state assessments. Creating assessments that align with the state assessment is only the minimum requirement. Formal assessments in high-achieving districts such as Lake Travis ISD should also include performance assessments at a higher cognitive level or context than students will encounter on standardized tests.

Use of Assessment Data

High performing districts have leaders who are intentional in their efforts to generate quality data and who develop a broad-based culture of data literacy among all staff to make data-informed decisions. The systematic use of student assessment and program evaluation is necessary for district leaders to improve the curriculum, instruction, programs, and services. In effective school districts, the student assessment process is ongoing, programmatic, and systemic. Administrators and teachers demonstrate a clear understanding of how students are assessed on required testing instruments. Further, administrators and teachers know how to analyze trends in the instructional program and identify and address areas of strength and weakness by classroom, groups of students, and individual students. School leaders

and teachers make frequent use of assessment data to design classroom instruction to improve student achievement and conduct program evaluations based on predetermined goals. The use of various forms of formative and summative data is critical for making sound decisions about program implementation, continuation or expansion, modification, or termination of such programs and interventions. Generating quality data and using it effectively depends on having a comprehensive assessment plan with a scope of assessment that includes core and non-core courses as discussed earlier in this finding.

To determine the extent of data use in Lake Travis Independent School District, auditors reviewed board policies, job descriptions, and other documents provided by the district regarding the presence of data-driven processes.

Overall, auditors found that although there is a general expectation for data use and initial work has begun to implement a district-wide process for data use, systematic processes are not in place for analyzing and utilizing data to inform instruction at the district or campus level to achieve desired impacts to student learning and performance (see also **Finding 1.2**).

Auditors expected to find policy establishing the value for use of data as a prerequisite for strategic decisions; however, policies that would provide the district with the necessary guidance related to use of assessment were missing critical components (see **Finding 1.1**).

Auditors reviewed job descriptions expecting to find explicitly outlined accountability measures related to the use of assessment data. Auditors found no reference to the use of data for informing others of student progress or tracking progress on student performance in the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction or in the Director of Curriculum job descriptions. The Director of Accountability and Achievement is responsible for "providing analysis and interpretation of data for the District and comparison districts to assist district administrators in evaluating district performance," and the Director of Special Services is to "ensure student progress is evaluated on a regular, systematic basis, and the findings are used to make special education programs more effective." Instructional coaches are asked to "assist individual teachers and teams of teachers with analyzing multiple sources of data, including student work to reflect on student growth and determine appropriate instruction." Teacher job descriptions have the expectation to "assess the accomplishments of students on a regular basis through formal and informal testing and provide progress reports as required." Instructional Specialist job descriptions address the monitoring and assessing of students as required by specific programs in which they serve students. The elementary and high school principal job descriptions set the expectation for the principal to "develop, maintain, and use appropriate information systems and records necessary for attainment of campus performance objectives addressing each academic excellence indicator." Job descriptions for associate principal and assistant principal at the high school set the expectation for the associate or assistant principal at the high school to "assist the principal in developing, maintaining, and using appropriate information systems and records necessary for attainment of campus performance objectives addressing each academic excellence indicator." No job description for assistant principal was found at elementary level.

The District Improvement Plan's third goal states that the district will "provide best in class education." To achieve this goal, the plan states, "regular assessments of students will indicate that all learning needs are properly identified, supported, and included to maximize graduation rates and minimize dropouts." Strategy 1 further outlines how the district plans to achieve their third goal by expecting that "students will be assessed regularly throughout the year including state assessments, *MAP* (*Measures of Academic Progress*) interim assessments, and both classroom formal and informal assessments in order to create interventions to support struggling students." The fourth goal of the District Improvement Plan is "grow

and innovate together." The performance objective supporting this goal states that district and campus staff will "regularly analyze data, including attendance, student achievement measures, and budgets to make decisions to best support student achievement." The expected outcome of this strategy is student data "will be used in real time to make adjustment to classroom instruction." However, what auditors did not find in the plans or documents was mention of the responsibility for putting the practices of data-driven instruction in place across all levels of the district. In addition, auditors did not find a timeline or expectation that data meetings would occur at specific intervals. Professional development leading up to the implementation of data-driven discussions must be provided to all teachers, administrators, and other instructional staff participating in data discussions with the foundational knowledge of key practices of using data to drive instruction and improve student learning.

Through other communication avenues (surveys and interviews), auditors did find evidence that teachers and principals are using data, but it is inconsistent across campuses, and no evidence was provided that the district-created data-driven instruction plan or guiding questions documents were being utilized in a systematic way. This section will address the following regarding use of assessment data:

- Use of Formative Assessment Data
- Use of Summative Assessment Data
- Use of Intervention and Program Evaluation Data

Use of Formative Assessment Data

Formative data are critical for guiding instruction, enabling teachers to modify instruction in a timely manner for improved student learning. Feedback is essential to a quality curriculum management program. In effective school systems, teachers, administrators, parents, board members, and students are asking:

- Is what we are doing working?
- How can we do it better?
- Should we be doing something else?

Educators can only respond to these questions accurately by collecting, analyzing, and using data as feedback for improvement. The use of assessment data from a variety of sources is essential in determining the effects of the district's curriculum design and delivery systems on student learning. Effective assessment measures, including formative and summative assessments, student performance data, and follow-up studies, audits, and reviews, and other data sources, reflect the status of the instructional program. In effective districts, assessment data are collected and used on an ongoing basis for continuous improvement of services, programs, and instruction.

In multiple interviews, district administrators, campus administrators, and teachers were asked questions regarding the use of assessment data. Consistently, the response was that the district did not have common assessments, and there was no protocol to guide the use of data or set an expectation that data be used for instructional planning as illustrated in the following quotes:

- "No one talks about formative assessments." (Campus Administrator)
- "There is limited use of data in the district." (District Administrator)
- "It is hard in a high-performing district to have them look at data in a different way." (District Administrator)

- "We don't look at data." (Teacher)

Perceptions among teachers, campus administrators, and district administrators establish similar regard for the use of data. Although data are used at the benchmarks required by state mandates--beginning, middle, and end of year--to assess a student's need for MTSS, data are not used or consistently analyzed throughout the year to drive instructional decisions.

Another approach to look at assessments is to ascertain if data are being presented in such a way that teachers can easily use data to guide instruction. As provided in the exhibit above, auditors did not find an adequate assessment system at the district level. In the next exhibit, the Curriculum Management Improvement Model (CMIM) shows characteristics that should exist for the effective use of formative assessment information to guide student learning in practical ways that are useful to teachers as they make instructional decisions. Adequacy for this analysis requires that at least four of the five characteristics be fully present.

Exhibit 4.2.10: Characteristics of Formative Assessment Data Use for an Adequate Instructional Approach

Characteristic
1. Provides teachers with formative achievement data for the students in their class(es). Data from the prior year(s) assessments are available by student, so every teacher has data for their new students at the beginning of the year or course.
2. Identifies for the teacher the individual student's formative data for every discrete objective, his or her respective level of achievement for that objective, and where he or she is within that level for each administration of the formative assessments. Data include group or subgroup levels of achievement for a given concept/standard.
3. Presents for every objective the individual formative student achievement level within the context of the district's schedule or sequence of objectives or pacing chart.
4. Presents teachers with longitudinal data for each student, organized by class roster, and specifies the gain required to close any identified achievement gaps. This information is intended to assist teachers in moving all students to grade-level performance over the course of their education within the district.
5. Identifies formative student assessment instruments that teachers may use prior to teaching targeted concepts, knowledge, or skills to diagnose individual student mastery of those targeted objectives. These formative instruments allow teachers to determine whether students are making desired progress over time.
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Lake Travis ISD has not created *Common Curriculum-Based Assessments*. In the absence of district-created formal assessments aligned to the curriculum for all courses and grades, auditors also consider *mCLASS*, *NWEA MAP*, and *STAAR BOY* and interim assessments as sources of formal formative data. Because these assessments are not administered in all core content areas at all grade levels, comprehensive data on student knowledge and skills are not available, and no characteristic could be rated as fully met, auditors have provided explanations and clarification for the characteristics below.

Characteristic 1: Data available at the beginning of year

Having individual student data from throughout the previous year allows teachers to understand an individual student's academic strengths and weaknesses. Without this information in advance, teachers must wait until students are formally assessed to adjust curriculum or provide targeted interventions, thus losing valuable instructional time. Teachers do have access to assessment scores for their current students electronically through the student data systems (Eduphoria and Schoology). Teachers who

have students currently enrolled in their classes are able to access prior year data electronically, as well. Teachers indicated that the lack of training on the use of some assessment programs and inconsistent use of the systems hindered their ability to access data and use that data effectively. Combining the fact that the overall scope of assessment is inadequate with reports of inconsistent data, data at the beginning of the year for teachers to utilize in making instructional decisions may not provide them with the most reliable information needed to understand an individual student's areas of strength or need.

Characteristic 2: Data available by objective

Kindergarten through grade 2 are utilizing the *mClass* for all students. This assessment provides teachers with an initial screening and progress monitoring tools to determine student skill levels. The *NWEA MAP* assessment, given to students in K–8, English I, and Algebra, reports student achievement and progress in discrete skills, including their level of achievement for that skill, where the student falls within that level compared to others, and subgroup data. Although the skills in each of these assessments are incorporated into the state learning standards, the reports do not line up by objective. Courses that are assessed by the *State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness* are given the *BOY* and interim assessments created at the state level, which do provide some data by specific objectives.

Characteristic 3: Data related to objectives within context of curriculum

Auditors received no evidence based on documents, interviews, or observations that the data include a firm connection to every objective within the curriculum for a given subject. As not all subjects are assessed and without firm knowledge of the level of data analysis that currently exists among teachers, principals, and district-level instructional leaders, the depth of use of data related to objectives in the context of the curriculum cannot be determined.

Characteristic 4: Longitudinal data with growth goals

Without ongoing consistent data across all grade levels and subjects, even though some of the assessments administered provide longitudinal data, it is difficult to ascertain growth goals for all students at all grade levels.

Characteristic 5: Identified pre-teaching instruments

District leaders did not provide district-created formative assessment instruments that could be utilized prior to teaching targeted concepts for any grade level or subject.

Overall, auditors found that a systematic approach to using student assessment data to inform instruction needs additional planning, development, and training for implementation. Although the intent to use student assessment data is present, none of the five characteristics for use of formative and summative data to guide student learning were fully met. Procedural guidance is inconsistent and informal, resulting in a lack of uniform application of data. Formative assessments are not available for every subject, including electives, at each grade level.

Use of Summative Assessment Data

The auditors next considered use of summative assessment data within Lake Travis ISD. Most of the district's summative student assessment data come from state-mandated assessments. Considering the recent pandemic, summative data for the current year are available, but may not be representative of all students in Lake Travis ISD due to remote instruction. Summative data, when available, can be used formatively to assist teachers in designing appropriate instruction for individuals and groups.

The exhibit below presents the Curriculum Management Improvement Model (CMIM) characteristics for an effective approach to using summative assessment data. Auditors were not presented an assessment plan addressing the district's approach to the use of data and, therefore, did not rate these characteristics.

Exhibit 4.2.11: Characteristics of Summative Student Assessment Data Use for an Adequate Instructional Approach and Auditors' Ratings of District Approach

Characteristic
1. Provides teachers with student achievement data for each student in their class(es). Data from prior years' assessments are available by student, so every teacher has data for their new students at the beginning of the year or course.
2. Identifies for the teacher the individual student's summative data for every objective, his or her respective level of achievement for that objective, and where he or she is within that level. Data include group or subgroup levels of achievement for a given concept/standard.
3. Presents the student's summative achievement data for every objective within the context of the district's sequence of objectives or pacing chart.
4. Presents teachers with longitudinal data for each student, organized by class roster, and specifies the gain required to close any identified achievement gaps. This information is intended to assist teachers in moving each student to grade-level performance over the course of their education within the district.
5. Identifies formative student assessment instruments that teachers may use prior to teaching targeted concepts, knowledge, or skills to diagnose individual student mastery of those targeted objectives based on summative achievement data from one or more years. This allows teachers to determine whether students are making desired progress over time.
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Although auditors found evidence of some aspects of these characteristics of summative data, they were unable to rate any single characteristic as adequate. Auditors' findings regarding each characteristic are discussed here.

Characteristic 1: Prior year's data for every student

To receive credit for this characteristic, teachers must receive student achievement data for each student in their classes in time for the beginning of the school year. In Lake Travis ISD not all core content courses are assessed at every grade level (see **Exhibit 4.1.8**). Consequently, at some grade levels and in some core courses, summative assessment data are not available.

Characteristic 2: Individual student data by objective

To be deemed adequate, each teacher must have individual students' summative data for every objective, his or her respective level of achievement for that objective, and a clear indication of where he or she is within that level. Data must include group or subgroup levels of achievement for a given concept/standard. The district did not present evidence of the existence of data for every objective and every subgroup or demographic.

Characteristic 3: Summative data related to pacing chart

Like other districts in Texas and across the nation, Lake Travis ISD offered remote instruction during the 2020-21 school year due to the pandemic. Summative data from the prior year may not be available for every objective within the context of a sequence objectives or pacing chart. The auditors were not provided with any other type of summative assessment aligned to district curriculum documents and pacing charts.

Characteristic 4: Longitudinal data for closing the achievement gap

Teachers must have longitudinal data for each student, organized by class roster, with gains specified to close achievement gaps to receive credit for this characteristic. This information is intended to assist teachers in moving each student to grade-level performance over the course of their education within the district. Auditors were not provided with reports that reflected longitudinal data on student performance over time beyond *NWEA MAP* data. Evidence of end of year assessment completion was inconsistent. Further, data are not available for all subjects.

Characteristic 5: Formative assessments to support instruction

To be rated met, the district must provide or identify formative student assessment instruments for teacher use prior to teaching targeted concepts, knowledge, or skills. These assessments enable teachers to determine whether students are progressing satisfactorily over time; they are used to diagnose individual student mastery of targeted objectives based on summative achievement data from one or more years. Auditors found no district-wide preparation of data for use in this manner.

Overall, auditors were not provided with a clear process for the disaggregation and use of summative data when available. Therefore, there was limited evidence of the use of summative data for making decisions regarding the curriculum at all district levels.

Use of Intervention and Program Evaluation Data

Program evaluation is a critical component of any productive educational system, providing timely information that permits district and school leaders to identify strengths and weaknesses of supplemental interventions and programs. These data support informed decision making in identifying programs for revision or termination to enhance program effectiveness. The absence of a carefully planned and implemented program evaluation model leaves district leaders with no guidance to inform decision making concerning the effectiveness of selected programs in meeting intended objectives. When programs are not evaluated, the likelihood they will continue to be funded for reasons other than program effectiveness is increased, and ineffective programs may continue to consume valuable resources that could be allocated elsewhere to positively affect student learning.

Effective district leaders evaluate programs and rely on the data for decision making regarding program continuation, modification, or selective abandonment. Auditors found no evidence that Lake Travis ISD has a formal process of program evaluation in place. The following exhibit provides the Curriculum Management Improvement Model (CMIM) characteristics for quality program evaluation as a reference for district administrators in designing a future comprehensive program evaluation plan.

Exhibit 4.2.12: Curriculum Management Improvement Model Program Evaluation Characteristics

Characteristics of a Quality Program Evaluation Plan or Process
1. Describes board or administrative directives to have program evaluation procedures in place
2. Specifies procedures for program evaluation, including needs assessment and formative and summative evaluation methods
3. Specifies the proficiencies of persons responsible for conducting the evaluation, enhancing likelihood that findings achieve maximum credibility and acceptance
4. Expects multiple accurate and reliable measures designed to obtain quality data about the goals and objectives of the program
5. Provides for multiple measures of data collection to be used, including both quantitative and qualitative data

Characteristics of a Quality Program Evaluation Plan or Process
6. Directs ongoing formative assessments for the first two years for any new program implementation and summative evaluation at the end of the third year
7. Directs that all existing programs undergo a program evaluation at least every three years
8. Expects procedures used in the evaluation process to be clearly described
9. Specifies that program evaluation reports clearly describe the program, including its context, purposes, and procedures
10. Expects program evaluation reports to be utilized to support timely decisions regarding program effectiveness, identify both strengths and weaknesses of the program, and include findings and recommendations for continuation as is, modification, or termination
11. Directs program evaluation designs to be practical, ethical, and cost effective, and to adequately address relevant political issues
12. Expects all proposals for the initiation of new programs to include needs assessment data, a description of formative and summative evaluations, and data collection procedures
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During interviews, auditors heard comments related to the quantity of resources in Lake Travis ISD and the issue of not having program evaluations.

- "There is no formal process of program evaluation. There are a lot of things we need to work on as far as evaluating programs." (District Administrator)
- "We have a lot of variability in resources among campuses. Campus teachers still buy what they want. That is where autonomy is not a strength." (District Administrator)
- "There are so many resources teachers are using; it would be very difficult to see what is working and what isn't." (District Administrator)
- "We have tried to reign in using our own resources." (Campus Administrator)
- "Program evaluation really hasn't happened much. We started the process, but there is a lot of learning that needs to happen." (District Administrator)

The abundance of resources without expressed purpose for their use can raise concerns. These comments imply the absence of a system that ensures cost-benefit measures are in place to mitigate program needs.

In summary, the auditors did not find any documentation of processes to operate a formal evaluation of programs to provide decision-makers with information regarding intervention or program effectiveness. Consequently, decisions regarding whether to continue, modify or selectively abandon ineffective efforts are made based on popularity, opinion (of effectiveness), and/or positional authority. Further, without a robust program evaluation system in place, the district's budget planning leadership cannot consider cost-benefit data for allocation of funds toward efforts more likely to be successful in improving the learning of all students (see **Finding 5.2)**.

Trends in Student Achievement

Student assessment data enable a school system's staff to evaluate and analyze the effectiveness of the written curriculum, as well as the instructional methods and programs used to improve student achievement. District administrators, school staff, students, and parents use comparative assessment data to determine how effective the educational program provided by the school has been in educating students. Effective school systems can document achievement among all students, and test scores should

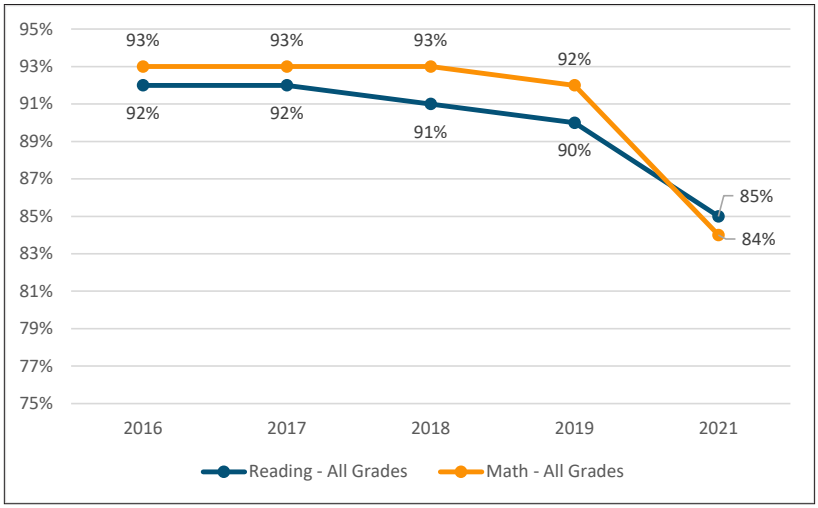
indicate a consistent pattern of improvement over time. Without such data, leaders do not have the information necessary to assess the quality and consistency of student learning, program effectiveness, and organizational performance. Additionally, leaders do not have a sound basis for decisions about the design and delivery of curriculum.

The auditors reviewed state and district policies and plans, assessment data reports, and other related documents to identify proficiency goals and student performance. Auditors also interviewed and surveyed district administrators, school administrators, and teachers.

To determine the anticipated performance of students in Lake Travis ISD and identify potential gaps in student groups, the auditors looked at performance data for three key subgroups of the student population: Economically Disadvantaged, At-Risk, and Special Education. The auditors used the *State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness* (*STAAR*) data from the last five years (without 2020 data since no tests were administered due to Covid 19) to compare these subgroups' performance to the performance of their non-identified peers in English language arts/reading and mathematics across all grade levels.

The next exhibit shows the district achievement trends on the *State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness* (*STAAR*) the past five years for all students and all grades in reading and math for the five-year period.

Exhibit 4.2.13: Five-Year Performance Trends in Reading and Math for All Students in Lake Travis ISD

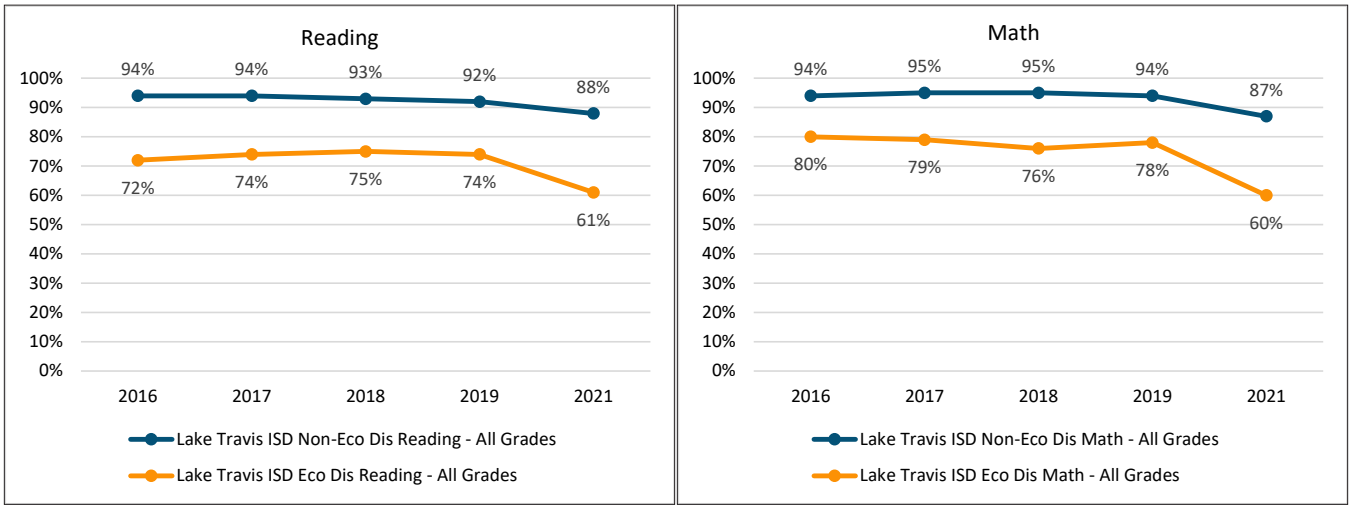


Data Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Performance Reporting System

Performance trends for all students from 2016-2021 (minus 2020) in reading and mathematics show the trajectory for all areas is slightly declining. Achievement data for mathematics remained consistent from 2016-2018; however, the achievement of all students taking the *State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness* (*STAAR*) shows a decline on the 2019 assessment. Reading, however, shows a decline in achievement for all students beginning in 2017. While the effects of Covid 19 play a role in the decline of student achievement, these declines began before the onset of the pandemic. Should this decline in student achievement continue, the district could ultimately see an impact in achievement on the *ACT/SAT*. An intentional focus on monitoring programs and curriculum through common assessments would allow teachers and district administrators to more closely monitor and predict the achievement of all students.

The following 3 exhibits compare the district achievement trends on the *State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness* (*STAAR*) of the economically disadvantaged, at-risk students, and special education students to their non-identified peers for all students at all grade levels in reading and math for the five-year period.

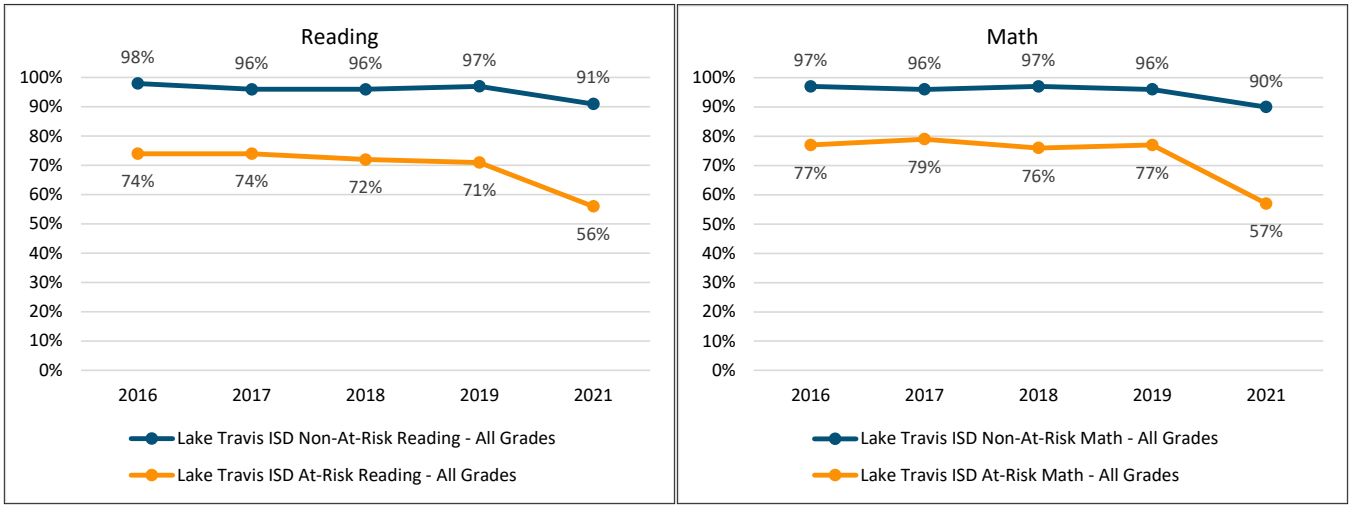
Exhibit 4.2.14: Five-Year Student Performance Trends in Reading and Mathematics for Economically Disadvantaged and Non-Economically Disadvantaged Students



Data Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Performance Reporting System

A relatively stagnant or declining student performance over time is indicated from the trend lines shown above. While non-economically disadvantaged students are significantly outperforming their economically disadvantaged peers, neither group of students has shown a consistent upward trend in student performance over the last five years. Although both groups of students are experiencing a decline in achievement, the decline of the economically disadvantaged students is more significant in both reading and math.

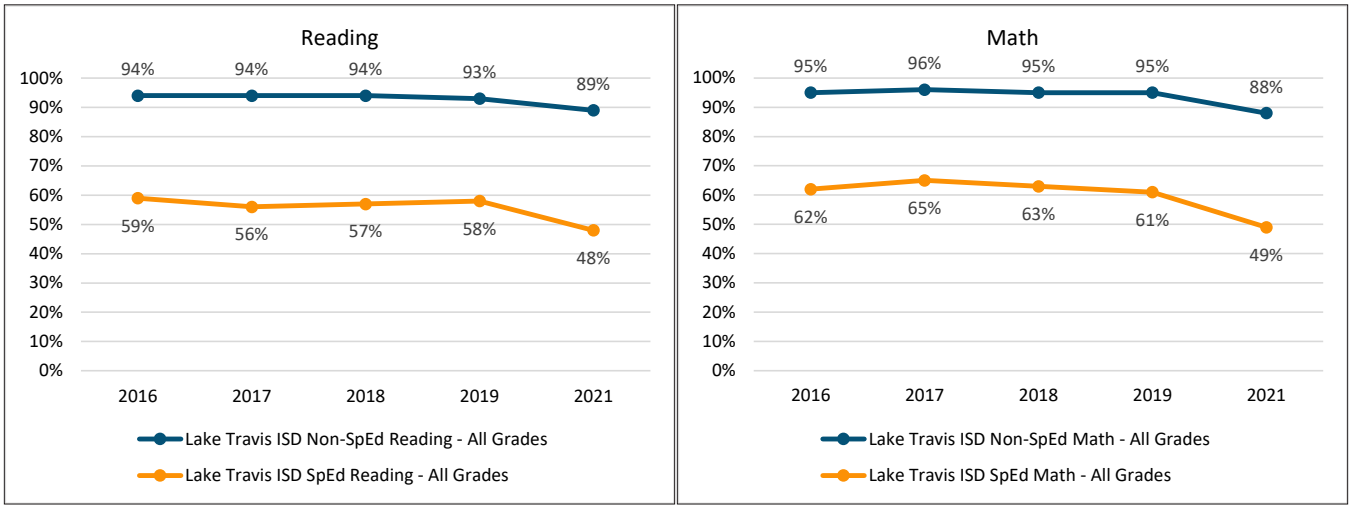
Exhibit 4.2.15: Five-Year Student Performance Trends in Reading and Mathematics for At-Risk and Non-At-Risk Students



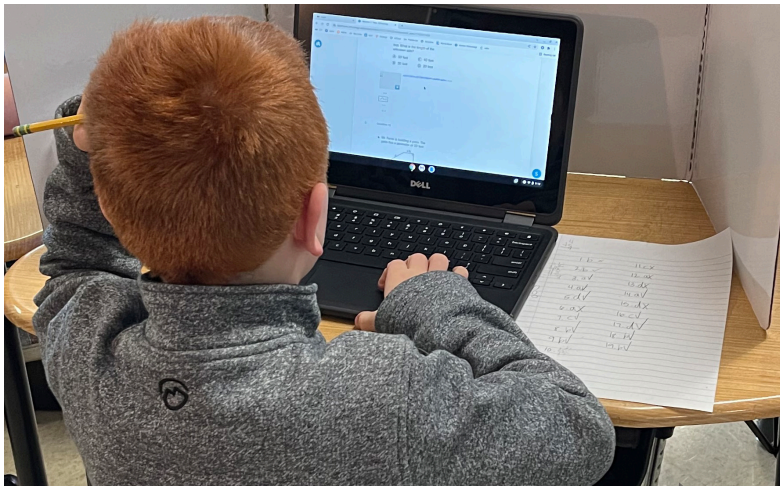
Data Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Performance Reporting System

Performance trends for at-risk and non-at-risk students from 2016-2019 in reading and mathematics show the trajectory is stagnant for both student peer groups. While the trajectory in both reading and mathematics declines in 2021 for both peer groups, at-risk students experience a more significant decline than non-at-risk students and most notably in mathematics. This trend could likely extend the gap between the student peer groups and perpetuate the decline in reading and mathematics for students if there is not an increased focus on formal monitoring of student achievement.

Exhibit 4.2.16: Five-Year Student Performance Trends in Reading and Mathematics for Special Education and Non-Special Education Students



Data Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Performance Reporting System



West Cypress Elementary Third Grade Student Using Go Math for an Assessment

The most significant gap between a subgroup of identified students and their non-identified peers is that of special education students and non-special education students in reading and mathematics. Again, over the last five years, the achievement of these student peer groups has remained stagnant until the Covid 19 pandemic. In 2021, special education students experienced a sharper decline in achievement than non-special education students in both reading and mathematics. With the significant decline of the special education students, the gap between them and their non-identified peers increases. This gap likely will increase if targeted instruction and interventions are not purposefully planned and implemented to reverse the performance trend.

Summary

Lake Travis ISD relies heavily on *mCLASS*, *NWEA MAP*, and state-mandated testing as its formal testing program.

The scope of district assessments is inadequate to guide instructional decision making to positively impact the design of the curriculum and delivery for performance outcomes aimed at increasing overall student performance. Tightly-held assessments aligned to curriculum documents and administered to all students in all courses taught are not evident. Lake Travis ISD relies heavily on *mCLASS*, *NWEA MAP*, and state-mandated testing as its formal testing program.

Further, district leaders have not implemented a formal process to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-benefit of district programs for decision making regarding their continuation, modification, or selective abandonment. A formal process for the use of valuable student assessment data and a program evaluation system are needed to inform decision making in Lake Travis ISD (see **Recommendation 4**).

FOCUS AREA FIVE: The School District Has Improved Productivity.

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

What Auditors Expected to Find in Lake Travis ISD:

Focus Area Five: Productivity

Under Focus Area Five, auditors examine the degree to which school systems are equipped to attain goals and improve the delivery of the educational program and services while maintaining (or decreasing) current resources. The attainment of improved productivity in a school is a complex process dependent on the balance of tightly-held organizational structure and expectations system-wide, with flexibility at individual schools.

Common indicators

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

Overview of What Auditors Found in Lake Travis ISD:

This section is an overview of the findings that follow in the area of **Focus Area Five**. Details follow within the findings.

Auditors visited 269 classrooms and found limited use of technology when analyzed under the guide of the SAMR Model. Teachers typically used technology as a substitute for things they could do without technology such as an overhead projector to display notes. Auditors noted students used technology less frequently than teachers, but when auditors did see students using technology, it was typically more active than teacher use of technology. There is no overall technology plan guiding district leaders as the last plan has expired. Technology would likely be utilized more efficiently to increase productivity if monitored through the effective use of a technology plan.

Budgeting procedures do not formally require consideration of connections between program effectiveness or cost-benefit data and allocation of resources, competition between and among budget requests, or rank-ordering (prioritizing) requests—all strategies to promote increased financial productivity. Key internal stakeholders (teachers and principals) do not have meaningful input in establishing budget priorities.

Finding 5.1: District leaders do not have a current technology plan in place that will guide technology functions of the district and improve productivity.

Effective use of technology is a critical component of a student's education as society nears the end of the Covid 19 pandemic. District leaders throughout the country found themselves seeking resources to implement 1:1 programs in their districts during the pandemic. In addition, learning can be enhanced through the appropriate integration of technology in classroom instruction throughout the district. Technology also serves important roles in business and management functions of the school system. Appropriately funding and directing the use and integration of technology throughout the school district can be essential to effective management and control of district resources. Failure to plan for and utilize available technologies to their fullest extent limits the ability of school system leaders to achieve the goals relative to technology availability, use, and integration. Technology productivity is measured through processes including cost-benefit analyses of software and hardware programs and overall program evaluations.

To determine the quality of the technology program in the Lake Travis Independent School District, auditors visited all campuses and a total of 269 classrooms to observe, in part, the use of technology. Auditors interviewed board members, district administrators, building principals, and used online surveys directed to administrators, teachers, and parents. Auditors analyzed school board policies, job descriptions, campus planning documents, and the *Lake Travis ISD Technology Plan 2017-2018*. Board policies and regulations offer limited guidance on expectations for the implementation and use of technology.

Overall, auditors found most teachers using some sort of technology, but in a passive manner. Auditors observed students using technology less frequently than teachers, but in a more active way. District leaders presented no processes for cost-benefit analyses of technology hardware or software to monitor productivity.

Auditors measured the 2018 planning document, along with any policies and job descriptions, against 15 Curriculum Management Improvement Model (CMIM) criteria for instructional technology programs. The criteria and auditors' assessment of adequacy are presented in the exhibit below. To be considered adequate, 70% (11 out of 15) of the quality criteria must be determined to be met.

Exhibit 5.1.1: CMSi Criteria for Instructional Technology Programs

Criteria	Auditors' Rating
1. Board policy or administrative regulation for instructional technology exists.	
2. There is a clear statement of program philosophy/vision.	
3. A comprehensive view of technology exists.	P*
4. A needs assessment has been completed and evaluated.	P*
5. Measurable student goals and objectives exist.	
6. An ongoing student assessment component exists.	
7. An ongoing program assessment component exists.	
8. There are comprehensive staff trainings related to existing standards and objectives.	P*
9. Standards for hardware exist.	
10. Standards and guidelines for software/applications exist.	
11. Internet access standards exist.	
12. The role of the school library/media center is stated.	
13. A budget for program implementation/roll-out has been identified.	P*

Criteria	Auditors' Rating
14. A budget for program maintenance has been identified.	
15. Technology site plans are aligned with district plans.	P*
Total Met	**0/15**
Percentage Met	**0%**
Key: X = Met, P = Partially Met, Blank = Not Met	
*Partial ratings are counted as not met when determining overall percentage of adequacy.	
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As illustrated in the exhibit, auditors rated 0/15 criteria (0%) as met. In order for a technology plan to be considered adequate, 70% of the criteria need to be met. Auditors' comments are noted for each criterion.

Criterion 1: Board policy or administrative regulation for instructional technology

Adequate board policy establishes the expectations for use of technology by all school personnel. When board policy addresses technology, it concerns technology use or security. No policies address a technology program or establish expectations for either teacher or student use. Auditors rated this criterion as not met.

Criterion 2: Clear statement of program philosophy/vision

A clear statement of the program philosophy or vision can guide decision making concerning technology as it will prompt leaders to ask how certain actions can support the philosophy or bring about the vision stated. The *Lake Travis ISD Technology Plan 2017-2018* does not provide any clear statement of program philosophy or vision. Auditors rated this criterion as not met.

Criterion 3: Comprehensive view of technology

A comprehensive view of technology is necessary for district personnel to understand technology status at any point in time and to adequately plan budgetary items concerning technology. While auditors found no policy or administrative regulation requiring a comprehensive view of technology, the plan presented did convey a view of technology by campus concerning devices. Because the plan preceded the Covid 19 pandemic and a complete transition to a 1:1 environment, auditors rated this criterion as partially met due to the fact there is a comprehensive view of technology, although outdated.

Criterion 4: Needs assessment

After district leaders and/or the technology team have a clear view of available technology, a needs assessment will allow reasoning to request any future expenditures regarding the acquisition of new or replacement of old technology. Like Criterion 3, auditors noted a needs assessment within the 2017-18 plan, but the Covid 19 pandemic, which occurred after the plan expired, warrants an updated needs assessment. Auditors rated this criterion as partially met due to the fact there is an approach to a needs assessment, although outdated.

Criterion 5: Measurable student goals and objectives

Establishing student goals for the technology program allows district leaders to quickly organize data to determine program effectiveness. While these student goals may take on many forms, they must contain quantitative metrics that can be gathered on an annual basis at a minimum. Auditors did not find any measurable student goals or objectives in the 2018 technology plan. Auditors rated this criterion as not met.

Criterion 6: Ongoing student assessment

Closely attached to Criterion 5 is an ongoing student assessment program that gauges the attainment of student goals and objectives. This ongoing assessment program can be done annually or more frequently as needed. Auditors did not find any ongoing student assessment program within the 2018 technology plan. Auditors rated this criterion as not met.

Criterion 7: Ongoing program assessment

Similar to data used for student assessment, the same or similar data can also be used to understand an overall program assessment of the technology or other program. The 2018 technology plan did not contain information relating to an ongoing program assessment. Auditors rated this criterion as not met.

Criterion 8: Comprehensive staff trainings related to existing standards and objectives

Professional development for faculty and staff regarding use of technology is necessary to achieve the most efficiency for dollars spent. Staff may need required training in the use of programs, while faculty may need training in the use of programs to enhance instruction. Auditors analyzed the 2018 technology plan for professional training and noted the use of training for staff and faculty, specifically new faculty to LTISD. There is also training for technology staff specifically. In fact, the first goal of the technology plan addresses the need for staff development. Due to the fact this plan is outdated, auditors rated this criterion as only partially met.

Criterion 9: Hardware standards

Hardware standards are minimum requirements for hardware use. These standards address the minimum requirements to meet the intended purpose of hardware. The 2018 plan states hardware and equipment specifications are in place within district policies and guidelines/expectations, but they are not part of the plan. Nonetheless, the plan is outdated. Auditors rated this criterion as not met.

Criterion 10: Software standards

While the 2018 plan mentioned some software programs used within LTISD, no standards were noted in the plan. Auditors rated this criterion as not met.

Criterion 11: Internet access standards

Even though the 2018 plan addresses internet connections, no mention is made of internet access standards in the plan. Auditors rated this criterion as not met.

Criterion 12: Role of school library/media center

A library media specialist can offer a wide range of support for technology in the classroom and for teachers by providing sources of instruction and enhancing the use of technology. There is no mention of a library media specialist in the 2018 plan, nor does the job description for librarians included on their district website make any mention of technology support other than book databases. In addition, auditors found that district technologists, job descriptions and the organizational chart show them to be technicians without responsibilities to provide support for teachers in using technology to enhance classroom instruction. Auditors rated this criterion as not met.

Criterion 13: Program implementation/roll-out budget

An initial program budget and sources of expenditures allow all involved in technology to understand and budget properly for dollars to be spent. The 2018 plan provides an initial budget for the technology plan, but due to the fact the plan is outdated, auditors rated this criterion as partially met.

Criterion 14: Program maintenance budget

The program maintenance budget is in addition to the program implementation budget once all parts of the technology plan are rolled out and put in use. The 2018 plan does not provide a program maintenance budget. Taken in consideration with **Characteristic 13**, auditors found there is no formal cost-benefit analyses utilized to ensure teachers and students are using hardware and software to realize maximum productivity. Exhibits in the remaining portion of this finding indicate both teachers and students are utilizing technology at minimum levels. Auditors rated this criterion as not met.

Criterion 15: Site/district plan alignment

Alignment of planning efforts throughout the district affords leaders guidance to organize and follow intended purposes of activities as they work to make plans come to fruition. An effective technology plan is in alignment with site and district plans. While auditors found mention of technology in the site and district plans, due to the fact the technology plan is outdated, auditors rated this criterion as partially met.

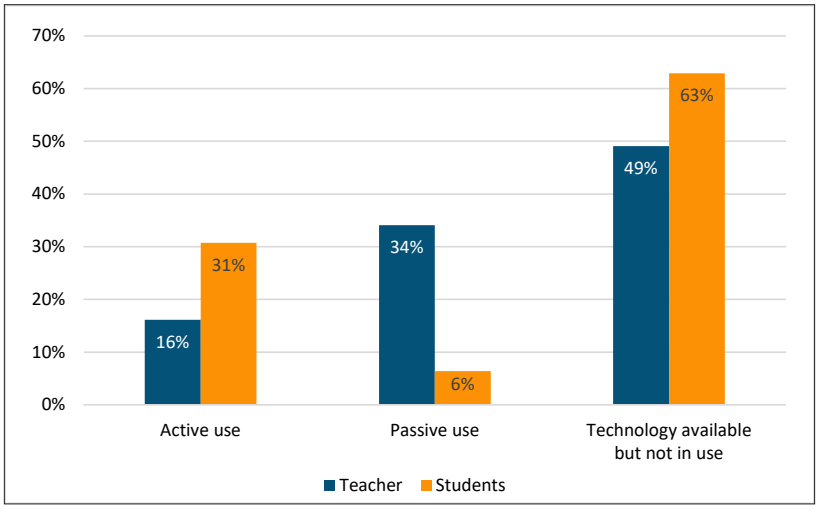
In visits to 269 classrooms on all campuses in the Lake Travis Independent School District Auditors noted the use of technology by both teachers and students as part of their 3-5 minute observations. Auditors realize not all courses or activities lend themselves to the use of technology, but still note the use of technology to help district and campus leaders better understand how technology is being used. Auditors first noted if teachers and students were using technology and if they were using it actively or passively. This exhibit displays the definitions used by auditors to denote active and passive use by teachers and students.

Exhibit 5.1.2: Definitions of Technology Usage

	Active Use	Passive Use
Teacher	Teachers modeling, engaging with students, and using technology as a teaching tool.	Teachers providing directions and/or non-instructional information.
Student	Students researching, creating a presentation, or interacting with technology for learning.	Students using computer-assisted instruction (designed to be used for rote learning).

The next exhibit displays totals related to active and passive use of technology in the 269 classrooms visited.

Exhibit 5.1.3: Active/Passive Use of Technology



As illustrated in the exhibit, auditors noted 49% of the teachers did not use technology in classrooms. Of all teachers observed, slightly more than one-third (34%) used technology passively, while auditors noted 16% actively using technology. On the other hand, auditors noted almost two-thirds (63%) of students not using technology, but inversely related to teachers, most students seen using technology did so actively (31%) compared to only 6% using it passively.

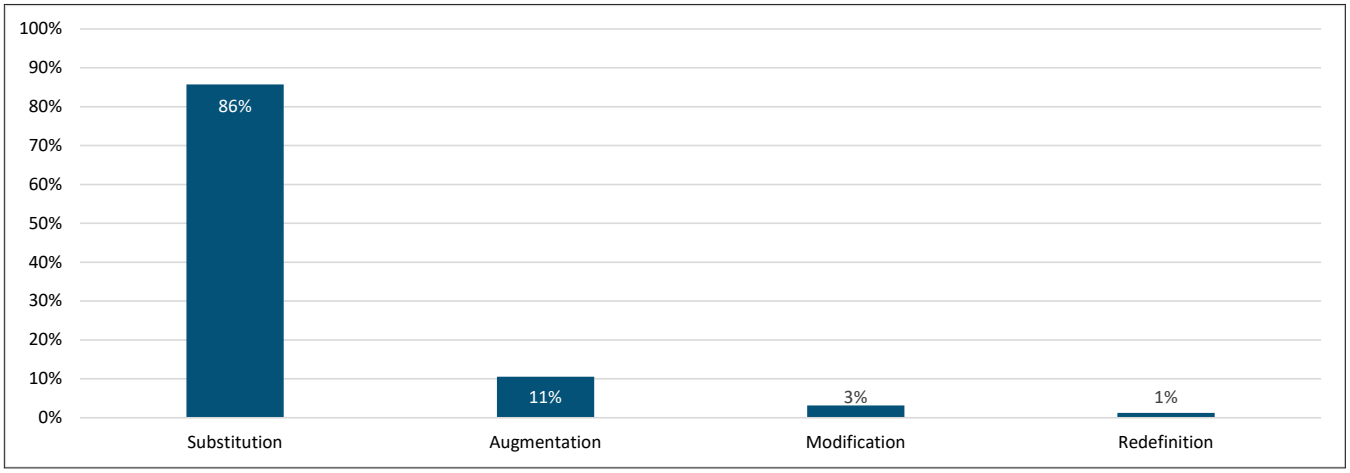
When auditors noted teachers using technology, they indicated the level of use based on the SAMR Model. The table shown below displays the definitions of the four levels used in the SAMR Model.

Exhibit 5.1.4: Level Definitions of SAMR Model Used by Auditors

Level	Definition
Substitution	Direct tool substitute without modifications. Examples include using note-taking app to draft a document, using a writing instrument to write on a whiteboard while moving around the room, using the overhead projector as a tv, showing a PowerPoint, or displaying notes or directions to students.
Augmentation	Task has not changed, but it is slightly enhanced. Examples include using tools like thesaurus, dictionary, or speak mode to augment a classroom task.
Modification	Redesign new parts of the task and transform student learning. Examples include student collaboration on a Google document and using comments to give feedback.
Redefinition	Doing something inconceivable without technology. Examples include students connecting to classrooms across the world to write a narrative of a historical event, using chat and comments section to discuss differences in real-time, or creating a documentary.

The exhibit below displays the auditors' indication of level of use by teachers using the SAMR Model in all classrooms where they witnessed teachers using technology.

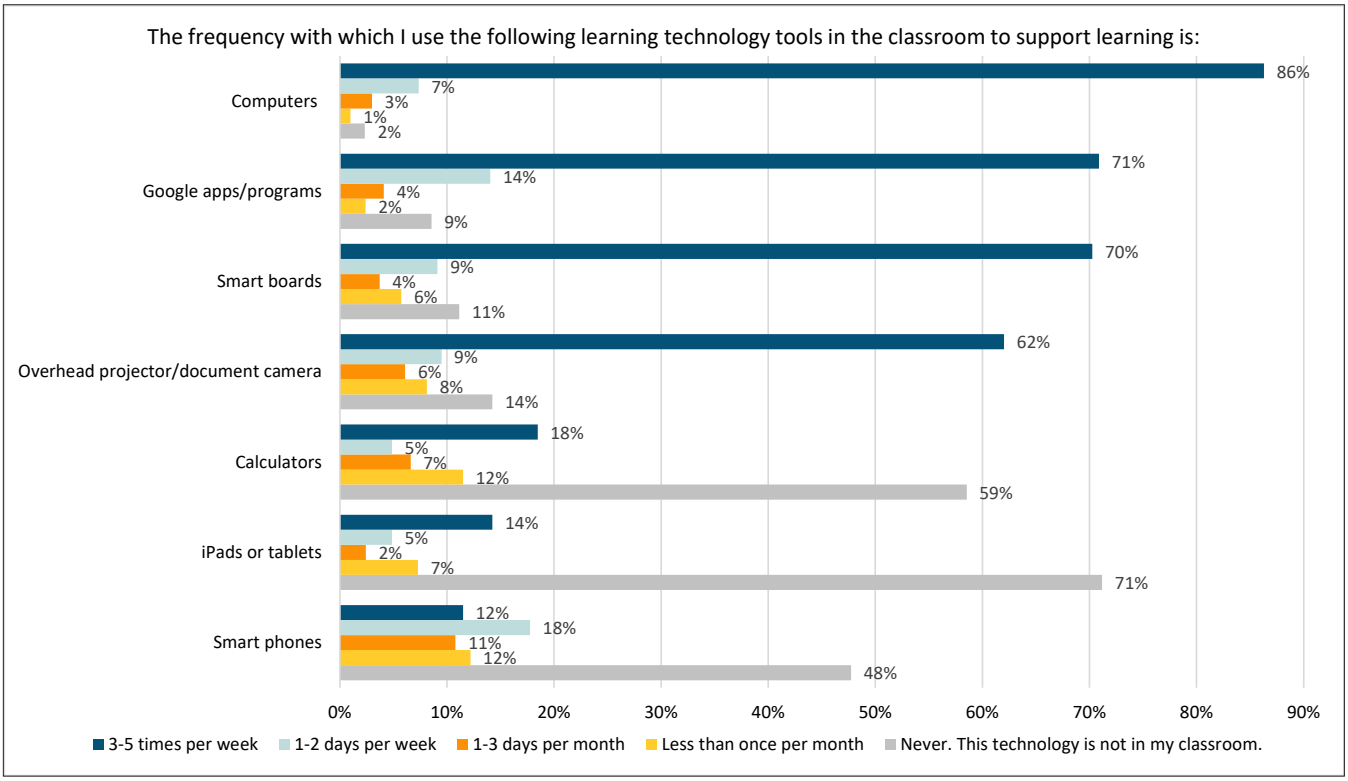
Exhibit 5.1.5: Levels of SAMR Model Observed



As illustrated in the exhibit, auditors rated 86% of the technology used by teachers at the substitution level. As indicated in **Exhibit 5.1.6**, most of these observations included teachers using computers and overhead projectors to display notes and/or announcements. Auditors rated an additional 11% at the augmentation level of use with the remaining 4% at the modification and redefinition levels.

In online surveys, auditors asked teachers the frequency with which they used certain types of technology in their classrooms. The following exhibit displays the results.

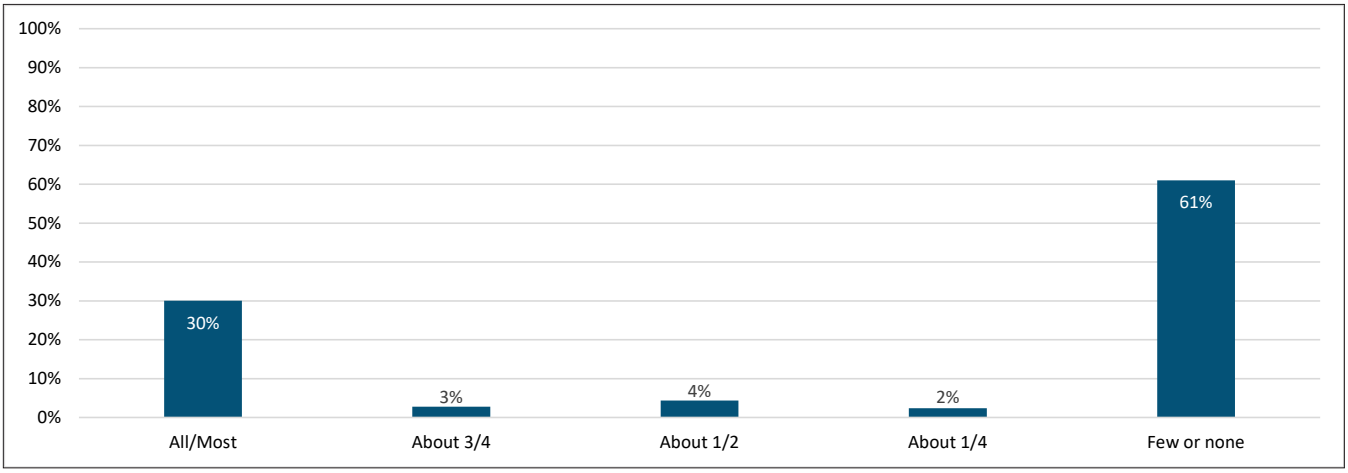
Exhibit 5.1.6: Teacher Survey Response Concerning Technology Used



As illustrated in the exhibit above, 86% of teachers responded that the most frequently used type of technology is computers, such as laptops or desktops, and they used this technology 3 to 5 times per week. Other items of noted use, 3 to 5 times per week, included Google apps/programs (71%), Smart boards (70%), and/or overhead projectors or document cameras (62%). These figures coincide with what auditors noted as passive use at the substitution levels in **Exhibits 5.1.3** and **5.1.5**.

Auditors noted approximately how many students they observed using technology in each classroom visited. The following exhibit displays the results.

Exhibit 5.1.7: Percentage of Students Using Technology

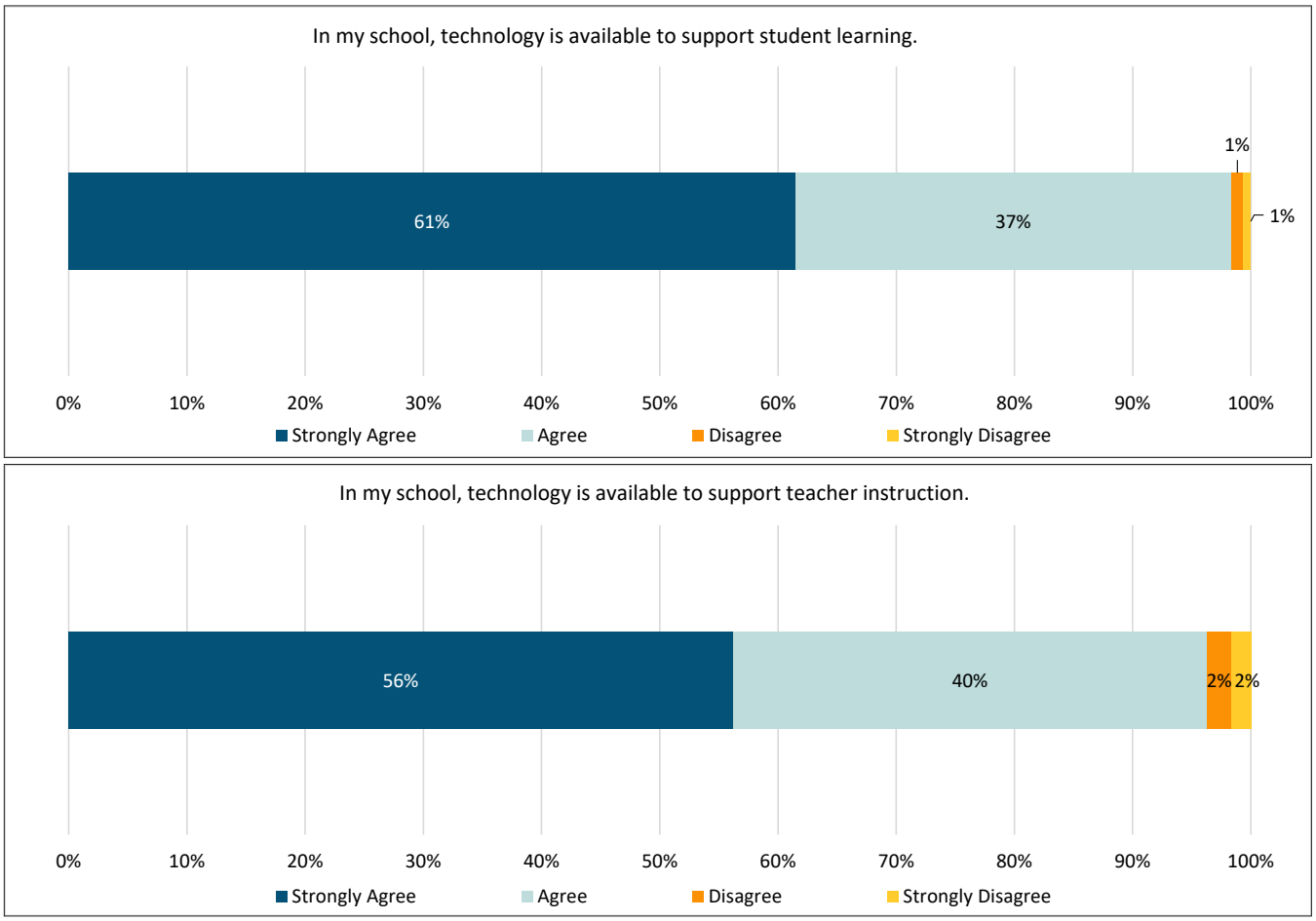


As illustrated in this exhibit, when auditors noted students using technology of some type, in almost one-third (30%) of the classrooms they saw all or most students using technology. In a total of 61% of the

classrooms visited, they saw few or no students using technology. The remaining 9% had various amounts of students using technology. This is similar to **Exhibit 5.1.3** when auditors noted 31% of classrooms had students actively using technology. To summarize, if auditors observed teachers using some form of technology, they usually noted passive use; when they saw students using technology, they noted mostly active use.

In online surveys to administrators, auditors asked questions concerning availability of technology to support both student learning and teacher instruction. The next exhibit displays the responses from administrators concerning these questions.

Exhibit 5.1.8: Administrator Survey Response Concerning Technology Availability



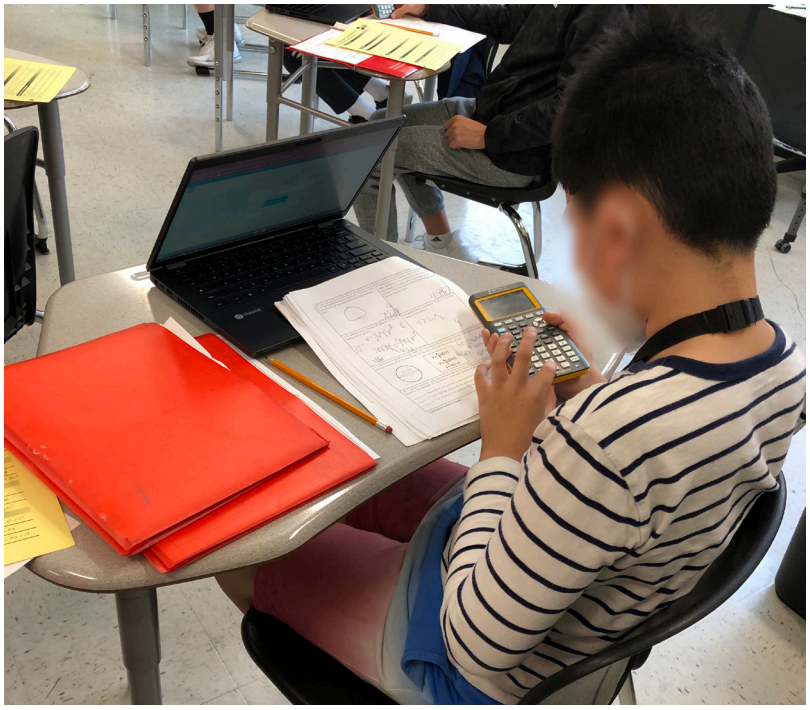
As illustrated in the two charts in the exhibit, both questions resulted in overwhelming agreement regarding availability of technology to support student learning (98%) and teacher instruction (96%).

On this survey, teachers could also include written comments. Some typical comments included:

- "The Chromebooks are too slow."
- "We have technology, but it's often hard for the students to complete tasks with the equipment we have."
- "Technology support is only available for a small window of time to students and staff."
- "It would be better to have a variety of tech available."

Administrators also included some written comments:

- "Teachers need laptops to adequately and collaboratively plan for instruction."
- "To say it is dated is an understatement. We can do so much better."



Bee Cave Middle School Honors math student using technology

Summary

District leaders in the Lake Travis Independent School District presented auditors with a technology plan that expired in 2018. While auditors located aspects of CMIM criteria within the plan, the outdatedness of the plan and missing components resulted in the plan meeting 0% of the CMIM characteristics. Auditors visited 269 classrooms during the onsite visit and recorded various aspects of technology use they saw. In addition, auditors surveyed both teachers and administrators and asked a few questions concerning technology. The results of observations and surveys revealed that teachers, when using technology, use it passively, primarily at the substitution level of the SAMR Model. Auditors also noted when they saw students use technology, this was much more active and occurred in classrooms where most, if not all, students used some sort of technology. Technology is a significant financial commitment for a school district. Without plans and systems in place to guide teachers in the use of educational technology, its use becomes random and less effective. If the cost-benefit for technology hardware and software is not evaluated regularly for effective and consistent use, teachers and students may not get the full benefit and results the district expects from this investment (see **Recommendation 3**).

Finding 5.2: Performance-based principles have not been incorporated into the budgeting process to increase productivity and promote equity in the allocation of financial resources.

Effective school governance and leadership maintain control over their system's financial resources through fiscal responsibility and sound management. The primary vehicle for maintaining financial control is an annual budget that is focused on productivity and communicates alignment between the school district's finances and its goals and priorities. Such a budget should reflect a direct relationship

between the resources provided and the importance of the intended goals. System-wide productivity is further enhanced by budgetary decisions based on cost-effectiveness of programs, innovations, and initiatives that result in the allocation of adequate resources to program activities and needs that can demonstrate success in meeting these priority goals. Without this systematic linkage and leadership's ongoing benchmarking expenditures against the desired goals, a detour that inadvertently promotes the ineffective, inequitable, and/or inconsistent distribution of financial resources and subsequent failure of the district's mission may occur.

To determine the financial status and budgeting process in the Lake Travis Independent School District, the auditors reviewed documents (e.g., board policies, annual budgets, board meeting agendas, independent audit reports, state financial reports, enrollment and revenue projections, and other budget development forms). They also interviewed district personnel and reviewed responses to online teacher and administrator surveys.

Overall, auditors found the Lake Travis ISD is financially sound and solvent. However, the district's budgeting process is not adequate to ensure increased productivity in the allocation of financial resources based on performance-based principles that incorporate cost-benefit data, competition of requests, rank ordering of program components that facilitates budget cut/increase decisions, and allocation of resources based on need.

The board and superintendent share responsibility for maintaining the district's sound financial standing, as provided in *Policy BAA (Legal) Board Legal Status: Powers and Duties, Policy BJA (Local) Superintendent Qualifications and Duties*, and *Policy CFA (Legal) Accounting: Financial Reports and Statements*. *Policy CE (Legal) Annual Operating Budget* focuses on statutory and case law mandates for public school budgeting in the state of Texas. As indicated in **Finding 1.1**, *Board Policy CE (Local)* requires input from the district and campus planning and decision-making committees during the budget planning process and that the budget reflect the district's education programs and goals. However, other aspects of performance based budgeting are not addressed.

Budget Development

One of the primary responsibilities of Texas public school boards includes adopting policies that control for the budgeting process and adopting the annual budget in a timely manner. Although most of the budget related work between these two major events is administrative in nature, the board is responsible for monitoring the processes of budget development and budget implementation to ensure fidelity to their expectations. The Lake Travis Independent School District has chosen to operate on a September 1-August 31 fiscal year. Texas law requires all districts to approve new fiscal budgets prior to adoption of the tax rate and the first day of the new fiscal year.

The auditors expected to find a budget development process in which district priorities and goals are clearly identified and communicated prior to budget planning. The allocation of financial resources should be prioritized based on alignment of requests to the district's mission and priority goals, assessment of operational effectiveness, cost-benefit evidence or logical projections, and internal competition since budget requests generally exceed anticipated revenue. Each request should include hierarchical funding packages to provide options for decision makers. Teachers, principals, and other key internal stakeholders are expected to participate actively in the budgeting process, specifically in setting budget priorities. Collectively, these components comprise a *performance-based budget* approach to the allocation of district resources, a process that promotes improved productivity over time and greater likelihood that the district's goals and priorities will be realized.

The six criteria for performance-based budgeting are described in the following exhibit.

Exhibit 5.2.1: Components of a Performance-based Budget and Adequacy of Use in the Budget Development Process

Performance-based Budget Criteria
1. Tangible, demonstrable connections are evident between assessment of operational curriculum effectiveness and allocation of resources.
2. Rank ordering of program components is provided to permit flexibility in budget expansion, reduction, or stabilization based on changing needs or priorities.
3. Each budget request or submittal is described to permit evaluation of consequences of funding or non-funding in terms of performance or results.
4. Cost benefits of components in curriculum programming are delineated in budget decision making.
5. Budget requests compete for funding based upon evaluation of criticality of need and relationship to achievement of curriculum effectiveness.
6. Priorities in the budget are set by participation of key educational staff in the allocation and decision-making process. Teacher and principal suggestions and ideas for budget priorities are reflected and incorporated in budgeting decisions.
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In their review of the district's budgeting process, auditors did not find adequate evidence of any performance-based budgeting criteria. The district's annual budgeting process is based on a *program and per student* formula underpinned by a "roll-over" allocation from the previous year unless categorical spending requirements changed. Budget managers have much authority to manage their respective operations budgets if categorical spending requirements are met. Auditors learned that district leadership is concerned about and sensitive to adequate funding of teaching and learning needs, and teachers are able to request and receive instructional materials they feel are needed. However, comments on the survey revealed multiple areas in which teachers did not feel that resources were adequate, including technology, ESL, materials in Spanish, and Special Education. Some comments on the administrator survey indicate there is not a clear funding process for programs:

- "Principals can adopt anything that they fund."
- "It depends on the 'program'. District has tried to reign in campuses funding programs that don't align with district initiatives."
- "Principals fund programs without approval from supervisor, using campus funds."

In addition, several comments indicated the administrator did not know or was not sure about how programs were funded.

For clarity and planning purposes, a discussion of the auditors' findings related to each of the six criteria for performance-based budgeting is provided below:

Criterion 1: Evident connections between assessment of curriculum effectiveness and allocations of resources

This criterion requires quantitative or qualitative (excluding affective domain) evaluation results of curriculum effectiveness. As indicated in **Finding 4.2**, the district has not implemented a process to evaluate programs and interventions to determine their effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes. Therefore, meeting this criterion is currently impossible. Further, the auditors found no requirement to provide anticipated or expected effectiveness. The budget calendar indicates gathering feedback from

campuses, departments, and programs on personnel needs, but does not indicate those needs based on program evaluations.

Criterion 2: Rank ordering of program components

Rank-ordering requires consideration of differential funding levels for each major request to introduce funding options for decision makers, particularly useful when revenue (within the fiscal year) is unexpectedly increased or reduced or if priorities change. The auditors found no evidence of program component rank ordering or incremental funding requests on the list of activities in the budget calendar.

Criterion 3: Evaluation of consequences of funding or non-funding

This criterion requires each budget request to include a statement of the outcome (with supporting data) if funding is approved and not approved. The auditors found no evidence that budget managers are required to provide this information when submitting funding requests.

Criterion 4: Delineated cost-benefits of curriculum programming components

Cost-benefit analysis investigates the output (benefit) derived from a defined monetary input. In budget planning and decision making, cost-benefit data become crucial when decision makers are faced with requests that exceed available resources. Even if all requests are cost effective (worth the investment), cost-benefit informs which requests provide the greatest return on investment (ROI). Since the district has not institutionalized a system of program/initiative/innovation evaluation, cost-benefit data are not available.

Criterion 5: Competitive budget requests

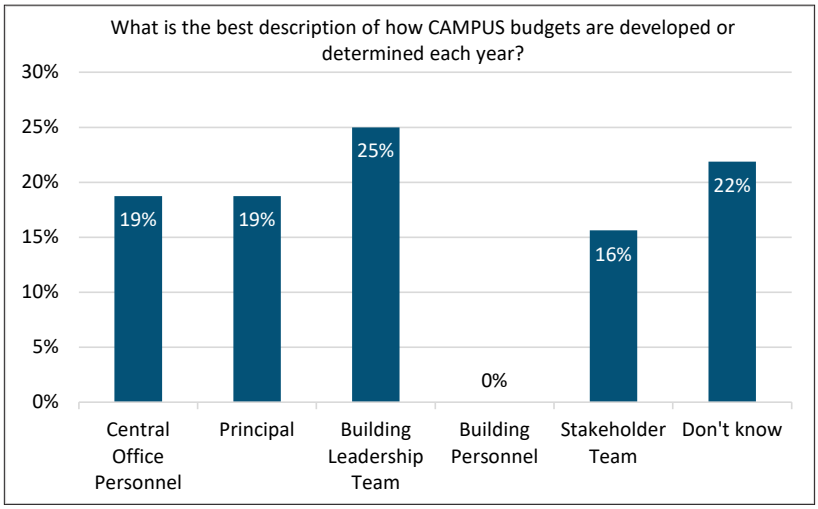
This criterion requires two conditions: (1) budget requests are competitive among each other and across all budgets for funding, and (2) requests are approved based on evidence of greater need and/ or expectancy of meeting priority goals. The auditors did not find compelling evidence of open competition of requests within or between district budgets based on effectiveness.

Criterion 6: Participation of teachers, principals, and other key stakeholders

To meet this criterion, auditors looked for evidence that key internal stakeholders have meaningful input into establishing district priorities regarding budgetary allocations. Participation does not mean, however, that they are expected to "approve" the budget before it is presented to the board. Although board policy requires input from the district and campus planning and decision-making committees during the budget development process (see **Finding 1.1**), the auditors did not find evidence of their involvement. Based on document review and personnel input, auditors determined budget priorities are determined by executive leadership.

Campus and district administrators were asked questions regarding personnel involved in developing campus and district budgets. Results are illustrated in the following two exhibits.

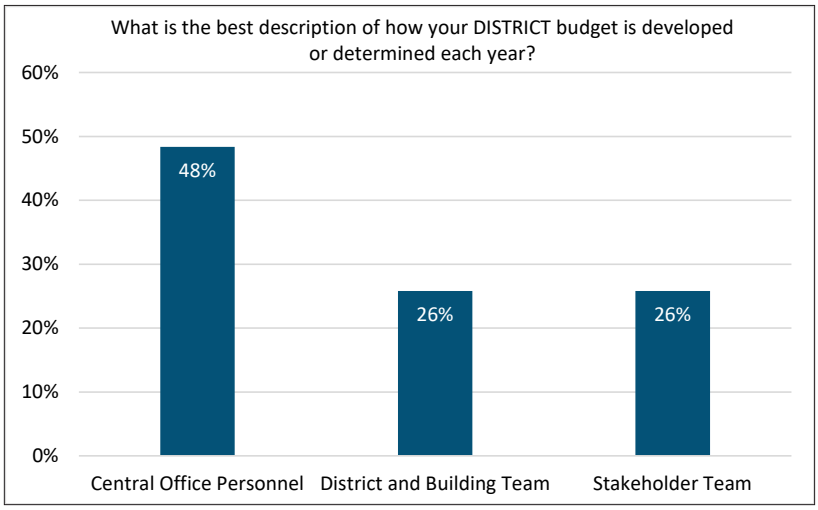
Exhibit 5.2.2: Personnel Involved in Campus Budget Development



Responses were mixed regarding how campus budgets are determined. Over 20% of surveyed administrators reported they did not know who was involved in developing campus budgets. Another 19% said central office personnel was the primary group. Over 40% reported a building leadership or stakeholder team developed the campus budget. No one reported building personnel [in general] were primary decision makers in developing campus budgets.

Data Source: Online Administrator Survey

Exhibit 5.2.3: Personnel Involved in District Budget Development



In comments, several administrators reported they were not sure or did not know who is responsible for developing the district level budget, conveying that some campus and district administrators have little, if any, involvement. Nearly half (48%) said central office personnel were responsible for district budget development, and 52% responded the budget was developed or determined by a team.

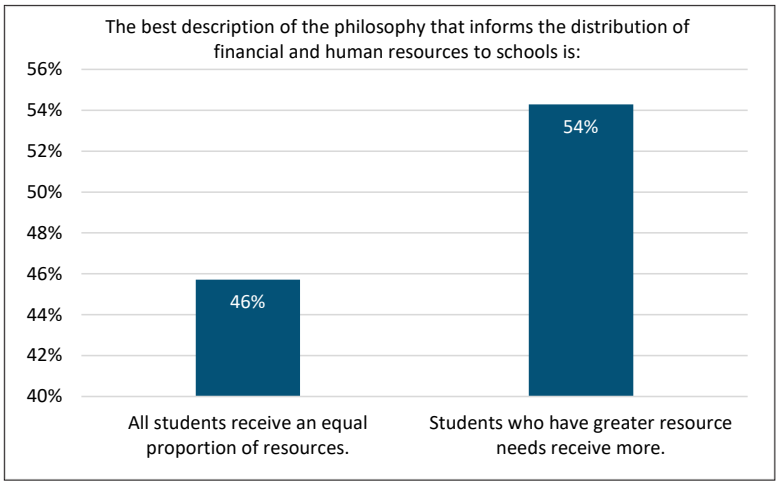
Data Source: Online Administrator Survey

Collectively, data in the above exhibits, interviews, and reviewed budget development documents provide adequate evidence that campus and district budget priorities and the budget development process are managed primarily by executive leadership.

Equitable Allocation of Resources

Auditors found no indication of differential resource allocation within a student group or among campuses based on evidence of need. In the online survey, administrators were asked about the district's philosophy regarding the distribution of resources to campuses. The following exhibit illustrates a summary of their responses.

Exhibit 5.2.4: Philosophy of Distribution of Resources to Campuses



Data Source: Online Administrator Survey

Administrators (54%) were more likely to report distribution of resources based on equity (need) than equal distribution of funds (46%). However, the auditors found little supporting evidence of either position. In comments, administrators reported the Title I school receives additional resources and positions that other campuses do not have, but also that Parent Teacher Organizations differ among campuses with the amount of money they raise. One administrator commented, "Dual language students may receive less, not equal or more resources."

Overall, auditors found the district is not using a budget development approach based on performance-based criteria, nor is the current process sensitive to the equitable distribution of financial resources based on need.

Summary

Auditors found adequate evidence from district documents that the Lake Travis ISD is financially sound and solvent. However, the district has not incorporated key productivity efforts into its annual budgeting process. Budgetary decision makers are outspoken in their support of teaching and learning and generous in funding requests without documented evidence of need. Although admirable, this process can inadvertently allocate resources to students ineffectively, inequitably, and inconsistently. Further, principals and teachers, major players in the district's primary business of teaching and learning, are not meaningful participants in the budget decision-making process. The district needs a revised budget development process that requires evidence of effectiveness and cost-benefit results for funding and reflects broader participation of internal stakeholders in establishing district priorities (see **Recommendation 4).**

Recommendations

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

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

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

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

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

Recommendation 1: Review, revise, and adopt board policies and the district strategic plan to provide clear direction and accountability for curriculum management. Develop comprehensive job descriptions and continue with plans to modify the existing organizational structure so the principles of sound organizational management are fully met. Develop systems to guide critical district functions.

A comprehensive set of school board policies is necessary to guide the management of a school system and express the expectations and intentions of the elected body legally charged with governance of the district. Policies are a reliable reference for district administrators in responding to recurring issues and making operational decisions to promote the consistency of administrative practices and the cohesion of organizational functions. The auditors found that board policies do not sufficiently direct the management of the design and delivery of instruction.

Planning is the vehicle for managing improvement in the district. Well-written plans coordinated throughout the system provide district leadership with control over direction of change. Planning in Lake Travis Independent School District has elements that lead to improved teaching and learning, but formal accountability for some of those elements is missing. The *Lake Travis ISD Strategic Plan Draft,* in beginning stages of development, does not yet provide enough direction to guide daily decision making in the district.

Most of the district's financial assets are invested in human capital. Board members are assured those assets are well invested when an organizational chart and job descriptions are presented to them. Those documents bridge the board's ownership and control of the district mission and goals with the district's use of human capital to realize the mission and goals. The bridge is strong when policies set a standard for high-quality documents: an organizational chart reflecting the principles of sound management so staff are deployed strategically; and job descriptions containing the information needed to hire the best people and then manage their work in light of the mission and goals. In Lake Travis ISD, auditors found organizational charts do not conform to four of the six principles of sound organizational management, but plans are in place to modify the structure to rectify these weaknesses. The district does not have protocols for maintaining accurate job descriptions, and inconsistencies exist between the organizational charts and job descriptions (see **Finding 1.2)**.

Having systems in place that define and clarify procedures helps district personnel to understand the expectations of their jobs and the tasks they are expected to accomplish throughout the year. A sample bulleted list of possible functions that require written systems can be found in **Finding 1.2**. During interviews, district personnel repeatedly expressed a need to institute clearly defined systems.

The auditors present the following recommendations for establishing greater accountability over curriculum management and related functions through quality documents clarifying the board's and superintendent's expectations and through effective planning processes. The recommended actions related to board policies and human resource management should be prioritized and completed within one year. The recommended actions related to planning should be completed within one to two years.

Policies and Plans

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Lake Travis Independent School District Board of Trustees:

G.1.1: Review, develop, revise, and adopt board policies that meet the Curriculum Management Improvement Model (CMIM) criteria for the management of an aligned written, taught, and assessed curriculum as reported in **Finding 1.1, Exhibit 1.1.2**. Ideally, create a policy *EH Local: Curriculum Design* that incorporates all the criteria not included in other policies. See **Appendix E** for detailed criteria and characteristics for quality policies that guide curriculum management.

G.1.2: Request the superintendent to work with other district office personnel to develop local regulations that provide additional clarification to legal and newly adopted local policies. Administrative guidelines/ regulations assist in the interpretation and implementation of policies and are particularly important if the "how" of implementation (not just the outcome) of a board policy is critical, when a board policy is vague or stated in broad terms, and/or if precise implementation is necessary for legal and/or mission impact reasons.

G.1.3: Engage with the superintendent and other school leaders in a process to further develop the LTISD Strategic Plan to include all components listed in **Exhibit 1.1.5** and support all audit recommendations. The plan should span at least three to five years and be evaluated and updated annually in order to reflect changes in community and student needs.

G.1.4: Ask the superintendent to present a plan that includes a timeline for completion and the resources needed to implement the administrative functions outlined below. Commit adequate resources and support for timely implementation. Require regular board updates on progress.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Lake Travis Independent School District Superintendent:

A.1.1: Assist the board with the revision or creation of board policies and regulations needed to support cohesive and comprehensive planning as referenced in **G.1.1 and G.1.2**.

A.1.2: Lead the district in further developing the LTISD Strategic Plan to support audit recommendations and meet the requirements set in **G.1.3**. Revise the strategic plan to include a long-range, multi-year focus on change strategies. Develop a process whereby all district plans are aligned with the district strategic plan. Require that goals are specific, time bound, and measurable. Provide for evaluation and monitoring of the plan for feedback and consistency. Refine action plans into discrete steps and tasks assigned to specific district personnel. Have school leaders report on the progress of action steps and objectives in the plan. Quality district planning and plans should include the following criteria (see **Exhibit 1.1.5** for more details):

- Directed by written expectations
- Responsive to vision
- Based on data
- Drives daily decision making
- Is emergent and fluid
- Is collaborative and coordinated
- Clear and measurable
- Reasonable and feasible
- Implementation strategies
- Capacity building
- Internal reliability and congruence
- Aligned professional development
- Budget
- Accountability
- Evaluation plan and implementation
- Monitoring
- System-wide coordination of effort

Implementing the recommendations outlined above will promote clear direction and accountability through policies and plans that will clarify the daily work of the district and result in more efficient and effective work.

Organizational Chart, Job Descriptions, and Systems

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Lake Travis Independent School District Board of Trustees:

G.1.5: Expand **G.1.1** by adopting a board policy or regulation requiring up-to-date documentation of the district-wide deployment of human capital in two categories of documents:

a. Uniform organizational charts for every department that are dated and conform to the principles of organizational management listed in **Exhibit 1.2.3** and the accompanying analysis, including clear graphic representations of the chain of command, line authority, and scalar relationships. Require that the principles be met in all charts.

b. Job descriptions for every employee that are dated and meet the quality criteria described in the analysis of job descriptions in **Exhibits 1.2.6** and **1.2.7** and the narrative explanations following the exhibits.

G.1.6: Request the superintendent to develop, with the assistance of department leaders, new regulations that incorporate written systems for every critical function and process that is carried out in the district.

G.1.7: Request the superintendent to present a plan to implement the administrative functions outlined below, including a timeline and the resources needed. Commit adequate resources and political support for timely implementation. Require regular board updates on progress.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Lake Travis Independent School District Superintendent:

A.1.3: Assist the board in developing the policy described in **G.1.5.**

A.1.4: Delegate to a position in the human resources department the responsibility for managing organizational charts and job descriptions. Amend the position's job description to include the following responsibilities:

a. Create and maintain a written set of procedures to be followed when positions are added, removed, altered, or relocated.

b. Maintain an up-to-date set of organizational charts and job descriptions that are dated and accurately document the district's deployment of human capital.

c. Work with unit leaders to assure compliance with the procedure described in **A.1.6.**

d. Maintain a reliable archive of changes made to those documents.

A.1.5: Work with designated leaders to establish a protocol for the format and content of organizational charts and a template for job descriptions that complies with the policy described in **G.1.5**.

A.1.6: In accordance with the policy described in **G.1.5**, establish an administrative regulation requiring every administrative unit to maintain an organizational chart or set of organizational charts conforming to the expectations of **G.1.5**, and to submit updated organizational charts and job descriptions to the designated Human Resources position within a specified time after a position is added, removed, altered, or relocated.

A.1.7: In accordance with **G.1.5**, establish an administrative regulation requiring job descriptions to be distributed to every employee and the employee's supervisor prior to the annual evaluation. Require the job description to be used as a factor in evaluating the employee's job performance, and require documentation in the evaluation report that the job description was so used.

A.1.8: Require all current organizational charts to be updated and submitted to human resources by a specified date. Updated organizational charts should include the principles shown in **Exhibit 1.2.3** and

explained in the narrative following the exhibit**.** Submit the up-to-date set of organizational charts to the board according to the timeline in the plan described in **G.1.6.**

A.1.9: Require all current job descriptions to be updated by human resources with assistance from department leaders by a specified date. Updated job descriptions should include the components shown in **Exhibit 1.2.6** and should address the issues discussed in **Exhibit 1.2.7** and the narrative for each component that follows the exhibit. Also, address the issues described in the bullet points after **Exhibit 1.2.5** to correct errors and inconsistencies that currently exist between the organizational charts and job descriptions.

A.1.10: Continue with plans to add a central administrative position to alleviate excessive supervisory responsibilities, particularly over campus principals. Focused support of principals is essential to improving student achievement. Other modifications that are recommended include:

a. Adding teachers to the charts, as the most critical line position.

b. Ensuring that horizontal lines are reflective of consistent remuneration.

c. Maintaining limited spans of control fro all supervisors.

d. Grouping responsibilities logically and in accordance with design or delivery function.

These changes, in addition to principles presented in **Finding 1.2**, will assure greater efficiency and effectiveness in managing student larning across the district.

A.1.11: Develop new regulations that incorporate written systems for every critical function and process that is carried out in the district, according to rationale described in **Finding 1.2**.

Implementing the recommendations outlined above will assist Lake Travis Independent School District's Board of Trustees and Superintendent to establish greater vision and accountability of the district mission and goals by improving management of human capital, implementing more effective district planning processes, and providing parameters in board policy and regulations to institutionalize these changes.

Recommendation 2: Develop and implement a comprehensive curriculum management plan to provide system-wide direction for the design, delivery, and evaluation of the curriculum. Complete the scope of the written curriculum, and revise existing curriculum documents to define, prioritize, sequence, and pace student learning and to provide suggestions for how to deliver learning most effectively. Specify expectations for use of the written curriculum.

Quality curriculum planning requires a comprehensive curriculum management plan and written curriculum documents to focus the system on efforts to achieve a deeply aligned curriculum with strong delivery and evaluation components. Curriculum management planning is based on the principle of tight alignment of the written, taught, and assessed curriculum. A curriculum management plan provides for instructional resources, strategies, and assessments aligned to the content, context, and cognitive type for each objective for students to attain and demonstrate mastery of the desired curricular results. In effective systems, the curriculum management plan is directed by school board policies that delineate the processes for curriculum development, and determine roles and responsibilities of staff in the processes and procedures for monitoring and evaluating the district curriculum. A well-designed plan is critical for sound design, delivery, and evaluation of the written, taught, and tested curriculum and to provide reliable data for instructional decision making.

The auditors found that board policies and district documents were not adequate to provide for a curriculum management plan and quality control (see **Finding 1**). They also found that the Lake Travis

Independent School District does not have a comprehensive management plan to provide for the design, delivery, and alignment of the curriculum (see **Finding 2.1**). The scope and quality of the district's written curriculum were inadequate to effectively guide teaching and learning. There was no expectation that teachers utilize the written curriculum (see **Finding 2.2**).

Based on their findings, auditors present the following recommendations regarding the development and implementation of a comprehensive curriculum management system under the broad headings below. These actions should be completed within three years.

- Curriculum Management Planning
- Curriculum Design, Development, and Revision of Existing Documents

Curriculum Management Planning

The district needs a comprehensive plan for the development and implementation of a quality curriculum that is 1) aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, as well as the high-stakes state and national assessments; 2) implemented effectively in every classroom in the district; and 3) continuously evaluated using aligned, formative, and diagnostic measures. This plan should be developed in concert with the district strategic plan and plans governing student assessment, professional development, and program evaluation to ensure that all personnel and departments within the district work efficiently and effectively in achieving district goals related to increased student achievement.

Governance Functions: the following actions are recommended to the Lake Travis Independent School District School Board of Trustees:

G.2.1: Adopt a new board policy to require the development and ongoing revision of a curriculum management plan. The policy should also define roles of the board, district administrators, and teachers regarding the curriculum. For example, the board of trustees is primarily responsible for adopting curriculum; administrators are responsible for overseeing its development, evaluation, and revision, as well as for monitoring its implementation; teachers are responsible for delivering the adopted curriculum, and sometimes assisting in the writing or reviewing of the curriculum, with assistance from outside consultants or district instructional coaches and administrators.

G.2.2: Request regular reports (at least annually) on activities and outcomes of the curriculum management plan to be presented at a public board meeting.

G.2.3: Provide necessary funding to support implementation of the curriculum management plan and all related functions in the annual budget.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Lake Travis Independent School District Superintendent:

A.2.1: Draft a new policy with components addressed in **G.2.1**.

A.2.2: Develop an administrative regulation linked to the new policy (see **G.2.1**) outlining required elements of the new curriculum management plan for directing the design, delivery, monitoring, evaluation, and revision of curriculum (see **Appendix F**). The plan should establish the following:

A. A clear understanding of the curriculum functions and components that are tightly-held versus those that are loosely-held;

B. The definition and expectation of an aligned, written, taught, and tested curriculum in all three dimensions (content, context, and cognitive type);

C. The expectation of a K-12 scope and sequence of specific learning goals, benchmarks, and objectives that form the basis of all curriculum documents and that meet and exceed Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills expectations;

D. A requirement that all courses offered, core and non-core, be supported by quality written curriculum that aligns with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills;

E. Formal board adoption of all curricula prior to implementation; and

F. An expectation that the teachers will use the district-developed curriculum at all levels and in all schools.

The plan should include the following components:

1. **Description of a philosophical framework for the design of the curriculum**: What are the underlying beliefs of district leadership regarding how children learn, what constitutes effective teaching, what is the teacher's role, what is the student's role, what is a district's role in making available or ensuring a student's education? Defining the beliefs and philosophy establishes the foundation for what curriculum should look like, what the district's and school's respective roles are in providing each child with an education, and creates a picture of what an effective, engaging classroom might look like. Defining the philosophical framework must take place before defining and training teachers in the instructional model; all curriculum work, in both design and delivery, should reflect the same philosophy.

2. **Direction for how state standards will be considered in the curriculum:** This addresses whether to use a backloaded approach, in which the curriculum is derived from high stakes tested learning (topological and/or deep alignment), and/or a frontloaded approach, which derives the curriculum from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, but in a refined, more specific format.

3. **Define and direct the stages of curriculum development:** This specifies the different stages involved in developing and revising the written curriculum. These might include: backloading and released item analysis; reviewing for alignment with external/ target assessments in all three dimensions (content, context, cognition); assessing the complexity, rigor, and measurability of objectives; placing objectives in an articulated K-12 sequence that expects mastery of content six to nine months before it is encountered on the state assessment or other high-stakes tests; developing mastery-level projects and activities with accompanying rubrics; and creating a bank of high quality assessment items and formative/diagnostic assessment instruments to support differentiated, individualized instruction.

4. **Specific roles and responsibilities for the design and delivery of curriculum:** This aspect of the plan delineates which tasks are primarily classroom-based, which are school-based, which are department or position based, and which are board of trustee based. For example, it is the board's responsibility to approve and adopt the written curriculum. It is the teacher's role to deliver the curriculum effectively so that students master it. It is the principal's role to monitor its delivery to ensure alignment, and the role of instructional coaches and principals to support teachers in delivering the curriculum.

   Monitoring of classroom activities should be accomplished by principals and other designated support personnel to identify and promote productive practices that support learning, correct or eliminate practices that do not, and identify professional learning needs. Clarify how monitoring

responsibilities of any campus-based personnel complement one another to prevent duplication of effort or possible conflicts in carrying out monitoring responsibilities.

5. **Presents the format and components for all curriculum, assessment, and instructional guide documents:** This specifies the aspects or components of the written curriculum that are non-negotiable for consistency in every content area and other aspects that are "fluid." The curriculum document should include objectives, assessments, prerequisite skills, instructional resources, instructional strategies, and suggestions for meaningful student work. Ideally, they should include suggested student projects or activities that integrate all the expectations for rigorous student engagement and learning. (See **Finding 2.2** for further explanation of components of a quality curriculum.)
6. **Requires for every content area a focused set of content objectives:** This plan component addresses the requirement of a written curriculum guide for every course taught at every grade level. Learner objectives should be derived from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, be reasonable in number so the student has adequate time to master the content, be very specific so teachers clearly understand what mastery of these objectives looks like and what the standard of performance is. Objectives should be measurable and linked to formative assessment measures.
7. **Directs that curriculum documents not only specify the content of the student objectives/ student expectations, but also multiple contexts and cognitive types.** Review the concepts of deep curriculum alignment, and require that those concepts form the basis for curriculum design efforts across the district. The dimensions of alignment include content (what is to be learned), context (how the leaning is to be practiced) and the cognitive type (level of engagement or rigor of learning). Deep curriculum alignment means the learning exceeds the requirement of the state standard for each dimension. When this occurs, students encounter expanded content, practice the learning in relevant ways that exceed what the standard requires, and think and work at the cognitive levels beyond the expectation of the standard.
8. **Directs the curriculum be designed to support teacher differentiation:** Curriculum documents are designed so they support teachers' differentiation of instructional approaches to match student preferences and learning styles, as well as teacher selection of student objectives at the right level of difficulty to meet students' academic needs. This ensures those students who need prerequisite concepts, knowledge, and skills are moved ahead at an accelerated pace, so they do not fall further behind, and students who have already mastered the objectives are also moved ahead at a challenging pace. Whole group, one-size-fits-all approaches cannot meet the needs of most students in the district. District curriculum leaders must define what true academic differentiation looks like, and how teachers can manage so many different skill levels in the classroom without holding some students back and leaving others behind. This is critical to meet the needs of a district with a diverse student population and must be supported by the design of the curriculum in addition to all district documents that describe expectations for delivery.
9. **Identifies timing, scope, and procedures for a periodic cycle of curriculum review:** This ensures that every content area is addressed and has a written curriculum that facilitates effective, rigorous instruction, and that curriculum is kept up-to-date, particularly with changes in state or national standards or assessment requirements. The cycle should also include procedures for when/ how often to finalize updates and revisions to the written curriculum so teachers can rely on the accuracy of their content and prepare for anticipated changes and revisions. Such a cycle should establish the timeline for reviewing the alignment, quality, and rigor of adopted resources and

materials, and direct their revision or replacement where and when needed. All resources that are referenced or suggested by the written curriculum should be screened for rigor, appropriateness, cultural relevance, alignment to district expectations for instruction and student engagement, variations in context, and content alignment. Weaknesses and gaps should be identified, and supplements included. Note that while resources and materials are loosely-held, these should be suggested to teachers to assist them in their instructional planning. Resources should also be fully aligned and current, thus eliminating an overabundance of unaligned or partially aligned materials that may not meet the needs of individual students.

10. **Specifies the overall beliefs and procedures governing the assessment of curriculum effectiveness:** What are all the instruments that will be used to measure progress toward meeting goals, including the goal of students' mastery of curriculum objectives? How will data be used, who will use them, how will data be collected, analyzed, and disseminated to teachers, administrators, and concerned stakeholders? This must all be defined. Curriculum documents must include an expectation for formative assessments that teachers can use to evaluate student progress in mastering objectives, or to determine what they already know about the new content to be introduced. These assessments are part of a comprehensive battery of tools. The availability and quality of formative, diagnostic tools are critical to being able to determine and meet students' individual, academic needs.
11. **Describes the procedures teachers and administrators will follow in using assessment data to strengthen curriculum and instructional decision making:** What are all the instruments that will be used to measure progress toward meeting goals, including the goal of students' mastery of curriculum objectives? How will data be used, who will use it, how will data be collected, analyzed, and disseminated to teachers, administrators, and concerned stakeholders? This must all be defined. Curriculum documents must include an expectation for formative assessments that teachers can use to evaluate student progress in mastering objectives, or to determine what they already know about the new content to be introduced. These assessments are part of a comprehensive battery of tools. The availability and quality of formative, diagnostic tools are critical to being able to determine and meet students' individual, academic needs.
12. **Outlines the procedures for conducting formative and summative evaluations of programs and their corresponding curriculum content.** Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of programs, and establish a cycle for reporting results to the board.
13. **Requires the design of a comprehensive staff development program linked to curriculum design and its delivery:** Professional learning that prepares teachers to deliver the curriculum in accordance with the board's performance expectations is critical. This includes support in the classroom to ensure that training and curriculum materials are properly used.
14. **Presents procedures for monitoring the delivery of the curriculum:** The procedures, philosophy, and intent for monitoring the delivery of the curriculum should be outlined. Multiple means of monitoring are suggested, including frequent classroom visits.
15. **Establishes a communication plan:** this establishes a plan for communicating among and across departments and levels of the district regarding the process of curriculum design and delivery to maintain constancy of effort, focus, and continuity.

A.2.3: Develop the curriculum management plan with the components described above. Share it with the board, senior staff, and all members of the curriculum department. Provide training, as determined

needed, for all responsible employees to understand their respective roles as outlined in the plan. Charge supervisors with communicating and establishing accountability for performance of responsibilities at a high level of quality.

A.2.4: Develop and provide periodic reports to the board regarding the progress and curriculum management district-wide, using data from formative and summative assessments, as well as from monitoring practices. The importance of deeply aligned, quality, written curriculum that raises expectations for student performance and supports those expectations with critical resources for teachers cannot be overstated.

Curriculum Design, Development, and Revision of Existing Documents

A quality curriculum document is based on a written, taught, and tested curriculum that is aligned in content, context, and cognitive types. Therefore, when a curriculum is aligned, the content (what is taught) is aligned with the context (how a concept is learned and practiced), and with the cognitive types (thought process and knowledge dimensions required to accomplish the task.)

A cohesive format for curriculum documents across grade levels and content areas provides consistency for teachers as they utilize the documents for planning effective delivery of instruction. Key components of an aligned curriculum provide teachers with all of the tools needed for effective planning and instruction, and include the following:

- Objectives that specify the content to be taught;
- Formative, diagnostic assessments and sample test items that are aligned with district and state tests that enable teachers to know when objectives have been mastered;
- Prerequisite skills and knowledge needed for new learning so teachers know what has been taught previously and what will be taught at the next level;
- Instructional resources, technology, and texts that support the objectives;
- Suggestions for classroom strategies to teach the content as well as the contexts necessary for students to attain mastery and the desired cognitive type for student engagement; and
- Suggested student practice activities, assignments, or projects that can be differentiated for content, process, and product.

When a quality curriculum is in place, learning is not left to chance, but becomes an intentional, focused effort with clear direction for teachers and access to the same learning for all students across the district.

The scope and quality of the Lake Travis Independent School District written curriculum is inadequate and does not have the necessary components to provide direction for planning, teaching, and learning and to ensure the alignment of the written, taught, and assessed curriculum. The curriculum documents that are available to teachers are inconsistent in quality and are not adequate to guide instruction (see **Finding 2.2**).

The auditors provide the following recommendations to create and manage the design, development, and revision of a deeply aligned curriculum that is implemented effectively in every classroom across the school district. Proposed actions regarding professional development, delivery, and monitoring of the curriculum are provided in **Recommendation 3**. Proposed actions regarding assessment measures and evaluating supplemental programs and instructional materials are provided in **Recommendation 4.**

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Lake Travis Independent School District Board of Trustees:

G.2.4: Request that efforts to develop and/or revise the written curriculum begin immediately and that decisions regarding which content areas receive priority be determined by need.

G.2.5: Request the superintendent (or designee) to review the concepts of deep curriculum alignment, and use those concepts to form the basis for curriculum design efforts across the district.

G.2.6: Revise curriculum policies to include a requirement that teachers use the adopted curriculum to plan daily instruction.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Lake Travis Independent School District Superintendent:

A.2.5: Define the components and characteristics that comprise a "model" curriculum document.

Written curriculum documents should be structured with the following sections:

1. **Introductory material:** Content area vision, expectations, notes on using the guide, etc.
2. **Scope and sequence:** A vertical articulation of all standards and student objectives, organized by unit and subunit, K-8. This section organizes and presents the objectives.
3. **Year at a Glance/Course Overview:** This section shows on a single page the major bundles of content (units), possible subunits, unit tests, and the months of the year to suggest pacing needed.
4. **Unit Plan:** Teachers use this section to plan daily instruction.
5. **Appendices:** The appendices provide additional information or suggestions that would make the unit plan too large and overwhelming. It is a way to organize suggestions (by unit) so teachers have references they can use when they want more ideas or need some background knowledge.

The curriculum documents should also include the following minimum components:

1. **Objectives:** A learner objective is a specific restatement of the intended skill or knowledge to be learned, the contexts in which it is to be learned and practiced, and the standard of performance by which a teacher knows mastery of that skill or knowledge has been achieved. These should align closely with the state standards, but specific learner objectives give the teacher more precise information of what mastery looks like and clearly define which objectives are assigned to which grade or instructional level. The number of objectives included in the guide must also be manageable. Objectives can be clustered so that teachers can address them more deeply instead of touching on a battery of individual objectives. Review all objectives for evidence of rigor (Bloom's Taxonomy), and integrate into the objectives across all content areas.

   Giving teachers a clear continuum of student learning from kindergarten through grade 12 allows them to move students ahead at an appropriate pace if students are on level, or to accelerate them if they are behind. This is easier when the teacher knows exactly where a student is on the continuum of learning, knows what content is next in the sequence, and can easily determine what students have already mastered. This is particularly important in cases of rapid district growth or changing demographics.

2. **Assessment:** Specific examples of how each objective will be assessed must be included in the curriculum documents. District formative assessments or common unit assessments must be cross-referenced throughout, specifying when, how, and with what instrument each objective

will be evaluated. The sample items should be items based on deconstructed, released test items that have been altered and "deepened" to provide students with a challenge level to ensure their success on a multitude of test items related to the same content. Teachers must have tools with which to continuously evaluate student progress and move them at the appropriate, individualized pace in all content areas.

3. **Prerequisites/Scope and Sequence:** Place the learner objectives (K-12) in a scope and sequence document to allow teachers to easily discern what content and skills students have been taught, and what content and skills they are responsible for seeing students leave their class with. Such a document helps eliminate gaps and overlaps in student learning. This will also facilitate greater articulation of the curriculum from one level to the next and assure greater coordination across a single level or course, as the mapping out of objectives is already completed and misinterpretation of the nonspecific TEKS is avoided. A K-12 scope and sequence would be effective for teachers to understand the continuum of expected learning in their content area.

4. **Resources and Materials:** Every book, recommended professional resource, audiovisual aid, technology enhancement or program, and other resource should be listed in the written curriculum and referenced by objective/strategy. Suggested materials and resources should be analyzed for deep alignment with the content, contexts, and cognitive types of the objectives and the tests in use; modifications should also be included in the documents to improve alignment. All teachers should have access to every resource that is included in the curriculum document for their course.

5. **Suggested Strategies and Approaches:** This item is a critical part of ensuring high expectations for students and achieving deep alignment. This component is intended to provide teachers, particularly inexperienced teachers, with support in deciding ways to teach the assigned objectives. Flexibility is always allowed in how teachers approach a given objective, but this component provides teachers with research-proven suggestions. Suggested strategies should also incorporate those contexts and cognitive types known to be a part of the standardized tests to allow students to become familiar with the context and cognitive type before encountering them on high-stakes tests. In addition, a wide variety of authentic, student-centered contexts is recommended to ensure a more broad-based, real-life application of the concepts, skills, and knowledge so that students can connect personally with the learning, be more actively and cognitively engaged, and see the overall value of their learning. Classroom-based activities and strategies should always meet and exceed the rigor found on assessments to ensure students are challenged and engaged. Currently, the strategies and use of technology that are used in classrooms that auditors observed are of varying quality and rigor, and classroom activity was observed to mostly be teacher-centered whole group or students doing individual work with the teacher assisting (see **Finding 3.1**). Suggestions for more researched-based effective strategies, the effective use of technology, and grouping methods, along with training and coaching regarding how to implement those suggestions, will allow teachers to create more rigorous, engaging learning experiences for all students.

6. **Suggested Student Work/Activities:** Along with suggested instructional strategies, the quality and level of the work students are assigned can be critical to student learning and achievement. Assignments and activities teachers arrange for students to do in class or for homework allow students to practice skills and apply knowledge at the level that is expected by the TEKS and beyond. Having clear models of high-level student work suggested in the written curriculum sets

the expectation for teachers for the type of work that students should be doing to develop their skills and show mastery of objectives. When teachers use these activities in class with fidelity, it ensures that all students will have equal access to the district curriculum and rigorous work that requires critical thinking skills. This component of the written curriculum gives the district a space to clearly indicate to teachers how to differentiate activities and assignments for content, process, and product to meet the needs of gifted, high achieving, or special needs students while ensuring that all students meet the expectations of the TEKS.

A.2.6: Include in the design of the curriculum the expectation that instruction will be differentiated to accommodate individual student academic needs and learning styles. This requires suggestions for remediation as well as enrichment within the guides themselves. In written curriculum, include the following:

- Integration of instructional technology use for both teachers and students.
- Inclusion of strategies for meeting the needs of English Language Learners, special education students, high achievers, and gifted students.

A.2.7: Take steps to ensure that all courses (core and non-core) taught at all grade levels across the district have a corresponding written curriculum. Set priorities, beginning with the core content areas, for curriculum development and/or revision. Set specific goals for curriculum writers to add missing components (as listed in **A.2.5**) to existing documents and improve existing components to meet audit criteria.

A.2.8: As curriculum is developed and revised, require a deep alignment analysis to ensure the objectives, resources, and strategies included in curriculum documents are deeply aligned to the tests in use in all three dimensions – content, context, and cognitive type.

A.2.9: Establish a process to ensure that curriculum guides, texts, and instructional materials for all courses, including intervention courses and programs, are presented to the board for adoption. Present policy revisions for adoption by the board requiring teachers to use the adopted curriculum to plan daily instruction. Ensure that teachers are required to use the adopted curriculum, according to policy.

Implementing the recommendations outlined above will promote clear direction for a comprehensive curriculum management system to establish aligned, quality curriculum that empowers teachers to faithfully deliver the district's learning objectives in all classrooms, improve performance related to instructional practices that promote depth of cognitive demand and differentiation, and assign deeply aligned student work. Managing the development of quality curriculum guides will direct system efforts to deliver a rigorous curriculum to ensure that every student has the benefit of a customized learning experience linked to student achievement data and district goals. Attention to the three essential components of effective districts, the written, taught and assessed curriculum, will ensure Lake Travis Independent School District students will attain exemplary levels of achievement.

Recommendation 3: Develop a comprehensive professional development plan that supports instructional capacity of teachers and leadership capacity of administrators. The plan should illustrate how professional development is supported through the monitoring of instruction, and in turn provides the means to improve instructional delivery, student work, the use of technology, and address equity concerns. Update the technology plan to provide guidance for enhancing productivity of technology through more efficient and effective instructional use.

A quality professional development program is supported through board policy and includes aspects of planning, design, delivery, evaluation, and support. Effective professional development programs share commonalities, and the most effective programs consistently articulate and communicate a clear, focused mission and vision to all stakeholders. Professional development begins with a careful analysis of data and a comprehensive needs assessment to determine strengths and weaknesses in curriculum delivery through monitoring of the curriculum as stated in **Finding 3.3**. **Finding 3.1** illustrates instructional delivery is not meeting district expectations and is characterized by low-rigor, teacher-centered instruction, and little differentiation. **Finding 3.2** shows problems with coordination of content and differences in the interpretation of mastery in multiple content areas. Once professional development is informed by classroom instruction, district leaders can then seek wider goals for professional development that will incorporate the use of assessments (see **Finding 4.1**), the use of technology (see **Finding 5.1**), and culturally responsive pedagogy to address equity concerns (see **Finding 3.4**).

Auditors recommend considering classroom instruction and monitoring of the curriculum in the development of a comprehensive professional development plan.

Classroom Instruction

The element of instructional delivery is a critical part of promoting high expectations for students, achieving deep alignment between the written and taught curricula, and providing teachers, particularly inexperienced teachers, with support in selecting ways to teach the assigned objective(s). Flexibility should be allowed in how teachers approach a particular objective, but a well-developed district-adopted instructional model provides teachers with invaluable, research-proven suggestions. Instructional strategies should incorporate content and process standards for each objective as well as those contexts and cognitive types known to be part of the assessment structure in use. Recommended instructional strategies should incorporate a mastery learning approach, which provides for differentiation based on informal and diagnostic assessment, along with reteaching and sufficient practice to embed new learning into long-term memory. Differentiation includes strategies for remediation, sheltering content for access by English language learners, enrichment, and strategies that are effective with at-risk student populations. A district-adopted instructional model should be explicitly incorporated within curriculum design rather than being a stand-alone add on.

Auditors found no direction in policy, job descriptions, observation, or evaluation protocols for district expectations of an instructional model. There was no common understanding of expectations for instructional practice across the district. In their visits to classrooms, auditors found instructional practices varied and in cases, high quality, but inconsistently so. The rigor, however, was not reflective of the most rigorous types of cognition (see **Finding 3.1**).

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Lake Travis Independent School District Board of Trustees:

G.3.1: Request the superintendent (or designee) to review research-supported instructional strategies that are effective with all student populations (such information is available from CMSi). Focus this research especially on those characteristics that have been shown to improve student achievement, such as vocabulary development and cognitively engaging instruction.

G.3.2: Request the superintendent (or designee) to develop administrative regulations (files) that define the instructional model(s) to be adopted in classrooms throughout the district.

G.3.3: Request the superintendent (or designee) to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery of curriculum across the district. Such an evaluation should use data from multiple sources: formative assessments, summative assessments, all monitoring data from principals, and from teacher evaluation instruments.

G.3.4: Adopt the policies and regulations described above when drafted; direct the superintendent to ensure their implementation.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Lake Travis Independent School District Superintendent:

A.3.1: Assist the board of trustees in developing the previously described policies.

A.3.2: Assure consistency in curriculum implementation. Train teachers in the new curriculum documents, and support them in using them to guide instruction (see **Recommendation 2** for the development of the written curriculum). Assure that the curriculum is used in a context that prioritizes student needs above all else—the most effective instruction is responsive to students at an individual level.

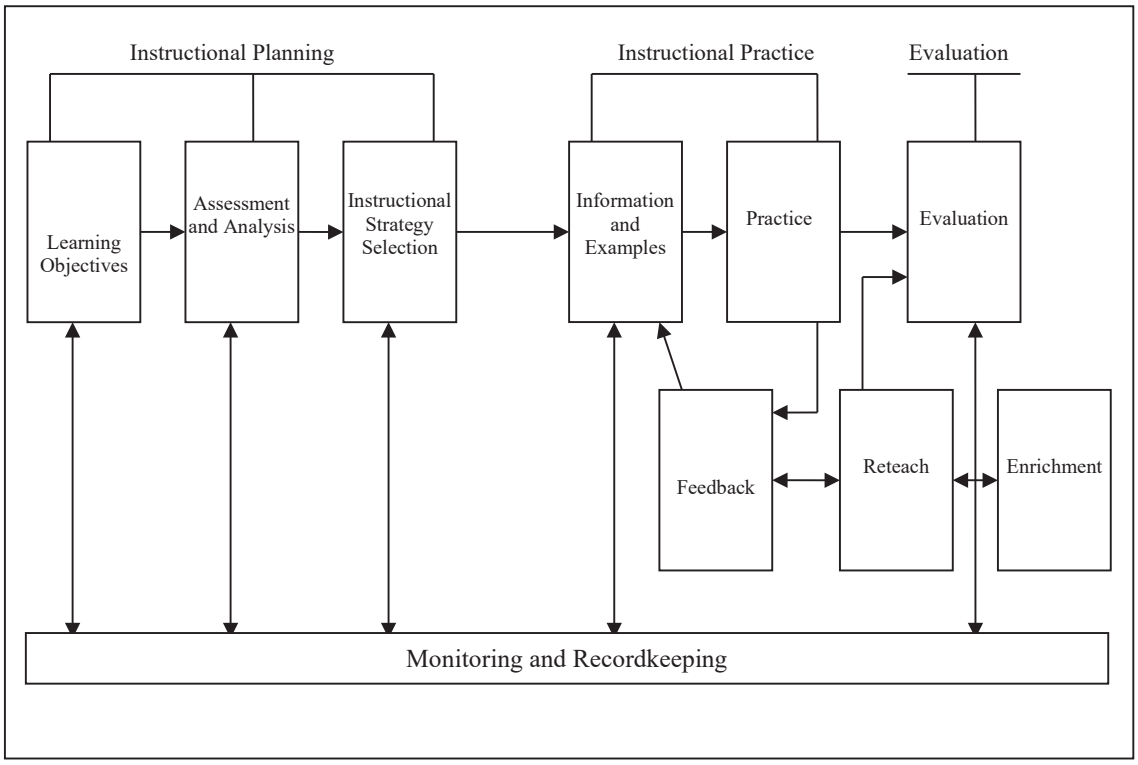
A.3.3: Define the instructional model expected to be used in classrooms across the district. This is *not* intended to be a prescriptive, tightly-held requirement. Rather, the instructional model is intended to provide a clear picture of what district leaders want and expect effective and rigorous instruction to look like. The model should encompass the following:

1. **Strategies/Approaches**: Describe the ways in which district-adopted curriculum is expected to be delivered. In other words, the types of proven and effective teaching practices district leadership expect to see should be specifically described in writing and adopted in policy to ensure implementation. Strategies are loosely-held, but this method is intended to outline those strategies and approaches the district considers congruent with the philosophy of teaching and learning. Suggested practices should be research-based, developmentally appropriate as well as relevant, and might include:
    - Ensuring that the learning objective and language objective are evident to students and that the students understand what they should be able to know and do.
    - Implementing higher-order questioning that helps students see the "big picture" of the concepts, knowledge, and skills being taught, as well as facilitating a deeper understanding on the part of students.
    - Differentiating instruction to meet the individual needs of all students.
    - Using small group activities, paired tasks, and cooperative learning strategies.
    - Using sheltered strategies, such as SIOP, to provide English language learners and students with low vocabulary ranges access to core curriculum and to support their academic English language development across all content areas.
    - Comparing/contrasting new concepts, knowledge, skills, with concepts, skills, and experiences already familiar to students.
    - Engaging students in experimental inquiry, problem-solving, and investigation—all hands-on methods of applying or discovering new knowledge and concepts.
    - Having students set their own learning goals, develop strategies for attaining them, and monitor their own progress toward meeting those goals.

- Engaging students in metacognitive activities, whereby they analyze their own thought processes in approaching test questions, assignments, new information, etc.
- Using non-linguistic ways to support comprehension of, identification with, and the retention of new concepts or knowledge, such as pictures, graphic organizers, outlines, etc.[2]
- Tailoring instruction to the cultural, economic, and linguistic diversity present in every classroom, recognizing and valuing differences and similarities and emphasizing the benefits of cultural and linguistic pluralism (see **Finding 3.4**).
- Incorporating technology that is effectively used at high levels according to a model similar to the SAMR Model used by auditors (see **Finding 5.1**).
- Designing student work products that demand higher-order thinking, are conceptual in nature, require students to demonstrate their thinking, and provide opportunities for extended reading and writing in all content areas.

2. **Instructional Planning and Monitoring of Learning**: Describe expectations for how teachers are to use student performance/achievement data to plan instruction based on their specific academic needs. Consider the Mastery Learning Model as a possible model for planning and executing instruction using a variety of strategies and approaches with which the teacher is comfortable. The Mastery Learning Model requires close monitoring of student learning that is data-based, and relies on flexible, small student grouping to deliver the exact teaching that those students need, rather than relying on whole group, one-size-fits all approaches.

Exhibit R.3.1: Mastery Learning Model



2 For more information, see Downey, C., English, F., Steffy, B., Frase, L., & Poston, W. (2003). *Fifty Ways to Close the Achievement Gap*.

See also Marzano, R., Gaddy, B. & Dean, C. (2001). *What Works in Classroom Instruction*. May be downloaded from http://www.mcrel.org/topics/products/110/

Require the monitoring of curriculum delivery to include monitoring for these teaching strategies and practices expected to be used in the classroom. The aim is to provide teachers with specific feedback regarding what type of strategies they were using, their effectiveness, and how the chosen strategies could have been more effective or how perhaps others could have been used to improve student achievement.

A.3.4: As part of the instructional model, incorporate the expectation for **differentiating** instruction in the classroom to meet individual student needs. Differentiation can be evident in content, product, or process. Content is defined as what is being taught. Product refers to options about how to express required learning. Process refers to how students understand or make sense of what is being taught or delivered. All types of differentiation are important, but teachers must learn the difference and apply as needed with each individual child, based on the individual child's *need*. A critical part of differentiating effectively is having a battery of skill-specific diagnostic assessments that give teachers key information on whether a student has mastered a targeted concept or skill (see **Exhibit 3.1.14**).

In addition to differentiation being detailed and incorporated into the instructional model, special consideration should be given to student work and special populations. **Finding 3.2** shows pre-K artifacts had a considerable focus on worksheets and skills like letter and number recognition and less focus on free choice activities and play. New research demonstrates detrimental effects in Pre-K programs focusing on low-level drill activities. Auditors noted that artifacts for GT began in kindergarten and did not offer students much choice in activities. It is important to ensure all gifted students are identified, no matter when that giftedness manifests itself. Special Education (SPED) artifacts showed significantly less use of higher-order thinking and engaging contexts than regular artifacts. Because SPED students are already vulnerable, great care must be taken to ensure that the coursework they are given is of the highest quality. The following steps are recommended for special populations when considering student work and the instructional model:

Pre-K

- Consider placing more emphasis on the play and free choice aspects of Pre-K and less emphasis on worksheets and repetitive skill activities.
- Create locally prioritized curriculum that emphasizes critical thinking, real-world experiences, and exploratory learning for Pre-K students.

GT

- Create a battery of enrichment activities for all core content areas that teachers can offer to any student at any time. In this way teachers can be continually evaluating potential giftedness and be responsive to developmental growth.
- Build more choice into GT activities, and include a wider variety of activities beyond those that require designing and building objects. Activities should touch on many areas of potential interest—writing, performing, math concepts, etc.

SPED:

- Develop curriculum guides that emphasize the use of higher-order thinking skills and engaging contexts for all SPED students. Provide model approaches to content and suggested activities that promote high engagement to ensure that students more readily retain target skills and concepts.

Diversity and Inclusion:

The literature selections and resources in ELA and social studies were mostly focused on White authors, perspectives, and protagonists. In order to embody the growing diversity in the district and of the United States as a whole, and to provide district students more opportunities to see themselves reflected in the curriculum, the following are recommended to district leaders:

- Evaluate the entire body of literature across grade levels and content areas and the various resources in use—including those that teachers are getting from internet sites—to determine the degree to which they offer non-White students opportunities to see inventors, mathematicians, pioneers, war heroes, authors, poets, suffragists, etc. who are people of color. Children should see enough representation that they feel fully part of the history and culture of the United States. No child should be made to feel like an afterthought in the curriculum.
- This work must be intentional and widespread, touching every content area from ELA to music, art, P.E., and library science. It is important that this inclusion not be an aside from the "regular" curriculum; it must be fully embedded and seen to be both relevant and important to the concepts under study. Teachers should, however, go out of their way to show students Black and Hispanic (and other cultures represented in the district) contributors alongside White contributors in all areas being studied. Even things that seem uniquely White or European can have roots in other cultures, such as the way the Founders wrote the United States Constitution, borrowing heavily from a Native American form of government called the Iroquois Confederacy.
- Embed diversity and inclusion in the curriculum so that every child has the opportunity to feel proud of their culture and background and every child can develop an appreciation for the tremendous benefits offered by the richly diverse population of the United States, as expected in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.
- District leaders should review all resources currently in use, keep those that offer the most and best inclusion possible, eliminate resources that present biased, distorted, or demeaning portrayals of people of color, and select new inclusive resources where current ones are inadequate. If a resource is not diverse but useful, the district should seek out companion texts to provide diverse perspectives.

A.3.5: Communicate the expectations for adherence to the instructional model widely. Integrate throughout all discussions and meetings concerning curriculum delivery the need to not only verbally espouse high expectations for all students and respect and appreciation for cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and economic diversity, but to model it faithfully in every classroom every day.

The definition and adoption of a research-based, student-centered, rigorous instructional model will assist the district in moving forward with improving instruction and student achievement.

Monitoring

Monitoring is the primary means by which district leaders evaluate the degree to which curriculum is delivered with fidelity, and that the instructional model is likewise reflected in classroom activities and instruction. Monitoring is an absolutely critical facet of effective implementation. It is about supporting and facilitating quality and effective curriculum delivery, not just looking for it. No matter who is involved

in monitoring (it can be carried out by multiple positions within a building and even by teachers amongst themselves), the principal should still remain the instructional leader on the campus.

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Lake Travis Independent School District Board of Trustees:

G.3.5: Revise the principal and superintendent's job descriptions and board policy to include more specific expectations for monitoring. These expectations must:

A. Define all purposes of monitoring.

B. Specify who is monitoring for what and how those responsibilities are interconnected. For example, if department chairs share in monitoring responsibilities, how/when are their findings or observation data shared with the principal? What kind of feedback should they share with district-level curriculum staff? How is this to occur and how frequently? Ensure that the building principal remains the key instructional leader in the building, and require him/her to oversee all monitoring that occurs by other staff members.

C. Specify what type of data are to be collected for each purpose, and with what methods.

D. Indicate which data are intended to be collected district-wide for district-level feedback (such as for determining the effectiveness of a professional development initiative), and which data are to be used for teacher evaluation, coaching, and instructional improvement within the building. All monitoring data should be reported to a single department, rather than split across individual departments. Instructional walk-through data is about collecting information regarding the effectiveness and alignment of the delivered curriculum, not an evaluation of teachers, so this should be seen primarily as a curriculum-related function.

G.3.6: Request the superintendent to revise supervision and evaluation procedures to be consistent with the district's instructional model.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Lake Travis Independent School District Superintendent:

A.3.6: Require monitoring to be the primary responsibility of the principal, in keeping with his/her role as an instructional leader. In monitoring, district leaders should not only keep the learner objectives and effective strategies in mind (see **Recommendation 2**), but the instructional model, as well, focusing reflective questions on those aspects of the model the administrators deem appropriate or desirable.

A.3.7: Revise walk-through observation tools as non-evaluative methods of monitoring along with formal evaluation procedures to be consistent with the newly adopted instructional model.

A.3.8: Once the new instructional model has been incorporated into regular classroom practice, consider adding additional classroom observation processes (in addition to walk-throughs), as described above, to specifically evaluate the student artifacts and objectives being used in each classroom, in a collaborative, non-threatening context that can even be performed by teachers. Consider something like *Examining Student Work* program (CMSi) to enable teachers and building leaders to gauge the level of student work in the school and determine if it is appropriately on-level and cognitively challenging. This process will also assist teachers in evaluating the work they assign in their classrooms (a loosely-held component), particularly those activities and resources that are commercially produced. Analysis of student assignments must include the following:

a. **Calibrate the student activity:** Determine if the skill area or concept to be mastered in the student activity matches the district's stated content objective or standard as described by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for the grade level.

b. **Examine cognition levels:** Determine if the student activities are meeting district expectations for cognitive demand. Are students being asked to understand a concept or analyze the content in a way that promotes higher-order thinking?

c. **Determine the context:** Examine how students are interacting with the content. Certain types of contexts—ways in which students are called upon to demonstrate their learning—are inherently less engaging than others and, therefore, less likely to promote retention of the material. Contexts also determine the level of cognitive engagement students will likely experience during a lesson. Cognitive engagement is the level to which students are intellectually interested in participation in the activity. Activities that mimic tests such as multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank questions, as well as activities rarely seen outside of the classroom, are less engaging. Real World applications and Meaningful Writing experiences allow students an opportunity to engage with the content in a way that sparks interest (see **Finding 3.2**).

d. **Look for differences among student work samples:** Are students in one classroom consistently asked to engage with content at a higher cognition level than students in another classroom? Do some classroom teachers use highly engaging contexts to explore a concept, while others use less engaging activities?

A.3.9: Create models of calibrated, high-cognitive-level, aligned student work products to include in the written curriculum (see **Findings 2.2**, **3.2**, and **Recommendation 2**). Having good models to examine will give teachers a clear picture of what student work will look like when it is deeply aligned in content, context, and cognitive demand. When designing and implementing professional learning regarding the written curriculum, include opportunities for teachers to examine student work products that are deeply aligned to the standards in units of study, and to practice creating student assignments that are deeply aligned.

Professional Development

The purpose of a quality professional development program is to increase staff effectiveness and student achievement. This is accomplished by developing the skills of teachers, administrators, and support personnel in effective design and delivery of the curriculum. Professional development is a key factor in ensuring the alignment of the written, taught, and tested curricula. A comprehensive professional development program is based on district goals prioritized and implemented over a stated period of time. Special emphasis must be placed on training teachers and principals to employ instructional strategies that meet the needs of all students and to implement the adopted instructional model to support differentiation and student-responsive teaching. A comprehensive professional development program also requires regular evaluation of the professional development approaches and content to determine if student achievement has improved based on the training and approaches used. An effective professional development program is also linked to a teacher appraisal program designed to provide teachers with constructive feedback to improve classroom performance.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended for consideration to the Lake Travis Independent School District Superintendent:

A.3.10: Align all staff training with the district curriculum (see **Recommendation 2**), district and campus improvement plans (see **Recommendation 1**), student achievement results (see **Recommendation 4**), as well as performance evaluation data of instructional staff members.

A.3.11: Develop a Comprehensive Professional Development Plan that works in concert with the curriculum management plan, and serve to support the strategic plan. Professional development plans should be updated (minimally) annually to ensure and maintain alignment with any changing priorities or conditions. This plan should call for the following:

A. Establish a framework for integrating professional development activities with the mission and plans of the district.

B. Establish expectations for professional growth for all employees

C. Implement a process to provide for organizational, school, and individual professional development in a systemic manner.

D. Implement a process to provide for the three phases of the change process: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization.

E. Incorporate in all professional development plans, whether campus-based or district-wide, sufficient provisions for in-depth training, follow-up or on-the-job assistance over time to ensure that professional development is being applied correctly and results in changes in practice.

F. Define expectations for administrative monitoring and feedback to staff regarding implementation of new training in the classroom. Provide sufficient, targeted staff development for administrators to carry out this monitoring function, including training not only on the new skills teachers are learning, but also on how to observe classroom implementation of the new strategies and how to provide growth-producing feedback to improve performance.

G. Hold teachers, administrators and support staff accountable for attending, utilizing, and monitoring the effective implementation of the training through their annual performance evaluations.

H. Implement an evaluation process that is ongoing, focuses on all levels of the school district, includes multiple sources of information, and is based on actual behavior documented in the classroom.

Overall, the focus of professional development should be on the improved delivery of curriculum and its monitoring to assure student learning is maximized. These recommendations, when fully implemented should allow Lake Travis Independent School District to experience improvements in job performance related to effective instructional practices, assignment of deeply aligned student work, and monitoring both delivery of instruction and quality of student work. Additionally, the steps will support creation of a systemic approach to implementation of a high quality instructional framework for teaching and learning. This recommendation should be analyzed and implementation started upon receipt of the final report, and should be completed in approximately one to two years.

Technology

The use of technology is seen through two lenses in the audit. First, the use of technology through classroom instruction. Second, the use of technology to enhance productivity since technology is a high-cost investment for the district. The creation of an effective technology plan will address both areas of

technology. Auditors learned the district leaders in Lake Travis Independent School District operated from the Lake Travis ISD Technology Plan 2017-2018.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended for consideration to the Lake Travis Independent School District Superintendent:

A.3.12: In addition to the work on curriculum development in **A.3.3**, the superintendent shall work with the technology department to create a new technology plan that incorporates the 15 criteria found in **Exhibit 5.1.1**:

A. Board policy or administrative regulations for instructional technology use
B. Clear statement of program philosophy/vision
C. Comprehensive view of technology
D. Needs assessment
E. Measurable student goals and objectives
F. Ongoing student assessment
G. Ongoing program assessment
H. Comprehensive staff trainings related to existing standards and objectives
I. Hardware standards
J. Software standards
K. Internet access standards
L. Role of school library/media center
M. Program implementation/roll-out budget
N. Program maintenance budget
O. Site/district plan alignment

The development of a new plan using the criteria for instructional technology programs will show the connection between technology functions and increase productivity of this significant investment.

Recommendation 4: Develop and implement a comprehensive system for student assessment and program evaluation that will provide meaningful opportunities to analyze data for decision making and support improved student achievement. Develop, implement, and use results of aligned, formative, and diagnostic assessments at all levels to monitor student learning on a continuous basis and inform individualized, differentiated, and effective instruction. Develop and implement a performance-based budget that allocates resources according to needs determined through program evaluation and provides efficient use of resources.

Effective school systems follow clear steps when creating a plan that focuses on improving student achievement. These steps are defined within a system that clearly identifies what the expectations are and what they look like when mastered, what the tools are to determine mastery of those expectations, how to interpret the data from those assessment tools, and what to do when mastery is not achieved. All administrators and teachers know how to analyze important trends in the instructional program as well as areas of strength and weakness by classroom, student, group, and individual student. School leaders

and teachers make frequent use of assessment data to design classroom instruction aimed at improving student achievement.

In Lake Travis ISD, the auditors found board policies, plans, and job descriptions to be inadequate to direct student assessment, program evaluation, and the use of data to address student needs and improve student achievement. Planning for a comprehensive assessment program was not in place to provide feedback to students, parents, teachers, and administrators with results of student attainment of expected outcomes (see **Finding 4.1**). Auditors found the scope of student assessment to be inadequate to evaluate the taught curriculum in all subject areas and grade levels and to provide sufficient data for making sound curricular decisions (see **Finding 4.2**).

Tightly-held district-level assessments to monitor student mastery of a given objective or standard were not available in Lake Travis ISD. While the MTSS guide defined processes for the use of data from *MAP* and *STAAR BOY* assessments for structuring targeted student groups, the processes within did not inform curriculum or instruction changes to increase student achievement. At all levels, the overall percentages of district students performing at "masters" level on *STAAR* are significantly lower than the percentage of students scoring at the "approaches" level. The pattern of lower percentages of students scoring at the masters level is consistent for all student groups. Additionally, no formal processes for monitoring student mastery of state standards or program evaluation are institutionalized within Lake Travis ISD (see **Finding 4.2**)

The Lake Travis ISD budgeting process is not adequate to ensure increased productivity in the allocation of financial resources based on performance-based principles that incorporate cost-benefit data, competition of requests, rank ordering of program components that facilitates budget cut/increase decisions, and allocation of resources based on need as determined through program evaluations. Programmatic budgeting processes can offer an efficient way for the board and superintendent to allocate resources with a cost-benefit system, and to ascertain how well funds are being used to address system needs. To do this, all programs and activities of the organization must first be evaluated and reviewed on the basis of performance and cost. Reviews and budget building should include a team of district personnel, composed of key instructional staff, including principals, teachers, community representatives, and parents (see **Finding 5.2**).

For the basic instructional support areas of the budget, linkages are needed with performance information. The major steps of installing programmatic budgeting include the following recommended actions:

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Lake Travis Independent School District Board of Trustees.

G.4.1: Adopt new policy to require that assessment planning occur, and include the characteristics outlined in **Finding 4.1, Exhibit 4.1.1,** which aligns with and may be part of the curriculum management plan (see **Recommendation 2**).

G.4.2: Adopt new policy to require that a process for program evaluation be developed, including the characteristics outlined in **Finding 4.1, Exhibit 4.2.12.**

G.4.3: Provide necessary funding to support actions in this recommendation.

G.4.4: Request annual board reports on the implementation and success of the new student assessment and program evaluation process.

G.4.5: Review performance-based budget recommendations from the superintendent, evaluate priorities, establish final programs and services to be funded and at what level, and approve the final budget to be implemented.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Lake Travis ISD Superintendent:

A.4.1: Assist board in strengthening policy that provides direction for development and implementation of a comprehensive student assessment plan and program evaluation process as described in **G.4.1** and outlined in **Finding 4.1.1, Exhibits 4.1.1** and **4.2.12.**

A.4.2: Develop an administrative procedure that extends and provides additional implementation detail to board policies described in **G.4.1**. Include the requirement of a student assessment plan that includes the characteristics outlined in **Finding 4.1, Exhibit 4.1.1.**

A.4.3: Develop the comprehensive assessment plan, including assigning clear responsibility for development and implementation of formalized procedures for systematic student assessment in alignment with the curriculum management plan (see **Recommendation 2**) and including characteristics outlined in **Finding 4.1, Exhibit 4.1.1.**

A.4.4: Commit adequate resources to support implementation of comprehensive student assessment planning.

A.4.5: Implement the comprehensive student assessment plan described in **A.4.3.**

A.4.6: Regularly report to the board the performance outcomes of student assessments resulting from the implementation of the plan described in **A.4.3.**

A.4.7: Develop common summative assessments aligned to Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for all courses/grades. These common summative assessments should be of high rigor and reflect contexts that are similar and also above and beyond those found on state and national assessments. Common summative assessments need not be only multiple-choice tests, but can be high-interest capstone projects that incorporate real world purposes and meaningful writing experiences for students. When teachers are included in the development of such assessments, they are much more likely to understand their purpose and use them as intended.

A.4.8: Develop tightly-held and loosely-held formative assessments for various purposes, common across the system, that deeply align with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills and that include characteristics outlined in **Finding 4.2, Exhibits 4.2.9** and **4.1.10.** Formative assessments should inform teachers of student progress in a timely manner to ensure their use for informing instruction.

A.4.9: Establish clear expectations for administrators and teachers in board policies, administrative regulations, and job descriptions on use of assessment data for diagnosing student needs, evaluating student progress, determining curriculum and program effectiveness, and making decisions in all district operations (see **Recommendation 1**).

A.4.10: Develop plans and processes to systematize the use of student assessment data for instructional decision making at all levels of the system to include the characteristics as discussed in **Finding 4.2, Exhibits 4.2.10** and **4.2.11.**

A.4.11: Provide comprehensive and ongoing training on the use of different types of assessments (both formative and summative), data access, analysis, and use of data in facilitating teaching and learning. Extend this training to all instructional staff and administrators, and provide systems to connect this training to district-wide efforts to increase student achievement.

A.4.12: Establish a process for developing, maintaining, and reporting trend analysis (at least five years) on data points that the district determines as critical for student growth and increasing student achievement.

A.4.13: Develop a process for the evaluation of interventions/programs to determine cost-benefit of programs and innovations and to inform budgeting decisions as well as the use of PTO funds. The process should include the elements presented in **Finding 4.2, Exhibit 4.2.12.**

A.4.14: Implement the program evaluation process described in **A.4.13**.

A.4.15: Regularly report to the board the results of program evaluations resulting from implementation of the process described in **A.4.13**.

A.4.16: Develop a performance-based budget that includes criteria described in **Exhibit 5.2.1**. Identify various educational activities or programs and group them into broad areas of need or purpose. Build budget "packages" within each of the subgroups that deliver the objectives of the area of need or purpose. Budget packages should be based on program evaluations as described in **A.4.13** and should be concise and meaningful. No program should be guaranteed continued funding based on last year's budget.

A.4.17: Include in each program area (package group) a goal statement, which expresses the purpose it serves and provides a basis for evaluation of results. Distribute packages to appropriate staff to gather data to best describe service levels, program outputs, and cost benefits.

A.4.18: Compile budget packages, including costs, into a work sheet with instructions for evaluating and ranking. Priorities must be set among competing intentions. Couple past cost information with performance data and recommendations to guide preliminary budget-building estimates. Give budget program packages to the appropriate budget directors and staff for evaluations and ranking, and publish compiled results in a tentative budget program package list in order of ranked priority.

A.4.19: Make final decisions based upon measured effectiveness of programs elements, revenues available, the appropriation levels to be authorized, and the program funding priorities and rankings by the superintendent, and recommend to the board.

These recommendations should be completed within one to three years and will give the district a means of ensuring consistent, appropriate use of data to assess student progress, analyze results, and ensure such results are used to make sound decisions about curriculum and instruction. Additionally, assessment and evaluation data will be available for use to inform students, parents, and other stakeholders of the effectiveness of district staff in educating Lake Travis ISD students.

Given this approach to budgeting, changing funding or allocation levels will be based upon "how well are we doing?" instead of "how much did we spend last year?" Tangible linkages can be identified among curriculum results, curriculum objectives, and curriculum costs. The superintendent and board will have a credible rationale and system for appropriating and/or reallocating finances, especially from old, obsolete, or unproductive programs and activities to new, emerging programs or activities of high priority. This new budgetary system may take three or more years to develop, and the budget's cornerstones must be curriculum unity and monitored performance in the Lake Travis Independent School District.

Appendices

Appendix A: Auditors' Biographical Data

Mary Arthur, EdD

Mary Arthur is currently retired from the position of Language Arts Coordinator for the Grapevine-Colleyville Independent School District in Texas where she served for 15 years. She also served 18 years as an adjunct professor for the University of North Texas, teaching classes and supervising student teachers in the College of Education. Dr. Arthur holds Texas Teacher certifications in Home Economics, Secondary English, and Professional Reading Specialist K-12. She has served as a classroom teacher, reading specialist, new teacher liaison, and district curriculum coordinator for Language Arts, for a total of 33 years in public education. Dr. Arthur earned her Doctor of Education degree from the University of North Texas with a major in Reading Education and a minor in Computer Education and Cognitive Systems. She received her audit training in Tucson, Arizona, in 2010 and has served on 25 audits in Texas, Arizona, Washington, Illinois, Kentucky, Ohio, Missouri, and Montana.

Heather Boeschen, BA

Heather Boeschen Is Director of Operations for CMSi. She has been an educator for over 25 years, and currently serves as an independent professional consultant in curriculum and instruction. She received a Bachelor's Degree in English, German, and Education from Macalester College in 1988, and she has completed advanced graduate work at Augsburg College, Drake University, and Iowa State University. She served as a teacher of advanced college preparatory writing for over a decade, and she completed her audit training in St. Paul, MN, in 1996. She has served on more than 30 audits, most recently in Texas, Maine, and Illinois.

Jim Ferrell, EdD

Jim Ferrell currently serves as department chair for the Educational Leadership Department at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. He also serves as program chair for the School Administration Program within the Educational Leadership Department. He worked as a classroom teacher for 12.5 years, teaching social studies and Spanish in grades 6-12. After leaving the classroom, he worked as a middle school principal for six years. Dr. Ferrell earned a BA in history from Oklahoma City University, an MA in history from the University of Central Oklahoma, and an EdD in school administration from Oklahoma State University. He received his curriculum audit training in Tucson, Arizona, in 2008. He has participated on audit teams in more than a dozen states.

Laurie Pace, MS

Laurie Pace is the Director of Humanities in Texarkana ISD in Texarkana, TX. She has 23 years of experience serving public education in Texas and Arkansas, including teaching grades K-7, serving as PreK mentor through Texas School Ready for the 38 districts within Region 8, Coordinator of Elementary Reading Language Arts for Region 8, and Assistant Principal of Instruction at Texas High School in Texarkana. In her current role, Director of Humanities, Ms. Pace is leading a PK-12 literacy initiative along with supervising the development of curriculum enhancement documents in Reading Language Arts and Social Studies. She received her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, Masters of Science in Curriculum and Instruction, K-12 Reading Specialist, and PK-12 Principal certificate from Texas A&M University – Texarkana. Laurie Pace is employed in the Lake Travis ISD's former district. Permission for her to serve on this team was requested and granted by the LTISD superintendent.

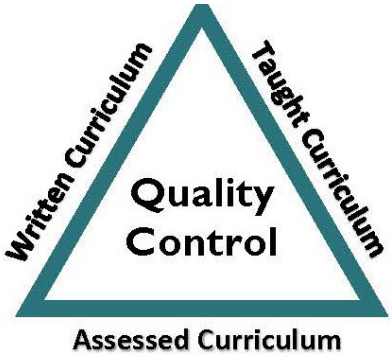
Debra Phillips, EdD

Debra Phillips has over 37 years of experience in public education. She recently retired as Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education in Conroe ISD. She has also served as Executive Director for Curriculum and Instruction and Executive Director for Elementary Education in Clear Creek ISD. Prior to this experience, Dr. Phillips was an elementary principal for 11 years on two Title I, bilingual campuses. Her background includes extensive experience in early literacy acquisition, instructional coaching, professional development, curriculum development, and special education. Dr. Phillips received her bachelor's degree from Texas State University and her master's degree from University of Houston – Clear Lake. She holds a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from Texas A&M. Dr. Phillips completed Level III Curriculum Management Audit training in February 2015.

Appendix B: Audit Methodology

The Model for the Curriculum Audit™

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



A Schematic View of Curricular Quality Control

General quality control assumes that at least three elements must be present in any organizational and work-related situation for it to be functional and capable of being improved over time. These are: (1) a work standard, goal/objective, or operational mission; (2) work directed toward attaining the mission, standard, goal/objective; and (3) feedback (work measurement), which is related to or aligned with the standard, goal/objective, or mission.

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

Within the context of an educational system and its governance and operational structure, curricular quality control requires: (1) a written curriculum in some clear and translatable form for application by teachers in classrooms or related instructional settings; (2) a taught curriculum, which is shaped by and interactive with the written one; and (3) a tested curriculum, which includes the tasks, concepts, and skills of pupil learning and which is linked to both the taught and written curricula. This model is applicable in any kind of educational work structure typically found in mass public educational systems, and is suitable for any kind of assessment strategy, from norm-referenced standardized tests to more authentic approaches.

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

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

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

Standards for the Auditors

While a Curriculum Audit™ is not a financial audit, it is governed by some of the same principles. These are:

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

The Lake Travis ISD Curriculum Audit™ Team selected by the Curriculum Management Audit Center included auditors who have been school superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors, coordinators, principals and assistant principals, as well as elementary and secondary classroom teachers in public educational systems in several locations, including Texas, Oklahoma, England, Minnesota, and Iowa.

Independence None of the Curriculum Audit™ Team members had any vested interest in the findings or recommendations of the Lake Travis ISD Curriculum Audit™. None of the auditors has or had any working relationship with the individuals who occupied top or middle management positions in the Lake Travis ISD, nor with any of the past or current members of the Lake Travis ISD Board of Trustees.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Some school principals said that…"

"Many teachers expressed concern that…"

"There was widespread comment about…"

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

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

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

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

Interviewed Representatives of the Lake Travis ISD	
Superintendent	School Board Members
District Administrators	Principals
K-12 Teachers (voluntary, self-referred)	Assistant Principals
ESL Support Teachers	Instructional Coaches

Approximately 59 individuals were interviewed during the site visit phase of the audit.

Data Sources of the Curriculum Audit™

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

The major sources of data for the Lake Travis ISD Curriculum Audit™ included the following:

Documents

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

Interviews

The auditors conducted interviews with stakeholders throughout the district to shed light on district initiatives and documents and on the district context, as a whole. Interviews were conducted with all board members, the superintendent, top administrators in the system, all building principals, assistant principals, teachers, instructional coaches, and ESL instructional support staff. A total of 59 stakeholders were interviewed as part of the audit process.

Site Visits

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

Online Surveys

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

Appendix C: List of Documents Reviewed by the Lake Travis ISD Audit Team

Document	Date
Assessments in LTISD	varied
Board of Trustees – 10 yr. History	2012-2022
Board Policies	varied
Board Regulations	varied
Budget Calendar and Annual Budget	2021-22
C & I Directors' Weekly Meeting Agendas	varied
Campus Improvement Plans 2022	2021-22
Campus Master Schedules	2021-22
Class Size Data by campus	2021-22
Course Catalogs – High School and Middle School	2021-22
Curriculum Documents – C & I Hub	varied, undated
District Improvement Plan 2022	March 3, 2022
District-wide Offense Referral by Student and Race	1/1/2022
Enrollment by Campus by Grade	12/8/21
Enrollment w/Race & SpEd Totals	12/8/21
Iowa Assessments for GT by Campus	Fall 2017
Job Descriptions	varied
Lake Travis Demographic Study	2020-21
Lake Travis Elementary Schools Student/Parent Handbook	2021-22
Lake Travis Secondary Schools Student/Parent Handbook	2021-22
Learner-Centric Model Learner Profile	07/2019
Learning Together Conference 2022 schedule	2022
Library Book Count by Campus 2022	2022
List of Superintendents	2002-Present
LT Conference 2022 Master Schedule	2022
LTISD Calendar	2021-22
LTISD Chromebook Handbook	undated
LTISD Employee Handbook	2021-22
LTISD Organization Chart	undated
MAP and *mClass* Data	2019 - 2022
Map of District	2021-22
Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Resource Guide	8/01/2021
Principals' Meeting Agendas	varied
Sample Teacher Evaluations	2021-22
STARR Data Summary Reports by campus	2016-2021
Strategic Plan – Best in Class Education Work Canvas	undated
Strategic Plan – One Community Work Canvas	undated
Strategic Plan Outline Draft	undated
Student Work Artifacts	undated
TASB 2020 Employee Opinion Survey	4/6/2020

APPENDICES

Document	Date
TEA 2020-21 Student Information by campus	2020-21
Teacher Term Employment Contract	undated
Technology Plan	2017-18

Appendix D: Artifacts

Exhibit D.1: Description of Cognitive Types in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy

Cognitive Domain	Definition of Type	Additional Clarification Comments
Remembering	Includes those behaviors and test situations that emphasize remembering, either by recognition or recall of ideas, material, or phenomena.	Ranges from the specific and relatively concrete to the more complex and abstract, including interrelations and patterns in which information can be organized and structured. Remembering is the dominant psychological process.
Understanding	When confronted with written or oral communications, the student is expected to know what is being communicated and how to make some use of the materials or ideas contained in it.	Three types: translation, interpretation, extrapolation. Emphasis is on grasping the meaning and intent of the material.
Applying	Student must be able to apply comprehension without prompting in a situation new to the student. Requires transfer of knowledge and comprehension to a real situation.	Emphasis is on remembering and bringing to bear upon a new situation.
Analyzing	Student must break down into component parts, make explicit the relationships between elements, and recognize organizational principles of the structure, which hold the elements together as a whole.	Emphasizes breaking wholes into pieces and the ability to detect structure, relationships, organization. Must have a specific purpose.
Evaluating	Making judgments about values for some purpose; ideas, works, solutions, methods, materials, etc.	Involves the use of criteria as standards for appraising the degree to which something is effective, accurate, satisfying. May be quantitative or qualitative. Not merely opinions; must have salient criteria as its basis.
Creating	Putting together elements and parts to form a whole; to create pattern or structure not clearly there before.	Emphasis is on the creative ability of students within a given framework. Must draw on elements from many sources. Should yield a product.

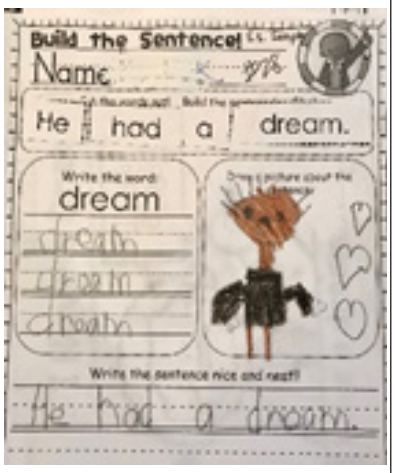
Exhibit D.2: Context Descriptors

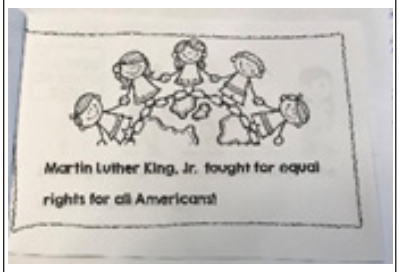
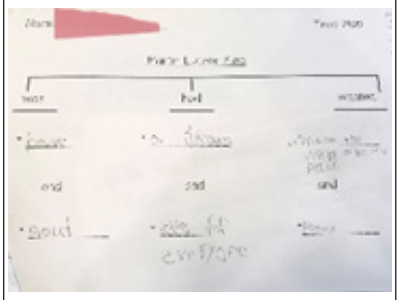
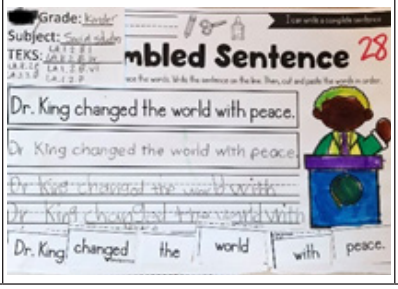
Context	Explanation	Examples
Real World/ Simulated Real World	This type of context replicates activities found in the real world. It is often a hands-on activity.	Writing a business letter; building a ramp to measure acceleration and velocity; researching a historical period and designing costumes for a play set in that period; planning a travel itinerary; creating a budget using salary and expense information; learning songs in a target language.
Test-like	This context replicates activities and tasks from released test items or from other exit exams in use by the district, such as AP exams. It allows students to practice skills prior to the test. It is important to note that quizzes and tests from a classroom setting do not necessarily fall into this category.	Marking a bubble sheet; selecting from multiple-choice items; constructing a short answer; writing an extended response. Fill-in-the-blank and true/false questions.
Classroom Activity	This context is comprised of activities that are unlikely to be found outside a classroom.	Vocabulary worksheets; answering questions at the end of a chapter; solving math problems; marking geographical features on a map; labeling parts of a cell; locating examples of figurative language in a poem; fill-in-the-blank worksheets.
Meaningful Writing	This context requires students to use higher-order thinking skills to complete the writing. The writing is usually of an extended nature.	Researching, formulating, and defending a position; analyzing and critiquing a piece of literature; hypothesizing, testing, and evaluating a theory or premise; writing a personal narrative utilizing techniques learned in class.

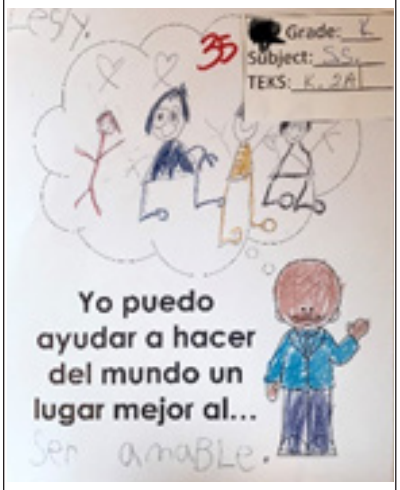
Exhibit D.3: Course Groupings for Analysis

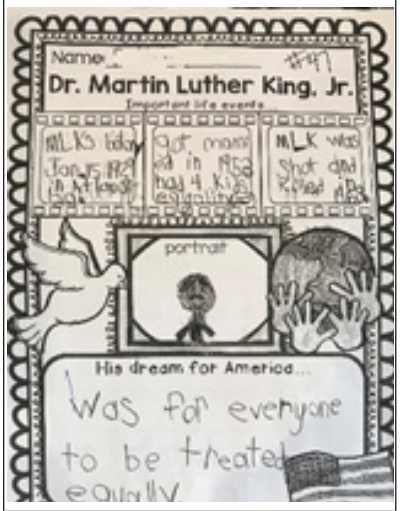
9	10	11	12
Algebra 1 Geometry	Algebra 2	Pre-Calculus College Prep Math Financial Math	AP Calculus AP Statistics Advanced Quantitative Reasoning
Biology Pre-AP Biology	Chemistry Pre-AP Chemistry IPC	AP Chemistry AP Biology Scientific Research and Design Physics	AP Environmental Science Environmental Systems Aquatics
World Geography Pre-AP World Geography	World History AP World History	U.S. History AP U.S. History	U.S. Government AP U.S. Government AP Macroeconomics Economics AP Microeconomics

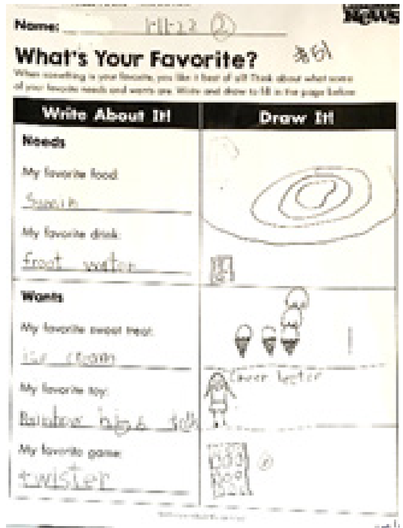
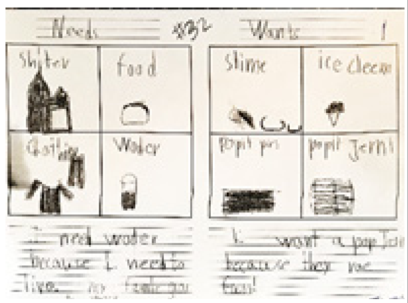
Exhibit D.4: Mastery Expectations and Articulation Analysis for Social Studies K-5

Grade Level	Standard	Artifact	Notes
K	K.1 History. The student understands that holidays are celebrations of special events. The student is expected to: (A) identify national patriotic holidays such as Constitution Day, Presidents' Day, Veterans Day, and Independence Day; K.2: History. The student understands how historical figures helped shape the state and nation. The student is expected to identify contributions of historical figures, including Stephen F. Austin, George Washington, Christopher Columbus, and José Antonio Navarro, who helped to shape the state and nation.	1.  2.  	These artifacts were all about Martin Luther King, Jr., and were presumably for MLK Day in January or possibly part of Black History Month in February. The standards for kindergarten Social Studies do not mention Dr. King. Dr. King is mentioned in grade 1 Social Studies standards. While it's not bad to include this material a year early, the question teachers must ask is, what is it that students must know or do to master this standard in grade 1? And does what we are doing in kindergarten align with what students will do next year? Part of the grade 1 standard requires students to identify contributions from Dr. King and others and explain how they shaped the state and nation. What is done in kindergarten should work toward that understanding. The artifacts vary widely in purpose, and some present inaccurate information. Artifact 1 has the student work on sentence word order and practice handwriting, not addressing any Social Studies standard. Artifact 2 has students draw a picture of how they can be a friend. (This description of Dr. King's dream is incorrect.)

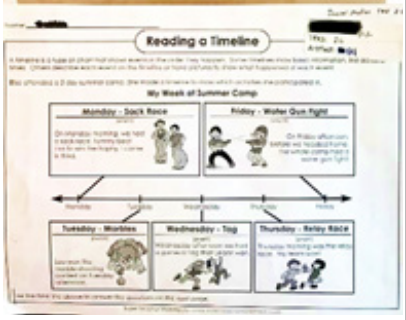
Grade Level	Standard	Artifact	Notes
K (Cont.)		3.  4.  5.  6.  	Artifact 3 has students write their own dream. (Personal dreams are not the point of the *I Have a Dream* speech.) Artifact 4 is a coloring book, and Artifact 5 is a graphic organizer for details of the speech. There is no indication of what the teacher is using to give students information on the speech prior to filling out the 'tree.' Artifact 6 is a social studies artifact but is labeled with ELA standards. The activity is putting the words in correct sentence order.

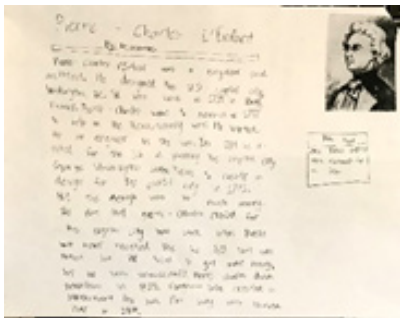
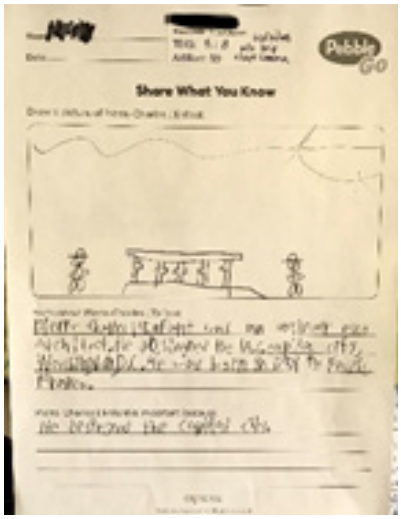
Grade Level	Standard	Artifact	Notes
K (cont.)		7. 	Artifact 7 has the prompt (in Spanish) "I can help make the world a better place by…" and gives space for the child to write or draw their answer. The only connection to Dr. King is in the illustration. Only Artifact 7 requires any higher-order thinking to complete; most of the artifacts do not rise above Understanding, and many are just Remembering. Some, like the coloring book, require some motor skills but virtually no cognitive demand. Six of the seven artifacts are from internet sites such as *Teachers-Pay-Teachers* or similar. The illustrations of these artifacts are of very low quality and seem almost to obscure the fact that Dr. King was Black. Artifact 4 has the caption "Martin Luther King, Jr. fought for equal rights for all Americans!" (which obscures the fact that he was fighting for equal rights for people of color), but every child in the accompanying illustration appears to be White. Many of the artifacts would require some companion material in order for students to be able to complete the activity with accuracy. It's not possible to know what teachers used or even if they used any such materials. Some artifacts like the coloring book or the handwriting/sentence order activities could be completed without any reference to Dr. King. This underscores the essential question: What should children know or be able to do?

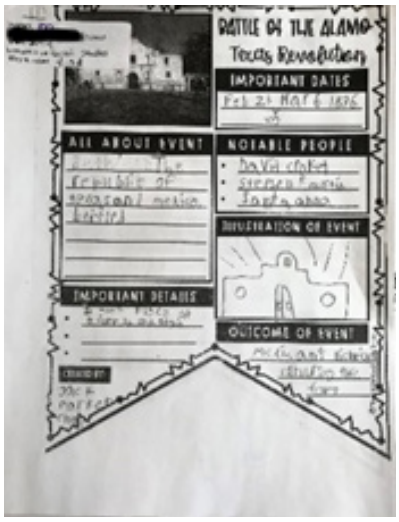
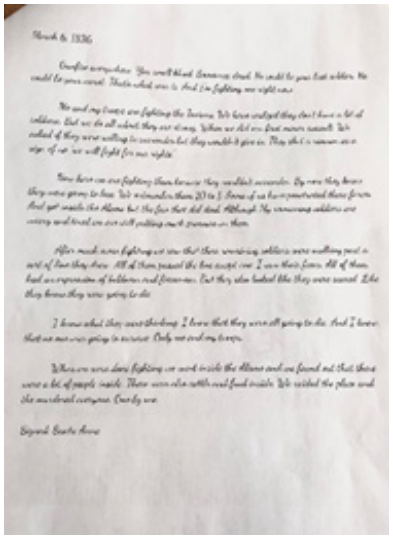
Grade Level	Standard	Artifact	Notes
1	1.2 History. The student understands how historical figures helped shape the state and nation. The student is expected to: (A) identify contributions of historical figures, including Sam Houston, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and **Martin Luther King Jr.**, who have influenced the state and nation; and (B) compare the lives of historical figures who have influenced the state and nation.	1.  2.  	**Note:** Both of these artifacts came from the same school, showing that the expectations for mastery are different classroom to classroom. The grade 1 standard for Martin Luther King, Jr. requires students to **identify** his contributions, **understand** how he helped shape the state and nation, and **compare** him to other historical figures. The standard is relatively vague – *understanding* could be shown in a multitude of ways with varying degrees of cognitive demand and engagement. *Compare* is essentially obscure – Compare how? For what purpose? To show what? Comparison doesn't occur in a vacuum; it must have a point. What should mastery look like for this part of the standard? *Identify* is clearer but is the lowest level of cognition, Remembering. The MLK artifacts from grade 1 vary in cognitive demand and engagement. Artifact 1 is a graphic organizer where students can identify key life events for Dr. King and summarize his *I Have a Dream* speech. Artifact 2 is a letter to Dr. King in which the student explains with some detail why s/he admires him. Artifact 2 represents far greater cognitive demand and engagement because it requires the child to synthesize information they have learned into a new form (the letter) while filtering that information through their own lens (why they believe he is admirable). Both artifacts require some external source of information, which is not specified. Neither artifact addresses how Dr. King shaped the state/nation or compares him to other historical figures. Both artifacts appear to be from internet resource sites. The quality of illustration is better for these artifacts than the K artifacts, but this underscores the point that internet resources can vary widely in quality and accuracy and require careful vetting.

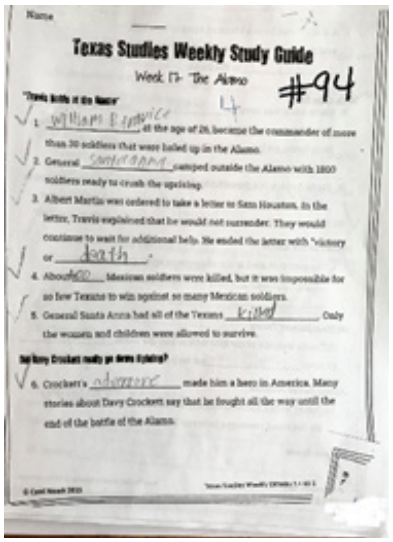
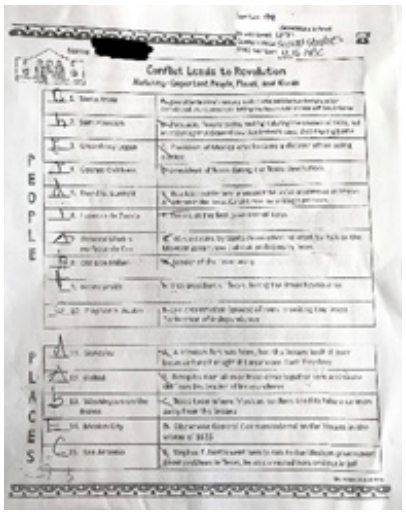
1	K.5 Economics. The student understands the difference between human needs and wants and how they are met. The student is expected to: (A) identify basic human needs of food, clothing, and shelter; (B) explain the difference between needs and wants; and (C) explain how basic human needs and wants can be met. 1.6 Economics. The student understands how families meet basic human needs. The student is expected to: (A) describe ways that families meet basic human needs; and (B) describe similarities and differences in ways families meet basic human needs. 1.8 Economics. The student understands the condition of not being able to have all the goods and services one wants. The student is expected to: (A) identify examples of people wanting more than they can have; (B) explain why wanting more than they can have requires that people make choices; and (C) identify examples of choices families make when buying goods and services.	1.  2.  	Neither grade 1 artifact meets either of the grade 1 standards. Instead both are more closely aligned to the kindergarten standard but do not extend to parts B and C of that standard. The artifacts vary in cognitive demand. Artifact 1 is of low cognitive demand. It gives the student the needs and wants and merely asks them to identify and draw things that the artifact also provides. The cognitive level here is Remembering. Artifact 2 required students to come up with their own list of needs and wants, illustrate each, and write a sentence explaining what they need or want and why. This is more cognitively demanding, requiring Analyzing and Evaluating. These two artifacts illustrate a problem with alignment to grade level standards and a problem with inconsistent mastery expectations.

1	Grade 1: No standard 2.7 Economics. The student understands the roles of producers and consumers in the production of goods and services. The student is expected to: (A) distinguish between producing and consuming; (B) identify ways in which people are both producers and consumers; and (C) trace the development of a product from a natural resource to a finished product.		Producers and Consumers do not appear in the grade 1 standards. Instead, they are addressed in grade 2. While it is fine to introduce these concepts in grade 1, there should be specific conceptual articulation so that the grade 1 activities don't replicate those of grade 2. This pair of artifacts shows the difference in expectations for mastery for this standard. The top artifact requires the student to define a Producer, identify a synonym, use it in a sentence, and illustrate it. Most of the artifact is Understanding/ Applying, but the illustration component raises it to the level of Analyzing because the student must decide how best to represent the word in another way (drawing). The bottom artifact requires the student to sort a list of given terms as either Producers or Consumers. The student does not have to make any connections to their own experiences or synthesize any information. The cognitive demand here is Remembering, the lowest on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy.

2	2.16 Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to: (C) create and interpret timelines for events in the past and present;	 	This pair of artifacts from grade 2 show the differences in expectations for mastery between schools. The standard requires students to create and interpret timelines for events past and present. The top artifact has the student creating a personal timeline using realia from their own lives and placing them in order chronologically. This is highly engaging and cognitively demanding since they must select the events they want to represent, find something to represent them, place them in order, label them, and then display their timeline to the class. This is right at the top of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy because it requires Creating. The bottom artifact gives students a timeline and asks them to answer a series of questions about the timeline (not shown). These questions include "On which day of the week did Elise play tag?" and "True/False: Elise played marbles three days before the water gun fight." The activity of this worksheet is Understanding. It is unlikely to be very engaging because it isn't particularly meaningful for the student.

3	3.1 History. The student understands how individuals, events, and ideas have influenced the history of various communities. The student is expected to: (A) describe how individuals, events, and ideas have changed communities, past and present; (B) identify individuals, including Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, Benjamin Banneker, and Benjamin Franklin, who have helped to shape communities;	1.  2.  	These artifacts illustrate differences in expectations for mastery. The standard in grade 3 requires students to identify individuals who have helped to shape communities and then describe how individuals have changed communities. Identification has been done for them. Description then becomes the focus skill. Artifact 1 requires the student to synthesize information into a new product (Creating), which is at the highest level of cognitive challenge. Artifact 2 requires them to identify 3 facts (Remembering) and explain why L'Enfant was important (Understanding). They are also supposed to draw a picture of L'Enfant, which could rise to Analysis if there were more direction than is given on the worksheet. Because there is not, the cognitive challenge of this part is not predictable.

4	3.3 History. The student understands the importance of the Texas Revolution, the Republic of Texas, and the annexation of Texas to the United States. The student is expected to: (A) analyze the causes, major events, and effects of the Texas Revolution, including the Battle of the Alamo, the Texas Declaration of Independence, the Runaway Scrape, and the Battle of San Jacinto; (B) summarize the significant contributions of individuals such as William B. Travis, James Bowie, David Crockett, Juan N. Seguín, Plácido Benavides, José Francisco Ruiz, Antonio López de Santa Anna, Susanna Dickinson, and Enrique Esparza;	1.  2.  3. 	These artifacts from grade 4 show the differences in mastery expectations between schools. The activities include fill in the blank activities (#4), matching activities (#5), recounting of basic facts and answering comprehension questions (#2), creation of a One-Pager (#1) and creation of a series of journal entries from the perspective of an eyewitness to the Battle of the Alamo (#3). Matching and fill-in-the-blank are at the lowest levels of cognition; basic facts and comprehension questions are at the level of Understanding, a One Pager and Journal Entry are at the highest levels of cognition (Creating). Students are going to get very different educational experiences, depending on which school they attend.

4		4.  Name **Texas Studies Weekly Study Guide** Week 17- The Alamo #94 1. William B. Travis at the age of 26, became the commander of more than 30 soldiers that were holed up in the Alamo. 2. General Santa Anna camped outside the Alamo with 1800 soldiers ready to crush the uprising. 3. Albert Martin was ordered to take a letter to Sam Houston. In the letter, Travis explained that he would not surrender. They would continue to wait for additional help. He ended the letter with "victory or death." 4. About 600 Mexican soldiers were killed, but it was impossible for so few Texans to win against so many Mexican soldiers. 5. General Santa Anna had all of the Texans killed. Only the women and children were allowed to survive. 6. Crockett's adventure made him a hero in America. Many stories about Davy Crockett say that he fought all the way until the end of the battle of the Alamo. 5.  Conflict Leads to Revolution PEOPLE PLACES	

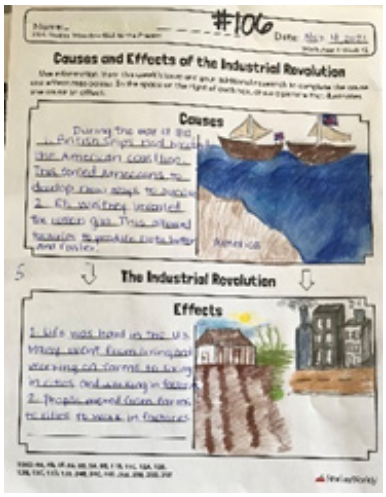
5	**TEKS:** 5.4A, B, F 5.8A, B 5.9A, B 5.11B, C 5.12A, B 5.13B, C, D, E 5.24B, C, E 5.25A, B, D, E		This artifact purports to measure 22 separate standards and sub-standards. Given the activity of the artifact and the amount of room for writing, this is not really possible. The only standard this artifact measures is 5.4A: "The student understands political, economic, and social changes that occurred in the United States during the 19th century. The student is expected to: (A) describe the causes and effects of the War of 1812 such as impressment of sailors, territorial conflicts with Great Britain, and the increase in U.S. manufacturing.

Exhibit D.5: Analysis of Specificity in Science Strands K-5

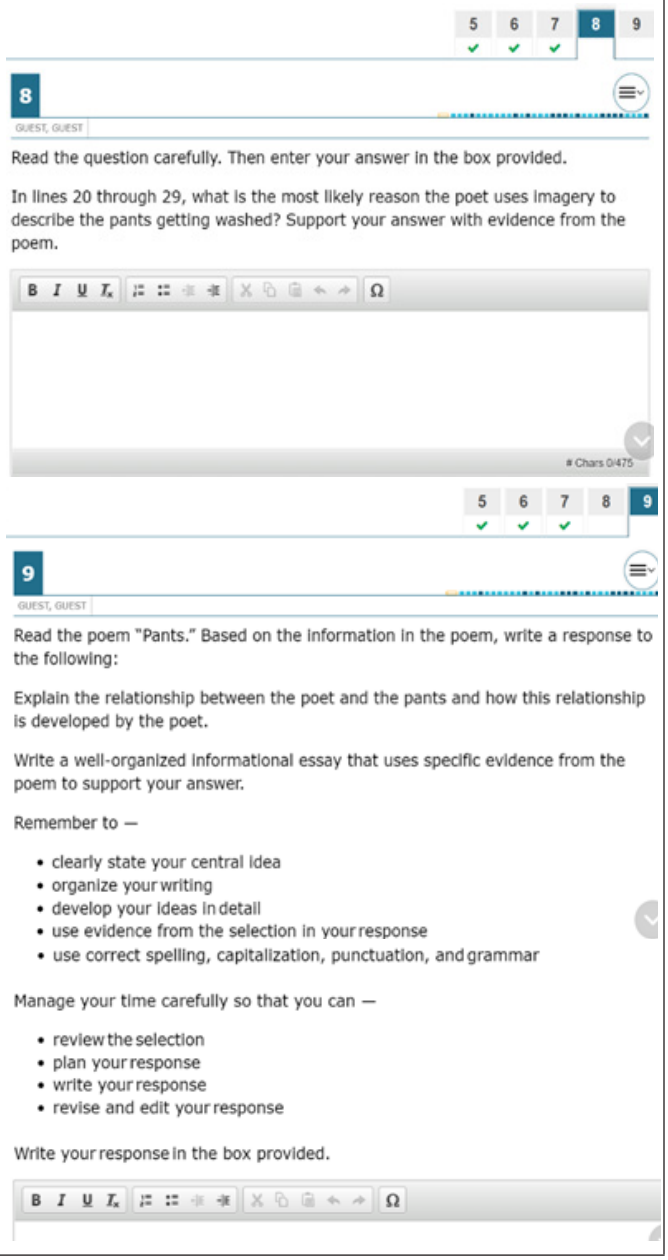
Strand	Notes
K.5 Matter and energy. (A) observe and record properties of objects, including bigger or smaller, heavier or lighter, shape, color, and texture; and (B) observe, record, and discuss how materials can be changed by heating or cooling.	Most of the artifacts about matter were States of Matter – Solids, Liquids, Gases – and required the student to classify matter as a solid, liquid, or gas. These artifacts appeared in kindergarten and grade 2. However, the actual requirement to classify by the three states of matter doesn't appear in the standards until grade 3. The K standard requires observing and recording properties like size, weight, shape, color, and texture and how materials can be changed by heating or cooling. The teacher has to guess here what materials to use and what changes from heating/cooling to focus on. Grade 1 is almost identical to K except it adds predicting changes to materials through heating/cooling and classifying objects by materials. This is not explained, but might include metal, wood, liquids like water or juice, plastics, bones, etc. Again, the teacher has to guess. Grade 2 adds more distinctions: temperature, flexibility, solids and liquids. Students must now compare changes due to heat/cooling. They must also demonstrate ways they can change the physical properties of something and use a combination of materials to build a structure, justifying their selection of materials based on their properties. Justifying implies a written product of some sort to go with the physical structure. Grade 3 adds testing properties—mass, magnetism, density—and students are asked to classify matter as solid, liquid or gas. Approaches to this are not clear, and no way of demonstrating mastery is offered.
1.5 Matter and energy. (A) classify objects by observable properties such as larger and smaller, heavier and lighter, shape, color, and texture; (B) predict and identify changes in materials caused by heating and cooling; and (C) classify objects by the materials from which they are made.	
2.5 Matter and energy. (A) classify matter by physical properties, including relative temperature, texture, flexibility, and whether material is a solid or liquid; (B) compare changes in materials caused by heating and cooling; (C) demonstrate that things can be done to materials such as cutting, folding, sanding, and melting to change their physical properties; and (D) combine materials that when put together can do things that they cannot do by themselves such as building a tower or a bridge and justify the selection of those materials based on their physical properties.	

Strand	Notes
3.5 Matter and energy. (A) measure, test, and record physical properties of matter, including temperature, mass, magnetism, and the ability to sink or float; (B) describe and classify samples of matter as solids, liquids, and gases and demonstrate that solids have a definite shape and that liquids and gases take the shape of their container; (C) predict, observe, and record changes in the state of matter caused by heating or cooling such as ice becoming liquid water, condensation forming on the outside of a glass of ice water, or liquid water being heated to the point of becoming water vapor; and (D) explore and recognize that a mixture is created when two materials are combined such as gravel and sand or metal and plastic paper clips.	Grade 4 requires students to compare and contrast physical properties like mass, volume, states, temperature, magnetism and density. Including mass and volume implies that teachers must include liquids and solids. Magnetism implies metals and non-metals. Grade 5 has students classify matter based on mass, magnetism, physical state, relative density, solubility in water, and conductivity for thermal/electric energy. The implication here is that students now have multiple tools they can use to classify matter; it further implies that teachers must not only teach them how to use the tools but also when to use them and for what purpose. It would be helpful to students (and teachers) to understand how and why actual scientists use classification. This strand is somewhat specific, with enough information to inform teachers of the content under study. However, there is little direction (other than verbs used) on what mastery of this strand would look like at every grade level. What should students be able to do?
4.5 Matter and energy. (A) measure, compare, and contrast physical properties of matter, including mass, volume, states (solid, liquid, gas), temperature, magnetism, and the ability to sink or float; and (B) compare and contrast a variety of mixtures, including solutions.	
5.5 Matter and energy. (A) classify matter based on measurable, testable, and observable physical properties, including mass, magnetism, physical state (solid, liquid, and gas), relative density (sinking and floating using water as a reference point), solubility in water, and the ability to conduct or insulate thermal energy or electric energy; (B) demonstrate that some mixtures maintain physical properties of their ingredients such as iron filings and sand and sand and water; and (C) identify changes that can occur in the physical properties of the ingredients of solutions such as dissolving salt in water or adding lemon juice to water.	

Strand	Notes
K.8 Earth and space. (A) observe and describe weather changes from day to day and over seasons; (B) identify events that have repeating patterns, including seasons of the year	This strand has two parts: but only Weather is analyzed here. Kindergarten: Students are to observe weather day to day and over seasons. They must also identify repeating patterns like seasons. Teachers have to guess what students are supposed to do to demonstrate mastery of this standard because observe just means watch and is meaningless here as a measure of mastery; identify just means they must correctly name the season. There are a lot of ways a teacher might interpret these standards, with commensurate differences in rigor. Grade 1: Students must record weather information and understand concepts like hot/cold, cloudy/clear, calm/windy, rainy/icy. They must also identify characteristics of seasons. Teachers will have to guess how students should demonstrate mastery for most of this standard. Auditors found artifacts recording daily weather in grades K, 2, and 3. Grade 2: Students must now measure, record, and graph weather information, including temperature, wind, precipitation, and cloud cover, and identify patterns in their data. They must also tie this information to how we make decisions about clothing, activities and transportation. Auditors found artifacts graphing local weather in grades K and 2. Grade 3: Students must observe, measure, record, and compare weather changes in different locations at the same time. Auditors found artifacts tracking (but not graphing) weather in other places in grades 2 and 3. Grade 4: Students must measure, record, and predict changes in weather. The key verb here is predict. How they will be able to predict weather changes is not clearly specified, nor is what students should do to demonstrate mastery. Auditors found one artifact asking students to predict weather based on cloud types, but the artifact did not require recording weather. Grade 5: Students must differentiate between weather and climate. How mastery should be demonstrated is not clear from the wording of the standard. Simply giving a definition of each would technically fulfill the standard. This could be connected to earlier standards from grade 3 where students are looking at weather from different places.
1.8 Earth and space (A) record weather information, including relative temperature such as hot or cold, clear or cloudy, calm or windy, and rainy or icy; (B) observe and record changes in the appearance of objects in the sky such as the Moon and stars, including the Sun; (C) identify characteristics of the seasons of the year	
2.8 Earth and space (A) measure, record, and graph weather information, including temperature, wind conditions, precipitation, and cloud coverage, in order to identify patterns in the data; (B) identify the importance of weather and seasonal information to make choices in clothing, activities, and transportation;	
3.8 Earth and space (A) observe, measure, record, and compare day-to-day weather changes in different locations at the same time that include air temperature, wind direction, and precipitation;	
4.8 Earth and space (A) measure, record, and predict changes in weather;	
5.8 Earth and space (A) differentiate between weather and climate;	

Strand	Notes
	Several parts in this strand are either unclear or poorly worded. Without a clear articulation and specific guidelines for how mastery should be demonstrated, teachers are free to interpret the standards in any way they want, which may lead to inconsistencies in content and cognitive demand.
K.7 Earth and space (A) observe, describe, and sort rocks by size, shape, color, and texture;	This strand includes rocks and soil, earth surface changes, and water sources. Only rocks and soil are addressed here. Kindergarten: The standard asks students to sort by specific properties such as size, shape, color and texture. Grade 1: Students must observe, compare, and describe components of soil by size, texture and color. Which components are not specified. Auditors found artifacts on Properties of Soil and Soil Layers in the Ground in grade 1 but also in grade 4. Grade 2: This standard is virtually identical to the kindergarten standard. How do the activities in grade 2 move these concepts forward? Grade 3: This requires students to explore and record how soils are formed. Explore as a verb here is not clear. How are they to demonstrate mastery of exploring? Grade 4: Students must examine properties of soils – color, texture, water retention. The way the standard is worded, it seems as though the student's ability to examine is being assessed. What, exactly, must students do to demonstrate mastery of this standard? Auditors found artifacts dealing with Properties of Soil and Soil Layers in the Ground at this grade level as well as artifacts on water holding capabilities of soils. Grade 5: Students must explore the processes that led to the formation of rocks and fossil fuels. Again, the wording implies that the student's ability to explore is what is measured. What must they do to demonstrate mastery? This strand does not specify mastery well enough to help teachers plan for instruction. It's also not well articulated from grade level to grade level. These two things in combination mean that much is left for the individual teacher to interpret.
1.7 Earth and space (A) observe, compare, describe, and sort components of soil by size, texture, and color;	
2.7 Earth and space (A) observe, describe, and compare rocks by size, texture, and color;	
3.7 Earth and space (A) explore and record how soils are formed by weathering of rock and the decomposition of plant and animal remains;	
4.7 Earth and space (A) examine properties of soils, including color and texture, capacity to retain water, and ability to support the growth of plants;	
5.7 Earth and space (A) explore the processes that led to the formation of sedimentary rocks and fossil fuels;	

Exhibit D.6: Analysis of STAAR 2.0 Poetry Released Items

Grade Level	STAAR 2.0 Text	STAAR 2.0 Task
3	**Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question.** **Pants** *by Mordical Gerstein* We go everywhere together. You carry my treasures for me. When I find grass on your knees and sand in your pockets, I know where I've been. We go everywhere together except the washing machine. "Don't let them put me in there!" you beg. "Or at least come with me!" But all I can do is watch you go round and round in the little window, tumbling in the suds, like me when I'm caught in an ocean wave. I hear your buttons clicking in the spinning dryer. You emerge, limp and lifeless, till I slip my legs inside you. You're alive again! Eager for our next adventure! DEAR HOT DOG by Mordical Gerstein, Copyright © 2011 by Mordical Gerstein. Used by permission of Abrams Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York. All rights reserved.	 5 6 7 8 9 8 GUEST, GUEST Read the question carefully. Then enter your answer in the box provided. In lines 20 through 29, what is the most likely reason the poet uses imagery to describe the pants getting washed? Support your answer with evidence from the poem. # Chars 0/475 5 6 7 8 9 9 GUEST, GUEST Read the poem "Pants." Based on the information in the poem, write a response to the following: Explain the relationship between the poet and the pants and how this relationship is developed by the poet. Write a well-organized informational essay that uses specific evidence from the poem to support your answer. Remember to — • clearly state your central idea • organize your writing • develop your ideas in detail • use evidence from the selection in your response • use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar Manage your time carefully so that you can — • review the selection • plan your response • write your response • revise and edit your response Write your response in the box provided.

Notes: In this grade 3 item, students must read a poem they've never seen before and answer a series of questions that measure comprehension and also understanding of vocabulary and imagery. The questions shown here are the two most difficult from the series; both involving writing. The first is a constructed short response, and the second is an extended response.

- The short response item requires the student to be able to explain how imagery contributes to the poem – why the poet chose to use imagery in the description of the pants and what effect that imagery has on the reader. The student will need a good understanding of imagery and what its function is in poetry. The student will also need to be able to evaluate possible reasons why a poet would use the specific imagery s/he chose for this poem and what s/he was trying to achieve with it. This means the student has to infer the poet's intent. The cognitive demand of this item is Evaluating.
- The extended response item is more complex and requires the student to be able to define the relationship between the poet and the pants, trace how the poet develops that relationship throughout the poem by identifying details, explain the relationship in an essay with a clear central thesis, well-organized and fleshed-out supporting ideas using specific evidence from the poem, and use correct conventions and expression. They must also be able to review and revise their writing as needed before submitting. There is also an injunction to use the time wisely so there may be a timing component as well, changing the context of the test item. In the sample item, students complete the test using word processing tools, meaning they must type their answers, another significant aspect of the context. The cognitive demand of this item is Creating – the student is fusing a lot of information into an entirely new form. To achieve this level of cognitition requires all the other thinking types.

In order to have success on *STAAR 2.0*, students will need ample practice on these most difficult items – the content, context, and cognitive demand so that they are not surprised when they take the test. Although there were many poetry artifacts in the K-5 sample, none required this type of activity. Many required Creating, but this was for the purposes of writing one's own poetry, not for analyzing and evaluating a poem or poems and synthesizing that analysis/evaluation into a new form. This type of test-item analysis should be conducted for all the most difficult released items in every content area to ensure student practice activities are aligned in all three dimensions.

Exhibit D.7: Diversity and Inclusion in ELA Literature

Grade Level	Diverse	Neutral	Not Diverse	Undetermined
K-5	Snowmen at Night/ Buehner Sundae My Prince Will Come/Nelson* My Mouth is a Volcano/ Cook Home/author unknown Holes/Sachar Going Places/Reynolds How Music Came to the World/Ober Wonder/Palacio Esperanza Rising/ Munoz Ryan	Bear Snores On/ Wilson Good Boy Fergus/ Shannon The Snowman/ author unknown Penguins: The Fanciest Birds Around/author unknown Great Barrier Reef Poem/Garcia Tale of Despereaux/ DiCamillo* Cloudette/ Lichtenheld Tacky the Penguin/ Lester	Because of Winn Dixie/DiCamillo* The Maddie Diaries/Ziegler* Wish/O'Connor The Fighting Ground/Avi* The Mystery of the Muddy Footprint/ author unknown Scribbles/unknown Waiting for Eddie's Letter/unknown Turn it Down/unknown Lucky Returns/unknown Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark/ Schwartz* The Fortune Wookie/Angleberger* The Cricket in Times Square/ Selden*+ Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone/Rowling* The Witches/Dahl	Because of Mr. Terupt
	28%		**44%**	
6-8	A Long Walk to Water/ Park*# Eleven/Cisneros# Walk Two Moons/ Creech# Night (excerpt)/Wiesel # The Treasure of Lemon Brown/Myers# The School Play/Soto# Charlie Thorne and the Last Equation/Gibbs#	A Whale of the Wild/Parry#	Fahrenheit 451/Bradbury@# The City of Ember/DuPrau* A Christmas Carol/Dickens (video) # The Giver/Lowry @ First They Came for the Communists/Niemöller #@ I Survived the Attacks of September 11th/Tarshish* All the Things that Could Go Wrong/ Foster*@ Divergent/Roth*@ Tangerine/Bloor@ The River/Paulsen	
	39%	**5%**	**56%**	

9-12	*Address to America's School Children*/ Obama^ Night/Wiesel I Have a Dream/King How Long? Not Long?/ King Alchemist Man's Search for Meaning/Frankl Schindler's List (video) The Scholarship Jacket/ Salinas		Speak/Anderson^ To Kill a Mockingbird/Lee*@ The Story of an Hour/Chopin Letters of Abigail Adams/Adams The Crucible/Miller The Great Gatsby/Fitzgerald *Address to the Nation on 9/11*/Bush The Hobbit/Tolkien# The Canterbury Tales/Chaucer^ Into the Wild/Krakauer Taming of the Shrew/Shakespeare# Let There Be Dark/Brogard^ All the Light We Cannot See/Doerr Eye of the Beholder/Serling	
	36%		**64%**	

Key: *Student selected book
+Book has been criticized for racist portrayals of non-White characters
Honors only
@Includes themes criticizing the oppression of marginalized groups or includes supporting characters of color or from marginalized groups
^AP/PreAP only

Appendix E: Criteria and Characteristics of Quality Policies for Focus Areas One Through Five

Curriculum Management Improvement Model Criteria and Characteristics of Quality Policies for Focus Area One

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

Audit Criteria and Characteristics
Focus Area One: District Vision and Accountability
Requires the development of a system-wide, long-range plan that is updated annually; incorporates system-wide student learning targets; and is evaluated using a variety of both formative and summative measures.
Expects school and other district plans to be congruent with the vision, goals, and expectations of the district long-range plan.
Expects plans that coordinate expectations for curriculum design and development, professional development, student assessment and program evaluation, and other critical functions across the district, in order to assure alignment with district vision, mission, and goals.
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Curriculum Management Improvement Model Criteria and Characteristics of Quality Policies for Focus Area Two

Audit Criteria and Characteristics
Focus Area Two: Curriculum
2.1 Written curriculum that defines the content that must be learned and provides suggestions for how to support that learning in congruence with district vision
Requires curriculum to define, sequence, and bundle (pace) the content (concepts, skills, knowledge, vocabulary, etc.).
Requires curriculum to provide adequate suggestions for how teachers should approach the content and how students should practice and demonstrate the content, in alignment with district vision.
Requires curriculum to specify a variety of measures to monitor progress that also reflects the district vision.
Directs that curriculum provide scaffolds and supports so teachers have the tools they need to differentiate.
Requires the curriculum to allow for flexibility in pacing and instructional decision making so teachers have the ability to respond to students' needs and interests/backgrounds, while maintaining on-grade-level learning.
Requires the written curriculum to support the needs of specific student groups with suggestions for strategies and activities in an integrated fashion (within the curriculum itself, not as a separate or isolated component).
Includes clear expectations for assuring user-friendliness, feasibility, and access when electronically housing/providing access to curriculum.
Specifies how the curriculum supports learning in both in-person and virtual formats.
2.2 Periodic review/update of the curriculum and aligned resources and assessments
Requires the development of procedures to both formatively and summatively review the quality and effectiveness of all curriculum in all grade levels and content areas.
Requires the annual review of test banks, benchmark assessments, and other assessment instruments for deep alignment (meets and exceeds CCC dimensions) with the district or state accountability system.
Requires the evaluation of all assessment instruments for alignment to the district curriculum in all three dimensions: content, context, and cognitive type.
Requires the periodic review of all resources for alignment to the content of the district curriculum in all three dimensions (CCC), and prior to adoption for use.
Requires the review of all externally-adopted assessment instruments for alignment to the district's vision and philosophy for instructional approach.
2.3 Textbook/resource alignment to curriculum and assessment
Requires textbooks/resources to be regularly reviewed and the resource revision/adoption cycle to align with the curriculum revision cycle.

Audit Criteria and Characteristics
Focus Area Two: Curriculum
Directs review of all new instructional resource materials for content, context, and cognitive type alignment to the district curriculum and assessment.
Directs district staff to identify discrete areas where alignment is missing and provide teachers with supplementary materials to address gaps in alignment (missing content, inadequate contexts, etc.).
Requires that all resources used in the district reflect the diversity and backgrounds of its students.
2.4 Content area emphasis
Directs the yearly identification of subject areas that require additional focus and/or support based on a review of assessment results.
Within subject areas, requires identification by administration of specific objectives, contexts, cognitive types, and instructional practices to receive budgetary support.
Requires focused professional development and coaching to support the instructional delivery of identified priorities within content areas.
2.5 Program integration and alignment to the district's written curriculum
Directs that all subject-related (e.g., reading, Title I) and school-wide (e.g., tutoring, DARE, AVID) programs be reviewed for alignment to the written and assessed curriculum, as well as the district vision and expectations for student engagement.
Requires written procedures for both formative and summative evaluation of all new subject-related and school-wide programs before submission to the board for approval.
Directs administrative staff to prepare annual recommendations for subject-related and school-wide program revision, expansion, or termination based on student achievement.
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Curriculum Management Improvement Model Criteria and Characteristics of Quality Policies for Focus Area Three

Audit Criteria and Characteristics
Focus Area Three: Consistency and Equity
3.1 Delivery of the adopted district curriculum
Identifies curriculum as the definition of what students should learn and student learning as the primary goal for delivering the district curriculum.
Requires all personnel to deliver the curriculum as approved by the board.
Identifies an instructional model for delivering the curriculum in response to student need, as evidenced in data from multiple assessment tools.
Requires an annual report to the board regarding the status and effectiveness of curriculum delivery.
Specifies the strategies, approaches, and student engagement that reflect the district's vision and expectations.
Requires the delivery of curriculum to reflect consistent content expectations (on-grade-level) across the district within a grade level or course (horizontal coordination).
Requires the delivery of curriculum to be sequenced and spiraled from one grade level to the next, consistently across the district (vertical articulation).
Specifies the role of the curriculum in supporting lesson planning (but not providing them).
3.2 Professional development for staff in the delivery of the district curriculum
Identifies the primary purpose of professional development: to support the effective delivery of the district curriculum to improve and increase student learning district-wide.

Audit Criteria and Characteristics
Focus Area Three: Consistency and Equity
Requires all professional development initiatives to align to the district vision, goals, and expectations related to student engagement and learning.
Directs the development and implementation of a district professional development plan focused on effective curriculum delivery that is congruent with the district long-range plan and vision for the system.
Requires a process whereby staff are coached over time in the implementation of professional development initiatives.
Directs the regular evaluation of the impact of professional development on student learning, using both formative and summative measures.
3.3 Monitoring, coaching, and supporting the delivery of the district curriculum
Specifies the purposes of curriculum monitoring and coaching and expectations concerning the process.
Specifies other measures to determine strengths, weaknesses, and inconsistencies in the curriculum delivered to students (collection of student work, walk-throughs by central office curricular personnel, student surveys, data from common assessments).
Delineates the district philosophy concerning classroom visits/monitoring and coaching procedures, and distinguishes between coaching and the appraisal process.
Requires periodic school and classroom data-gathering reports from administrators detailing the status of the delivery of the curriculum across the district and links the reports to professional development and curriculum revision planning for the upcoming year.
3.4 Student access to the curriculum, resources, programs, and services
Requires equal student access to the curriculum and instructional resources.
Requires that identification of students by gender or ethnicity for special programs (AVID, GT, SPED) be proportional with their representation in the general population.
Directs the development of procedures for fast-tracking students who lack sufficient prerequisite skills for courses such as AP, honors, etc., but need more challenging content.
Requires all students to have appropriate instructional materials for a variety of learning levels and modes, and appropriate facilities to support the learning environment necessary to deliver the district curriculum.
Specifies expectations for all students to have equal access to on-level, rigorous, and meaningful content, with scaffolding and supports when gaps exist to assure academic success.
3.5 Equitable and bias-free educational environment
Has clear expectations for ensuring all students have an equitable school experience free from discrimination and bias.
Defines equity and specifies district goals related to equity, diversity, and inclusion.
Communicates expectations for addressing equity and eradicating discrimination and bias across the district.
Establishes guidelines for equity within the context of the district's instructional vision and philosophy that inform and direct curriculum design, development, and revision and professional development initiatives.
Requires an annual review of all data related to assuring and maintaining equity (access to programs, rigor, high quality teaching/learning, discipline and retention data, resource allocation).

Curriculum Management Improvement Model Criteria and Characteristics of Quality Policies for Focus Area Four

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

Curriculum Management Improvement Model Criteria and Characteristics of Quality Policies for Focus Area Five

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

Audit Criteria and Characteristics
Focus Area Five: Productivity
5.6 Change processes for long-term institutionalization of district priority goals
Requires the identification of strategies, grounded in documented assessment of program success or efficacy, to be used by the district to ensure long-term institutionalization of change.
Directs the development of school improvement plans that address the use of specific change strategies at the building level to ensure the institutionalization of change and improved results or performance.
Directs that all district, department, and program plans incorporate procedures for change strategies to ensure the institutionalization of change for improvement; and include procedures with formative and summative practices that provide data about change implementation and effectiveness.

Appendix F: Curriculum Management Improvement Model Decision-Making Matrix

Tightly-held (Non-negotiable) District Level	Loosely-held (Aligned to the Tightly-held but Negotiable by School) School/Classroom Level
Ends **(Curriculum and Aligned Assessments)**	**Means** **(Instruction and Programs)**
• Vision, Mission (district, program-specific) • Goals (district goals, program goals) • Philosophy, Beliefs about education (district) • Priorities (district, program) • Standards, objectives for students • Curriculum—Outcomes/Student Expectations/ Objectives • Assessment—aligned to curriculum, criterion-based, benchmark, formative, and diagnostic (progress-monitoring, skill checks, performance-based)	• Differentiation of when students (individual and groups) get which standards/outcomes/student expectations/objectives • Processes, procedures • Instructional strategies • Resources, textbooks, etc. • Program implementation • Groupings • Staffing • Informal assessments for classroom purposes
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Appendix G: Scope of Curriculum

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