Manchester Essex School District

Phase 1-Needs Assessment

Report

May 2019

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MANCHESTER-ESSEX SCHOOL DISTRICT

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

A collaborative partnership between HILL for Literacy and Manchester-Essex School District administrators and staff was established to provide a comprehensive in-depth analysis of the current status of literacy practices at the elementary and middles schools. The HILL has generated a district report based on data collected from the schools that includes recommendations for improving the literacy achievement of all students.

B. Timeline (See Timeline in Appendix A)

The needs assessment began February 5, 2019 and was completed on May 1, 2019. The completed needs assessment report will be shared with the leadership team and school staff on May 1, 2019. The literacy planning based on the needs assessment will take place on May 13, 2019.

The Phase 1-needs assessment was initiated through an initial meeting with district and school leaders on January 31, 2019, followed by a signed proposal and letter of agreement on February 4, 2019. The ELA task force was assembled and a planning meeting was conducted on February 5, 2019. An overview of the needs assessment process was presented to all elementary staff on February 27, 2019. The assessment and program survey data gathering was completed by April 1, 2019. Phase I interviews began on April 1, 2019 and were completed on April 3, 2019. The PET-R survey was disseminated on April 3, 2019 and completed by April 15, 2019.

C. Methods

A literacy current state analysis was conducted using a variety of qualitative tools. Information was gathered through self-reporting mechanisms, through focus group interviews, and through the Effective School-wide Reading Program Survey. Information gathered by the Manchester-Essex School District and the HILL data collectors and facilitators is listed below:

1. **The MANCHESTER-ESSEX SCHOOL DISTRICT Self-Reported:**

- Literacy Assessments Currently in Use
- Curricula and/or Programs Used for Literacy Instruction
- Professional Development History

2. **HILL Gathered:**

- Interviews with Staff and Administrators

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- Planning and Evaluation Tool for Effective School wide Reading Programs (PET-R)

D. Results

Results are discussed in several ways. Self-reported information was reviewed and discussed from the perspective of how an effective school's literacy framework compares to Manchester-Essex School District' literacy framework. The goal of Phase I was to identify, prioritize, and recommend areas for literacy improvement that would have the most immediate and positive impact on teachers' skills and on the reading and writing skills of the students in the Manchester-Essex School District. Because of this, some results are shared in a format that is intended to allow for further exploration by administrators and staff.

Results shared in the district report reflect the general trends in all of the schools. When significant, specific school differences are noted. The discussion is organized around the key elements of an effective school-wide reading program as outlined in the Planning and Evaluation Tool for Reading Programs-Revised (PET-R), adapted from Kame'enui and Simmons (2003).

Results

II. Self-Reported Information

A. Literacy Assessments: (See Chart in Appendix B)

The purpose of this analysis is not to review student outcomes data but to review the assessment framework used by the school. The goal is to determine if the assessments chosen by the school provide adequate information about students' abilities in oral language, phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and writing. The underlying goal is to ensure that teachers have the appropriate information to inform instructional practices across the key literacy areas. Consequently, the focus is on ensuring that there are adequate formative and summative assessments that can be administered and interpreted by teachers or support personnel in an effective and efficient manner.

The administration and staff reported 158 assessments that gather information across the domains of oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary comprehension and writing. Based on the information provided, a universal screener and progress monitoring tool is used consistently across the schools. In addition, each of the schools have diagnostic measures and program based assessments. However, the assessments reported in individual schools vary and are not consistent across all of the schools in the district. Although, some of the assessments could be the same but the name

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of the test referred differently by different grade levels. There were several assessments reported for each of the components of reading which reflects redundancy.

In addition, the data gathered suggests that there is inconsistency in which assessments are used to measure the different components of the literacy. It recommended that administrators and staff engage in process of reviewing the current assessments, clarifying their purpose and what component of literacy they measure. It will be important to conduct this process prior to building a comprehensive assessment framework.

It is recommended that an Assessment Framework be developed and disseminated. The purpose of building the Assessment Framework is to ensure that a comprehensive but also consistent assessment framework for informing instruction is in place across the district. In addition, through the process of building the framework, the literacy leaders can reduce the redundancies and fill the gaps in the current assessment framework. A more in-depth discussion regarding the use of assessments and recommendations is in the results section of the report (i.e., assessment category of the interviews and survey).

B. <u>Literacy Programs/Curriculum</u> (see chart in Appendix C)

Manchester-Essex School District staff reported 285 different items on the Literacy Programs/Curriculum Summary Chart. There may be several items on this chart that represent the same curriculum and assessments, but the HILL left them to ensure accuracy and to allow for further discussion and refinement by Manchester-Essex School District faculty and administrators.

The data collected through the program surveys document that there is considerable amount of resources available to teachers for literacy instruction. Although, the variability across school suggests there is not a fully consistent approach to program implementation within a tiered instructional model. It was reported during the interviews that the teachers like the flexibility of choosing from different materials but also recognized the need for consistency within and across grade levels districtwide. In addition, based on the program surveys, it appears that that there is great variation between teachers on what materials and programs they are using to provide literacy instruction within each school and across the schools.

The type of programs, resources and materials reported range from packaged research-based programs to teacher developed. It will be important for the district to conduct an in-depth review of the current programs, resources and materials and the research on their effectiveness. The teachers articulated the need for consistency of implementation and expectation for instruction, this will be difficult to accomplish with this many different programs, resources and materials currently being used or available to teachers.

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It is recommended that Manchester-Essex School District modify and consolidate the entries on the summary sheet that are identical and/or components of the same program and eliminate the items that do not fit the definition of a program. Further, some initial work needs to occur with the administrators, specialists, and teachers to clarify the structural and content components in current use, and then to identify those that are missing. This activity will lead to instruction that is delivered with a clear purpose and intention. It is necessary for an effective school to possess a variety of programs and materials (tools) to meet the needs of diverse groups of learners. Making public what is available is an essential step in developing a comprehensive and effective literacy model.

With some refinement, the "Literacy Programs/Curriculum Summary Chart" can be used as a guide for future curriculum discussions and purchases. Manchester-Essex School District educators are encouraged to continue work on describing their curricular plan using a cross school, team process. The outcome of this work should be to identify Manchester-Essex School District' core, supplemental, and intervention program and then to identify when and how teachers will use them with their students. With the first priority being to identify Tier 1 instruction. Without effective tier 1 instruction, the alignment of tier 2 and tier 3 will be difficult and potentially ineffective to accomplish. A more in-depth discussion regarding staff beliefs about the effectiveness of the current curriculum/programs at elementary schools is provided in the interview section of this report.

C. History of Professional Development (see chart in Appendix D)

The professional development history survey reflects professional development offerings from 2014 to 2019. There have been consistent professional development offerings across the two elementary schools in the areas of RtI, Aimsweb and Orton Gillingham. However, it appears that the teacher participants varied between special education and regular education. Recent professional development on the Comprehension Toolkit was reported at one of the elementary schools but not the other. In addition, professional development time was allocated to mapping phonics instruction and developing a scope and sequence for phonics instruction at Essex elementary but that was not reported by Memorial elementary.

The middle school participated reported a few literacy-focused professional development and training in social emotional training. The professional development history suggests that a combination of trainers, both district/school leaders, outside consultants, program developers and publishers are used to deliver the training sessions.

An important next step for the district and school leadership teams is to determine if the surveys reflect all trainings/workshops offered and professional development time allocated to planning for literacy. Then, the district leadership team should develop a professional development plan based on a combination of program specific training,

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fidelity of implementation expectations and allocated time for teachers to focus on instruction.

III. HILL Gathered Information

A. Introduction

A literacy current state analysis was conducted using a variety of qualitative tools. Information was gathered through self-reporting mechanisms, through focus group interviews, and through the Effective School-wide Reading Program Survey.

The themes derived from the interviews have been filtered and coded three different ways. First, comments are sorted by strengths and needs. Then the comments are coded into categories: administration, assessment, culture, home/family, goals and objectives, instructional practices, instructional time, differentiated instruction, and professional development. Lastly, themes are derived within the categories from a final coding process. Comments become a theme when a number of comments are grouped and reach a number that represents a percentage of the possible themes. In some cases, there are not a sufficient number of comments to derive a theme. When this occurs, a N/S is designated in the table.

The PET-R survey identifies key elements of an effective school-wide reading program. There are seven categories: goals and objectives, assessment, instructional practices, instructional time, differentiated instruction, administration, and professional development. The key elements in the survey provide an independent and objective standard to use for comparison purposes with practices in Manchester-Essex School District.

The discussion and recommendations will be organized around the PET-R categories. It is important to note that comments from the interviews are also coded according to these categories. However, the categories are broad in nature and, unlike the survey items, the interview comments are not elicited through specific questions. Asking open-ended qualitative questions, at times, results in interview comments that reflect different perspectives within a category. When important, differences will be noted and discussed. Recommendations are based on the interviews, surveys, best practices in literacy improvement and the facilitator's knowledge of the schools.

B. Faculty/Staff and Administrator Interviews

K-5 grade staff in the schools was interviewed. 62 teachers and staff participated in focus group interviews. From the 20-30 minute interviews, 962 interview comments were coded, filtered, and analyzed. Comments were coded and filtered several times before thematic categories emerged. Some comments were eliminated from the final analysis because they contained information that simultaneously fit several categories and could

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not be separated without losing the meaning of the comment. These types of comments were relatively few in number and did not contradict the themes that emerged. The total number of comments for each category is listed below:

- Instructional Programs and Materials (434)
- Culture (200)
- Differentiated instruction/grouping/scheduling (152)
- Goals, Objective, Priorities (45)
- Administration/Organization/Communication (39)
- Assessment (37)
- Instructional/Preparation Time (26)
- Professional Development (18)
- Home/Family (11)

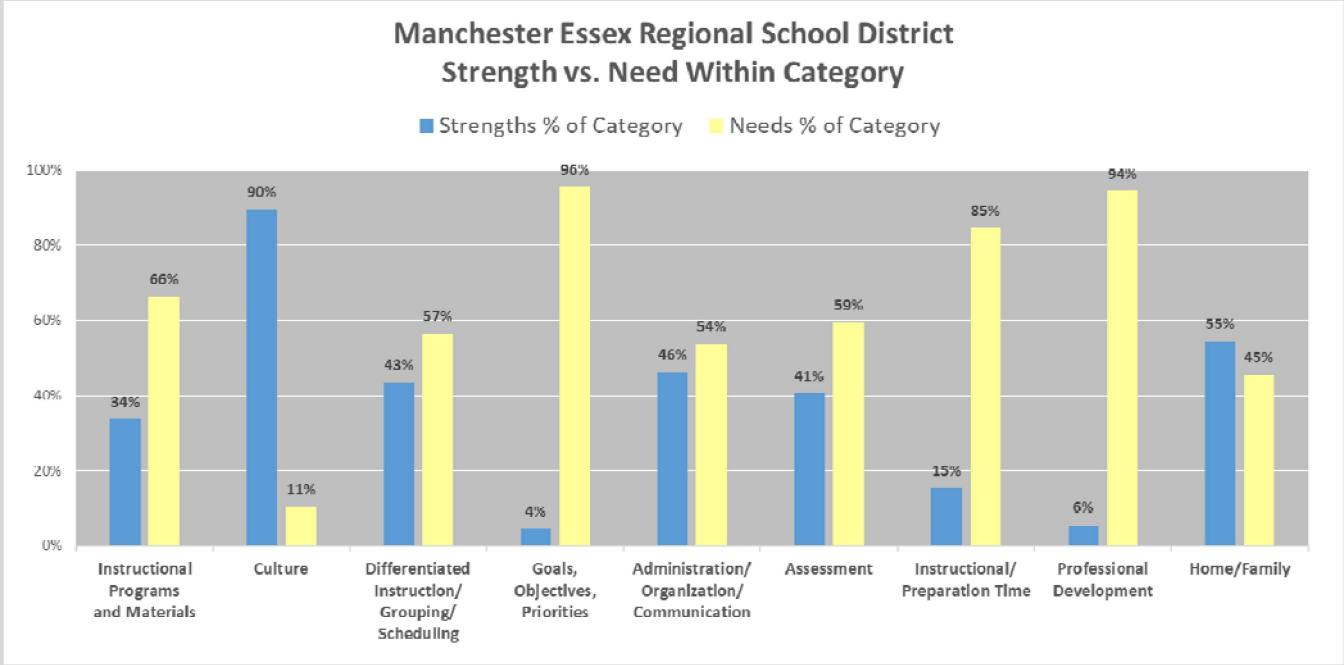
The charts below reflect the analysis of the comments in each category. Each comment was coded as a strength or need.

In addition to the total *number* of comments in each category, we analyze the *percentage* of comments that were either a strength or need. See the table below.

Interview Data Analysis - Manchester Essex Regional School District						
			Strengths		Needs	
Category	Number of Comments	%	#	% of Category	#	% of Category
Instructional Programs and Materials	434	45%	146	34%	288	66%
Culture	200	21%	179	90%	21	11%
Differentiated Instruction/ Grouping/ Scheduling	152	16%	66	43%	86	57%
Goals, Objectives, Priorities	45	5%	2	4%	43	96%
Administration/ Organization/ Communication	39	4%	18	46%	21	54%
Assessment	37	4%	15	41%	22	59%
Instructional/ Preparation Time	26	3%	4	15%	22	85%
Professional Development	18	2%	1	6%	17	94%
Home/Family	11	1%	6	55%	5	45%
	962	**100%**	**437**		**525**	

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In this next chart, the number of comments in the Strength vs. Need category is represented:



Overall, the category with the highest percentages of comments coded as strength is: Culture (64%) and Instructional Programs and Materials (53%). The remaining categories had more comments coded as needs than strength.

Staff Interviews – Thematic Elements and Examples

Below we provide a definition of each category. We will discuss the strengths and needs that emerged in all of the categories as well as the significant themes. The significant themes are in bold type and examples of comments are bulleted below the theme. Themes emerge based on the number of comments made about a topic.

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1. Instructional Programs and Materials

Comments about appropriateness for a variety of learners, documented efficacy, evaluative comments about efficacy, drawn from research-based findings and practices, alignment with state standards and benchmarks, adequate amount and type available, structural and/or content components, and supporting the full range of learners are included in this category.

Instructional Programs and Materials (434)	
Strengths (146)	**Needs (288)**
Multiple Texts for Instruction • Good supply of both nonfiction and fiction books • Class novels for read aloud and guided reading instruction • Organized book room with a lot of leveled text • Our leveled library is awesome • We have browsing boxes for independent reading **Many Resources to use flexibly** • We have a lot of resources • We have immense amount of freedom to use materials to meet student needs • We have Open Court phonics that provides a scope and sequence	**Writing Program** • Need a consistent approach to writing instruction • Writing instruction is lacking • Everyone is doing their own thing for writing • Need to focus on developing expressive language for the purpose of writing **Grammar Instruction** • Grammar instruction is non-existent. • Student arriving at middle school with gaps in their grammar skills • Need instructional materials for teaching grammar **Spelling Instruction** • No scope and sequence for teaching spelling • Need an instructional approach for teaching spelling **Consistent curriculum K-5** • Need a consistent curriculum for ELA K-5 • Need a roadmap for what to teach for reading and writing • Need consistent approach to comprehension and vocabulary instruction • Need a better phonics program • A lot of time was spent aligning Open Court and Orton Gillingham for phonics instruction.

Noteworthy Perceptions:

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The most frequent comments were about having a plethora of materials for guided and independent reading and the need for a consistent approach to teaching writing. In addition, teachers articulated the need for consistent curriculum to teach phonics, grammar, spelling and comprehension strategies.

2. Culture

Comments about teamwork, teacher autonomy, an emotional response to working at the school, collegial behaviors, creativity, and school diversity issues are included in this category.

Culture/Collegiality (200)	
Strengths (179)	**Needs (21)**
Positive work environment • Teachers are dedicated and knowledgeable • Great place to work • All looking for new/better ways to help students learn • Very caring and committed staff • A lot of respect among teachers • Like a family • Love working here • Best place I have ever worked **Collaborative Staff** • This is a collaborative and supportive place • Staff works collaboratively • Willingness to work together – the teachers like each other • Teachers support each other and collaborate	**N/A**

Noteworthy perceptions:
The comments from staff at the Manchester-Essex School District regarding culture and climate indicate an exceptional work environment, a culture of collaboration, and an eagerness for teaching and learning.

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3. Differentiated Instruction/Grouping/Scheduling

Comments about how instruction optimizes (or not) learning for all students, student grouping, scheduling of literacy in the day, service delivery model, paraprofessionals/ aides in classroom, consistency of instructional grouping for all groups, and flexibility within groups or classes are included in this category.

Differentiated Instruction /Grouping/ Scheduling (152)	
Strengths (66)	**Needs (86)**
Reading Support Staff • We have a great RtI process where students get targeted instruction • We are able to provide a lot of small group instruction because we have a lot of support • We have a lot of pull-out services for students • Our reading staff is our best resource	**Schedule is an Issue** • Students are missing instruction due to scheduling issues • Scheduling students for RtI and SPED groups is an issue • The schedule does not support the flow of the workshop model **Large Group sizes** • Large numbers of referrals for SPED in middle school • Difficult to provide intervention in middle school due to high number of students and varying needs

Noteworthy Perceptions:
Overwhelmingly the staff in the elementary schools reported that the high number of support staff is a huge asset and enables students to receive small group instruction. However, the master schedule in the schools appears to be an issue for supporting the use of the all people resources. In the middle school, there are high numbers of students requiring support and not enough personnel to deliver it. Also, the varying needs of the students at the middle school is an issue.

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4. Goals, Objectives, Priorities

Comments about literacy goals, research based standards or goals, teaching objectives, ideology or philosophical approach used, consistency in planning and/or implementation of professional development, cohesiveness of school plans and instruction, and priorities in terms of importance to student learning are included in this category.

Goals / Objectives /Priorities (45)	
Strengths (2)	**Needs (43)**
N/A	**Consistency of Instruction and Expectations** • There is lack of consistency within or between grade levels for instruction • We need something that carries through from one grade to the next. • The two schools are very different • Not sure what instruction students are exposed to in elementary schools • There needs to be more consistency between regular education and special education instruction

Noteworthy Perceptions:
The majority of the comments in this category were related to inconsistency in instruction between schools, grade levels and individual classrooms. In addition, it was reported that there is lack of alignment in instruction between regular and special education.

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5. Administration/Organization/Communication

Comments about general leadership issues, focus on high-quality instruction, organizing and allocating resources to support reading, mechanisms to communicate reading progress and practices, managing change, accountability, child-centered, and school systems are included in this category.

Administration / Organization / Communication (39)	
Strengths (18)	**Needs (21)**
Supportive Administration • Jennifer is very supportive and supports us to try new things. • Jennifer fosters us to be leaders and try new things	Need to keep library open and fully staffed Concerned about the lack of technology support

Noteworthy Perceptions:
Staff at Essex elementary spoke highly of the principal. The staff at Manchester school made very few comments about administration. The comments coded as need were primarily focused on the decrease in librarians and technology teacher.

6. Assessment

Comments about instruments and procedures for assessing reading achievement, how they inform instruction, meaningfulness, MCAS results, or lack of understanding about assessments are included in this category.

Assessment (37)	
Strengths (15)	**Needs (22)**
• We collect data to inform how we group students.	MAZE testing is not the best test for measuring comprehension. At the middle school, we need assessments to tell us about student's needs and to monitor progress.

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Noteworthy perceptions:
There were 37 comments that were unique in nature so determining trends from the interviews on this topic was difficult.

7. Instructional/Preparation Time

Comments about a sufficient amount of time for instruction, time allocated is used effectively, adequate planning time, extracurricular activities, meetings/staffing, paperwork load, behavior issues that distract from instructional time, or classroom management issues are included in this category.

Instructional / Preparation Time (26)	
Strengths (4)	**Needs (22)**
N/A	Need for more time for vertical teams to meet and collaborate Need more time for regular education and special education teachers to meet and collaborate

Noteworthy Perceptions:
More time for teacher collaboration is needed.

8. Professional Development

Comments about the adequateness and/or consistency of ongoing professional development, availability of training to support reading achievement, suggestions for topics or training desired, planning issues around topics and implementation, amount provided, who determines professional development topics, or teacher choice for attendance are included in this category.

Professional Development (18)	
Strengths (1)	**Needs (17)**
N/A	More training in programs adopted is needed (i.e., LLI, Open Court, Lively Letter, Handwriting without Tears, etc.) All staff responsible for teaching the programs should be included in the trainings.

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Professional Development (18)	
Strengths (1)	**Needs (17)**

Noteworthy Perceptions:
Although a few comments were made regarding professional development the majority of them were about the need for training on programs for all staff.

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9. Home and Family

Comments about home environment, family situations, language spoken at home, and any bilingual/ELL/ESL statements are included in this category.

Home / Family (11)	
Strengths (6)	**Needs (5)**
Parents are supportive.	Parents need to promote reading at home.

Noteworthy Perceptions:
A few comments were articulated related to families but they were consistent.

C. Effective School-Wide Reading Programs Survey Results

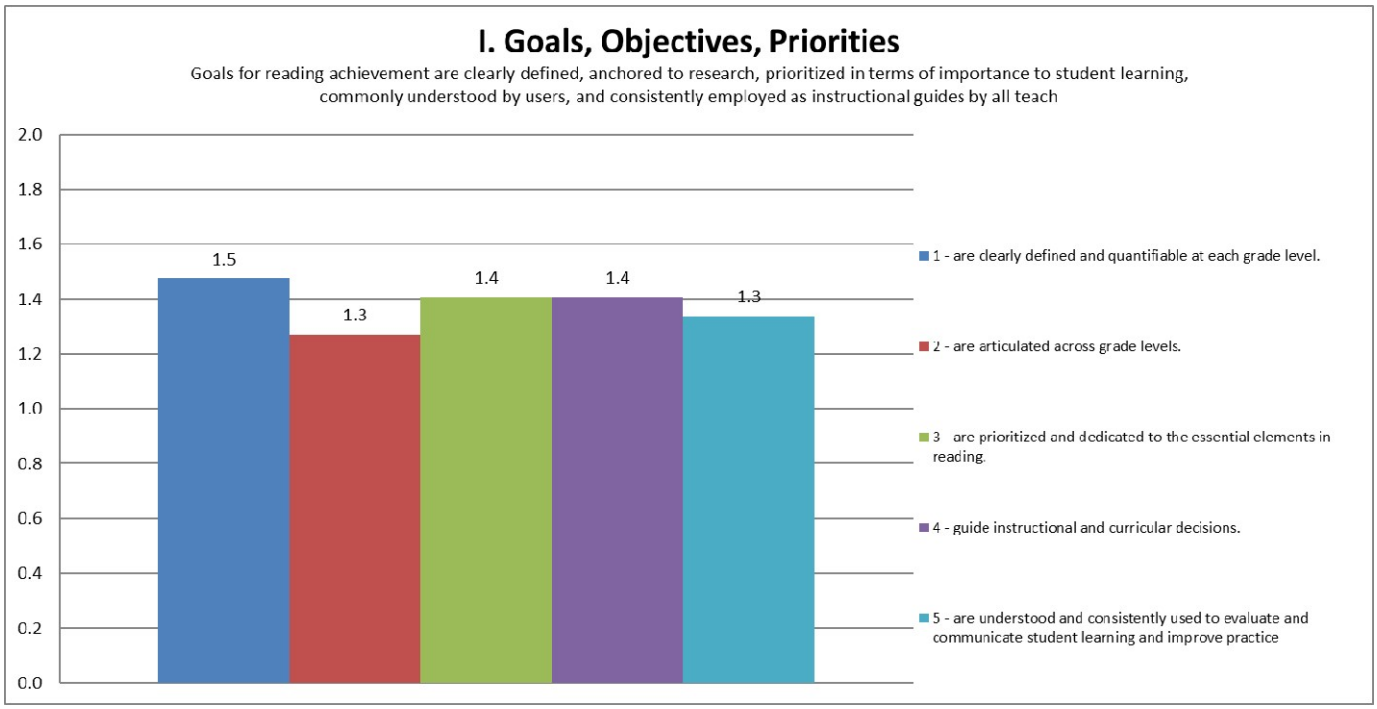
Introduction

After the interviews were conducted, 59 Planning and Evaluation Tool for Effective School-Wide Reading Programs - Revised Surveys (PET-R, adapted from: Kame'enui & Simmons, 2003) were completed and analyzed. This tool identifies key elements of an effective school-wide reading program. There are seven categories, as follows: goals and objectives, assessment, instructional practices, instructional time, differentiated instruction, administration, and professional development. There are 5 – 8 individual items within each of these seven major categories.

Participants are asked to reflect on and rate all items as either "fully in place," "partially in place," or "not in place." If an item is fully in place it is awarded 2 points. If it is partially in place it is awarded 1 point and if it is considered not in place it is assigned a score of zero.

Individual Survey Items

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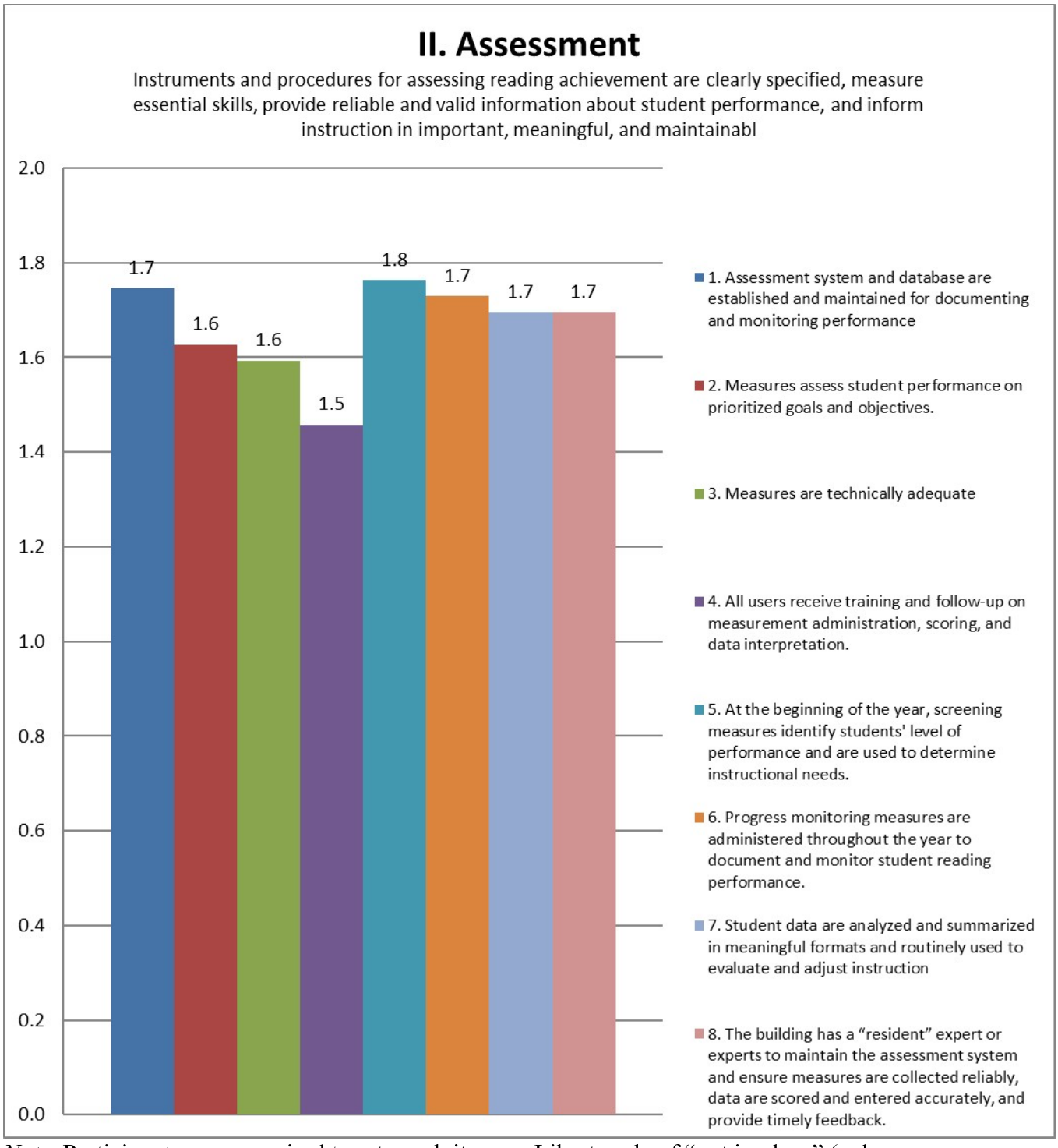


Note. Participants were required to rate each item on Likert scale of "not in place" (value =0), "partially in place" (value = 1) and "fully in place" (value = 2).

Noteworthy Perceptions:

The items in this category received similar ratings across all items and would be considered partially in place. The item regarding goals/ objectives are clearly defined and quantifiable and dedicated to essential components of literacy received the highest average ratings. The results of the survey suggest that there is still work to do on articulating goals across grade levels is needed.

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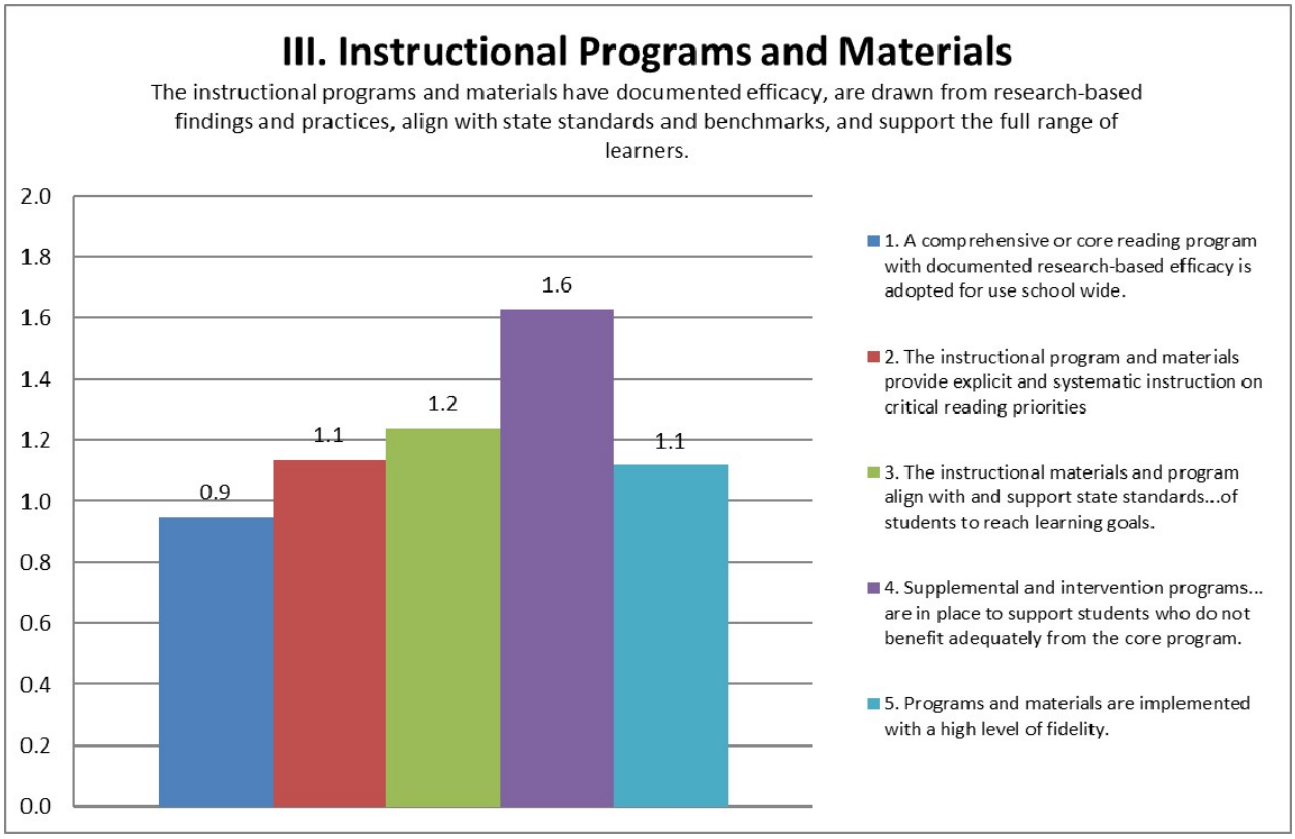


Note. Participants were required to rate each item on Likert scale of "not in place" (value =0), "partially in place" (value = 1) and "fully in place" (value = 2)

Noteworthy Perceptions:

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The item related to have a screening measure in place received the highest rating. The survey results on assessment suggest that training on how to administer, interpret, and utilize assessment data for all staff is a need. All the items in the assessment category would be considered partially in place and emerging to fully in place.

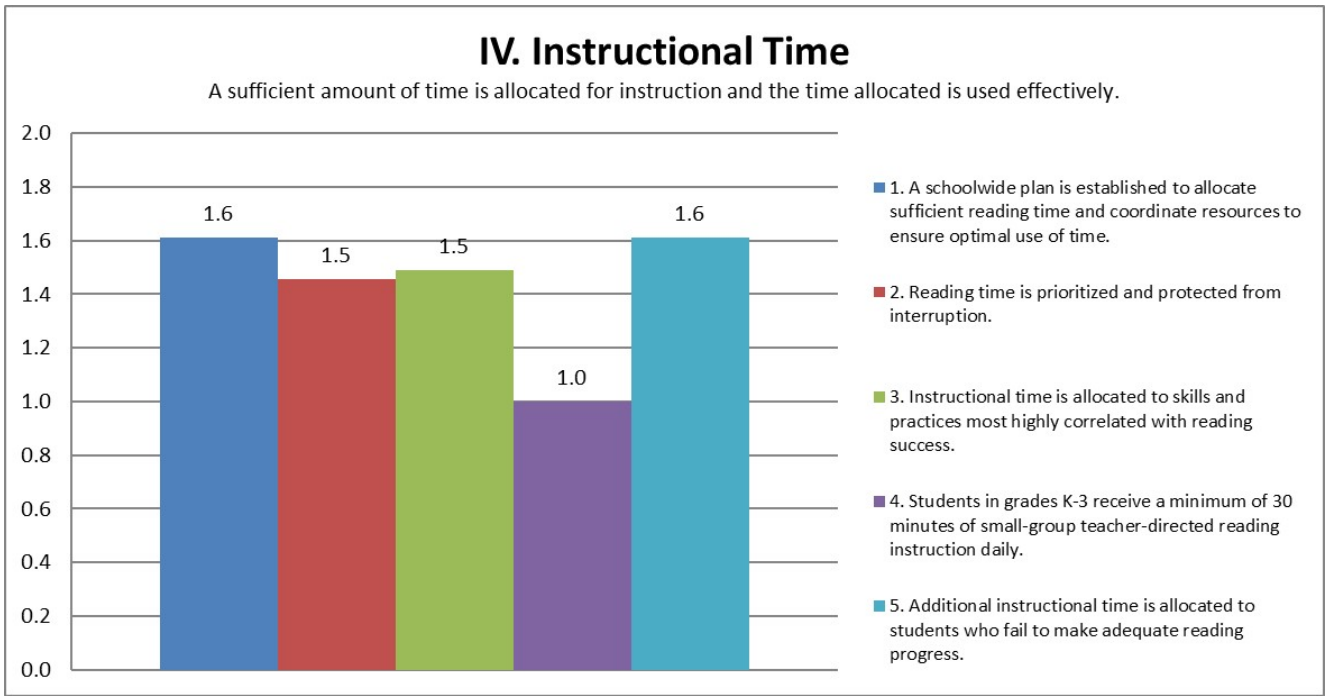


Note. Participants were required to rate each item on Likert scale of "not in place" (value =0), "partially in place" (value = 1) and "fully in place" (value = 2).

Noteworthy Perceptions:

The items in this category received relatively the same rating. Supplemental and intervention programs are in place to support at-risk students was rated the highest. Implementing a comprehensive core reading program and high levels of implementation fidelity received the lowest ratings.

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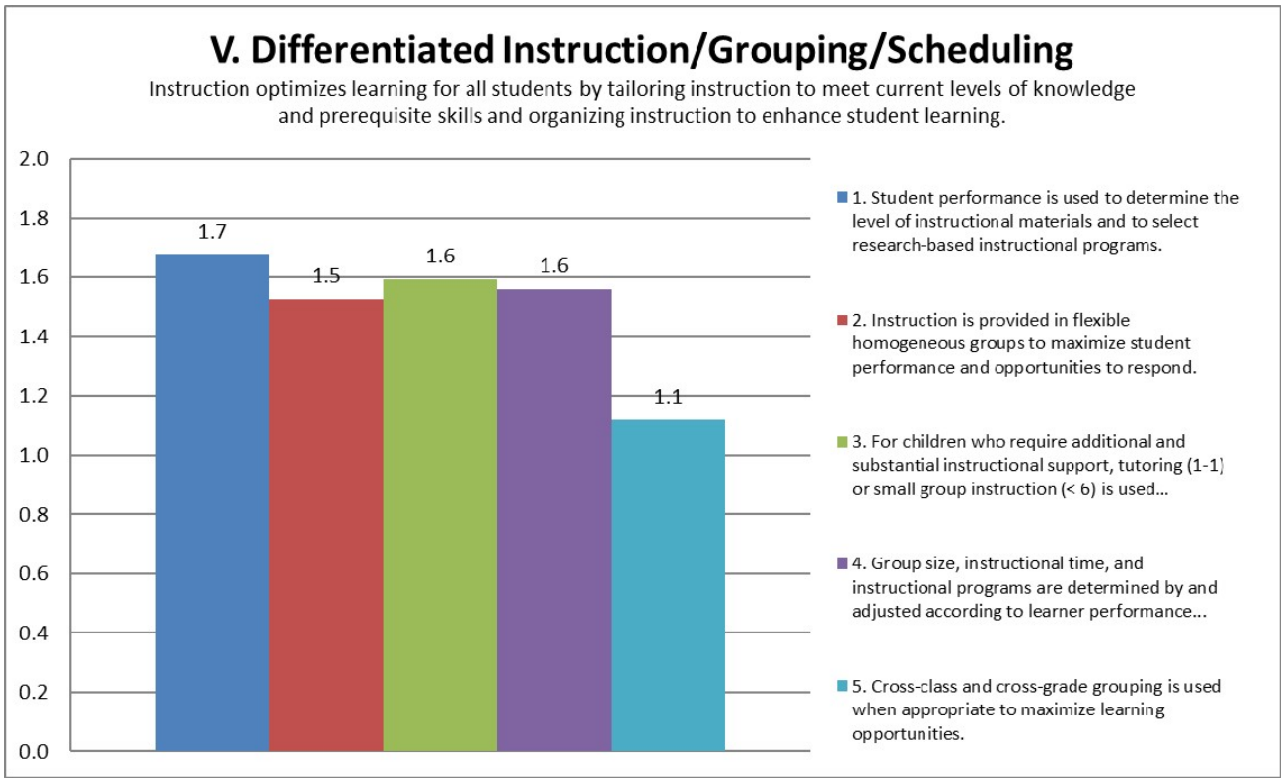


Note. Participants were required to rate each item on Likert scale of "not in place" (value =0), "partially in place" (value = 1) and "fully in place" (value = 2).

Noteworthy Perceptions:

Time allocated to reading instruction, coordinated resources and instructional time for at-risk students received highest rating. Students receiving small group, targeted instruction for 30 minutes daily received the lowest rating.

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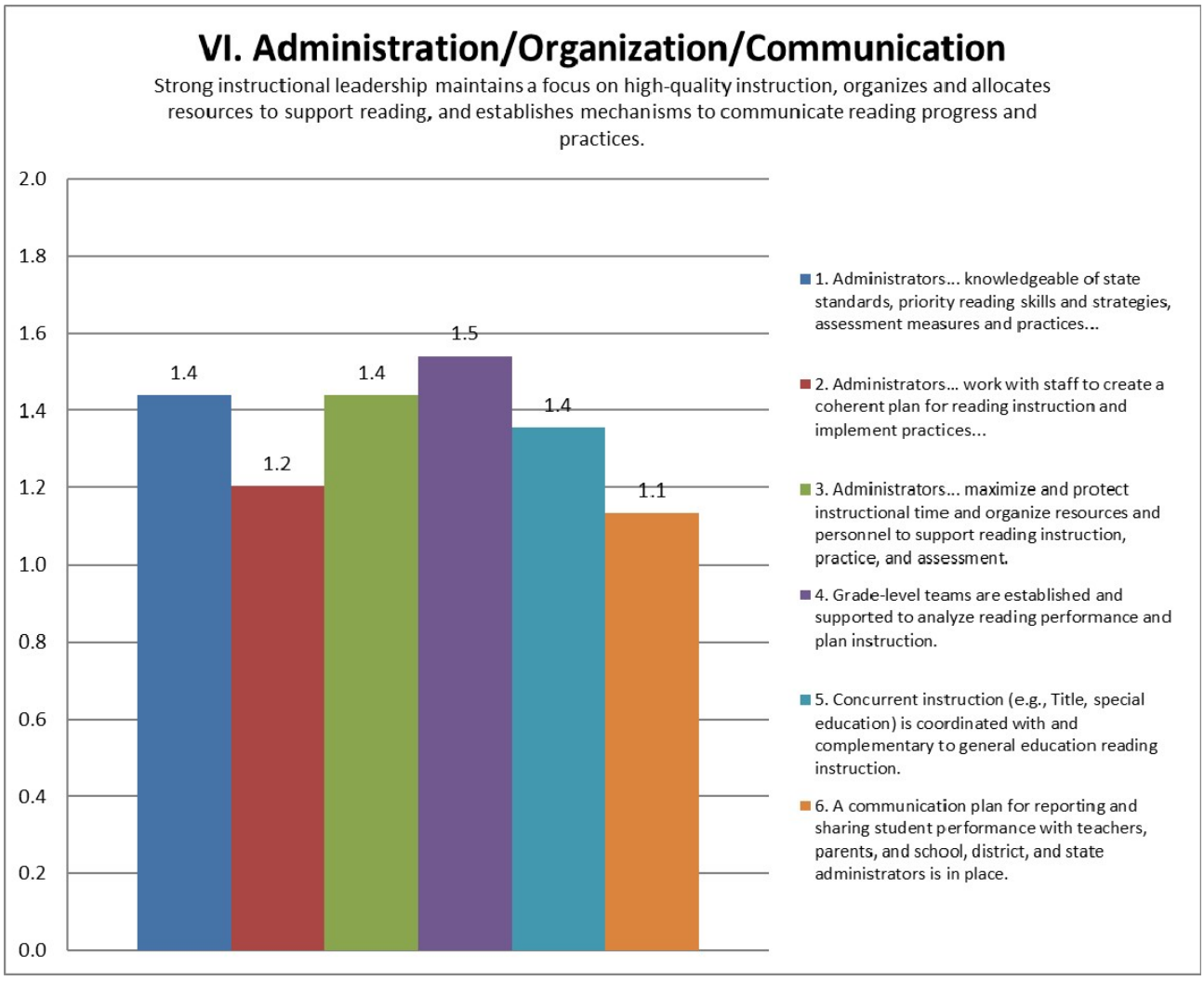


Note. Participants were required to rate each item on Likert scale of "not in place" (value =0), "partially in place" (value = 1) and "fully in place" (value = 2).

Noteworthy Perceptions:

The items related to differentiated instruction received ratings of partially in place, with student performance used to determine instructional level and materials receiving the highest rating. Cross class grouping received the lowest rating.

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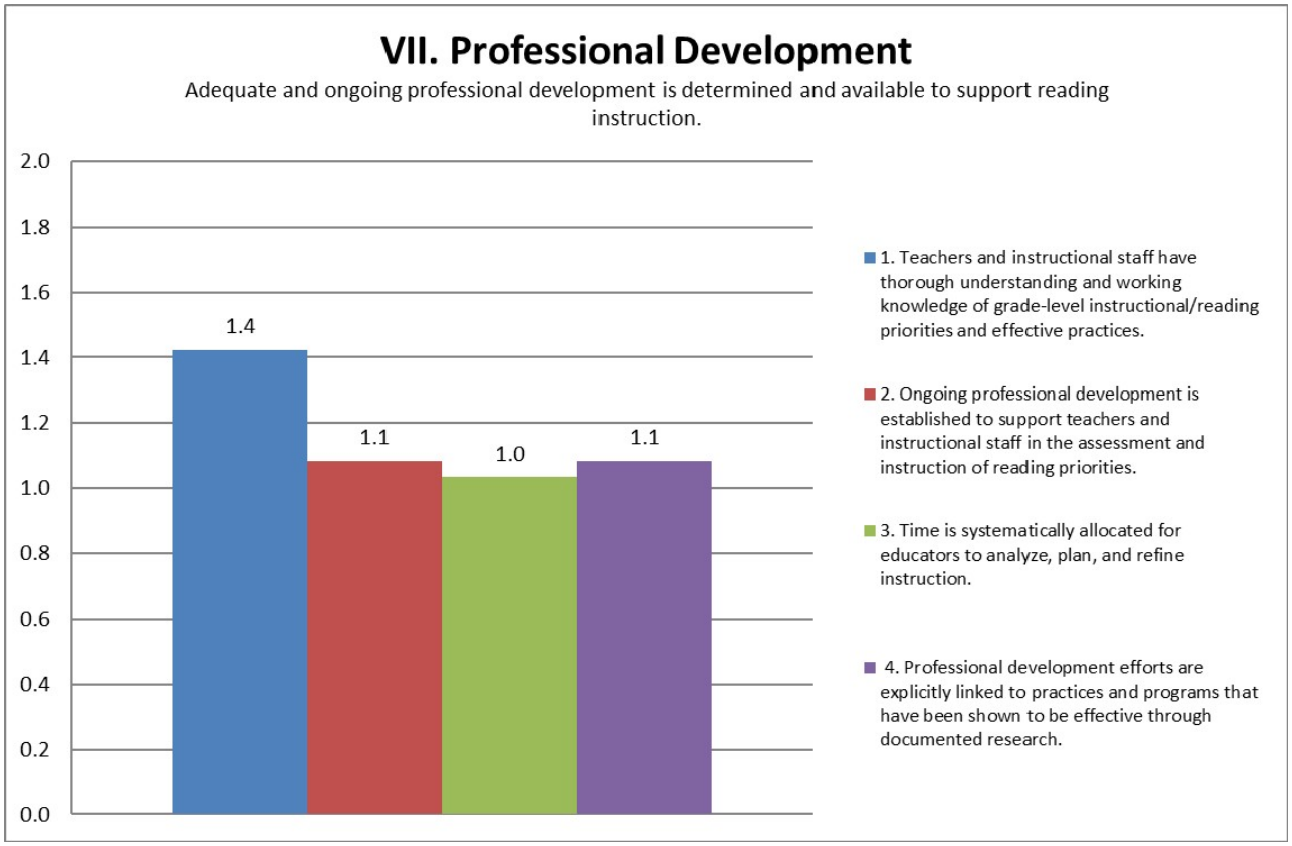


Note. Participants were required to rate each item on Likert scale of "not in place" (value =0), "partially in place" (value = 1) and "fully in place" (value = 2).

Noteworthy Perceptions:

Item four received the average rating of 1.5, indicating that grade level teams are established to analyze data and instructional plans. The items related to administrators supporting staff with coherent reading instruction and consistent implementation of practices and communication plans received the lowest ratings.

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Note. Participants were required to rate each item on Likert scale of "not in place" (value =0), "partially in place" (value = 1) and "fully in place" (value = 2).

Noteworthy Perceptions:

The items in this category with the highest rating is that teachers have an understanding of grade level priorities and practices. The item will the lowest rating is that there is time allocated to planning and refining instruction. Overall, this category is least in place relative to the other categories.

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IV. Analysis, Discussion and Recommendations

The Planning and Evaluation Tool for Effective School-wide Reading Programs - Revised (PET-R) data was compared with the individual interview data across all categories. From the analysis of the data presented, a picture of Manchester-Essex School District' literacy strengths and needs emerged. Below is a discussion of each category and the similarities and differences that emerged on the PET-R versus the interviews.

Culture and Home/Family District Trends:

There are two categories in the interview protocol that are not included in the PET-R survey. Comments from the culture and home and family categories are discussed below and should be considered in the development of a school-wide literacy plan.

Culture

In the area of culture, staff reported a high level of collaboration among school staff and overwhelmingly articulated that their schools had exceptionally positive work environments. Staff also reported that the faculty was hard working and sincerely dedicated to children and trying new instructional strategies. There were not enough similar comments coded as need to determine a trend and therefore unreportable.

Home/Family

In the area of home and family there were only 11 comments coded in the category during the interviews. However, of the 11 comments they were similar in nature. Staff reported that parents are supportive but need to emphasize the importance of reading for pleasure at home.

1. Goals/Objectives/Priorities

Goals/Objectives/Priorities items on the PET-R have ratings between 1.3-1.5 across the district. The items in this category on average were considered partially in place. The interview data and the PET-R data suggests a need for clearly articulated goals and expectations for literacy instruction across schools, departments and grade levels.

Recommendations:

- District administrators continue to utilize a district leadership team with representatives from each school. This literacy leadership team should craft literacy goals and action steps aimed to increase consistency across the district.

- School administrators form school based leadership teams with representatives from each grade level and specialists. This team would develop school based goals and an action plan that aligns with the district goals.
- Create a subgroup of the district literacy team to focus on setting and implementing goals that increase the alignment between regular education and special education.

2. Assessment

Assessment items have ratings between 1.5-1.8 on the PET-R across the district. The interview and PETR data consistently supported that universal assessment data is being utilized to group student for instruction at the beginning of the year. On the PETR, the item identified as least in place was on the allocation of time and training on how to administer and score assessments and interpret data. In addition, the interview data suggests that there could be gaps in the assessment framework for measuring comprehension in the upper grades. Based on the assessments reported on the survey, there appear to be a lot of different assessments currently being used across the three schools. There are also variations to the assessments used within grade levels in each of the schools.

Recommendations:

- The district leadership team should use a framework to review existing assessments, integrate them into the framework, identify gaps in the framework and create a plan to build a comprehensive assessment framework using reliable and valid assessments.

- Once district-wide assessment tools are agreed upon and recorded on the framework, provide adequate training and a system for administering, scoring, interpreting, and measuring the effectiveness of instruction on regular basis.

- The district should organize the data from all assessments into one format that can be used to determine instructional decisions at least 5x per year.

3. Instructional Programs/Materials

Instructional Programs and Materials have ratings between .9-1.6 on the PETR. During the interviews this category received the most comments. Staff articulated that there is multiple text for reading groups and independent reading. The staff also reported that they have a lot flexibility to choose materials to implement with their students. However, the staff also reported a need for teaching resources for writing, grammar and spelling instruction. In addition, there were mixed reviews shared regarding the current phonics

program. Lastly, The PETR results and interviews support the need to improving the consistency and fidelity of implementation of current programs and materials. The program survey completed by individual teachers further supports the need to review current programs, resources and materials to identify gaps, redundancies and inconsistencies within and across schools.

Recommendations:

- The district leadership team should allocate time to review the program survey results and map those programs onto a program framework. This process will enable the team to make decisions about the redundancy and gaps in instructional materials for teaching the critical components of literacy including writing, grammar and spelling.

- The district should work to create a multi-tiered model for delivering instruction. Manchester-Essex School District educators are encouraged to work on describing their tiered instructional model especially for tier 1 instruction within and across grade levels.

- The district should develop a clear plan for implementing tier 1 instruction and the aligned tier 2 and tier 3 instruction with fidelity.

4. Instructional/Preparation Time

Instructional/Preparation Time items on the PET-R have ratings between 1.0-1.6 across the district. The results suggest that review of the master schedule to ensure there is 30 minutes allocated to small group instruction daily for all students. The comments during the interviews suggest that time for vertical teams, special education and regular education teachers to meet and collaborate.

Recommendations:

- Develop schedules that allow for common planning time and collaboration for teachers, specialists and special education teachers at each school.

- Edit or create a master schedule that has staggered academic blocks for small group and intervention instruction.

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5. Differentiated Instruction/Grouping/Scheduling

Differentiated Instruction/Grouping/Scheduling items on the PET-R have ratings between 1.1-1.7 across the district. The item related to using student performance to determine instructional level received the highest rating. The item regarding cross-grade grouping received the lowest rating. During the interviews, teachers indicate that the high numbers of reading interventionists is highly appreciated and considered to be an asset to the school. However, an area of concern from the teachers that scheduling the intervention instruction is problematic due to the master schedule. At the middle school, teachers also indicated that large class size and numbers of students requiring reading support makes it difficult to meet the range of needs of students.

Recommendations:

- Develop master schedules in each school that have staggered academic blocks for both small group and intervention blocks to maximize the use of people resources.

- Schools should consider cross-class groupings as a way to provide more small group instruction within Tier 1 and the intervention block.

6. Administration/Organization/Communication

Administration/Organization/Communication items on the PET-R have ratings between 1.1-1.5. The ratings on the PET-R and comments during the interviews support that teachers analyze student data and plan for instruction with in their grade level. However, there is a need for the district and school leaders to determine a clear focus and expectation for instruction. An area of concern articulated during the interviews is the need to maintain the librarian and technology specialists.

Recommendations:

- Utilize the district leadership team and school leadership teams to support district administration to establish and communicate clear guidelines and expectation for instruction.

- Brainstorm ideas on how to maintain the support for the use of the library and technology across the district.

7. Professional Development

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Professional Development items on the PET-R have ratings between 1.0-1.4. Establishing a professional development plan that incorporates time for teachers to analyze to plan for and refine instruction on a regular basis is essential. In addition, the need to deliver professional development on how to implement the programs.

Recommendations:

- Develop a professional development plan to support the implementation of programs and assessments articulated on the district program and assessment frameworks.

- Utilize professional development time for regular education, reading specialists and special education to plan for instruction.

- Provide professional development in the science of reading and current evidence-based practices in assessment and instruction to ensure a common, consistent teacher/administrator knowledgebase across the district.

Next Steps:

1. Edit report based on feedback from the Manchester-Essex leadership team and school staff.
2. Submit final report to Manchester-Essex leadership team and staff (if needed).
3. Develop a district literacy plan based on needs assessment report.

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