



Systemic Instructional Review: Final Report

HAYWARD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



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2024

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Acknowledgments

This Systemic Instructional Review (SIR) was conducted by WestEd, in partnership with the Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE) and Hayward Unified School District (HUSD).

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Juwen Lam, ACOE Chief of Accountability Partnerships, and Dr. Lisa Davies, HUSD Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, served as essential leaders and collaborative partners throughout the SIR.

The SIR team extends immense gratitude to all of the HUSD central office administrators, school administrators, teachers, classified staff, labor partner representatives, students, and families who participated in interviews, focus groups, and input sessions. The SIR team also extends appreciation to those school leaders and educators who welcomed WestEd team members onto their campuses and into their classrooms to conduct observations. The insights and experiences shared by all of these leaders and members of the HUSD community were instrumental in informing the development of the SIR.

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Suggested citation: Boas, E., Krausen, K., Caparas, R., Sabalbuero, E., & Lias, C. (2024). *Hayward Unified School District Systemic Instructional Review: Final report*. WestEd.

WestEd is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that aims to improve the lives of children and adults at all ages of learning and development. We do this by addressing challenges in education and human development, reducing opportunity gaps, and helping build communities where all can thrive. WestEd staff conduct and apply research, provide technical assistance, and support professional learning. We work with early learning educators, classroom teachers, local and state leaders, and policymakers at all levels of government.

Executive Summary

During the 2023/24 school year, WestEd partnered with the Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE) and the Hayward Unified School District (HUSD) to conduct a Systemic Instructional Review (SIR) of HUSD. The SIR is intended to inform ACOE's ongoing support of HUSD in the coming years and guide the district's efforts to improve student outcomes. The purpose of the SIR is to provide findings and prioritized recommendations to the county office of education and the district about high-leverage areas for improvement—and potential strategies to address those areas—based on data collected through the review. This report conveys the SIR's findings and recommendations.

HUSD serves a diverse student population, including high proportions of socioeconomically disadvantaged students and English learners. While facing challenges such as declining enrollment and low academic proficiency rates, particularly in math, the district demonstrates several notable strengths.

HUSD's strengths include

- a strong commitment to equity and anti-bias/anti-racism (ABAR) initiatives,
- a diverse and dedicated teaching staff with deep community roots,
- recent investments in technology and facility upgrades,
- increased efforts in family communication and outreach, and
- valuable partnerships with local organizations to support students and families.

To build on these strengths and address challenges, HUSD should focus on creating structures and engaging education partners to drive meaningful improvement. A key finding is that professional learning (PL) in the district is often theoretical, optional, and/or disconnected from practice. To remedy this, HUSD should ensure that all PL includes an explicit connection between theory and teacher practice and offers support for implementation. Implementation support—such as modeling of effective practice, coaching, and opportunities for feedback and reflection—is central to ensuring that PL is effective and translates to changes in teacher practice ([Darling-Hammond et al., 2017](#)).

Additional recommendations include the following:

- Prioritize academic instruction as the focus for mandatory teacher PL.
- Integrate equity, anti-racism, and social–emotional learning into academic instruction through PL on culturally responsive education, with a focus on concrete steps for classroom instruction.

- Collaborate with labor partners to determine key instructional topics for future required PL.
- Reevaluate the current use of staff meetings and consider using some of them as opportunities to provide PL on key instructional areas.
- Develop a structured approach to weekly Common Planning Time that balances district/site support with teacher leadership.
- Establish a clear, data-driven process for student interventions and strengthen support for students with individualized education programs in general education classrooms.
- Establish routines for reviewing student data on progress toward fulfilling graduation requirements and expand credit recovery opportunities as needed.
- Align curricula and instructional practices across all school sites.
- Implement common local assessments across schools and classrooms.

By focusing on these key areas while leveraging its existing strengths, HUSD can create a more cohesive and effective approach to improving instruction, supporting teachers, and ultimately enhancing student outcomes. The success of these efforts will depend on the commitment and collaboration of the entire HUSD community, including district leadership, school administrators, teachers, and labor partners. A next step in this work will be to identify the assets needed to implement these improvement efforts districtwide.

To support these efforts, HUSD should prioritize and streamline district initiatives, focus on building a collaborative relationship with the teachers' union, and establish systems for data collection and use to inform instruction and resource allocation. HUSD and the union should work collaboratively to take joint responsibility for accelerating student outcomes and should prioritize student outcomes over teacher autonomy. Crucially, all teachers should be required and supported to implement the effective instructional practices and data use routines that HUSD adopts. This will require a shift in district culture, emphasizing the integration of PL with classroom practice and providing ongoing implementation support.



Introduction

During the 2023/24 school year, WestEd partnered with the Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE) and the Hayward Unified School District (HUSD) to conduct a Systemic Instructional Review (SIR) of HUSD. The SIR is intended to inform ACOE's ongoing support of HUSD in the coming years and guide the district's efforts to improve student outcomes. This report conveys the SIR's findings and recommendations.

Under California's accountability system, HUSD became eligible for more intensive support due to significant and persistent disparities in performance for multiple student groups over multiple years.¹ Specifically, after release of the 2022 California School Dashboard (the Dashboard), HUSD was identified as eligible for intensive support based on the performance of foster youth, students with individualized education programs (IEPs), and students experiencing homelessness.² Currently, based on 2023 Dashboard data, HUSD is also eligible for differentiated assistance based on the performance of two of these same student groups (foster youth and students experiencing homelessness) as well as on the performance of Hispanic students and English learners.

To conduct the SIR, the WestEd research team worked in close collaboration with leadership from HUSD and ACOE. The team met regularly with the ACOE Chief of Accountability Services to debrief on activities to date, reflect on progress, and define and refine next steps. The team also met regularly with HUSD leadership to plan and coordinate each step of the SIR process and for reflection and collaboration.

1 California Education Code Section 52072 stipulates that districts qualify for more intensive support from the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) "if a school district meets the criteria established pursuant to subdivision (g) of Section 52064.5 for three or more pupil subgroups identified pursuant to Section 52052 or, if the school district has less than three pupil subgroups, all of the school district's pupil subgroups, in three out of four consecutive school years." After submitting a request to the CCEE, ACOE was approved to partner with WestEd to conduct the SIR of HUSD.

2 Eligibility for more intensive support was based on student performance in the 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, and 2022/23 school years.

SIR Purpose

The purpose of the SIR is to provide findings and prioritized recommendations to the county office of education and HUSD on high-leverage areas of improvement—and potential strategies to address those areas—based on data collected through a systemic review. “High leverage” areas are (1) directly connected to student outcomes (academic achievement and well-being), particularly for those students most underserved by the school system, and (2) within the control of the district and schools to address. In addition to identifying areas for improvement, the findings highlight HUSD’s key strengths and opportunities to build upon existing strengths and assets. Recommendations are intended as a roadmap to help guide the county office of education’s ongoing support through differentiated assistance and HUSD’s efforts to improve student outcomes.

The SIR included a deep, systemic review of HUSD, with a focus on six education system components based on those described in the [Local Educational Agency \(LEA\) Self-Assessment](#). Developed by county office of education leaders statewide, the LEA Self-Assessment’s six components—each with a set of subcomponents—describe key areas of focus for school districts engaged in improvement work. Consequently, they are a familiar focus of improvement work within HUSD.

The six components that are the focus of this SIR are as follows:

Component 1: Safe and Supportive Learning Environments

Component 2: Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

Component 3: Leadership and Governance

Component 4: Professional Learning for All

Component 5: Infrastructure Alignment

Component 6: Clear & Collaborative Relationships

Because the SIR is centered on equity, its activities are designed to identify the policies, processes, and practices contributing to inequities in the school system.

Organization of This Report

The HUSD SIR is structured to offer a comprehensive analysis of current district systems, policies, and processes and to provide actionable insights to inform the district's future improvement efforts.

- The Executive Summary offers an overview of findings and recommendations.
- Section 1, Hayward Unified School District Context, describes HUSD's student enrollment, demographics, and proficiency rates.
- Section 2, Methods, outlines the methodology employed in the SIR and describes the processes undertaken to gather information. It details the timeline and the qualitative and quantitative approaches taken, including interviews, document review, and data analyses.
- Section 3, Findings by Component (Strengths and Areas for Improvement), conveys detailed findings for each of the SIR's six components, organized by strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- Section 4, Recommendations and Next Steps, provides a set of recommendations that direct HUSD toward concrete actions that draw on the district's strengths to address high-leverage opportunities for improvement. These recommendations derive from the rich data and analyses presented throughout the report, ensuring that the proposed solutions are grounded in evidence and tailored to the district's specific context.

Section 1



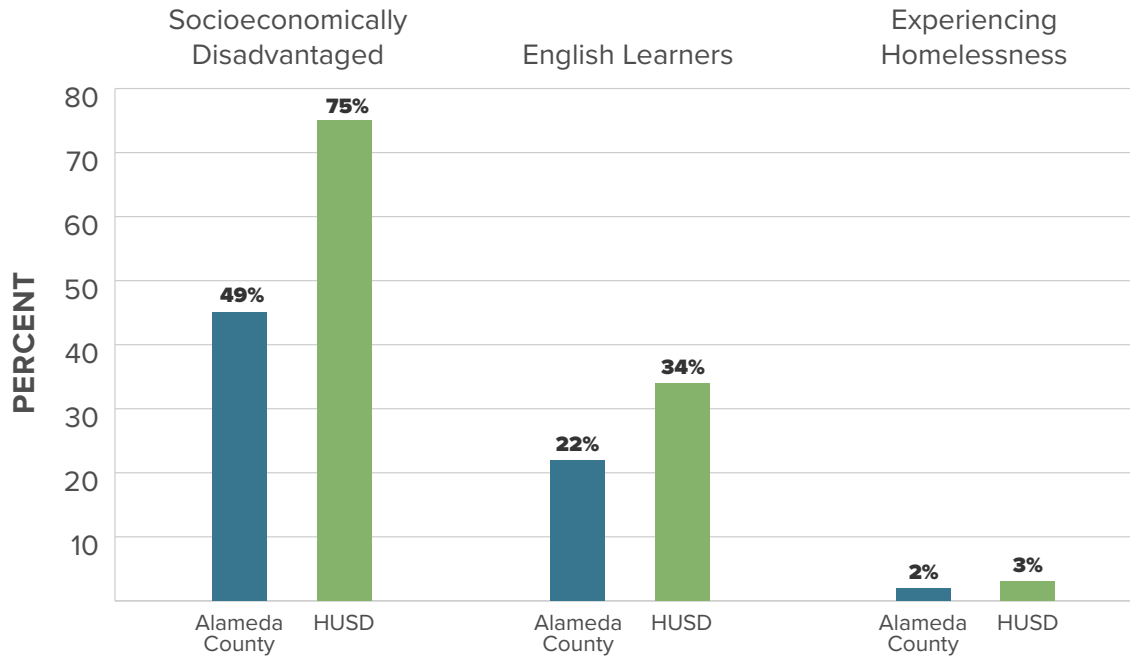
Hayward Unified School District Context

Since 2018/19, HUSD has faced a greater demand for comprehensive academic and support services. One factor is connected to student demographics. For example, since 2018/19, HUSD has experienced a 3 percent increase in the number of students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, making its proportion of socioeconomically disadvantaged students roughly 1.5 times higher than the countywide average.³ In HUSD, three in four students are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and one in three students are English learners. Although the need for comprehensive academic and support services has risen in schools all across the county since 2019, the increased demand in HUSD for a range of student supports and services is particularly pronounced.

At the same time, HUSD has been grappling with declining enrollment. Since 2018/19, the district's enrollment has declined by 8 percent, a rate roughly 1.5 times greater than the countywide enrollment decline. Because declining enrollment leads to a decline in revenue, it presents a notable challenge when trying to increase supports and services.

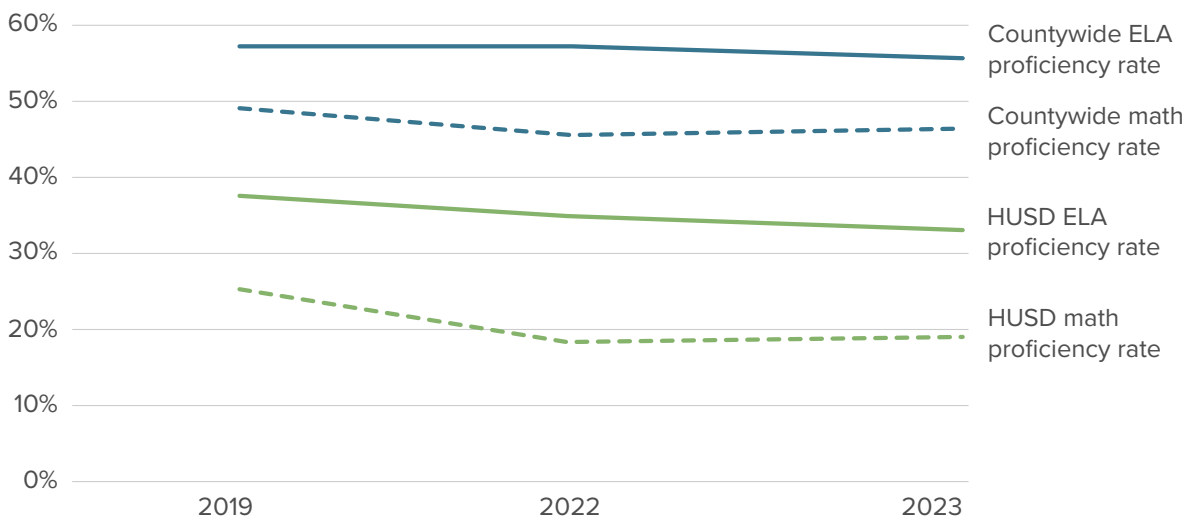
³ This section uses the term *English learner* because this is the language used by California's statewide student data and accountability systems. In other sections, however, the report uses the term *multilingual learner* as a more asset-based alternative that recognizes the value of students' existing language abilities.

Figure 1: Greater proportions of students are socioeconomically disadvantaged, English learners, and/or experiencing homelessness in HUSD than in Alameda County on average.



Many HUSD students are not attaining proficiency in math and English language arts (ELA), particularly upper elementary and secondary students and especially with regard to math proficiency. Academic proficiency declined and chronic absenteeism rates increased from 2018/19 through 2021/22, although chronic absenteeism showed some improvement by the 2022/23 school year. Notably, these outcomes are highly variable across schools within HUSD and across grades within each school. Proficiency rates declined most sharply between grades 3 and 5.

Figure 2: Compared to students across Alameda County, a smaller percentage of HUSD students are meeting or exceeding proficiency standards.

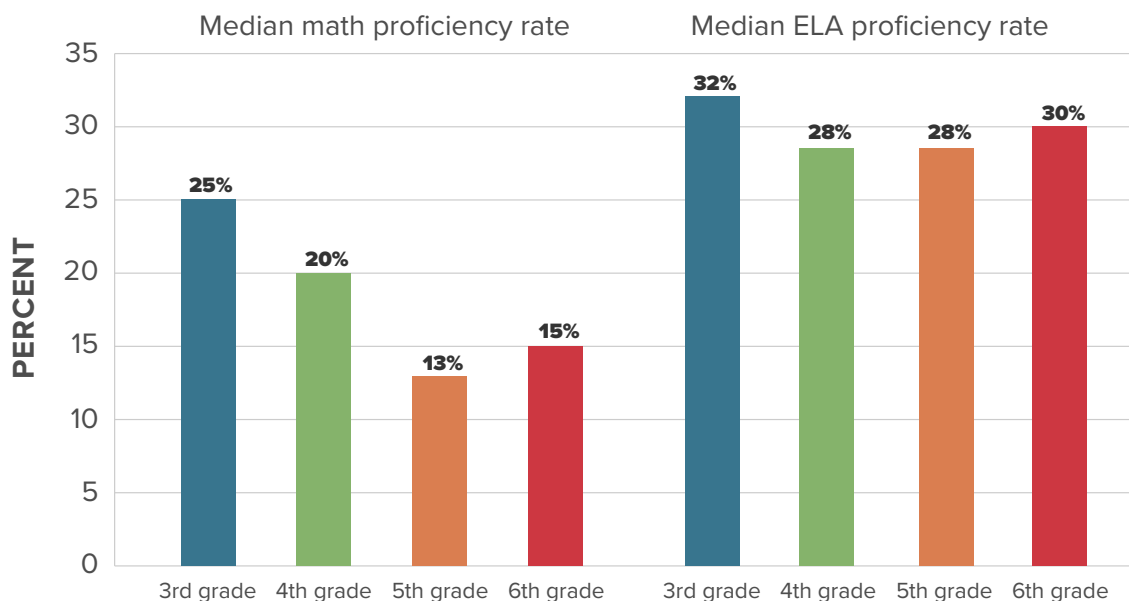


In line with countywide trends, proficiency rates declined in HUSD between 2019 and 2023 but are relatively flat year-over-year. HUSD's higher percentages of students who are English learners, are experiencing homelessness, and/or are socioeconomically disadvantaged may be contributing to its lower-than-countywide rates of academic proficiency. This is supported by the correlation between the proportion of socioeconomically disadvantaged students in each given school and that school's proficiency rates.

In 2023, one in three HUSD students met or exceeded ELA proficiency standards, whereas one in five HUSD students met or exceeded math proficiency standards. As noted earlier, these proficiency rates were highly variable across schools. This was especially true across elementary schools, where math proficiency rates ranged from 4 percent to 49 percent, and ELA proficiency rates ranged from 12 percent to 56 percent.

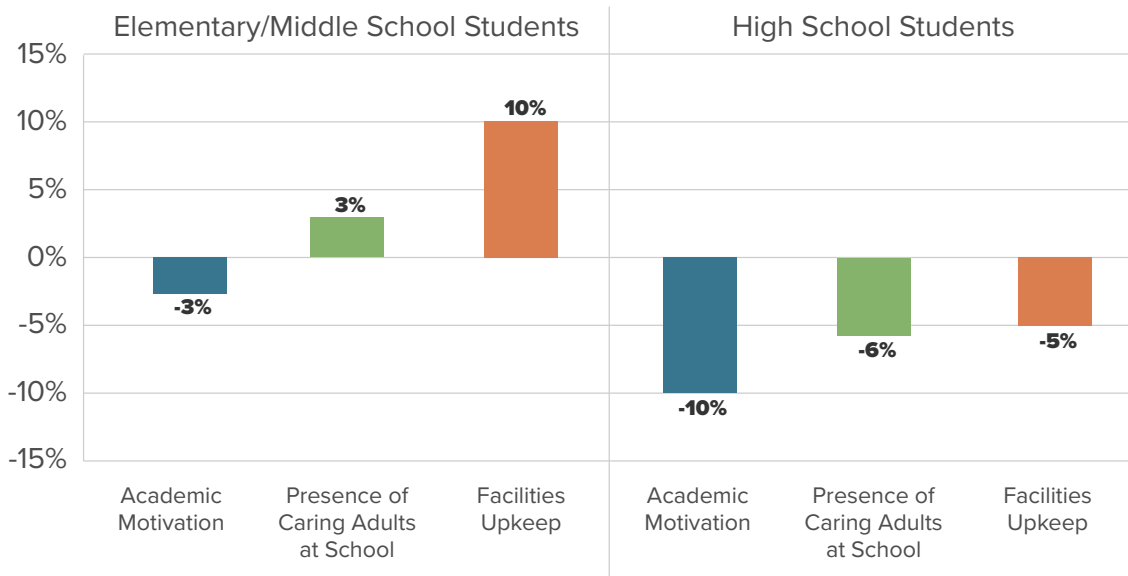
Proficiency rates also varied across grades within each school. Proficiency rates were generally higher for early elementary students, with steep drops in proficiency occurring between 3rd grade and 5th grade. Across the district, the median 3rd grade math proficiency rate was 25 percent, whereas the median 5th grade math proficiency rate was 13 percent. ELA proficiency rates also declined between 3rd and 5th grades in 2023, but not as steeply.

Figure 3: In 2023, proficiency rates declined most significantly between 3rd and 5th grade.



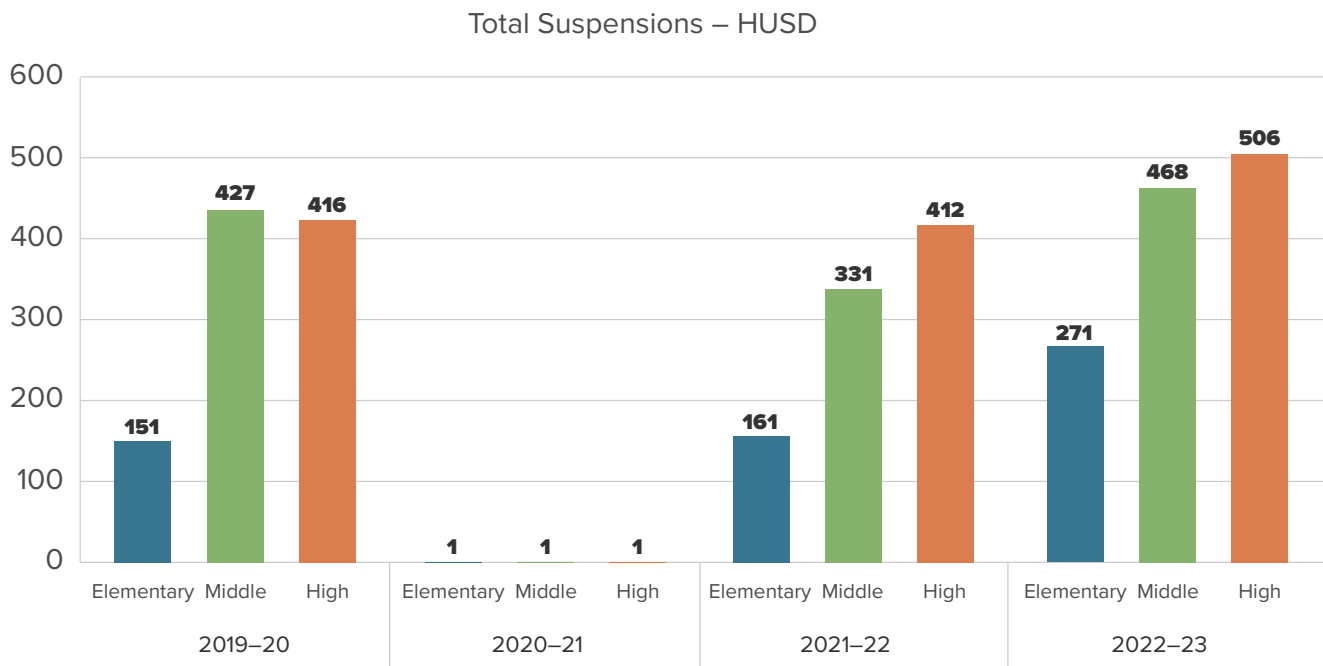
Since 2018/19, students across all school levels have reported lower degrees of motivation in school (e.g., trying one's best on schoolwork and being interested in schoolwork), although this trend is more pronounced among high school students. More elementary students reported the presence of caring adults in recent years compared with 2018/19, whereas fewer high school students reported this. Younger students also reported significant improvements to school cleanliness, tidiness, and/or neatness, whereas high school students indicated that this aspect of their schooling has worsened.

Figure 4: Change in HUSD students’ ratings of aspects of their schooling from 2018/19 through 2022/23



HUSD’s number of suspensions has increased since 2019/20, as has the number of students who have been suspended. Suspensions districtwide have increased by 25 percent over this time frame, and suspensions have increased across all grade bands. Suspensions of elementary students have increased most significantly in recent years, up by nearly 80 percent compared with 2019/20 (from 151 to 271). Suspensions in middle schools decreased between 2019/20 and 2021/22, but increased again in 2022/23. (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5: Suspension rates across HUSD elementary, middle, and high schools, 2019/20 through 2022/23



Section 2



Methods

WestEd's data collection activities included gathering and analyzing student data; reviewing HUSD documents; and conducting interviews, focus groups, and in-person observations at school sites. Together, the corpus of data provided the means to conduct a comprehensive systemic review that is designed to be non-evaluative of the performance of individuals or of specific schools. To ensure that findings are both accurate and nuanced, data were triangulated across these varied sources. Data collection activities spanned several months, from October 2023 through May 2024, and included the following methods:

- **Interviews:** Data from individual interviews and focus group discussions provided insights from various participants.
- **Classroom Observations:** Direct observations from visits to schools provided a firsthand account of the campus and classroom environments, teaching methods, and interpersonal interactions.
- **Student Data:** A review of student performance and demographic data offered information on educational outcomes across different student groups, grade levels, and school sites. This review also included an analysis of California Healthy Kids Survey data for insight into students' mental health and well-being.
- **Staffing Data:** A review of HUSD staffing data offered information on HUSD's allocation of staffing resources.
- **Document Review:** A review of HUSD documents, such as HUSD's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), website, and departmental web pages, provided additional context for the findings. The research team also reviewed publicly available information from non-HUSD sources (e.g., news media).
- **Input Sessions:** Three input sessions were held to present preliminary themes from the data collection and gather input from various education partners (central office administrators, school site staff, parents, and students) on the key areas of focus.

To ensure that findings would be well founded, WestEd compared information across the different sources of data. This approach, known as data triangulation, helped to confirm that the review’s conclusions were based on consistent evidence from and across multiple perspectives and sources.

Qualitative Data Collection: Interviews, Focus Groups, and Site Observations

Individual and Focus Group Interviews

Individual and focus group interviews were held between November 2023 and May 2024. WestEd conducted interviews with central office administrators, school administrators, teachers, parents, and classified staff, in that order. Student input coincided with the rollout of the input sessions in early May 2024. The research team spoke with over 150 interview and focus group participants (not including input session attendees).

Table 1. Individual and focus group interview counts by role

Role	Individual interviews	Focus group interviews	Total # individuals interviewed
Central Office Administrators	8	3	16
School Administrators	8	–	8
Teachers	16	–	16
Parents	–	3	35
Students	–	4	72
Classified Staff	–	1	9

Site Observations

Over a 2-day period in December 2023, WestEd conducted visits to a total of 29 classrooms located at eight different school sites. The research team selected a stratified sample of schools, ensuring that the sample included four elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools and that it reflected a representative sample of HUSD’s student demographics.

At each of the schools, four WestEd team members visited four classrooms, on average, and used a calibrated observation tool to capture notes on both the school and the classroom environments. Following the visits, the observers transferred their notes from paper to a communal digital file. Data from the site observations were divided into observations of the campus environments, classroom environments, teacher interactions, and student interactions and also were divided by level—elementary, middle, or high school. Next, these data were coded and analyzed to look for trends in elementary, middle, and high schools as well as across all schools.

Input Sessions

As the WestEd team approached the conclusion of its interviews, focus groups, and site observations, HUSD coordinated a sequence of interactive input sessions open to students, families, teachers, and administrators. The aim of these gatherings was to actively solicit and record insights on a nascent collection of themes arising from the initial data analysis. HUSD leadership sought to gain a deeper understanding of the various viewpoints and inquiries that educational partners throughout HUSD might have in response to the information presented. Insights from these sessions were also intended to guide the development of this final report. HUSD staff helped coordinate the input sessions and issue the invitations to interest holders across the HUSD community. More than 45 people attended the sessions.

Document Review

The WestEd team reviewed key materials pertaining to HUSD, including the HUSD LCAP, website, and departmental web pages and publicly available information from non-HUSD sources (e.g., news media). These materials confirmed and provided additional detail on many of the key priorities, strengths, and challenges described by HUSD leaders, staff, families, and students.

Quantitative Data Analysis (Including Student Outcome Data, Demographic Data, and Staffing Data)

In addition to its rigorous and robust process for primary data collection, the research team reviewed publicly available and HUSD-supplied quantitative data to further identify district strengths and areas for improvement. Quantitative data analysis provides insights on student performance and experience. The team used the following data sources to conduct its quantitative analysis of student proficiency, enrollment, chronic absenteeism, suspensions, and student perceptions of schooling experiences:

Table 2. Data sources for quantitative analysis

Data type	Source	Description
Proficiency	California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)	County-level, school-level, and school-grade-level data on the share of students who met or exceeded proficiency standards on CAASPP exams in 2018/19, 2021/22, and 2022/23
Enrollment	California Department of Education	County-level and school-level data on enrollment by race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomically disadvantaged status, and English learner status from 2018/19 through 2022/23
Chronic Absenteeism	California Department of Education	County-level and school-level data on chronic absenteeism by race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomically disadvantaged status, and English learner status from 2018/19 through 2022/23

Data type	Source	Description
Suspensions	California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) data provided by HUSD	School-level CALPADS data provided by HUSD on the number of suspensions and the number of students suspended from 2019/20 through 2022/23
Perceptions and Experiences of Schooling	California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) for elementary and secondary school levels	Survey data on various aspects of students' schooling from 2018/19 through 2022/23, within the School Engagement and Supports domain

The Research Team's Collective Positionality Statement

WestEd's team of nine researchers is committed to working to transform public school systems so that the outcomes and experiences of those within the system—especially students—reflect an equitable and just institution. All members of the research team are California-based and were educated in public school systems. Seven researchers reside in the San Francisco Bay Area, and five have hands-on experience working in schools and districts in Alameda County. One member of the team taught in HUSD.

All nine researchers are well versed in formal research methodologies, having pursued them in master's or doctoral education programs. The team's approach combines qualitative and quantitative research methods to uncover patterns and potential causes behind the inequities revealed by student performance metrics on the California School Dashboard.

In its analysis of HUSD, the team made a strong effort to engage educational partners at every level. Beyond identifying systemic challenges and opportunities, this approach also provides support in collaboratively finding solutions. The team is committed to helping to create opportunities and conditions that enable people impacted by the system to participate in shaping that system.

Section 3



Findings by Component (Strengths and Areas for Improvement)

The sections below delineate findings for each of this SIR's six components. Each component's subsection begins with a brief introduction, followed by descriptions of the strengths and areas for improvement identified through the review. Each component includes examples drawn from site observations, interviews, and focus groups. For the sake of brevity and to ensure the report is accessible to a range of different interest holders, the research team has not included an exhaustive list of all the data supporting each finding.

The strengths highlight commendable practices within HUSD, such as the promotion of a positive school culture and investment in social–emotional supports. The areas for improvement highlight findings on such issues as discriminatory incidents and the need for better integration of policies.

COMPONENT 1: Safe and Supportive Learning Environments

Component 1 focuses on promotion of a positive school culture, safe environments, student engagement, and student and staff well-being.

Strengths identified for Component 1 include efforts to advance equity and anti-bias/anti-racism (ABAR), the diversity of the community, implementation of equity-centered policies and practices to reduce exclusionary discipline outcomes, and investment in resources for social–emotional supports. Opportunities for improvement for Component 1 include the lack of integration of social–emotional learning (SEL) and ABAR efforts with academic instruction, racial discrimination against students and families, a “culture of retaliation” against staff in certain parts of the district, inconsistent implementation of positive discipline efforts, and the need to advance Tier 1 SEL support within classrooms.

Strengths

Central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers consistently reported that equity and ABAR have been embraced as top priorities within the district. HUSD has provided equity- and ABAR-focused trainings for central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers. Some school administrators reported that many of their teachers have implemented equity practices such as grading for equity (e.g., avoiding surprise tests, providing constructive feedback to help students improve their scores, and allowing students to retake tests). During site observations, the attention to anti-racism was evident in signage in school common areas and classrooms, including highlighting changemakers who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, or BIPOC, and displaying gender-inclusive and Black Lives Matter affirming posters.

Central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers expressed pride in the diversity of HUSD's students, families, and staff. Some staff reported that the HUSD community's diversity helps staff feel more connected to students—"I keep saying I don't leave [my school] because the kids look like I do"—and helps students feel more connected to the staff. Some staff, particularly elementary school teachers, spoke about the challenges that newcomer students had faced and expressed admiration for their resilience. Staff across levels also conveyed that some sites have multilingual staff—including educators and office staff—who play a valuable role in building positive relationships with multilingual students and their families. On schools' walls, displays of student work, including art, reflected a celebration of cultural diversity. Student-authored poems, reflecting on their unique identities, were also seen in classrooms.

HUSD has adopted equity-focused policies to reduce suspensions and other forms of exclusionary discipline. HUSD is working on implementing restorative practices as an alternative to exclusionary discipline practices, although the progress of implementation varies across school sites. During site visits, students who appeared distracted in class were spoken to in a supportive manner, and students who seemed distressed and/or were out of class were treated kindly by adults. One student shared with visiting WestEd team members that not only were the Campus Security Officers kind, but one served as a significant supportive adult in her life.

HUSD has invested in social–emotional supports for students. For example, HUSD has hired additional counselors since the pandemic and has piloted an SEL curriculum (Sown to Grow) in some classrooms. Central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers identified providing social–emotional supports and building positive relationships with students as key priorities, recognizing the importance of a whole-child approach in preparing students to learn. Classrooms' physical environments reflected the emphasis on SEL, as most were decorated with affirming, positive, and encouraging statements for students.

Areas for Improvement

Efforts focusing on equity, anti-racism, and SEL are not well-integrated with academic instruction and are often viewed by staff as competing with academics. Professional learning on these topics does not typically address how to integrate them into academic instruction. In addition, central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers reported that professional learning on these topics does not consistently change classroom practices, likely due in part to the lack of follow-up support.

There have been persistent reports of incidents of discrimination against students from certain racial backgrounds and of hostile environments for these students. Central office administrators, school administrators, teachers, and parents offered examples of such incidents and noted that when they are

reported to HUSD, the incidents are not addressed. For example, Latinx families described discrimination against their children. They reported that these discriminatory practices are amplified within special education classes and against children whose parents speak up within the schools. During a focus group, after parents shared examples of poor treatment by teachers and administrators, one parent stated bluntly: “*Somos los latinos discriminados prácticamente.*” (“We Latinos are, in practice, discriminated against.”)⁴

Although not reported everywhere, several central office administrators and teachers reported feeling that a “culture of retaliation” against staff exists in parts of HUSD. These respondents conveyed that some teachers feel they cannot voice concerns, including concerns related to student safety, out of fear of retaliation.

Although HUSD has embraced equity-focused policies around exclusionary discipline, schools have not consistently implemented alternative practices to support positive student behavior. Some school administrators and teachers reported that in some schools, the effort to avoid exclusionary discipline results in a lack of clear expectations for student behavior and/or lack of enforcement of school rules or consequences for problematic behavior. For example, one school administrator reported that as a result of the previous principal’s strong “anti-carceral” views, “there are no school rules” and “students are unclear as to what the consequences are or what the expectations are.” The school administrator reported that partly due to this lack of behavioral policies, behavioral issues are a major concern at the school. Despite policies to reduce suspensions, HUSD’s number of suspensions has increased since 2019/20, as has the number of students who have been suspended, particularly at the elementary school level. (See the quantitative analysis in Section 1 for more detailed data.)

Tier 1 SEL support has not become part of teachers’ standard classroom practice. Central office and school administrators reported that counselors, rather than teachers, are the primary staff responsible for providing SEL, including Tier 1 SEL within classrooms. Several staff across levels conveyed that the number of counselors is insufficient for meeting students’ needs for social–emotional support. Having teachers consistently provide Tier 1 SEL support within classrooms could free up counselors’ availability to provide Tier 2 and Tier 3 support. As one central office administrator said, SEL “still needs to be engrained in the culture [so that it] doesn’t just sit with ... the counselor.”

4 Some quotes that appear later in this report were also translated from Spanish. For the sake of brevity, they appear only in English.

COMPONENT 2: Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

Component 2 focuses on curriculum and instructional guidance, curriculum alignment, equitable access to rigorous coursework and educational opportunities, support for research-based instruction, use of data to close achievement gaps, and support for interventions and expanded learning opportunities.

Strengths identified for this component include the dedication of HUSD's teaching staff, teachers' interest in improving their instructional practices, and the emergent priority of support for students who are bilingual/multilingual. Opportunities for improvement include the need for specific districtwide policies for collecting and using data to inform instruction, clearer processes for accessing student interventions, greater support for students with IEPs within general education classrooms, greater focus on improving academic instruction, more consistent support for multilingual learners and newcomer students, and greater access to credit recovery options and advanced coursework.

Strengths

Central office administrators, school administrators, teachers, and students pointed to the dedication of HUSD's teaching staff as one of HUSD's greatest strengths. Participants across these role groups overwhelmingly reported that teachers care deeply about their students and make an effort to engage learners. School administrators specifically acknowledged teachers' flexibility and creativity as they work to meet student needs, including non-academic needs. In focus groups, students reported feeling supported by teachers and commended them for engaging learners through a variety of teaching methods. Students noted that in the absence of sufficient instructional materials, teachers develop their own. During classroom observations, several teachers demonstrated interactive teaching styles with clear guidance, patience, and probing questions to elicit deeper responses. Teachers also provided additional instruction to students who needed it, including through small groups. Some teachers employed creative instructional methods. For example, some elementary teachers incorporated songs and movement into their academic lessons.

Many teachers are interested in improving their instruction. Many teachers expressed an interest in learning to improve their craft, and some administrators noted this as well. "We have the attention of teachers," said one central office administrator. "They are interested in doing better; they are interested in looking for new strategies, trying to engage their students, and trying to support them."

Central office administrators and school administrators identified support for multilingual students—especially multilingual newcomer students (of which HUSD has one of the highest populations nationally)—as an emergent priority. Administrators and teachers agreed that multilingual students, especially multilingual newcomer students, deserve support dedicated to their specific needs. At the district level, HUSD recently hired a Multilingual Learner Director and is developing a Multilingual Learner Plan. School administrators expressed a strong desire to better serve their students and families who speak, among other languages, Spanish, Farsi, Pashto, Dari, Mandarin, and Vietnamese.

Areas for Improvement

Central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers expressed frustration with the lack of systematic processes to collect and use student-level data to understand students' academic needs and improve classroom instruction. Multiple central office and school administrators argued for bringing back mandated, districtwide local assessments to inform instructional improvement efforts and identify students for interventions. Administrators and teachers reported that because HUSD does not require local assessments, many schools rely on CAASPP data, which are not timely and which do not offer the level of detail needed to individualize instruction or interventions. Teachers expressed a similar sentiment, with one noting, “There’s no exit testing, there’s no intake testing. We don’t know what [students’] progress is.” Teachers reported that the lack of clear, measurable benchmarks also means there is no accountability for teachers, and even when data are provided, teachers are not trained in how to use them. Said one, “There are optional, voluntary after-school sessions that hardly anyone has chosen to come to. So there’s nothing systematic around training leadership teams to know how to use data and analyze it.”

Central office administrators and teachers reported that the lack of integration between special education and general education (at both the district and the site levels) presents a substantial barrier to improving inclusive practices, providing referrals to appropriate interventions, and supporting students with IEPs within general education classrooms. Interviewees reported that HUSD lacks a clearly defined process for referring students to tiered interventions, and general education teachers do not have the staff support needed to effectively serve students with IEPs within general education classrooms. As one central office administrator said, “We need a more robust intervention system that’s not just ‘send kids to special ed.’” Similarly, a teacher said that HUSD should help teachers understand the steps to take to acquire additional student interventions before referring students for an IEP. “We have way too many referrals that are not as valid—that we, general ed, could be doing more [to prevent] if teachers are trained.” Relatedly, school administrators, teachers, and parents expressed a need for building general education teachers’ capacity to support students with IEPs within general education classrooms. One teacher noted, “Really, we don’t have a very integrated way of working [with] our SPED department, so they’re very much siloed and sometimes even, I would say, ‘othered.’”

“In my role, generally, trying to get data for the things that I do is difficult. We say we like to measure things, but we don’t always measure them effectively, and sometimes when we do measure them, we never look at it. Or we look at it and then we ignore it.”

– HUSD teacher

HUSD requires additional supports to adequately serve students with IEPs. Some teachers said that a shortage of special education teachers has prevented students from receiving necessary services described within their IEPs. One teacher reported filing a complaint with the Department of Education’s Special Education Services office because two students with IEPs were “not receiving any services at all.” The subsequent investigation found this assertion to be correct. Another teacher reported that “we have a whole lot of other students who have never been assessed for special education and might be on some kind of waiting list because there aren’t enough personnel to do testing of students.” Some families of students with IEPs expressed frustration with the lack of language translation services when discussing their child’s needs with the special education department. Families also expressed an interest in delineation of specific pathways for students with IEPs, particularly those who are leaving high school.

Central office administrators, school administrators, teachers, and families emphasized that HUSD needs to focus more on improving academic instruction. For example, interviewees recommended providing academically focused professional learning (PL) opportunities, updating and aligning curricula, and providing ongoing support to ensure that high-level priorities are implemented at the classroom level. Central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers identified a number of factors that limit HUSD's ability to improve academic instruction, including limited mandatory professional development time and a shortage of substitute teachers. Central office administrators identified the union's contract limitations on PL as a particularly significant barrier, noting that teacher contracts limit the allowable number of mandatory PL sessions. Some administrators and teachers believe that districtwide ABAR efforts, while valuable, take up precious PL time and resources that might otherwise go toward improving instruction. One teacher expressed a desire to build on existing PL efforts: "[ABAR and SEL work] should be embedded within whatever our other instructional plans are. It should be how we approach the students and how we interact with students." In addition, students highlighted the lack of basic educational materials, including updated textbooks and stable on-site Wi-Fi (to use for classwork). Some teachers, parents, and students called into question the rigor of academics, particularly in the later grades.

Central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers identified the need for more consistent support for multilingual students, especially multilingual students who are newcomers. As noted earlier, HUSD is developing a Multilingual Learner Plan, but respondents reported that districtwide support for multilingual learners is currently inconsistent. One teacher reported, "We have a requirement to teach designated [English Language Development] daily to our students who need it. And at my school, we're really super faithful about providing students with that. I hear that at other schools it might be a little more like, maybe that's happening, maybe not." Another teacher said that HUSD has "cut personnel that support multilingual learners in the last couple years. It's harder when you have fewer people to support the same amount of teachers or students. [It] does not get the same job done. Things fall away."

One teacher also pointed out HUSD offers more support for younger multilingual students, especially multilingual newcomer students, than for older students. "So far, a lot of the [multilingual learner] interventions that we've had have been for younger kids. Only in the last year or two have we had anything for older kids." During an input session, another teacher explained that the World House program needs to stabilize some of its essential facets to provide the best learning environment for students who are new immigrants, including the schedule, class sections, and support for teachers seeking bilingual authorizations.

HUSD does not offer sufficient opportunities for credit recovery or for advanced coursework. The credit deficiency problem compounds academic deficits, as students move on to higher grades without a solid background in foundational academic concepts. One central office administrator stated, "We have a credit deficiency issue in our high schools, and we've been talking about it for years and we've done absolutely nothing. Other districts are doing different things." At the high school level, students are tracked beginning in their freshman year, and if students fail early coursework, they have limited opportunities to access more

"We need to start focusing on academics again and improving our academic rigor. I don't think we have enough conversations about what the data is showing about where we're at and how we're performing. ... Which best practices, which instructional practices should we really be focusing on to move our students up?"

– HUSD teacher



advanced courses. High school students are also concerned about the limited Advanced Placement offerings, as certain courses are offered only in alternating years or are scheduled at times that conflict with one another. Some families, too, expressed regret that HUSD does not offer more opportunities for advanced academic coursework.

COMPONENT 3: Leadership and Governance

Component 3 focuses on district-level leadership and decision-making, support for school-level leadership, and support for teacher leadership.

Strengths identified for this component include the central office's commitment to inclusive decision-making and the value placed on input from staff and community members. Additionally, the supportive networks for principals and assistant principals facilitate valuable cross-site collaboration and mentorship. Opportunities for improvement in Component 3 include, among others described below, the need for clearer districtwide initiatives and implementation plans and the need for specific districtwide policies and expectations for site leaders to support teachers. There is also a need to address challenges posed by HUSD's decentralized leadership structure.

Strengths

Central office administrators reported that HUSD's highly collaborative approach to decision-making includes a wide array of voices. HUSD's governance structure capitalizes on the diversity of experiences and expertise of staff and community members in Hayward. As one central office administrator said, HUSD has "structures set up to where you do get shared and equitable input from everyone. And I think that's important. I don't think top down is the best way to lead, and I think that's the district's strength." Another central office administrator noted that HUSD's input processes prioritize bringing in numerous voices from various groups, "so that it's not just the leader of this group or that group."

Principal and assistant principal network meetings have been valuable to school administrators, and they would like to see more opportunities for cross-site collaboration. Although school administrators reported a need for additional training, support, and mentorship for their roles, they identified the principal network meetings and assistant principal network meetings as valuable opportunities to learn from one another. As one assistant principal put it, the assistant principal meetings "have been lifelines for me." By participating in these meetings, "I began to actually connect with other assistant principals to be able to talk shop about what's happening at the different sites."

Areas for Improvement

HUSD has adopted a large number of isolated initiatives, leading to a feeling of initiative overload and a lack of focus on implementation. HUSD has many emerging initiatives and pilot programs, but district

administrators, school administrators, and teachers observed a lack of alignment between these initiatives and programs and said that the abundance of initiatives obstructed staff's ability to focus on deep implementation. One central office administrator identified HUSD's greatest opportunity for improvement as "creating focus on what we are prioritizing and then standing by those priorities, which means intentionally choosing to not do other things that are also well intended and can provide benefits." Similarly, a veteran HUSD teacher said that the district has had a tendency to "roll stuff out and then kind of forget about it. And then another year, they roll something else out. Whenever I give feedback, I say, 'Look, just decide on something. Let's decide on a couple different things that we really need to focus on, based on evidence, and then just stick with those.'"

HUSD lacks consistency in the curricula and instructional content taught across different school sites and classrooms (i.e., horizontal articulation). Central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers cited multiple factors for this wide variation. School administrators and teachers often pointed to a lack of guidance from the district. As one school administrator said, "I just feel like there hasn't been really clear instruction on what they would like administrators to do with the curriculum—how it should be taught and how it should be delivered." Administrators across levels, as well as teachers, also pointed to a lack of mandatory PL focused on instructional content. Central office and school administrators often cited teachers' academic freedom as a major reason. One central office administrator said, "As you try to hold folks accountable, it's like a rallying cry: 'I have academic freedom!' Well, yes, you have the right to academic freedom. You don't have the right to not teach well. There are some best practices that we need to be following. It's not okay for kids to be missing out on what they should be learning or for kids to not be reading by third grade."

HUSD lacks specific, districtwide policies and expectations for how school administrators will support teachers to improve instruction. Central office administrators and school administrators reported that it would be valuable to have common standards for best first instruction, common practices for conducting classroom observations, and a common rubric for providing teachers with formative feedback. A school administrator explained that the district needs "established, specific instructional goals rather than the broad priority of deeper learning. That means nothing, deeper learning. I have no idea if my view of what good instruction looks like is the same as other administrators' in the district. We've never had any kind of norming exercises." Similarly, a central office administrator said, "I think we need to empower our principals to be innovative, to lead, and not all the solutions are going to come from the district. But [for solutions] that do need to come from the district, we also have to be strong and be leaders" in providing clear expectations for how solutions will be implemented.

HUSD lacks consistency in school policies, procedures, student intervention systems, and expectations for staff roles across school sites. Central office administrators, school administrators, teachers, and classified staff across sites reported that they would like clearer guidance and more alignment in these elements. One school administrator said, "We have no systems for basic things. How do we keep a log of which parents have been contacted, of discipline issues that we're dealing with? [How to get] everybody collaborating, sharing the same notes? It really, really feels like this school just came together yesterday." Central office administrators, classified staff, and teachers reported that the lack of alignment in policies and procedures is especially difficult to navigate for staff who work at multiple school sites. School administrators and teachers also expressed a desire for a consistent, districtwide Multi-Tiered System of Supports structure; they reported that schools currently are responsible for developing and implementing their own. Similarly, they reported a lack of guidance around how to develop and implement specific types of supports, such as parent centers. "We're left to our [own] devices and resourcefulness," observed one teacher. Teachers also reported inconsistency in the job descriptions and expectations for support staff (such as English learner specialists) across school sites.

HUSD lacks alignment between the instructional content taught from one grade level to the next (i.e., vertical articulation). School administrators and teachers expressed concern about the lack of districtwide guidance and lack of collaboration opportunities for teachers to align content across grade levels. As a teacher explained, “I think we do need more vertical articulation, because we often don’t see what’s happening beyond our own classroom, and so we don’t have a sense of how things build from year to year.”

HUSD’s decentralized leadership structure sometimes obstructs progress and creates confusion about who is responsible for what. Some central office administrators reported that HUSD’s approach to soliciting a wide range of feedback before making decisions makes the work overly bureaucratic and slow. As one central office administrator said, “I would say decision making [is] definitely a struggle because you want to include everyone and then you end up not getting anything done. Then you just go through this big, long cycle of no one making a decision.” Some central office administrators and teachers also reported that the central office’s flat governing structure creates a lack of clear accountability, leading to communications, requests, and complaints being bounced around between departments and personnel without resolution. School administrators reported a lack of clear guidance around which areas of decision-making and priority-setting should be HUSD-led and which should be site-led.

Many teachers reported that they do not feel heard—and in some cases, that they feel disrespected—by central office administrators. As one teacher described it, “Our teaching force is very passionate, and we are really dedicated to this population here in Hayward. I think that’s where we’re getting a lot of teacher burnout. It’s that we see the needs and we know that we’re not meeting them, and then we don’t feel like we are getting the [needed] support; [district] leadership is not listening to what the teachers are asking for.” Some teachers also reported that they feel disrespected because they perceive that central office administrators do not trust them to do their jobs well. One teacher said, “At the district level, there is a lack of respect for the professionalism within the teaching staff. There tends to be this ‘No, we know better than you attitude,’ just this general culture of not really trusting the teachers to do what’s right by our students.”

“On one hand, it’s nice sometimes for school sites to have a level of autonomy, since each site is different and sometimes serves different populations. But there’s nothing that’s universal in Hayward Unified. Every site does everything differently, and that is really difficult when people are leaving, when people are moving from one site to another. You could have the exact same job, [but] there’s so many new things to learn.”

– HUSD classified staff member



COMPONENT 4: Professional Learning for All

Component 4 includes districtwide plans and structures to provide professional learning for all staff, support for new teachers, support for collaboration teams, and support for site leaders.

Strengths identified for Component 4 include a strong desire among administrators and teachers for more PL opportunities and a consensus that academic instruction should be HUSD's top priority for future PL and instances in which teachers use Common Planning Time for collaboration. Opportunities for improvement include, among others described below, a lack of participation in PL, inconsistent training on curriculum, inconsistent use of Common Planning Time, limited access to instructional coaches, and lack of a structured system for feedback for teachers.

Strengths

Central office administrators, school administrators, and many teachers said that teachers are eager to participate in PL opportunities focused on academic instruction. For example, one teacher reported that the current, optional, after-school PL opportunities focused on instruction have been valuable and said that having deeper PL in these areas would be helpful. "These PD series for science or for art [or other topics] are very helpful, very much related to what we're doing in the classroom right now. But it's not necessarily ongoing PD. Sometimes it's just a few [sessions] here and there. I don't think it's very systemic." Teachers identified some specific academic subjects for which they believed PL would be beneficial, including math and literacy. More generally, there was broad consensus among central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers—including among teachers representing the labor union—that academic instruction should be HUSD's top priority for future PL. As one teacher stated bluntly, "The focus needs to start to shift to academics."

Some teachers use their weekly Common Planning Time for collaborative activities. School administrators and teachers reported that some teachers use Common Planning Time for collaboration with other teachers by subject area or grade level. One high school teacher shared a particularly robust example of collaboration with colleagues who teach different subject areas: "We write integrated lessons or curriculum. We review each other's timelines of what we're teaching. We have a portfolio that the students present at the end of the year. All of us come together—multimedia, English, science, social studies—to discuss what we're teaching [and] see where we can collaborate on projects." The teacher did note that this collaboration requires time beyond the standard Common Planning Time and that this collaborative team obtained grants (including outside grants) to support the additional time. Teams such as this one could serve as models across HUSD for how to establish routines for successful collaboration.

Areas for Improvement

Most teacher PL opportunities are limited and optional, and not all teachers participate. According to central office administrators, union contracts limit the allowable number of mandatory PL sessions. Central office and school administrators reported that this presents a major barrier to providing teachers with PL of appropriate

depth. One central office administrator said, “I believe it’s three professional learning days that have been negotiated at the beginning of the year. There’s so much that we want to try to pack into those three days that it becomes a ‘sit and take as much as you can.’ Sit and get. And then you use what you can throughout the year.”

Moreover, some teachers described barriers to attending optional PL opportunities that take place after the regular school day. As one explained:

A lot of the [PL opportunities] are offered after school, and that’s really hard for teachers who have family responsibilities, young children, or who have to commute. That does limit who participates. Also, we’re exhausted. There’s only so much that I can handle after three o’clock.

Some central office administrators and teachers also mentioned that many PL opportunities are virtual, and they believe in-person sessions would be more effective.

Competing priorities within HUSD have led to the deprioritization of PL focused specifically on improving academic instruction. Although there was consensus across groups that academic instruction should be the highest priority area for PL, administrators and teachers consistently reported that the district’s few mandatory PL sessions have focused only on ABAR. As one teacher described, “The only mandatory professional development has been related to ABAR—anti-bias/anti-racism. All other professional development has been voluntary. [For the voluntary PL,] you’re just getting a handful of teachers; you’re not getting what’s important to all kids.”

Teachers do not receive adequate training on how to teach HUSD’s adopted curricula. School administrators and teachers reported that after adopting new curricula, the district typically offers a “one and done” training without follow-up support. Some teachers also reported that not all teachers receive any training at all on the curricula. As one teacher said, “I know obviously the trainings are voluntary. There are teachers here that have taken zero trainings, and they don’t even know how to go through the teacher manuals. I feel like if you want consistency at a school site and in the district, everybody needs at least the basic training.” One school administrator also voiced concern that teachers who are hired after the start of the school year may not have access to this curriculum training. “If you’re asking them to deliver curriculum, but not to be trained in it, I kind of feel like they’re set up for failure.”

Offering PL opportunities for teachers during the school day (i.e., within regular contractual hours) often presents challenges due to the difficulty of finding substitutes to provide classroom coverage. Some central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers noted that HUSD used to be able to hire substitutes to enable PL during the school day, but since the pandemic, substitute shortages have made this much more difficult.

Teachers reported that because schoolwide staff meetings often focus on introducing the latest initiative, they sometimes feel like a waste of time. As one teacher put it, “They need to scale back on these massive meetings of whatever the topic du jour is ... we’re constantly having to sit in a meeting and listen to someone tell us about this new thing.” As a result, said several teachers, they often stop paying attention during these meetings.

Teachers’ use of weekly Common Planning Time varies; not all teachers use this time for collaboration. According to administrators and some teachers, the union contract requires that teachers have autonomy over the use of this time, and thus, its use varies widely across sites, grade levels, and individual teachers.

Some teachers use the time for collaboration (e.g., with grade-level teams); others use it for individual work time and administrative tasks. As one school administrator said, “Teachers on the leadership team have been honest with me. They said it’s [used for] a lot of individual catching-up on paperwork.” A teacher similarly noted, “There’s no guidelines, no support, no rules, no expectations” for Common Planning Time. Without this structure, some sites do not have effective collaboration. Another teacher reported that “because there is no structure or oversight, a lot of teachers aren’t choosing to collaborate.”

Additionally, school administrators reported that some sites do not have grade-level leads, which makes it difficult for school administrators to support teacher collaboration. Said one, “There’s no grade level leader to communicate messages to. We do not know right now where teachers meet, what they do, what kind of support they need. I’ve heard [the same] is the case at other sites.”

One teacher conveyed that central office and school administrators are not using HUSD’s existing tools for supporting Common Planning Time. The teacher explained that HUSD and the union have developed a form for teachers to share information with administrators about what they’ve been working on and where they need additional support, but administrators have not been responding to the information and requests that teachers submit. “When I’ve spoken to [other] teachers, it doesn’t look like either the district or the [school] administration is using that form, and it’s actually part of the contract [that they need to use it].”

Central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers expressed a need for follow-up support, including instructional coaching, to help teachers implement instructional strategies. As a central office administrator conveyed, “I think we talk a lot of talk. We have all the academic language, cultural responsiveness, all the engagement language, but oftentimes it doesn’t translate into the classroom.” Similarly, a teacher said, “The district does professional development which stops at knowledge building. They give us information, knowledge—more and more information, more and more knowledge—but they never create a support system to help us in the classroom.”

Teachers expressed a need for greater access to instructional coaches. Several central office administrators, school administrators, and teachers recommended that the district prioritize using long-term funding to invest in more instructional coaches. Some interviewees noted that HUSD used to have more instructional coaches who provided teachers with valuable implementation support. But because these coaches were supported with short-term funding, the district now employs fewer of them. As another potential strategy, school administrators suggested that the district host professional learning communities, or PLCs, focusing on supporting implementation of instructional strategies. Some recommended providing opportunities for teachers to observe other teachers who can model instructional strategies, including teachers at other sites.

Central office administrators, school administrators, and some teachers expressed a need for classroom observations and constructive feedback to help teachers improve their instructional practice. As one teacher said, “We have lots of very well-intentioned and hardworking teachers, but they’re kind of just figuring out a lot on their own without much feedback.” Central office and school administrators recommended that school administrators conduct classroom observations and provide feedback to teachers, although they acknowledged that these administrators’ many other responsibilities present a major time barrier. Some teachers suggested that instructional coaches could provide this support. School administrators and teachers noted the importance of communicating that observation and feedback are for formative, not evaluative, purposes—something that would be clearer if an instructional coach or a teacher on special assignment (TOSA) were in this role. “It would be nice to have a TOSA, somebody who’s on your same [level], they’re not evaluating you,” said one teacher. “Somebody who could come in and do observations and help improve your instruction. I think that would take some of the pressure off people, instead of it always being a principal.”

Central office administrators and school administrators expressed a need for more PL to develop school administrators to support their growth as instructional leaders and site managers. One central office administrator reported that HUSD’s current monthly principal and assistant principal network meetings only offer enough time to scratch the surface with regard to instructional leadership tools and strategies: “We’re still doing superficial work. It’s almost like we have just enough time to say, ‘We’re listening to you—here are some of the tools that we’ve developed. Hey, try it out a little bit.’ But to get into the deeper-level discussions and for them to talk together, that takes hours [that they don’t have].”

Similarly, a school administrator said that key strategies for school administrators “can’t be just addressed with a webinar. It has to be more in depth. We’re not given that PD that I think, as leaders, we need right now.”

School administrators and classified staff also reported that school administrators need more consistent onboarding and training on essential site management responsibilities. One school administrator reported, “Decision-making meetings, I was never trained to chair those, even though that would be my role as principal. Nobody reached out to me, I was never onboarded.” Similarly, a classified staff member said,

Site administrators should fully understand the role and how various groups within their site should operate. They should understand the laws around School Site Council, around [the English Learner Advisory Committee], and also around groups that are just local, like our Site-Based Decision-Making [team] and our local Curriculum Council. They should also have very specific training on classified [staff roles and responsibilities.] And I feel there’s far too many who don’t.

Teachers expressed a need for special education teachers to receive more PL opportunities, including instructional coaching and mentorship. “There’s no real support for [special ed teachers] at our site,” said one teacher, adding, “A lot of times, the turnover is so high in special ed, the teachers are afraid to say anything because they’re brand new and they’re [on] temporary contracts. And [among] veteran teachers who have been there, or the administrators who’ve been there, the idea is like, ‘Oh, you’re not going to last.’ So there’s nothing done about supporting them and making sure that they stay.” The teacher noted that special education teachers used to have access to extensive support from a TOSA through the special education department, and that the support was instrumental in reducing turnover. However, HUSD no longer has this special education TOSA position.

COMPONENT 5: Infrastructure Alignment

Component 5 includes development of an HUSD data system for interventions and school improvement; use of data for resource allocation to improve student learning; recruitment and retention of fully credentialed, experienced teachers; and use of fiscal resources.

Strengths under Component 5 highlight the recent adoption of a universal screener, site-based data dashboards, and investments in technology and facility upgrades. Opportunities for improvement include lack of site processes for collecting and using data, lack of data provision to enable sites to make data-driven resource allocation decisions, staff turnover, unfilled staff vacancies, lack of instructional coaches, and sustainability concerns around recent investments using short-term funds.

Strengths

HUSD recently adopted an evidence-based universal screener (FastBridge). Central office and school administrators report that use of the screener is still nascent. As one school administrator said, “My understanding—communicated to me by my principal—is that it’s just a screener, not necessarily a diagnostic. It’s just to get a big picture using one assessment tool across the district.” However, adoption of this universal screener is a valuable first step in ensuring that students are appropriately identified for academic interventions.

In 2023, HUSD provided each school with a data dashboard. It includes CAASPP data, California Healthy Kids Survey data, and attendance data. Central office administrators reported that these dashboards are a first step toward prompting more school-level conversations around student performance and well-being. Said one, “It’s very recent, in its infancy ... providing more data to the sites so that they can use it—so the site administrators can use it with their different committees and teams. But it can’t stop with ‘Oh, we provided it, we showed it.’ Now it has to be ‘What are we going to do with it?’”

HUSD recently improved learning environments by investing in technology and facilities upgrades at some sites. For example, HUSD has invested in Chromebooks for students and created a Family Technology Support Team to provide families with technical support. School administrators and teachers also noted that some schools have modernized their facilities or are currently undergoing modernization. In addition, thanks to a local bond measure passed in 2014, HUSD has constructed new buildings for science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (often referred to as STEAM), which include learning spaces, science labs, a maker space, and a demonstration lobby. Students reported loving these buildings.

Areas for Improvement

Without districtwide systems and specific, required processes for collecting and using student-level data, schools’ ability to use data is limited. As noted in Component 2, central office and school administrators as well as teachers reported that because HUSD does not require local common assessments, many schools rely

on CAASPP data, which are not timely and which do not offer the level of detail needed to meaningfully inform instruction or interventions. For example, one central office administrator conveyed that although schools offer a variety of interventions and resources for students who need additional support, “we don’t have a system to identify the students who need to access those programs.” As this administrator pointed out, students miss out on receiving beneficial interventions when schools do not systematically collect and use student data to identify student needs.

The lack of detailed student data also hampers the ability to make informed programmatic and instructional decisions, said school administrators and teachers. Moreover, because there is no structured routine of data collection and analysis to identify site-specific learning goals and measure progress toward those goals, staff can lose sight of what those goals are. “I wouldn’t be able to define what the academic goals are,” one school administrator reported. “I don’t think any teacher would be able to define what the academic goals at our site are because there haven’t been those data dives in my time.”

Insufficient data collection creates barriers to measuring program impact and making data-driven resource allocation decisions. Central office administrators reported that HUSD’s lack of implementation data and local outcome data hinders central office and school administrators’ ability to measure program effectiveness. This, in turn, limits HUSD’s ability to make data-driven decisions around resource allocation and which programs to adopt, adapt, scale, or discontinue. As one central office administrator said, HUSD would benefit from having “data points that are connected to that [program], which would allow us to say, ‘This thing is—or isn’t—really making a difference for kids’ because we’ve made time to look at it in some kind of periodic cycle.” Another central office administrator agreed, asking, “Which student groups are most impacted? We should be able to say that and say which strategy we are employing. We don’t look at data as widely and deeply as we should. We can draw conclusions, but we are doing that without the data.”

Staff turnover and shortages present challenges for long-term instructional improvement efforts. Central office administrators and school administrators reported that turnover among administrators at both the district and the site levels hinders the establishment of clear goals and strategic continuity. One school administrator who has served HUSD under many different superintendents noted that “with every single superintendent, you get a brand-new set of marching orders, a brand-new focus. ... We’ve had so many directions over the years that we just have no focus.” Similarly, a central office administrator reported that leadership turnover across levels involves multiple periods of transition, “which create a dilemma” in terms of carrying out HUSD’s improvement efforts.

Some school administrators also reported that due to staff shortages and budget challenges, school administrators have taken on additional responsibilities that leave them with little time to serve as instructional leaders. In particular, elementary school administrators reported that due to a shortage of schoolyard supervisors, administrators spend much of each day supervising student behavior and handling disciplinary issues. One administrator reported that visiting classrooms to observe instruction was their dream, but that it is a rarity.

Unfilled staff vacancies, particularly in support staff roles, prevent students from receiving the support they need. Central office and school administrators as well as teachers described unfilled vacancies for school-level positions, including counselors, case managers, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals. They reported that these vacancies prevent students from receiving necessary interventions and support. As a central office administrator reported, “We have massive staffing issues. So [in terms of] getting the right services to the right kids, we don’t even have service providers. We don’t have case managers.” School

administrators, teachers, and parents also noted a high level of turnover among staff who support students with IEPs. As one parent said, “There’s an issue with the retention of the staff, ... and the special education kids are the ones who are being sacrificed.” Moreover, general education teachers described difficulties supporting students’ diverse learning needs without the assistance of special educators and support staff.

School administrators and teachers described the need to invest in instructional coaches to support teaching staff. Several administrators and teachers noted that HUSD previously employed instructional coaches and said that reinvesting in such coaches would be valuable for building teachers’ capacity. They described a particular need for high-quality instructional coaches in math, reading, and English language development. In the past, instructional coaches also coached teachers in using formative assessments and helped guide teacher collaboration. One school administrator noted that because of the teacher shortage, “a lot of our teachers are underqualified, they don’t have the credentials, ... they haven’t had the proper training. So if the district can provide instructional coaches who can work with our teachers at a more in-depth level, I think that would have a huge impact.”

Sustainability concerns exist about investments of short-term funds in new staff positions. For example, some central office administrators noted that pandemic relief funds have been used to hire counselors and specialists to support social–emotional learning, and they expressed concern about sustaining these investments once the short-term funds are no longer available. One wondered, “What’s going to happen to our social–emotional counselors? There are a lot of question marks and stress about that.” Another said, “When we get this money and we put these programs together, [we need to work on] identifying the things that worked and then invest in that. It can’t be short term because when the money’s gone, the resources are gone, [and] then we’re going to go back to what was before.”

Some school facilities have fallen into disrepair, and some school administrators and teachers expressed concern over the transparency of resource allocation decisions, particularly around which schools to upgrade. One teacher conveyed, “We have the ugliest Frankenstein school play structure. The slides got burned a number of years ago due to vandalism, and they just got cut off and then they put a piece of plywood there. [Our school administrator] was advocating for us to get a new playground. And it fell on deaf ears.” The teacher also reported, “We were at a staff meeting in the fall and the rain was coming through the roof and we had to adjust our seating because it was dripping through the roof.” On decisions about school facilities, a school administrator said, “I’m not finding that there’s transparency with the funding for modernization” and pointed out that differences in facilities across sites can present an equity concern.

COMPONENT 6: Clear and Collaborative Relationships

Component 6 includes communication with educational partners (including students, families, community members, board members, and staff), engagement of educational partners, and establishment of community partnerships to expand resources for students and families.

Strengths for Component 6 include increasing efforts in family communication and outreach through family engagement specialists, leveraging staff who can communicate in families' native languages, and creating opportunities for Black family participation and voices through the African American Student Achievement Initiative. Areas for improvement include enhancing transparency, building trusting partnerships with labor partners, strengthening two-way communication with labor partners and with families, ensuring access to information and translation for families, providing full-time family engagement roles at all sites, and enhancing efforts to support the inclusion of all families in school and district activities.

Strengths

Some school sites' relationships with families have benefited from having bilingual staff. Although school administrators and teachers reported that school sites' success in building positive relationships with families has varied, several school administrators noted the value of having personable staff who can communicate with families in their native languages. "We owe a lot to our office manager and our attendance clerk, who are the points of contact for our families," one said, praising these staff members' ability to communicate with families in Spanish. A teacher from the same school described how the school often utilizes Google Translate to make the school newsletter accessible to their multilingual families.

HUSD has increased efforts to communicate with families and receive feedback from them, especially in recent years. Two-way communication with families is an emerging priority in the district. Success has varied by site, but teachers and parents reported that HUSD's multipronged approaches to outreach have produced promising early results. One parent (who is also a teacher) said, "It's definitely improved in the years since I've been here, now that we have a department that is in charge of parent communications." Another parent (who is also a staff member) reported, "Something that I've noticed about Hayward is that Hayward has so many more resources offered for parents compared to other school districts," including parent groups and plentiful communication. Another parent specifically praised the establishment of HUSD's African American Student Achievement Initiative parent group, noting that it has made a powerful difference in terms of Black families "being a voice [and] setting the pace when it comes to making decisions."

Teachers and parents conveyed that HUSD’s family engagement specialists and parent centers provide valuable assistance for families. As one teacher explained, “We worked with parents specifically in developing that parent center so that when parents come to the school, they can go there if they feel like they need to speak with someone, get extra support, extra help.” Another teacher described examples of the support that the school’s family engagement specialist provides to parents:

She will take them in, sit down with them, and help them fill out the forms [for after-school programs]. She will help them with Medi-Cal forms. She will help them with accessing the food behind her. She has a stack of soap and I don’t know what else, canned foods. ... You’re looking for a soccer team for your son? She will help you to find that—which is actually not easy to find, but she’ll help.

As a parent conveyed, “I think that [having family engagement specialists] is a very true example of some positive things that the school district is doing.”

Staff and students’ families have long-standing, personal connections with the district. Classified staff and teachers noted that many among them attended HUSD as students and that students often return to HUSD as staff members. As one classified staff member said, “I know we have this big logo that reads ‘Made in Hayward.’ Employees, students, parents—it really is a big community. I know myself, I went to school here in Hayward, and my children did too.” Similarly, a central office administrator noted:

One of our greatest strengths is our human capital. You’ll find a lot of folks that may have been born in Hayward, gone to elementary, middle, and high school in Hayward, went to Chabot and/or Cal State East Bay, and then decided to work their entire careers in Hayward. ... Many folks have deep, deep, deep roots in this community. Every aspect of their learning and career took place in Hayward. And even for those who are like me and come from the East Bay in general, but not necessarily from Hayward, that deep connection to this community is really significant.

The district has leveraged external local partnerships to strengthen support for schools, students, and families. HUSD has expanded its resources for students and families by obtaining external grants and by establishing partnerships with many local governmental and nongovernmental organizations. These resources have expanded school and classroom funding; supported specific programs and staff positions; and provided wraparound services for students, families, and community members (e.g., through the Hayward Promise Neighborhoods program). A central office administrator noted that partnerships developed through Hayward Promise Neighborhoods and other grants have brought millions of additional dollars in resources to HUSD students and families. Said one parent, “We have so many locally based organizations that are supportive of the goals of the district.”

“Our students come back to work in our district [in] different capacities. ... It’s always great to see people coming back after they get their professions to serve our community.”

—HUSD classified staff member



Areas for Improvement

Central office administrators and the Hayward Education Association (HEA) conveyed that the relationship between HUSD and the union is not always collaborative and that this hinders productivity. For example, administrators emphasized that some of the major barriers to school improvement efforts—including the limited number of mandatory PL days, teachers’ autonomy in the use of Common Planning Time, teachers’ autonomy

in classroom instruction, and HUSD's inability to require common assessments—result from provisions in the teacher contracts. Meanwhile, HEA representatives reported that most central office administrators are unresponsive to requests and communication from the HEA, teachers, and parents. Several central office and school administrators acknowledged that teachers and parents turn to HEA representatives as their first point of contact for resolving everyday concerns, and administrators agreed that HEA representatives should not have to fulfill this role.

For example, a central office administrator reported that the HEA president notifies the administrator “when she gets student-specific issues, which blows my mind. I came from [a different school district], and labor partner relationships never went deep into student-based issues.” Similarly, a school administrator said that teachers “would always just go to their union rep when [there was] something they could talk to me [about]” and that this has only recently slowly started to change.

Another central office administrator pointed out that administrative turnover has likely contributed to the lack of a trusting relationship between the central office and the HEA and also to HEA leadership's active role in addressing issues that typically fall to administrators. One administrator observed, “I don't think that the relationship between teachers and administrators has really been nurtured. And I think there's been so much change in leadership that it's created not just an opportunity, but a necessity for groups to step in and fill that leadership void. And in many ways, I think our union leadership did that.”

Parents reported shortcomings in communication with central office administrators, school administrators, and sometimes teachers, particularly in the context of individual communications. As noted earlier, several parents described robust mass communication from district and school administrators. However, several parents reported less satisfaction with individual communications. Some parents reported slow response times or no response at all when they reached out to teachers or administrators with concerns. Others said that they did not feel comfortable raising concerns with administrators. One parent commented, “Even in the coffee with principals, sometimes you don't want to talk or raise concerns because you worry about how you will be perceived by others. Some might think, ‘Wow, here comes the complainer.’” Another parent described a lack of communication from teachers about students' academic progress and behavior, saying that such updates were only shared via the required progress reports and that even then, the progress report “didn't say anything about my student. It was just generic [content]. I know other parents, and we're comparing notes, and everybody's says the same thing. That's not helpful to me.”

Some parents said that HUSD could do more to make communications and school events accessible to monolingual families. For example, one parent from the District English Learner Advisory Committee conveyed that many parents do not speak English and many do not know how to use the computer: “I know that the district puts everything on the website, but most parents don't know how to navigate the Internet. ... The district talks about inclusivity, but they are not including us.” Another parent said that if there's a school event “where you're inviting all families to be present, but there's no Spanish version of the event flyer, you're essentially excluding Spanish-speaking families from attending.”

Section 4



Recommendations and Next Steps

Based on the research conducted for the SIR and input from the HUSD community, this section provides a set of recommendations delineating high-priority, high-leverage areas to target for improvement. For each area, these recommendations also offer potential strategies for achieving improvement.

Recommendations

Professional Learning and Instructional Support

1. Prioritize academic instruction as the key focus for teachers' mandatory PL opportunities.
2. As an immediate next step in ABAR and equity initiatives, systematically integrate equity, anti-racism, and SEL practices into academic instruction through PL focused on culturally responsive education. It is essential that this PL be focused on concrete steps for implementation (e.g., including sample lessons and follow-up support), not just broad concepts.
3. In collaboration with labor partners and instructional leads, identify key instructional topics to prioritize for future PL sessions, ensuring that the contract includes sufficient time for ongoing PL centered on enhancing academic instruction.
4. Provide additional PL for teachers during compensated, non-instructional time. For example, once a month or every other month, an existing early release day could be dedicated to mandatory PL on an agreed-upon instructional topic.
5. Reevaluate the use of current school staff meetings and use some time for PL on key instructional areas. (Reducing the number of initiatives would help reduce the quantity of information presented during staff meetings.)
6. Invest in additional instructional services to support teachers with academic instruction. These services could include, for example, coaching, assessment support, and assistance with pedagogy and interventions.

7. Establish and communicate a clear, districtwide process for referring students to tiered interventions and strengthen teachers' capacity to support students with IEPs within general education classrooms. Some essential steps include the following:
 - ✓ Provide training for general education teachers serving students with IEPs.
 - ✓ Hire additional staff who can work individually with students with IEPs.
 - ✓ Empower the special Education department to work more closely with instructional staff at the site level.

Teacher Collaboration and Common Planning Time

8. Determine a districtwide structure for weekly Common Planning Time that allows for district/site support while being teacher-led. Recommended steps include the following:
 - ✓ Collaborate with labor partners to develop structures for the effective use of Common Planning Time.
 - ✓ Require or incentivize teacher participation to ensure that all teachers benefit.
 - ✓ Decide on evidence-based practices that foster collaboration.
 - ✓ Document and share collaboration models for districtwide use.
 - ✓ Determine guidelines for site leaders to participate in a supportive role.

Curriculum and Instructional Alignment

9. Align curricula and instructional practices across all school sites. This should involve the following:
 - ✓ Conduct a comprehensive, in-depth curriculum review with the assistance of an external consultant.
 - ✓ Based on the review findings, ensure that all grade levels adopt and consistently use evidence-based, high-quality curricula and instructional approaches.
10. Institute the use of common local assessments across schools and classrooms. Collaborate with instructional leadership teams to identify appropriate local assessments and devise a plan for training on administering these assessments and using the resulting data to guide instruction.

Equity, Inclusion, and Positive School Culture

11. Develop a clear and consistent process for addressing incidents of discrimination (particularly school staff's discriminatory actions against students) and creating a safe, inclusive environment for all students. Build on HUSD's stated values of equity and anti-racism by establishing protocols for investigating and responding to reported incidents promptly and effectively, including appropriate consequences for discriminatory behavior.
12. Expand the implementation of restorative practices and positive behavior support systems across all school sites. Leverage HUSD's commitment to reducing exclusionary discipline by providing comprehensive training and ongoing support for site leaders and teachers in implementing these alternative approaches consistently and effectively.
13. Consider building on early successes in engaging with multilingual and newcomer families and students by investing in increased supports, including hiring multilingual staff members, teachers, and family engagement specialists. Work to make communications more consistently available and accessible in multiple languages.

Data Use and Program Evaluation

14. Establish standardized districtwide systems and required processes for collecting and using student-level academic and social–emotional data. Provide guidance and professional learning to support data-informed instruction, goal-setting, and identification of students for interventions.
15. Establish routines for reviewing student data on progress toward fulfilling graduation requirements and expand credit recovery opportunities as needed.
16. Implement a comprehensive system for measuring program impact and effectiveness across initiatives, then use data from this system to inform resource allocation decisions on which programs to adopt, adapt, scale, or discontinue.

Initiative Streamlining and Prioritization

17. To streamline HUSD initiatives, consider narrowing the portfolio of districtwide efforts and/or integrating efforts where appropriate. (ACOE could support HUSD with initiative-mapping and prioritization.)

Relationship With Teachers' Union

18. Prioritize building a trusting, collaborative relationship with the HEA through strategies such as the following:
 - ✓ Commit to reevaluated procedures and protocols for working with the HEA.
 - ✓ Identify common goals (e.g., more instructional PL and support).
 - ✓ Use a third-party mediator to help strengthen the relationship.

As part of this trusting relationship, HUSD and the union should collaboratively take joint responsibility for accelerating student outcomes, including by prioritizing student outcomes over teacher autonomy.

Conclusion

Enacting these recommendations is the first step in a multiphased improvement process that will occur in partnership with ACOE. The process will involve research, prioritization and planning, and implementation. ACOE plans to work closely with HUSD to provide technical assistance, thought partnership, coordination, and implementation support and to ensure alignment between HUSD's improvement efforts and student needs. Critically, ACOE will also support HUSD and ensure action steps are taken in line with the report's recommendations as part of the next phase of intensive support. Throughout the steps of each phase, ACOE will continue its intensive support to ensure that the focus of this work continues to be improving student achievement and well-being, particularly for underserved student groups.

The success of this work hinges on the dedication and actions of the entire HUSD community. As one teacher interviewee noted, "I hope I've been able to share some of what I think is great about Hayward and the pride that I take in working for Hayward. If I didn't care so much about this district, I wouldn't even bother talking to you or mentioning the things that I think could be improved because I would've been resigned to things never getting better. But I always have hope that things will improve." Research conducted for the SIR affirms the HUSD community's deep commitment to the success of its students—and that commitment is the solid foundation on which the phases of improvement work will build.