

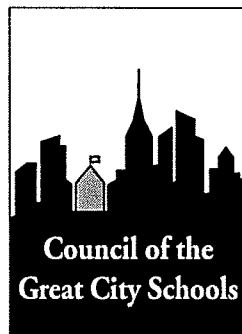
FINAL DRAFT

# Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis Public Schools

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

Submitted to the  
St. Louis Public Schools

By the  
Council of the Great City Schools



April 2004

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

First, we thank Acting Superintendent William Roberti. It is not easy to ask one's colleagues for this kind of review. It takes courage and openness. It also requires a commitment to the city's children that is uncompromising.

Second, we thank the St. Louis School Board who provided the leadership and support to conduct this type of self evaluation. Without the Board's cooperation, this review could not have occurred.

Third, we thank the members of the district's staff, who provided their valuable time and gathered all the documents and data that the Council needed to do its work. We especially appreciated the work of David Flieg, Leslie Lewis, and Jim Flanagan. The staff's openness and candor were critical to our understanding of the challenges that St. Louis faces.

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

Fifth, the Council thanks the cities and school districts that contributed staff to this effort. They included Boston, Broward County, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Chicago, Columbus, Fort Worth, Houston, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia. The enthusiasm and generosity of these districts is another example of how the nation's urban public school systems are banding together to help each other improve student performance.

Sixth, the Council thanks the Broad Foundation for its support for the special education team. All team members and council staff provided their services to St. Louis *pro bono*.

Finally, I thank Council staff members Sharon Lewis, Julie Wright Halbert, Janice Ceperich, Manish Naik, Jeff Simering, Robert Carlson, and Beth Antunez whose skills were critical to the success of this effort.

Michael Casserly  
Executive Director  
Council of the Great City Schools

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## **INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT**

The Council of the Great City Schools, the nation's primary coalition of large urban public school systems, has prepared this report to summarize its recommendations to St. Louis about improving student achievement in its public schools.

This analysis was requested by Superintendent William Roberti, who asked the Council to review the district's efforts to improve academic performance, serve special needs children, administer its federally funded school programs, and procure its educational materials.

To carry out this charge, the Council assembled four Strategic Support Teams (SSTs) composed of curriculum and instruction, special education, federal programs, and procurement specialists who have worked to address some of the same issues as those faced by the St. Louis schools. Each of the team members came from urban school districts that have significantly improved student achievement and strengthened operations over the last several years. Council staff members accompanied and supported the teams and prepared this report summarizing the findings and proposals of the SSTs.

The special education team made its site visit to the St. Louis Public Schools on December 7-10, 2003. Its meetings began with a briefing by Superintendent Roberti on the challenges the district faces with the over identification of children. That briefing was followed by two days of fact finding and a day devoted to synthesizing the team's findings and proposing preliminary strategies for improving services for students with disabilities. The superintendent was debriefed at the end of the visit. Additional time after the site visit was devoted to conference calls, data analysis, and the collection of further information.

The curriculum and instruction team made its site visit to St. Louis on January 12-14, 2004. This team focused on the district's broad instructional program and concentrated most of its attention on reading and mathematics. The team's schedule was similar to the special education team's schedule, including an initial, fact finding, synthesis of findings and recommendations, and debriefing.

The federal program team visited St. Louis on February 23-26, and the textbook procurement team visited the city on February 24-27. Each team followed the same general schedule as the first two teams.

We commend the school board, Superintendent Roberti, and staff for requesting this review. It is not an easy decision to subject oneself and the institution one leads to the scrutiny that an analysis like this entails.

## **PROJECT GOALS**

Superintendent Roberti asked the Council of the Great City Schools to—

- Review the instructional program of the St. Louis schools, its organizational structure and quality, and its potential for raising student achievement in the city.
- Propose ways to boost reading and math achievement in the school system.
- Analyze the reasons for the large numbers and costs of students being identified for special education services.
- Recommend strategies for reducing the numbers and costs of students identified as disabled and suggest ways of improving program operations.
- Review the district's federal education programs to assess their overall effectiveness in helping the district raise student achievement and their general alignment with *No Child Left Behind*.
- Propose ways that the district's federal programs could help boost student achievement, operate more effectively, and be in better alignment with *No Child Left Behind*.
- Identify the primary causes of the district's textbook procurement problems in 2003-04, and review the steps taken by the district to correct the problems.
- Recommend steps the district could take to ensure the successful acquisition and distribution of textbooks in 2004-05 and beyond.
- Identify expertise, resources, strategies, and materials from across the country that St. Louis could use to boost student achievement and improve its programs.

## **THE WORK OF THE STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAMS**

The Strategic Support Teams working on this project were composed of leaders from other urban school systems that have made substantial progress in improving student achievement and strengthening operations in their own districts.

The teams began their work with detailed briefings on the status of the functions they were about to review. The reviews that followed included extensive interviews with district staff, board members, principals, teachers, and others. The teams also reviewed numerous documents and reports and analyzed data on student performance and program participation.

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The superintendent was briefed at the end of each team's site visit. Team members then conducted conference calls after their visits, gathered additional information, gathered data, and refined their initial recommendations.

This approach to providing technical assistance to urban school districts that are struggling with instructional and operational problems is unique to the Council and its members and is proving effective for a number of reasons.

First, the approach allows the superintendent to work directly with talented, successful practitioners from other urban school systems that have established strong track records for performance and excellence.

Second, the recommendations developed by these peer teams have validity because the individuals who developed them have faced some of the same problems confronting St. Louis. It cannot be said that these individuals do not know what working in an urban school system is like or that their proposals have not been tested under the most rigorous conditions.

Third, using senior urban school managers from other communities is faster and less expensive than retaining a private firm. Team members know all the ways that school administrators can obscure reality. It does not take long for the teams to determine what is going on. This rapid learning curve permits services to be delivered in a faster and less expensive manner than could be secured with experts who are less versed on the folkways of urban education.

Finally, the teams comprise a pool of experts that the superintendent, school board, and staff can use to implement the recommendations or to develop other strategies.

Members of the Strategic Support Teams included the following individuals—

### **STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS**

<b>Special Education</b>	<b>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</b>
Sue Gamm Former Chief Specialized Services Officer Chicago Public Schools	Carol McGowin Director Mathematics Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools
Carolyn Guess, Assistant Superintendent, Special Education Services Houston Public Schools	Barbara Pellin Former Assistant Superintendent Student & Family Services Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools
Leah Kelly Director of Exceptional Student Education Broward County Public Schools	Nancy Timmons Former Assistant Superintendent Curriculum & Instruction Fort Worth Public Schools

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

Federal Programs	Textbook Procurement
Charlotte Harris Boston Public Schools	Dave Koch Former Chief Administrative Officer Los Angeles Unified School District
Ron Stewart Columbus Public Schools	Kimberly Sangster Chief Procurement Officer Philadelphia School District
	Willie Pavlas Textbook Operations Manager Houston Independent School District

### CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT

This report begins with an Executive Summary of the issues facing the St. Louis Public Schools as it struggles to boost student achievement and improve operations. The summary also outlines the proposals the Council and its SSTs are making. Chapter 1 presents a brief overview of district characteristics and student performance in the St. Louis Public Schools. Chapter 2 summarizes the findings and recommendations of the curriculum and instruction team. Chapter 3 summarizes the findings and recommendations of the special education team. Chapter 4 summarizes the findings and recommendations of the federal programs team. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and recommendations of the textbook procurement team. And Chapter 6 presents a synopsis of the review and discusses some of the features of the recommendations.

The appendices of this report include a number of items that may be of interest to the reader. Appendix A presents the results of the curriculum and instruction team's comparison of the St. Louis schools with key instructional practices of some of the nation's fastest improving urban school systems. Appendix B lists the people the teams talked with during their site visits. Appendix C lists the documents that the teams reviewed. Appendix D presents brief biographical sketches of team members. Appendix E presents a brief description of the Council of the Great City Schools and the Broad Foundation, which provided support for the special education team. Appendix F lists the Strategic Support Teams that the Council has conducted over the last several years.

The Council has now conducted nearly 80 Strategic Support Teams in more than 23 major cities in a variety of instructional and management areas. We have shied away from using a specific template to guide our fact-finding or our recommendations. Instead, reports by the organization are specifically tailored to each district and the particular challenges it faces.

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

In the instructional arena, the Council has been guided by its own research on why some urban school systems improve and others do not.<sup>1</sup> This research has focused on the key organizational and instructional strategies behind the academic gains of some of the fastest improving urban public school systems in the nation and how those strategies differ from those of districts that are not seeing much traction under their reforms.

Finally, we should point out that we did not examine everything that could possibly be analyzed in the St. Louis schools. We did not spend time, for example, looking at non-instructional operations. The school board has retained an excellent firm in Alvarez & Marsal to do that work. We also did not look at the district's finances, human resource department, facilities, school feeding efforts, transportation, or a host of other issues that often find their way into the headlines. Our focus in this report is exclusively on student achievement, special education, federal programs, textbook procurement, and how to improve them.

### PROJECT STAFF

Council staff working on this project included:

Michael Casserly Executive Director Council of the Great City Schools	Sharon Lewis Director of Research Council of the Great City Schools
Janice Ceperich Research Specialist Council of the Great City Schools	Manish Naik Legislative and Research Specialist Council of the Great City Schools
Julie Wright Halbert Legal Counsel Council of the Great City Schools	Beth Antunez Intergovernmental Specialist Council of the Great
Janet Na Consultant to the Council	Robert Carlson Director of Management Services Council of the Great City Schools

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<sup>1</sup>Snipes, J., Doolittle, F., Herlihy, C., (2002). *Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban Schools Systems Improve Student Achievement*. MDRC for the Council of the Great City Schools.

## Restoring Excellence to the St. Louis Public Schools:

### Report of the Strategic Support Teams

#### Of the

### Council of the Great City Schools

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND KEY PROPOSALS**

### **CHALLENGES**

When Acting Superintendent William Roberti took the reins of the St. Louis City Public Schools in the summer of 2003, he was given a year to eliminate a nearly \$90 million deficit, improve operations, and return a functioning school system to the elected school board.

That Roberti was being asked to tackle such a tall order was unusual, for he was the Managing Director of Alvarez & Marsal, a firm specializing in corporate turnarounds, and not a traditionally trained or recruited superintendent. Instead, Roberti came to St. Louis from the military and the private sector, and specialized in organizational management, logistics, and finance.

The school board's decision to hire Alvarez & Marsal was unique in the recent history of urban public education. It was not a choice made in the face of a state takeover or as the result of a proposal to breakup the system. Rather, it was the estimation of the city's own school board that the system was "out of steam" and that the burdens for these failures were falling disproportionately on African American and poor students in the community.

Only 23 percent of the district's third graders, 13 percent of its seventh graders, and five percent of its 11<sup>th</sup> graders were reading at or above the proficiency level on the state's test in 2003. Math scores were little better.

The firm's work since last summer has been difficult and controversial, but it has resulted in considerable progress for the district. The district's new leadership negotiated an agreement with the state and the NAACP to borrow up to \$49.5 million from the desegregation settlement fund to overcome the threat of bankruptcy. It developed a weekly cash flow system to track revenues and disbursements. It reorganized and streamlined the district's organizational structure and decision making process. It instituted new financial controls. It sold scores of unused facilities and reduced the district's non-teaching workforce. It closed 16 underutilized schools; streamlined bus routes; and stepped up security at school bus stops. It renegotiated labor contracts; outsourced food services and buildings, grounds, and maintenance operations. And it is steadily reducing the district's structural deficit.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

None of this work has been without controversy. The district's efforts over the last year have sparked outrage and headlines, anger and hope. But few people would claim that the city school system did not need a substantial overhaul.

Still, efforts to begin lifting the academic performance of the city's school children are just beginning. The district has hired a "literacy coach" for each of its 94 schools, put into place new interim assessments, and channeled cost savings into the classroom. But these steps are only a prelude to what remains if student achievement is to improve any faster than it has over the last few years.

At this point, the school district has no instructional focus; it lacks a plan for raising student achievement; its instructional staff is poorly organized; and its sense of direction has splintered. The district is also marked by little sense of urgency for improving achievement, no accountability for results, and very low expectations for children. To make matters worse, the district has piled one program on top of another for so many years that one cannot tell what the system is trying to do academically or why.

In short, the St. Louis school district has had trouble raising student achievement any faster than it has because it does not have its resources and people pointing in the same instructional direction. Almost everyone working for the district can claim that their work is consistent with the goals of the organization no matter what they are doing. The result is incoherent effort and predictably low performance.

In one crucial respect, however, the school board has already taken the most important step to turn around this situation. It decided to change. This choice, by itself, sets the district apart from some other cities that are captives of their own inaction. Cities that have decided to reform and improve, however, do not regret the tougher path they have chosen. Children are learning more. Things run better. Optimism is returning. And the schools are playing a central role in the revitalization of their cities. The St. Louis public schools could be in store for some of the same progress, if it stays the course, builds on the financial and operational reforms put into place over the last year, and bears down on its instructional program.

To begin the process of rebuilding the instructional program of the St. Louis City Public Schools, William Roberti, the district's acting superintendent, asked the Council of the Great City Schools to review system's academic efforts and propose ways to improve it and boost student achievement. The Council assembled four Strategic Support Teams, composed of senior managers from other urban school systems that have made substantial gains in achievement, to do the work. The teams looked specifically at the district's curriculum and instructional program, its special education operations, federal programs, and textbook procurement.

The teams visited St. Louis in December 2003 and January and February 2004, and prepared a detailed set of recommendations for the district. The proposals are summarized below.

### KEY PROPOSALS

The Strategic Support Teams are submitting proposals to the St. Louis Public Schools in four areas: curriculum and instruction, federal programs, special education, and textbook procurement. The following are highlights.

#### A. Curriculum and Instruction

The Council of the Great City Schools benchmarked or compared the instructional program of the St. Louis Public Schools against those of other urban school districts that were making more rapid progress. The organization then drew up a set of recommendations to make St. Louis's instructional practices more like those of districts seeing faster progress. For St. Louis's programs to be more like these other cities, the district will have to take the following bold steps:

##### 1. Develop a coherent vision for where it wants to go.

The St. Louis Public Schools currently lack a comprehensive plan for improving student achievement. But developing one will require the school board and the superintendent to develop a shared vision for where they want the district to go and what they want the schools to look like. The district's leadership will need to—

- Develop a broad vision and districtwide priority on improving student achievement.
- Hire a permanent superintendent who shares the school board's vision about improving achievement and has a strong track record of boosting student performance elsewhere.
- Charge the new superintendent with developing a comprehensive strategic plan for increasing student achievement in the school district—using the recommendations presented in this report.
- Stay focused on the attainment of the vision and the plan for a sustained period.

##### 2. Set measurable goals for academic improvement.

The St. Louis Public Schools currently lack a set of goals beyond those for attaining accreditation that would more rapidly improve student achievement across the district. The district needs to—

- Set specific, measurable student achievement goals in reading and mathematics on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) and other assessments, and are consistent with *No Child Left Behind*.
- Attach timelines to the attainment of district goals.



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- Set school-by-school academic targets that together would result in the district's improvement.
- Incorporate these districtwide and school-by-school goals into the district's school improvement plans.

### **3. Establish a new accountability system for attaining academic goals.**

Academic goals for the improvement of the St. Louis Public Schools are of little use unless they are accompanied by the means to hold people responsible for attaining them. To devise an accountability system that works across the system, the district will need to—

- Place the permanent superintendent on a performance contract tied the district's overall academic goals.
- Begin placing senior staff on performance contracts tied to the attainment of districtwide achievement goals.
- Begin placing principals on performance contracts tied to school-by-school targets.
- Revamp the evaluation systems for the superintendent, senior staff, and principals to incorporate the improvement of student achievement.
- Increase the latitude of principals to interview, select, and hire their staffs.

### **4. Standardize districtwide instructional strategies and curriculum.**

The St. Louis Public Schools currently have scores of programs to boost student performance, many of which are selected and implemented at the school level with little coordination or alignment—and little evaluation as to which ones work and which don't. To create instructional cohesion and focus, the district will need to—

- Select and put into place by the beginning of the 2004-05 school year a single, cohesive reading program that reflects the best scientific research.
- Ensure that the program is as closely aligned to the state's standards as it can be.
- Begin phasing out initiatives and models at the school level that are not proven effective or are not consistent with the new instructional program.
- Revise the district's pacing guides in math and develop them in reading in order to boost performance.

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- Hire a new Chief Academic Officer and reorganize the district's instructional division so that it is better aligned with best practices.

### **5. Provide uniform, districtwide professional development on the implementation and use of the new curriculum.**

The St. Louis schools currently have a very disjointed professional development program that largely reflects the incoherence of the instructional strategy. To be more effective, the district needs to—

- Adopt or implement a districtwide program for training principals and teachers on a new single curriculum.
- Revamp the district's menu-like professional development unit (PDU) system so that it is more explicitly tied to the curriculum's implementation and to the district's academic goals.
- Ensure that professional development is differentiated, includes training on supplemental materials, addresses intervention strategies in reading and math—and that attendance is mandatory.

### **6. Ensure that reforms are implemented at the classroom level.**

The St. Louis school system currently allows each school to pursue almost any programs or strategies it wants to. The result has been too many school-based strategies to be effective districtwide. The district not only needs to take primary responsibility for raising student achievement districtwide but also needs to—

- Assign a staff member at the central office to coordinate reading and math coaches at the school level.
- Revise the district's current classroom monitoring system to include instructional items rather than operational or logistical ones.

### **7. Use data to monitor progress and decide on instructional interventions.**

The St. Louis schools are getting more sophisticated in and committed to the use of data to decide on instructional strategies. But it is unclear whether the district's data tools are aligned to and consistent with its curriculum. The district needs to—

- Stop using the SRI as a quarterly or interim assessment measure and instead use an imbedded assessment from the new reading adoption.
- Have the publisher of the quarterly assessments tailor them so that they align with the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP).

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- Renegotiate the speed by which the publisher turns around TerraNova results to the district.
- Upgrade the district's research unit and charge it with putting the district's programs on a regular evaluation cycle.

### **8. Begin reforms at the elementary level but start reforming high schools.**

The St. Louis schools have a large and longstanding early childhood program that needs to be upgraded and tied to reading and math reforms at the early elementary school level. The district needs to—

- Ensure that its new reading program has a preschool component.
- Develop an explicit, comprehensive high school reform plan.
- Begin double blocking at the middle and high school levels to boost reading and math skills.
- Phase out the district's algebra readiness course in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and move it to the middle school grades.

### **9. Focus on the district's lowest performing schools.**

St. Louis has a number of schools that are unusually low-performing. Many urban school systems across the country are learning that they can improve their overall performance by targeting efforts on boosting the performance of its lowest achieving schools. The district needs to—

- Select five to ten of its lowest performing schools and develop a specific plan of intervention to boost their performance.
- Eliminate pullout programs unless they are used for periodic grouping, regrouping, and re-teaching of necessary skills.

## **B. Title I and Other Federal Programs**

*No Child Left Behind* includes a number of explicit requirements and provisions that the St. Louis Public Schools will need to address over the next few years. To better meet the letter and the spirit of the law and to ensure that federal funds contribute more to raising student achievement, the St. Louis schools will need to—

- Move the support of district literacy coaches out of Title I and the general operating budget and into Title II, saving about \$5.0 million in general operating funds.

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- Control the use of federal Title I funds centrally so that dollars are used on the district's instructional priorities rather than to fill individual school spending gaps. (The team recommends either a sizable, districtwide afterschool program or a school-based program that follows a district-established template.)
- Mesh NCLB's adequate yearly progress goals with those proposed for the district and individual schools.
- Reprogram the remaining \$3.0 million in unspent Title I funds for other Title I purposes.
- Devote the 10 percent set-aside for professional development that schools have to reserve for a districtwide training program to support a new reading initiative.
- Require that supplemental service providers align their programs with the district's new reading and math initiatives.
- Hire a new director for the district's Title I program.

### **C. Special Education**

The superintendent has been particularly committed to making sure that the district's special education program meets the requirements of IDEA, operates more smoothly, and addresses the issue of over-identifying students for special education. To achieve these goals, the St. Louis Public Schools will need to—

- Explicitly address special education students in the district's new strategy for improving student achievement districtwide.
- Establish clear, standard, and objective districtwide criteria and standards for placing students into and exiting them out of special education that rely less on subjective judgments.
- Conduct a detailed statistical analysis of where the over identification is occurring and intervene accordingly. (The district should also discuss with the state the problem that is occurring with the over identification of transfer students by the suburbs.) The district might also begin re-evaluating students coming back from the county tagged as disabled to determine continued eligibility.
- Put a "Positive Behavior" support program in district schools to begin lowering discipline problems.
- Sharpen the district's professional development to include strategies to help both general and special education teachers handle all identified disabilities and behaviors.

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- Reorganize the district's Special Education department and redeploy excess staff to realize greater cost efficiencies.
- Move IEP record-keeping into a school-maintained, web-based electronic data system.
- Revisit how the district assigns students with disabilities to particular schools.
- Clarify the district's use of 504 eligibility criteria rather than IDEA criteria for student services.

### **D. Textbook Procurement**

The school district had substantial problems last year ensuring that all schools and students had the right number of textbooks for classroom teachers and students. To ensure that the problem does not reoccur in 2004-05, the district will need to—

- Immediately name an internal textbook task force with a designated staff leader to begin the process of textbook purchasing and distribution for the 2004-05 school year.
- Revamp the school board's policy on textbook adoptions so that it clarifies not only the composition of advisory committees but the criteria by which they review and evaluate available options.
- Conduct an immediate inventory of textbooks in all district schools and warehouses so the district knows what it has.
- Develop a comprehensive back-up plan to cover contingencies in case computer systems fail.
- Establish a new set of district policies on textbook acquisition procedures and criteria, life cycles, take-home practices, disposals, pricing, and the like.
- Purchase and install a textbook management system to handle inventories, cataloging, monitoring, and reporting of books.

Student achievement has improved modestly in the St. Louis Public Schools over the last two years, but the gains will need to accelerate if the goals established under NCLB are to be met. The district has made an excellent start in fixing its financial and operational problems, but it will need to turn more aggressively now to raising student achievement. The Council of the Great City Schools hopes that this report will help focus the district further on student achievement and accelerate the gains that it is already starting to see.

## CHAPTER 1. BACKGROUND ON THE ST. LOUIS SCHOOLS

### LEADERSHIP

The St. Louis Public Schools is governed by a seven member school board. All members are elected citywide and serve four-year terms without compensation. The board meets monthly and selects its own president, vice president, and secretary annually. Four members of the board were elected on a reform slate in 2003, with the backing of business and other leaders across the city. The new working majority of the board then moved to overhaul the school system, starting with its finances, and retained the services of Alvarez & Marsal, a New York-based firm, to do the work.

The acting superintendent of schools is William Roberti, a senior partner with Alvarez & Marsal, who was appointed in July 2003 to turn around the struggling school system and hand it back to the board in the summer of 2004. The school board is currently searching for a permanent superintendent.

The school district participates in one of the nation's largest desegregation programs, which involves the voluntary transfer of some 10,000 city students to surrounding suburban schools. Costs of the program are paid by the state, the district, and the corporation managing the effort.

### STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The St. Louis Public Schools enrolled about 43,969 students in the 2001-2002 school year, the most recent year on which comparable national data are available for other major cities. (Statistics for the current school year, 2003-2004, show that the district enrolls 40,992 students.) Some 76.8 percent of the district's students were eligible for a free or reduced price lunch in 2001-2002, compared with about 35.2 percent nationwide. The average large city school system has a free or reduced price lunch eligibility rate of about 62.4 percent. (Table 1.)

A total of 81.5 percent of St. Louis' enrollment is African American, compared with about 16.9 percent nationwide. In addition, 6.1 percent of the district's enrollment is composed of English Language Learners and 18.6 percent are students with disabilities. In general, the St. Louis public school system looks more like other major urban school systems across the country than it resembles the average school district in Missouri or nationwide.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Great City School figures are drawn from the National Center for Educational Statistics on school districts that are members of the Council of the Great City Schools.

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

**Table 1. Comparison of St. Louis, Missouri, Great City Schools, and the Nation's Public Schools 2001-02<sup>3</sup>**

	<b>St. Louis Schools</b>	<b>Missouri</b>	<b>Great City Schools</b>	<b>National</b>
Enrollment	43,969	909,792	7,274,284	48,521,7831
% African American	81.5	17.5	37.0	16.9
% Hispanic	1.1	2.0	32.7	18.5
% White	15.9	79.0	23.1	58.9
% Other	1.4	1.5	7.0	5.7
% Free/Reduced Price Lunch	76.8	35.2	62.4	39.7
% English Language Learners	6.1	0.9	17.0	7.9
% with Disabilities	18.6	15.2	12.9	13.3
Pupil/Teacher Ratio	13.5	13.7	17.0	15.9
Number of Schools	123	2,380	10,270	96,193
Students per School	358	382	708	504
Current Spending per Pupil <sup>4</sup>	\$8,192 <sup>5</sup>	\$6,657	\$7,200	\$6,991

The average school in St. Louis, moreover, enrolls about 358 students, significantly fewer than the average city (708 students per school), the state average (382 students per school), or the national average (504 students per school). The district also has more teachers per pupil than either the Great City Schools average or the national average.

Finally, data from the National Center for Educational Statistics indicate that St. Louis' current per pupil expenditure was \$8,192 in FY2000, a level that is higher than city, state, or national averages.

<sup>3</sup> Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), Common Core of Data, "Public Elementary and Secondary School Universe Survey," 2001-2002.

<sup>4</sup> Data are for the 2000 fiscal year and include only those expenditures that can be defined around a per pupil purpose.

<sup>5</sup> The district indicates that its full 2003-04 per pupil expenditure is \$10,617. Approximately \$9,367 per pupil are General Operating Fund (GOB) funds.

## **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

The Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) in communication arts has been administered to all students in grades 3, 7, and 11 of the St. Louis school district since 1998. Student scores on the test show steady increases among third graders over the last several years. The percent of third graders scoring at the proficient level or above has increased from 10 percent in 1998 to 23 percent in 2003.<sup>6</sup> The percent of seventh graders scoring at the proficient level or above, however, has remained at around 12 percent over the last five years.<sup>7</sup> And the percent of students in the eleventh grade scoring at the proficient level or above decreased from 10 percent in 1998 to 5 percent in 2003.<sup>8</sup> (Graphs 1-3.)

Students across the state at each grade level, however, increased by varying degrees between 1998 and 2003. In other words, third graders in St. Louis have gained ground over the last five years on their counterparts statewide. But, seventh and eleventh graders have lost ground. The difference between the reading scores of third graders in St. Louis and those statewide decreased from 19 percentage points in 1998 to 11 points in 2003. The difference remained about the same among seventh graders, but increased from ten percentage points in 1998 to 17 points in 2003 among eleventh graders.

The Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) in math has been administered to all students in grades 4, 8, and 10 of the St. Louis school district since 1997. Student scores show steady gains among fourth graders since the first testing six years ago. The percent of fourth graders scoring at the proficient level or above increased from 11 percent in 1997 to 24 percent in 2003.<sup>9</sup> The percent of eighth graders scoring at the proficient level and above increased slightly from four percent in 1997 to six percent in 2003.<sup>10</sup> But, the percent of tenth graders scoring at the proficient level or above decreased from six percent to three percent.<sup>11</sup> (Graphs 4-6.)

The difference between the math scores of fourth graders in St. Louis and those statewide decreased from 24 percentage points in 1997 to 13 in 2003. The difference among eighth graders decreased from 10 percentage points in 1997 to eight points in 2003. But the difference among tenth graders increased from six percentage points in 1997 to ten points in 2003.

Students in St. Louis were gaining ground slowly in math on students statewide in all but the tenth grades.

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<sup>6</sup> Percent of third graders passing communication arts statewide increased from 29% to 34% between 1998 and 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Percent of seventh graders passing communication arts statewide increased from 30% to 33% between 1998 and 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Percent of eleventh graders passing communication arts statewide increased from 21% to 22% between 1998 and 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Percent of fourth graders passing math statewide increased from 34% to 37% between 1997 and 2003.

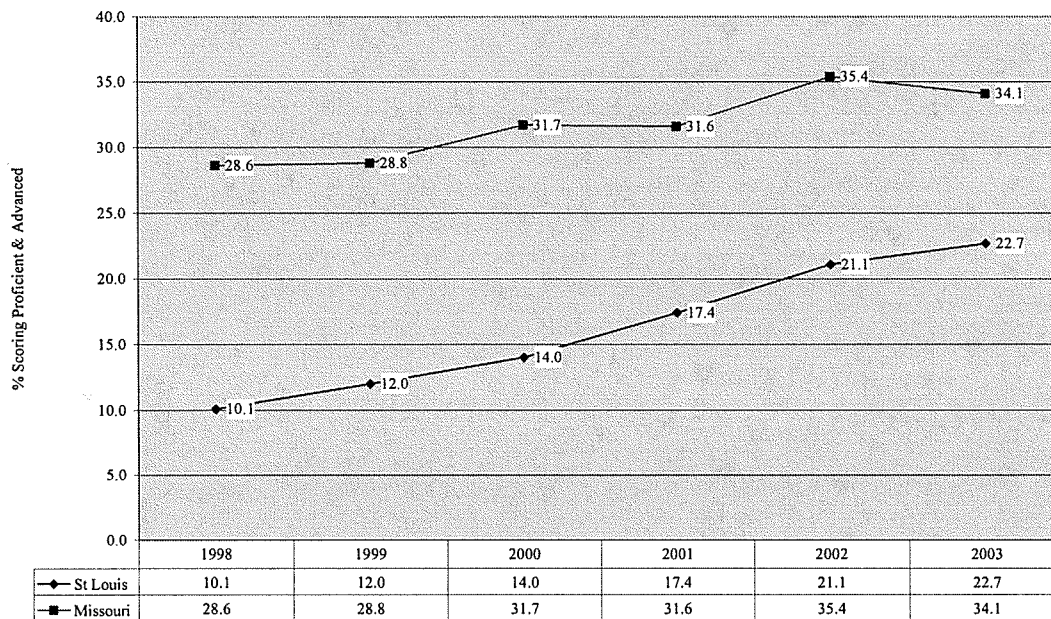
<sup>10</sup> Percent of eighth graders passing math statewide remained unchanged at 14% between 1997 and 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Percent of tenth graders passing math statewide increased from 11% to 12% between 1997 and 2003.

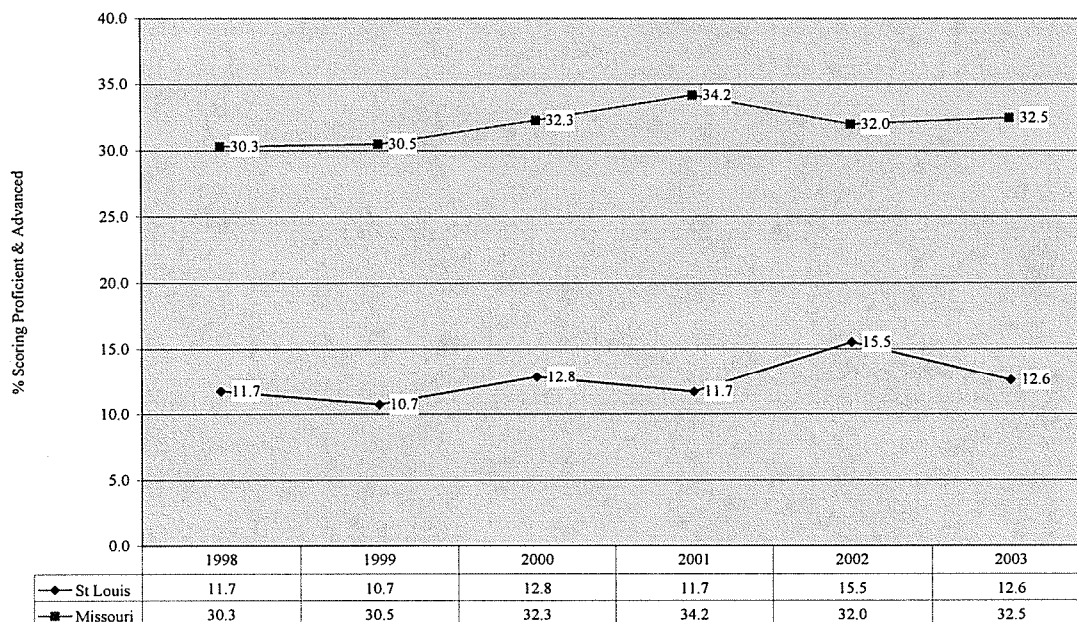


# Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

**Graph 1. Percent Scoring Proficient & Advanced  
Missouri Assessment Program Communication Arts Grade 3**

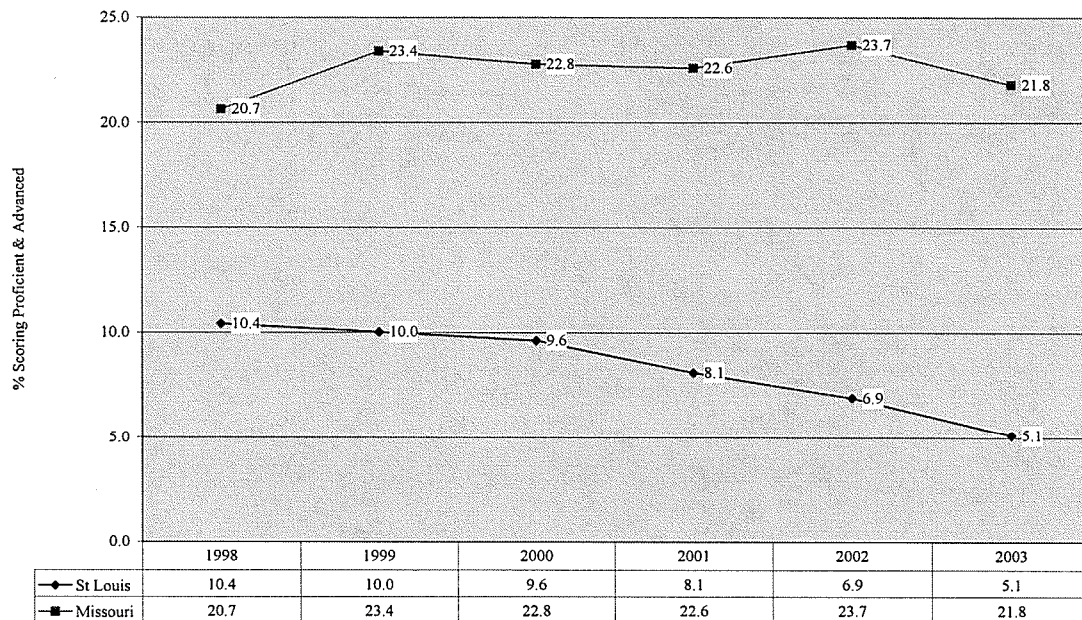


**Graph 2. Percent Scoring Proficient & Advanced  
Missouri Assessment Program Communication Arts Grade 7**

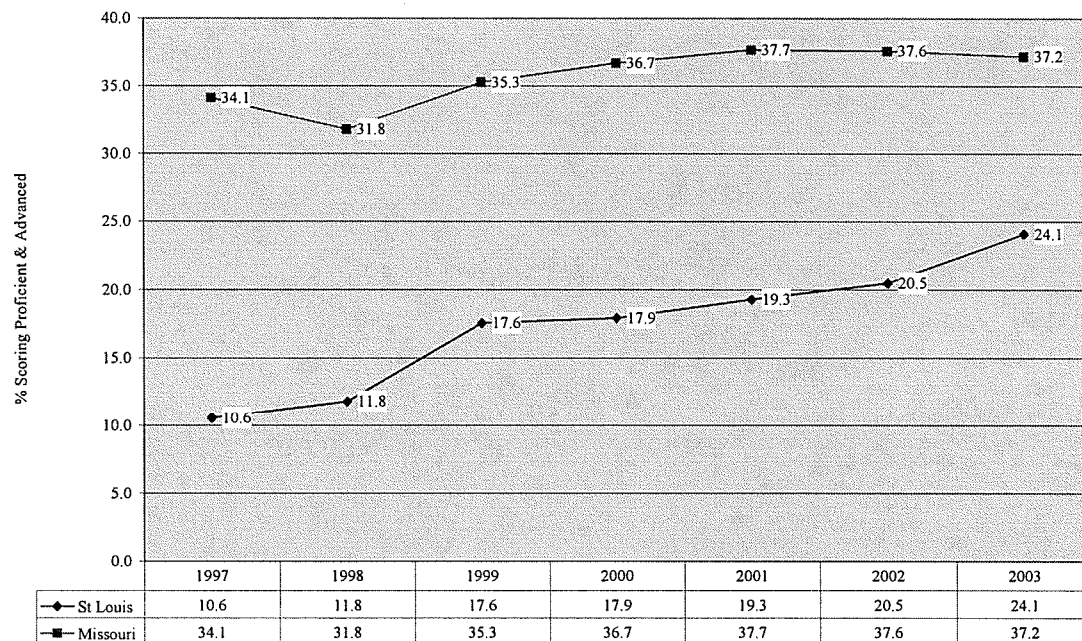


## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

**Graph 3. Percent Scoring Proficient & Advanced  
Missouri Assessment Program Communication Arts Grade 11**

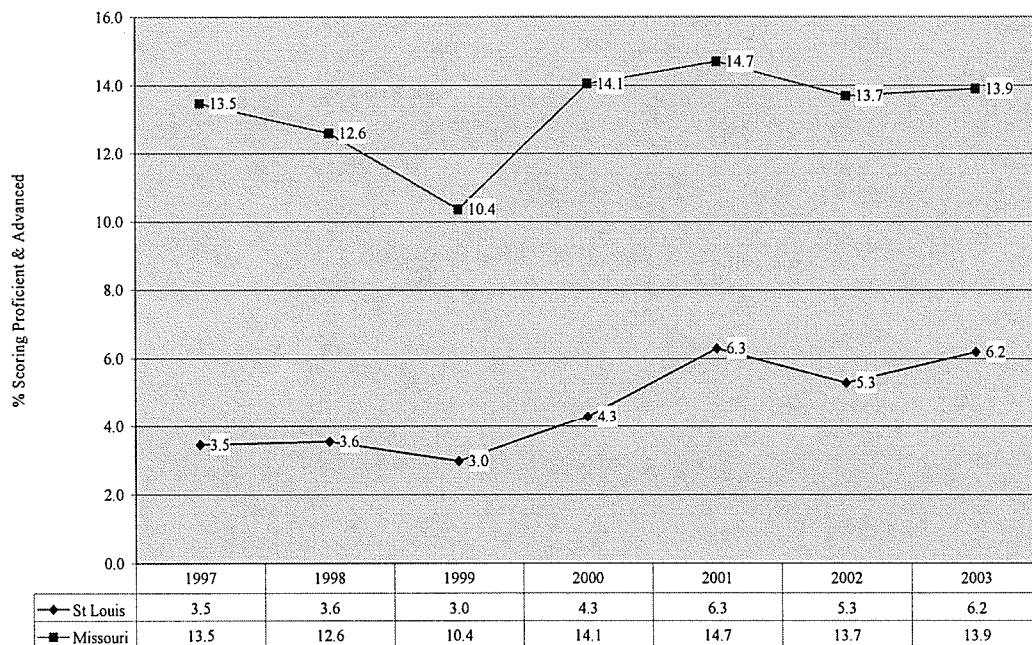


**Graph 4. Percent Scoring Proficient & Advanced  
Missouri Assessment Program Mathematics Grade 4**

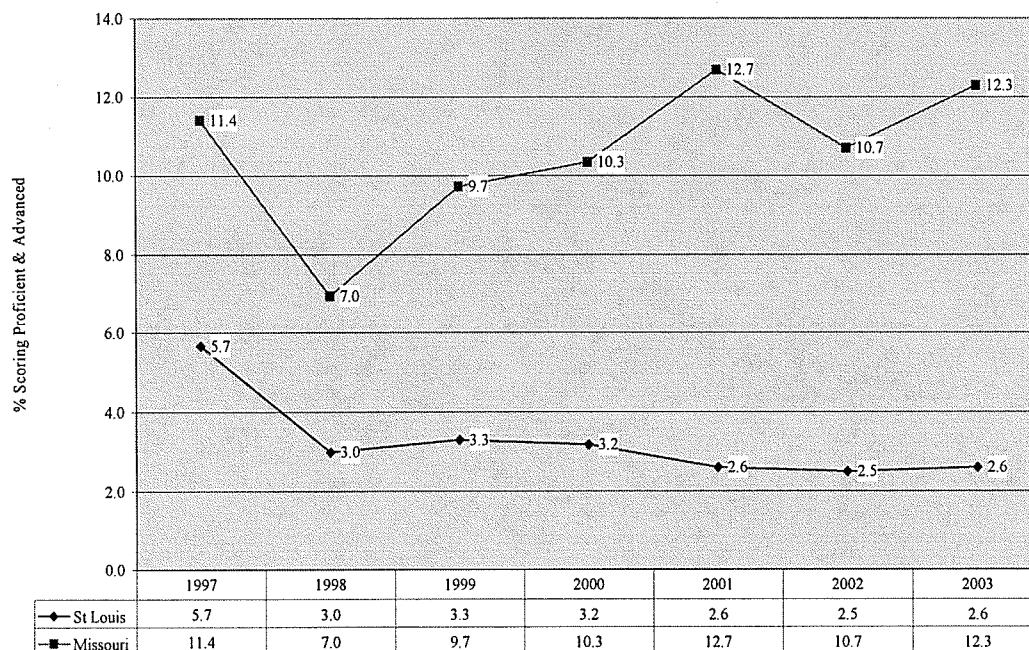


## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

**Graph 5. Percent Scoring Proficient & Advanced  
Missouri Assessment Program Mathematics Grade 8**



**Graph 6. Percent Scoring Proficient & Advanced  
Missouri Assessment Program Mathematics Grade 10**



## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

MAP trends are also available by race. The gaps in reading scores between racial groups are generally large, ranging from two points to 18 points depending on grade and group. In general, the racially-identifiable gaps in reading achievement are smaller in St. Louis than they are statewide and there is evidence in some grades that the gaps are narrowing faster in the city than they are across Missouri.

The difference in reading scores between white and African American third graders in St. Louis, for instance, was 10.1 percentage points in 2003, down from 17.4 points in 1998. The difference statewide was 22.7 percentage points in 2003, a level that was nearly unchanged since 1998. (Table 2.) Scores among seventh and eleventh graders generally showed similar trends.

**Table 2. MAP Communication Arts Racial Gaps (White minus African American)**

	Grade	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Change
St. Louis	3	17.4	17.3	18.3	11.2	10.0	10.1	-7.3
Missouri	3	24.7	22.6	21.6	21.2	21.4	22.7	-2.0
St. Louis	7	18.4	18.9	19.2	16.7	15.1	18.1	-0.3
Missouri	7	25.4	24.9	26.0	26.7	24.5	26.3	0.9
St. Louis	11	17.0	20.7	11.2	13.6	11.1	9.9	-7.1
Missouri	11	16.0	19.6	18.4	18.2	19.5	18.2	2.2

The differences between white and Latino third graders were similar to the gaps between white and African American students, except that neither the state nor the city showed much improvement in narrowing the differences in the performance of the two groups. St. Louis has shown substantial progress in narrowing reading gaps among seventh graders, however. There were too few Latino students in the eleventh grade to reliably compute the differences. (Table 3.)

**Table 3. MAP Communication Arts Racial Gaps (White minus Latino)**

	Grade	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Change
St. Louis	3	10.6	9.4	17.6	4.8	6.3	13.8	3.2
Missouri	3	16.0	14.6	15.8	17.1	18.5	17.0	1.0
St. Louis	7	9.2	NA	14.5	NA	4.0	2.0	-7.2
Missouri	7	14.0	13.0	15.5	13.7	14.8	12.8	-1.2
St. Louis	11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Missouri	11	3.4	10.4	10.8	10.0	9.5	9.8	6.4

The differences in math performance between white and African American fourth graders, moreover, were similar to the gaps in communications arts. The gaps were also narrowing faster in St. Louis in the fourth and tenth grades than they were statewide, but were increasing faster in the city among eighth graders than was the case statewide. (Table 4.)

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

**Table 4. MAP Math Racial Gaps (White minus African American)**

	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>Change</b>
St. Louis	4	20.8	15.6	16.9	23.9	19.1	19.9	15.3	-5.5
<b>Missouri</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>29.7</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>29.7</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>24.8</b>	<b>-4.9</b>
St. Louis	8	10.2	11.1	8.3	8.8	14.5	11.7	19.5	9.3
<b>Missouri</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>13.4</b>	<b>-1.2</b>
St. Louis	10	14.4	9.3	7.7	8.1	8.9	7.3	7.7	-6.7
<b>Missouri</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>1.1</b>

Finally, the differences between the math scores of white and Latino students were similar in St. Louis and statewide and have shown only marginal improvements over the last several years in both venues.(Table 5.)

**Table 5. MAP Math Gaps (White minus Latino) by Race**

	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>Change</b>
St. Louis	4	24.5	14.8	14.7	9.7	11.8	17.2	18.9	-5.6
<b>Missouri</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>-5.0</b>
St. Louis	8	NA	8.9	NA	NA	11.7	NA	14.7	NA
<b>Missouri</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>0.3</b>
St. Louis	10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	5.2	NA
<b>Missouri</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>-1.5</b>

## CHAPTER 2. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

This chapter summarizes the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Support Team.<sup>12</sup> Our findings are subdivided into ten sections. These sections are defined around themes that the Council of the Great City Schools has identified as critical to the academic improvement of urban school systems nationwide.<sup>13</sup> The themes include political preconditions and governance, goal setting, accountability, curriculum, professional development and teacher quality, reform press (or the ability to get reforms into the classrooms), assessments and use of data, low-performing schools, elementary schools, and middle and high schools. The Team's findings are further subdivided into positive areas and areas of serious concern.

The recommendations to accelerate student performance and to improve systemwide achievement are presented using the same categories that the team used to present its findings. The proposals are based on practices that research is demonstrating make a difference in improving student performance systemwide in urban school districts and what the Team believes that St. Louis needs to do to be more like districts that are making strong achievement gains.

### Findings and Recommendations

The Strategic Support Team assembled by the Council interviewed dozens of people and reviewed scores of documents to determine how the effectiveness of the instructional program of the St. Louis Public Schools. The team devoted most of its attention to reading and math. It did not spend as much time on social studies, the sciences, and other content areas. In general, the team found an instructional program that was incapable of accelerating gains in student achievement without substantial reorganization and reform.

#### A Political Preconditions

Urban school districts that have improved significantly over the last several years have a number of things in common. These commonalities also set them apart from urban school systems that have not seen significant improvement. One of these key features involves the political unity of the school board, its focus on student achievement, and its ability to work with the administration on improving academic performance. The Strategic Support Team did not conduct a special analysis of the board or its governing structure, but did observe a number of things that bear on the ability of the district to improve student achievement. The Team found things that were worthy of recognition and things that hamper the district's instructional reforms.

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<sup>12</sup> The SST recognizes that the St. Louis schools will need support to implement the recommendations outlined in this chapter. The Council of the Great City Schools would be pleased to provide it, if asked.

<sup>13</sup> Snipes, J., Doolittle, F., Herlihy, C. (2002). *Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban Schools Systems Improve Student Achievement*. MDRC for the Council of the Great City Schools.

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

### Positive

- The school board and the acting superintendent recognize the need for drastic change in the district's curriculum and instruction department. There is also substantial recognition of the fact that student achievement in the district is low and needs to be dramatically improved quickly.
- The school board secured the services of an outside management firm, Alvarez & Marsal, to overhaul district operations and to address a budget deficit of some \$90 million that was preventing the school district from focusing on student performance.<sup>14</sup>
- The school board understands that the community is upset with a number of reforms that have been made during the school year and that aggressive outreach is needed to restore community support.
- The school board and the acting superintendent share the same goals for the reform of the system and improvement of academic performance. The board is also cognizant of the fact that improvements in the system have to be sustained over the long run.
- The district has a straightforward vision and mission statement that establishes a priority on student achievement—

### Vision Statement

*Our schools will provide an excellent education, demand maximum performance and graduate well prepared students.*

### Mission Statement

*The St. Louis Public School District is a gateway to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It guarantees all students a quality education. We will set the highest standards and demand the highest achievement, which will enable our students to become productive workers, citizens and contributors to our democratic and increasingly technological society. We will do this in a broad learning environment that encourages critical thinking, collaborative action and the use of community resources.*

### Concerns

- Some of the board's decisions about closing schools and laying off staff were necessary but created enormous uproar citywide. It is not clear that a strong communications or outreach plan was in effect when these reforms were

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<sup>14</sup> The Council knows of only one other major urban school system in the nation—Minneapolis—which has secured the services of an outside firm to lead its district.



## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

announced. It was not clear to the team how much community input was sought before the announcements.

- Many central-office staff members do not share the same goals for the reform of the district as the board and the acting superintendent and his team.
- There is little sense of urgency among the staff for improving student performance.
- Comments from staff to the Strategic Support Team were often marked by high levels of excuse-making for poor student achievement rather than by any determination to examine flaws in the district's instructional program. Many staff remarked that the state's standards were too hard and that cut-off scores on state tests were too high.
- Staff members do not appear to be aware of the looming sanctions that face the district and many of its schools under *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB).
- Many—but not all—staff members appear to resent the presence of the management team and feel cut-off from management decision making. Staff morale, in general, appears to be very low.
- It does not appear that the board has received much training yet on the development of districtwide goals, the use of data, or how to design a theory of action that would guide its reforms.
- The district has not systemwide plan yet for the improvement of academic performance in the city. The board is moving on a new literacy effort, but the work is not yet complete and there are serious gaps in the initiative that remain to be filled. (See sections on goals and curriculum for more detail.)

### Recommendations

Urban districts that have made significant improvements in student performance have school boards that sets raising student achievement as its first priority, defines the initial vision for the district, and works closely with the superintendent to refine the vision and set goals for the districts. These boards also work to sell the districts' goals and reforms to the community and hold the superintendent accountable for results.

1. Charge the acting superintendent with developing a coherent direction and preliminary strategic plan for raising student achievement in the school district over the next five years.<sup>15</sup> The acting superintendent might name a "Project Management

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<sup>15</sup> The plan should have all the specifics of any good strategic plan, i.e. staff assignments, action steps, timelines, budgets, indicators, and monitoring and evaluation processes. The district might want to look at the "balanced score card" method used by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools to track the progress of their reforms and their results.



## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

Committee” composed of the best senior staff in the district to develop the details of the plan. The Committee should meet at least weekly over the next several months to plan and begin implementing an instructional strategic plan.

The school board has started this process, but it should convene another retreat or two to make sure it has a shared sense of direction about the reforms it is pursuing. The board’s budding efforts to develop a literacy plan is a good starting point, but there are still substantial gaps and flaws with the current drafts.

2. Hire a permanent superintendent, when the current engagement with Alvarez & Marsal is complete, who has a strong educational background, a proven track record of raising student achievement in an urban school district, and who will take the preliminary instructional strategic plan to its next levels.
3. Charge the district’s individual department heads with developing plans for their units that are consistent with and aligned to the district’s instructional strategic plan.
4. Require regular updates to the board on the development of the instructional plan and on the status of districtwide efforts to raise student achievement.
5. Articulate in the strongest possible terms a new and clear sense of urgency for raising student achievement in the district. The school board and the district’s acting superintendent should establish a “no excuses” attitude for staff performance.
6. Have the school board participate in additional training on governance, roles and responsibilities, goal setting, academic planning, data-driven decision making, and the like. The board might consider participating in board training provided through the Council of the Great City Schools with the Center for the Reform of School Systems.
7. Develop and implement a comprehensive community outreach plan to address both communitywide concerns and internal staff problems. Implementation of this strategy should probably wait until this summer or next school year.
8. Develop strategic community partnerships around raising student achievement and base the partnerships on the instructional strategic plan that the district should be developing.

### **B. Goals**

Urban school systems that have seen significant gains in student achievement often see this improvement because they have a clear sense of where they are going. This clarity is exhibited in academic goals for the district at large and for individual schools. These goals are measurable and are accompanied by specific timelines for when specific targets are to be attained. The Strategic Support Team looked specifically at the goal-setting process in the St. Louis Public Schools.

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

### Positive

- All schools districtwide are involved in a process of improvement and have established academic goals for their students.

### Concerns

- There is no strategic plan for raising student achievement in the district. The district has a solid set of plans for addressing its structural deficit and improving operations but still lacks a coherent plan for improving academic performance. The district has begun to articulate a new Literacy Initiative that includes reading coaches, professional development, new curriculum, increased instructional time, diagnostic assessments, disaggregated data, parent involvement, and the like; but the initiative has not yet been translated into an instructional strategic plan.<sup>16</sup>
- The district does not have academic goals for itself and has not tied either district goals or school-by-school goals to targets that have been established under *No Child Left Behind*. A process to do this has started but has yet to be completed or formally adopted.
- The school-by-school goals do not roll up to a set of districtwide goals. Each school's goals are independent of any cohesive or consistent districtwide targets.
- The individual school improvement plans are being better tied this year than in previous years to adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets mandated under *No Child Left Behind* but still do not contain goals and strategies for improving subgroup performance or meeting highly qualified teacher requirements.
- The school improvement plans (SIPs) lack goals related to ACT or SAT scores, graduation rates, dropout rates, course-taking rates, or reductions in the numbers of students identified as disabled (see next chapter on special education).
- The SIPs do not have detailed written strategies for how each school will improve student achievement. School improvement plans are largely based on pre-formed templates that provide a checklist of intervention strategies that school personnel pick from, suggesting that the planning process is more mechanical, routinized, and bureaucratic than strategic. The interventions that are checked on the SIP forms lack detail or specificity.
- There is no process in the district to ensure that all schools meet minimal standards in terms of staff, textbooks, computers, and other materials.

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<sup>16</sup> Presentation to the St. Louis Board of Education, February 5, 2004.

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

### Recommendations

Fast improving urban districts have set specific performance goals and targets for themselves and their schools. Goals have specific timetables and are focused on improved student achievement. These districts also have long range plans with five-year and annual goals. Forth Worth, Houston, Sacramento, Charlotte, Boston, Long Beach, Norfolk, and other cities have made major gains in test scores over the last several years, despite their high poverty levels, because they focused like a “laser beam” on the central goal of improved student achievement.

9. Establish specific, measurable academic goals with timelines for the district and individual schools that are linked to the AYP targets under *No Child Left Behind*.
10. Ensure that districtwide and school-by-school goals include targets on MAP results, ACT and/or SAT results, graduation rates, attendance rates, AP participation rates, dropout rates, special education identification rates, suspensions rates, etc. When establishing dropout targets, the district might consider using four-year rates rather than annual rates, as the latter can sometimes be misleading.
11. Ensure that all goals and targets at the district and school levels are disaggregated by race, poverty level, language status, and disability status as required under *No Child Left Behind*.
12. Incorporate the district and school-by-school targets into the individual school improvement plans. Also incorporate the district and school goals into the Professional Accountability Plan (PAP). Finally, districtwide goals should be incorporated into any community outreach effort that the district undertakes.
13. Accompany these outcome goals with a series of input standards that articulate the minimum numbers and types of textbooks, computers, software, materials, staff, and facilities that each school will be provided.<sup>17</sup> Incorporate a schedule into the instructional strategic plan and the PAP by which schools will meet these “opportunity standards.”
14. Establish a process by which goals and targets are reviewed and updated annually.

### C. Accountability

It is not sufficient for a school system, particularly an urban one, to have goals if no one is held accountable for attaining them. Urban school systems that have seen substantial improvement have devised specific methods for holding themselves responsible for student achievement, usually starting at the top of the system and working down through central office staff and principals. The Strategic Support Team observed the following things about accountability in the St. Louis Public Schools.

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<sup>17</sup> Charlotte-Mecklenburg has been successful with the identification of such standards. Examples are included in the attachment materials.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

### **Positive**

- The district has a formal procedure for annually evaluating all school principals, but the “status evaluations” consist of checklists and unstandardized write-ups of each principal’s performance.
- The district also has a procedure by which it evaluates teachers, but there is little indication that performance is rated as anything but positive.
- The district has developed a Professional Accountability Plan (PAP) that is meant to identify rewards and sanctions for schools and staff.

### **Concerns**

- No one in the district is really held accountable for student performance. There is no procedure or process by which the superintendent, senior central office staff, principals, or teachers are held responsible if students in the district do not perform well.
- Principal evaluations are not based on improved student achievement and there does not appear to be any criteria for hiring or firing principals that have anything to do with academic performance. Principal evaluations also do not include any provisions for reducing special education identification rates (see next chapter). There is a general sense of injustice among principals about the current process.
- The district’s PAP was developed in 2001 but there is no evidence that it has been updated or fully implemented. The rewards and sanctions components of the PAP, which are primarily financial, have not been operationalized, in part, because the district is in such financial trouble.
- No one in the district has taken primary responsibility for informing the community about district plans for improving district performance.
- There is very little vertical or horizontal teaming among staff in the central office. Staff members work in operational silos that do not communicate well with one another.

### **Recommendations**

Urban school districts that are seeing significant gains in student performance attribute some of their progress to improved systems of accountability, starting with top administrators and working down through the principals. The purpose of these initiatives is twofold: to boost public confidence that taxpayer-supported staff are being held accountable for results and to focus staff activities on the bottom line, student achievement.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

15. Place the new superintendent on a performance contract tied, in part, to progress in raising student achievement districtwide. Performance goals should be tied to the districtwide goals and targets that were described in the preceding section.
16. Place senior staff—instructional and non instructional—on performance contracts tied, in part, to progress in raising student achievement districtwide.
17. Place principals on performance contracts tied, in part, to school-by-school targets described in the preceding section.
18. Revamp all personnel job descriptions and evaluation procedures and forms to reflect the new performance criteria. Performance criteria might be set in two or three-year bands.
19. Revamp the Professional Accountability Plan to begin including incentives for meeting or exceeding goals that are not solely financial in nature. These incentives might include professional awards, recognition programs, public recognition ceremonies, attendance at regional or national conferences, subscriptions to professional publications, stipends for instructional or classroom materials, personnel letters, recognition in Public Service Announcements (PSAs), and the like.

### **D. Curriculum/Instruction**

Urban school districts that have seen substantial improvement in student achievement have a curriculum that is focused, coherent, and clearly articulated. Also, these districts have core supplemental and intervention materials that schools can use. The Strategic Support Team looked at the curriculum that the district was using, particularly to teach reading and math, and found a number of things, positive and negative.

#### **Positive**

- District staff members appear to understand that the district needs a new and better strategy for teaching reading in the district.
- The district has moved aggressively to hire and place literacy coaches in all of its schools.
- The district has developed a draft alignment chart, which aligns learner objectives in reading with Missouri Show-Me Standards. The team generally thought that this guide was useful and well-done.
- The district has maintained a sizable National Science Foundation (NSF) grant since 1995-96. The grants have allowed the district to develop quarterly pacing guides for math instruction. The district has also worked to raise expectations for math performance by requiring that all students complete four years of math.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

- The district requires 90 minutes of math instruction per day and 120 minutes of reading instruction.
- The district has also developed a curriculum alignment guide for teaching ESOL students (“ESOL Curriculum Guide K-5”). An initial review by the team indicates that the document was quite good. The district, moreover, has a very good ESOL diagnostic system and placement process.
- The ESOL department translates all district materials into five languages and provides interpreters for parents as they enter the country and city.
- The district has started to eliminate its various comprehensive school reform models.<sup>18</sup> The models have not shown measurable success in improving student achievement.
- The district has substantially redeployed its assets such that about 62 percent of the district’s expenditures were being devoted to classroom instruction in January 2004, compared with 46 percent in May 2003.
- The district may receive a gift of \$1 million from a local donor to implement the Orchard Program in all city schools.

### **Concerns**

- The district lacks a comprehensive strategic plan for raising student performance citywide. The district also has no one responsible for leading or directing the system’s instructional program. A number of people in the district, however, are vying for the position.
- The district’s curriculum does not appear to be closely aligned with state standards. There is also no process in place by which the acquisition of new materials, texts, or software is checked for alignment with state standards before they are purchased.
- There is no vertical alignment or grade-to-grade articulation of the district’s curriculum.
- The district does not have a uniform systemwide instructional program. Each school appears to be on its own as it works to teach its children.
- The district does not have uniform criteria or standards by which it selects or retains programs, textbooks, materials, software, etc. Individual schools and staff

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<sup>18</sup> As of September 2002, the district was using a variety of school reform models, including Galaxy, Accelerated Schools, Modern Red Schoolhouse, Success for All, HOTS, Different Ways of Knowing, Connect, Direct Instruction, and America’s Choice.

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

members can often acquire materials and programs with very little vetting. The result is both ineffective instruction and a more costly instructional program.

The district does have a school board-approved regulation that was recently used to pick a reading program for the system's "Reading First" application to the state.<sup>19</sup> The regulation sets out a process for selecting materials that specifies that recommendations be made by curriculum facilitators to the director of teaching and learning support and requires that a curriculum advisory committee be formed "composed of teachers, administrators, parents, and when appropriate, students." The curriculum facilitators and the advisory committee then make selections "based on goals and objectives."

The process specifies the categories of people who are to be involved in the selection, the chain of command for decisionmaking, the enunciation of needs, the ability of companies to submit samples for review, and budget limitations. But the regulation lacks specific criteria for issuing RFP's or language on what standards will be used for selecting materials, how potential vendors will be narrowed, where similar materials have been used and to what effect, or relative costs.

- The district's instructional staff often conveys a strong sense of victimization and "helplessness" that dampens its effectiveness and ability to lead. It also has a very weak understanding of what constitutes a curriculum. There was little understanding of the differences between the available instructional materials and the curriculum. There was also very little understanding of what the district's "balanced-literacy" program entails. In general, the instructional staff at the central office was extremely weak, with a number of notable exceptions.
- The district's senior literacy staff—with some exceptions—is not well versed in the latest research on scientifically-based reading instruction. The literacy staff was also not directly involved in developing the initial draft literacy plan.
- The district's current balanced literacy program lacks cohesion, is ineffective, and does not appear to be guided by any underlying philosophy or approach.
- The district's current reading approach appears to assume that students already know how to read or will learn to read with little, if any, direct instruction. The approach is evident in the district's primary reliance on independent reading, "read-to's," and "read alouds."
- Literacy coaches do not appear to be well-trained in reading research or instructional techniques and appear to have been hired rather hurriedly without proper vetting of skills or background.

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<sup>19</sup> School board regulation R6161.1—approved June 26, 1990, revised December 7, 1999.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

- The district's pre-k literacy program is not aligned with the overall k-12 literacy program, in part, because the k-12 literacy effort, up until recently, has been so incoherent.
- The district does not have any systemwide reading diagnostic assessment system by which it is able to tell what students lack which skills.
- The district's instructional system has no clearly-articulated components for differentiating instruction for struggling students. There is also no clear plan by which the district helps its struggling students in reading and math. Special education appears to have evolved into the program of choice for students who are falling behind. (See chapter on special education.)
- The district's afterschool programs appear to be mostly remedial in nature and offer very few enrichment opportunities. The afterschool programs are also not aligned with state standards or district curricula.
- The district's instructional program lacks any pacing guides, except in math, to tell teachers what gets taught when. Math pacing guides are in quarterly intervals.
- Staff members in the math and science department of the district are not delineated by subject area.
- Many students in the district do not appear to be ready to meet the four-year math requirement articulated by the district. The district also has no diagnostic system to determine the readiness of entering ninth grade students for a core sequence of math courses.
- Few of the instructional staff members were well-versed in the implications of *No Child Left Behind* or the looming sanctions facing the district if achievement did not improve soon. Neither the district nor forty to fifty of its schools met AYP goals last year. (See chapter on Title I and federal programs.)
- The organizational chart of the curriculum and instructional unit is not consistent with best practice and is inconsistent in its placement of functions.

### **Recommendations**

Preliminary research suggests that urban school districts that are improving student performance are doing so by standardizing their curriculum and implanting a more prescriptive approach to reading instruction. They are doing this for three main reasons: to bring greater focus to their instructional programs; mitigate the effects of high student mobility; and ease the task of supporting and monitoring program implementation.



## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

20. Adopt a single, uniform core reading program for systemwide adoption and implementation in September 2004. The program should be pk-12 and be consistent with “Reading First” criteria and should incorporate the components and instructional methodologies (direct, explicit, and systematic) of reading identified by the National Reading Panel as critical to reading success.<sup>20</sup>

- a. *Phonemic awareness*: the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. This component is important because it improves children’s word reading, reading comprehension, and spelling. Phonemic awareness can be developed by asking children to identify and categorize phonemes, blend phonemes into words and segment words into phonemes, delete or add phonemes to form new words, or substitute phonemes to make new words. Instruction is most effective when children are taught to manipulate phonemes using letters and when instruction focuses on only one or two types of phoneme manipulation.
- b. *Systematic phonics for decoding*: the ability to tell the relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language. This component is important because it leads to understanding of the alphabetic principle—the systematic and predictable relationship between written letters and spoken sounds. Phonics instruction is effective when it begins in kindergarten or first grade; includes a carefully selected set of letter-sound relationships that are organized into a logical sequence; and provides teachers with precise directions for teaching these relationships.
- c. *Comprehension*: the ability to understand what is being read. This component is important because it is the reason for reading. It can be developed by teaching comprehension strategies through explicit instruction, engaging students in cooperative learning, asking questions about the text, summarizing text, clarifying words and sentences that are not understood, and predicting what comes next.
- d. *Fluency development*: the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. This component is important because it frees students to understand what they read. Fluent readers are more likely than less fluent ones to focus their attention on making connections among the ideas in a text and between these ideas and their background knowledge. Fluency in young readers is developed by modeling fluent reading and by having students engage in repeated oral reading.
- e. *Vocabulary building*: the ability to understand and use words orally and in reading. This component is important because beginning readers use their oral vocabulary to make sense of the words they see in print and need to know what words mean before they can understand what they are reading. Vocabulary can be developed directly when students are explicitly taught both individual words

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<sup>20</sup> *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*. National Reading Panel, 2000.

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

and word meaning strategies, and indirectly when students engage daily in oral language, listen to adults read to them, and read extensively on their own.

21. Consider using “Nation’s Choice” (Houghton Mifflin’s newest reading series); “Open Court” (SRA/McGraw Hill); or “Trophies” (Harcourt Brace) as the district’s core reading program. Also consider supplementing the adoption with any of the following supplemental materials and interventions.

### Proposed PK-12 Literacy Plan<sup>21</sup>

Grade Level	Core Reading Program	Supplemental Materials	Interventions
Pre-K	Wright Group Open Court-Pre-K Pearson Early Literacy	Language for Learning	Language for Learning
K-5	Open Court (SRA/McGraw-Hill) Trophies (Harcourt) Nation’s Choice (Houghton Mifflin)	Reading Mastery (SRA) Trophies (Supplementary Materials) Language (Harcourt) Orchard Language for Learning	Open Court (Intervention) Language for Learning
6-8	Holt Literature Anthology McDougal-Littell	Holt Literature (Supplementary Materials) McDougal-Littell (Supplementary Materials) Bridges to Literature College Success (College Board-acceleration)	Read 180 Corrective Reading Academy of Reading (Also good for ESOL) GRADE (AGS-diagnostic & prescriptive) Reason in Writing (use w/Corrective Reading)
9-12	Prentice-Hall Literature McDougal-Little Holt Literature Anthology	Bedford Reader-Acceleration Prentice-Hall (Supplementary Materials) Holt Literature (Supplementary Materials)	Corrective Reading (lowest performing) Read 180 GRADE (AGS)

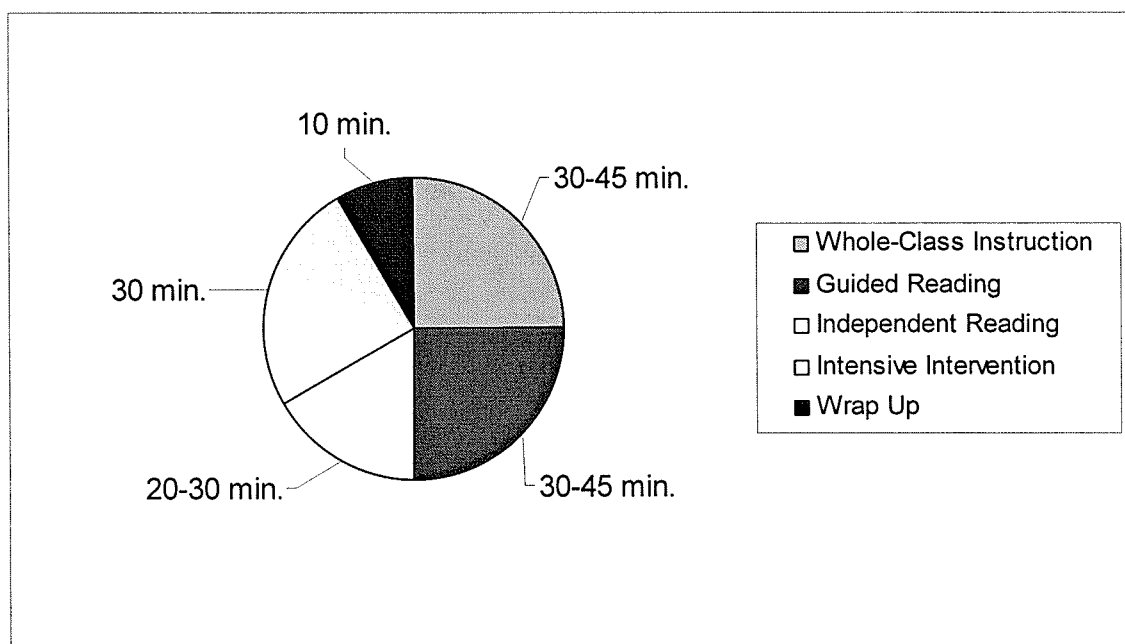
22. Be sure that the new reading adoption has a pre-k component and that the district negotiates for all available personnel, training, technical assistance, and supplemental materials from the publisher.

<sup>21</sup> Bridges to Literature is often a good match with McDougal Little. The Academy of Reading program (a diagnostic program) is a good match with Plato. Corrective Reading with Reason in Writing is often good with the lowest performing students. GRADE by AGS is a good diagnostic tool. And College Success by the College Board is often good for acceleration.

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

23. Conduct a detailed analysis of any gaps between the new reading adoptions, district curriculum, and state performance standards and acquire supplemental materials to fill those gaps.
24. Ensure that the curriculum and the reading adoptions are vertically aligned grade-to-grade.
25. Structure the district's 120 minutes of classroom reading time for whole-class instruction on the new core reading program; teacher-guided reading; independent reading and writing; and intensive interventions. (See graph below.)

**Structure of 120 Minute Literacy Model (K-5)<sup>22</sup>**



<sup>22</sup> **Whole-class instruction** (30-45 minutes) in core program: should focus on specific instructional activities and the subsequent instructional time used for support and to provide opportunity for practice. The goal is to impart skills using direct and explicit instruction. Time should be devoted to modeling of reading strategies, writing strategies, oral language development, reading and discussion of literature, and direct teaching of skills. Strategies should include: word study (phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, high-frequency words, and structural analysis); vocabulary; comprehensive; read-alouds; writing; and grammar and writing.

**Small-group teacher lead guided reading** (30-45 minutes) with supplemental materials and targeted instruction: should reflect the performance of students in the whole group (based on assessments or teacher observation). Time should be devoted to reteaching; additional practice; and work with English language learners, students with disabilities, and struggling readers. Differentiated instruction in small groups defined around specific student needs is critical.

**Independent reading and writing** (20-30 minutes): should be devoted to solo reading and writing, and can be done as small group instruction is going on. Reading and writing should be closely monitored by the teacher.

**Intensive intervention** (30-45 minutes): should focus on students who are two or more grade levels behind and/or have gaps in two or more of the five key reading components. Approaches should ensure closing instructional gaps and accelerating learning to attain grade-level performance.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

26. Create pacing guides in reading (with assistance from a consultant) and redesign the pacing guides in math. Pacing intervals should be weekly or every two weeks and should be closely aligned with state performance standards. Guides should also explicitly state which materials teacher should use. Guides in science and social studies should be developed after reading and math.<sup>23</sup>
27. Ensure that the pacing guides and the quarterly tests proposed in a subsequent section (data and assessments) are aligned with one another.
28. Consider increasing the amount of time for reading and math instruction for struggling students over and above the required 120 and 90 minutes by putting into place a districtwide afterschool program that would entail expanded intervention strategies and differentiated instruction to match the skill deficits and learning styles of struggling students. (See recommendations in the next chapter on how Title I could pay for this.)
29. Rewrite the school board's policy on textbook selection so that it specifies the program and cost criteria to be used in choosing new textbooks and materials rather than just the groups that will serve on the selection committees. The policy should also include an objective analysis of materials under consideration and how well they have worked in similar settings. Finally, the policy should also clarify that textbook committees are advisory and that the decision about which programs and materials to purchase ultimately rest with the superintendent, pending board approval. (See chapter on textbook procurement.)
30. Overhaul the district's criteria for the selection and retention of all materials, software, etc. Move to discontinue the use of materials/software that do not meet these criteria. Ensure that all staff members know what the criteria are. (See chapter on textbook procurement.)
31. Conduct a national search for a new Chief Academic Officer (CAO). Secure the services of a consultant while the district conducts this search.<sup>24</sup>
32. Identify a national reading advisor to report directly to the CAO and help shape and oversee a new reading program for the district. This position would be temporary (one to three years) and would not have direct line responsibility. The person would be responsible for guiding the implementation of reading reforms, the selection of supplemental materials, the design of intervention strategies, and training.<sup>25</sup>
33. Reorganize the curriculum and instruction department according to the proposed structure shown below.

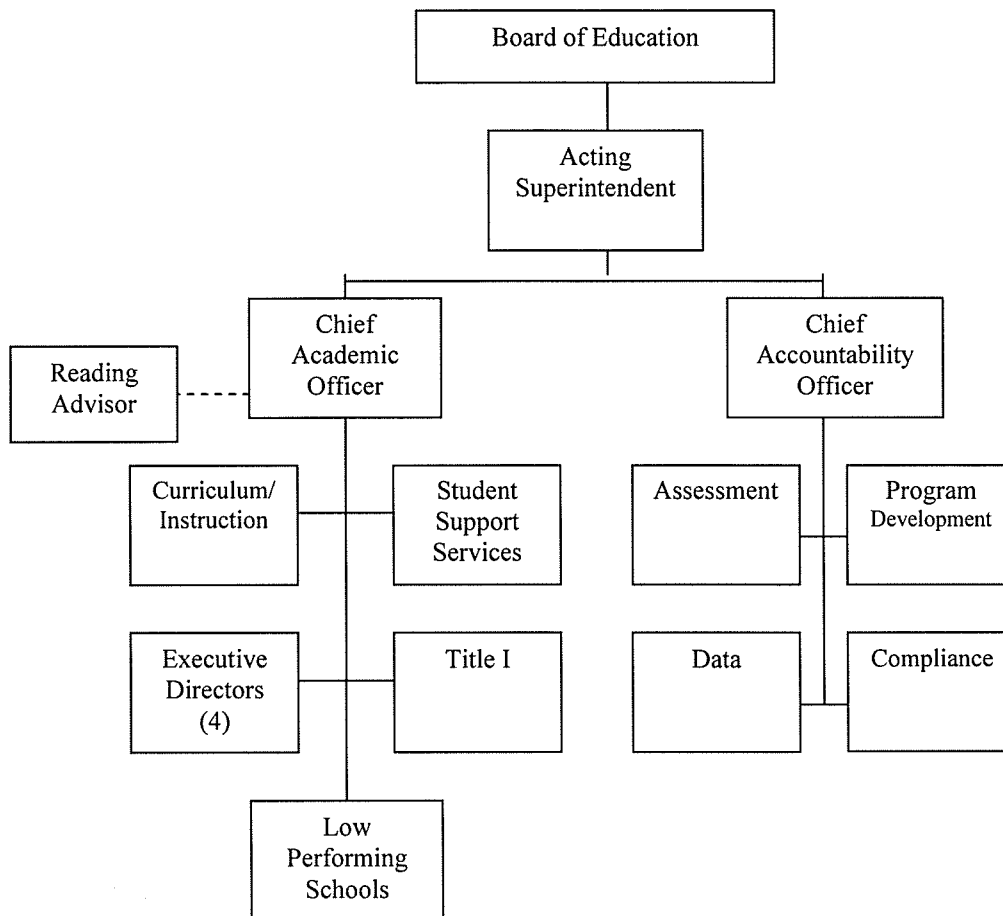
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<sup>23</sup> The Council has provided sample pacing guides from other urban districts.

<sup>24</sup> The Council can recommend possible candidates.

<sup>25</sup> St. Louis may have to secure the services of a consultant to begin these tasks as they search for a full-time reading director.

Proposed Organizational Chart for Instructional Unit<sup>26</sup>



**E. Professional Development and Teacher Quality**

Another feature that improving urban school systems have in common is a high-quality and cohesiveness professional development program. These programs are often defined centrally, built around the district's articulated curriculum, delivered uniformly across the district, and differentiated in ways that address the specific needs of teachers. These faster-improving districts also find ways to ensure that some of their better teachers are working in schools with the greatest needs.

**Positive**

- The district provides its staff with an extensive array of professional development opportunities. All teachers and principals are required to participate in

<sup>26</sup> Individuals responsible for early childhood education, ESOL, professional development (non-content), library services, career and vocational education, reading, math, sciences, and other content areas would be organized under the curriculum and instruction unit. Principals would report to the Executive Directors, who would be defined by grade span. See the proposed organizational chart for the renamed student support services unit in the chapter on special education.

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professional development activities (16 clock hours for non-certified staff and 10 Professional Development Units or PDUs for certificated staff). Attendance is taken. The district's Professional Development Catalog specifies the number of PDUs earned by course.

- The district has a districtwide Professional Development Committee (PDC), which oversees and coordinates the districtwide needs assessment, the writing of professional development plans, the provision of PDUs, attendance at conferences, and other activities.
- The district has an active program by which it recognizes the work of teachers and principals.
- The district appears to have a good teacher induction program, consisting of four days before the start of school and monthly meetings during the school year. The district also works to develop professional development plans specifically for new teachers.
- The district's professional development efforts for math and science teachers appear to be well-received.
- The district identifies retired teaching staff to serve as "consulting coaches" and to work with novice teachers. Many of the literacy coaches are former or retired teachers.
- The district has clearly delineated the responsibilities of the professional development unit and the content facilitators.
- The district administers an annual professional development needs assessment to all certified staff to identify needs.
- The district requires all teachers and principals to have a Personal Professional Development Plan (PPDP) and an Action Plan. PPDPs are defined around four major priorities: instruction, classroom management, interpersonal skills, and professional responsibilities. Materials for the PPDPs are found at <http://slps-pda.learnserver.org>.
- The district's central office professional development staff appears to be very committed to having a good professional development program for the school system.

### **Concerns**

- There is no districtwide professional development plan. Instead, the district has a catalog of courses that teachers and staff can take for Professional Development Units (PDUs).

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- The district's professional development program is not coherent and does not align with state standards, district curriculum, or any of the programs the district uses. The current program, instead, is menu driven, self-selected, and not targeted on teacher needs or student weaknesses. The district has assembled a Professional Development Catalog that contains a variety of coursework, some of which is related to the district's core mission and some not.
- The top five professional development needs identified by the district's certified staff included discipline, enhanced student self-esteem, learning style, instruction for individual and group needs, and classroom organization and management. The team did not see coursework in the Professional Development Catalog on some of these areas.
- The district does not have a convincing way of monitoring professional development provided to each teacher or of monitoring PDUs.
- The district's professional development program also does not appear to be shaped or driven by the results of student achievement data.
- The district's staff and teachers do not appear generally knowledgeable about best practices or models of good teaching. There is also little professional development aimed at improving teacher expertise in differentiating instruction.
- Some of the district's literacy coaches do not have to have a strong background or training in reading. The training program for literacy coaches lacks consistency and meaningful content. The training program for coaches also lacks any component on how to coach. Coaches, moreover, often do not attend the limited professional development efforts that the district provides. And teachers are often not receiving any professional development on the areas that coaches are providing coaching on.
- The district also lacks a professional development program for its central office administrators and principals that is different from the training offered teachers. Central office instructional staff members are in serious need of additional professional development on effective instruction, particularly in reading.
- The district does not appear to coordinate its various federal professional development funds from Title I and Title II to create a more cohesive districtwide professional development program.
- The district's "Priority Schools" do not receive any additional or specialized professional development to help administrators and teachers meet the extra challenges faced by these schools. (See chapter on federal programs.)

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- The district has a large number of uncertified special education teachers and relies heavily on Teach for America recruits to fill vacancies in this area. (See chapter on special education.)

### **Recommendations**

Many of the faster-improving urban school districts across the country are also standardizing and focusing their professional development. They are doing this to ensure better implementation of their curriculum and to clarify to principals and teachers what is expected. It does not mean that each school cannot supplement the districtwide training with other activities, but it does require principals and teachers to participate in professional development that is common across schools.

34. Develop a standardized, districtwide professional development plan that is closely tied to the district's instructional goals and is driven by student achievement data. The professional development plan should focus initially on the implementation of the new reading adoption, then on the use of supplemental materials and test score data, and finally on intervention strategies. This sequence should be followed at each grade level. Finally, the professional development plan should have a clear strategy to follow up its training and support classroom teachers and principals.
35. Redesign the district's PDU system so that the district's professional development offerings focus on the curriculum and the district instructional goals rather than consisting of a catalogue or menu of offerings that individual teachers can select at will.
36. Ensure that the professional development plan differentiates training by teacher experience level, previous professional development, and by student performance. It should also include explicit components for special education and bilingual education.
37. Revamp and upgrade the professional development that the district is providing to its literacy coaches. Training should be aligned with the district's new literacy adoption and should include components on how to coach, use performance data, differentiate instruction, and on the latest research on reading effectiveness. Attendance should be mandatory for all coaches.
38. Establish a districtwide "Principal's Academy" to provide professional development on instructional leadership and implementation of the district's reading program to meet the academic goals the district is setting.
39. Develop a professional development plan for upgrading the skills and knowledge of central office staff, facilitators, directors and executive directors responsible for student achievement.<sup>27</sup> Staff appear well-intended by their skills are woefully

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<sup>27</sup> Outside consultants are needed to fulfill this recommendation. The Council, if requested, can provide a list of consultants.



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outdated. Training should focus on the latest research in reading and math instruction and on central-office staff's responsibilities for providing leadership for the district's instructional program.

40. Curtail much of the school-by-school training that is now conducted under the aegis of individual principals or is provided for school-based programs, which are not aligned with the district's new instructional program. Principals should retain authority for training in their own buildings that is articulated as being necessary to meet the specific goals of the school, to address unique characteristics or needs of the school, student behavior and classroom management issues, parental involvement, and the like. These unique training needs should be articulated in the school improvement plans.
41. Ensure that all district staff members in the math and science department of the central office have backgrounds in math and specific sciences.

### **F. Reform Press**

Urban schools that are improving student achievement are not waiting for their leadership-initiated reforms to trickle down into the schools and classrooms. Instead, they have figured out specific ways to drive instructional reforms into the schools and classrooms, and they find ways to monitor the implementation of reforms to ensure their integrity and comprehensiveness. The Strategic Support Team looked at ways that the St. Louis Public Schools can press their reforms into the schools.

#### **Positive**

- The district has hired literacy coaches for all its schools in an attempt to ensure that reading reforms are implemented at the school and classroom levels.
- Literacy coaches keep their own activity logs to document the work they are doing to improve instruction.
- The central office staff members have a site visitation form that lists things to look for when visiting schools.
- Central office executive directors meet monthly with principals and attempt to monitor schools with the site visitation forms.
- Principals have a "classroom data collection" checklist for monitoring instruction in math.

#### **Concerns**

- There is no districtwide instructional program to implement. And no one at the central office is accountable for most of the district's many academic programs or

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for their professional development. The district's programs lack coherence, connection, or sustainability and appear *ad hoc* and temporary in nature.

- The district has no way to determine whether teachers teach the requisite periods of time in reading and math.
- The district's staff lacks the capacity or know-how to monitor reforms at the school level without considerable training.
- The district's checklists for monitoring classrooms are outdated and are not grounded in student performance.
- The activity logs kept by the literacy coaches do not ask for standard information, so coaches keep information on different things. In addition, the district does not have a regular process for reviewing or monitoring the activity logs.
- The district does not have math coaches in its schools.

### Recommendations

The urban school districts that are seeing steady progress in student achievement do not develop new policies at the central office and hope that they will trickle down to the classroom. Instead, they design specific strategies for ensuring that the reforms are being supported and implemented in all classrooms.

42. Standardize the activity logs used by reading coaches. Set up a process by which the logs are reviewed and monitored.
43. Redirect some federal NSF funds to begin providing math coaches to the district's lowest performing elementary and middle schools.
44. Charge executive directors with working with principals to redesign the current classroom observation checklist to provide a uniform classroom monitoring or "walk-through" system. Procedures should focus on classroom instructional practice, alignment of teaching practice with the curriculum, status on pacing guides, and needs for professional development.
45. Charge the new Chief Academic Officer, when hired, with meeting regularly with executive directors and principals to review achievement data and needs for intervention strategies.
46. Assign a staff member at the central office to be a districtwide reading and math coach coordinator. (Content facilitators should be able to handle this.) This person should be located in the curriculum office and charged with the ongoing coordination and focus of the coaches on the new reading and math instructional program.

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47. Charge the coach coordinator with working with principals to develop a process for evaluating the reading and math coaches. Ensure that student achievement is a significant component of that evaluation.

### **G. Assessments and Use of Data**

One of the most noticeable features of faster-improving urban school systems involves their regular assessment of student progress and their use of data to decide on the nature and placement of intervention strategies and professional development before the end of each school year. These districts use data, moreover, to monitor school and district progress and hold people accountable for results. The Strategic Support Team looked specifically at the St. Louis schools' student assessment program, how it linked with the state testing effort, and how the district was using data to improve achievement.

#### **Positive**

- The district has a comprehensive data profile on each of its school.
- The district uses the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) as a quarterly assessment that schools appear to be pleased with. (The SRI does not, however, provide the kind of data that will be very helpful in helping teachers direct instruction.)
- The district has developed a series of quarterly assessments in math.
- The district administers the TerraNova to all students in grades 2-11.
- The district has created MAP academic-growth projections for its schools that are linked to state assessment and AYP targets.

#### **Concerns**

- The district does not have a real quarterly assessment system by which it can determine mid-year student progress and determine strategies for improving performance on the MAP. The testing office does not appear to be involved in either the SRI or interim math assessments. Some schools appear to have filled the void on their own and developed their own interim tests.
- The SRI produces lexile scores on each student tested, identifies reading proficiency levels, and recommends books that match that proficiency level for each student. SRIs do not yield data, however, that would help teachers determine deficits in specific reading skills.
- SRI results are also not returned to schools consistently and in a timely manner. (The district is aware of this problem and is working on correcting it.)

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- There is no clear alignment between the SRI and the MAP. The SRI is linked to the TerraNova, according to the publisher, and reflects about one third of the questions on the MAP, but the team did not see any evidence that a detailed analysis of this linkage had been done by either the district or the publisher.
- The district does not appear to use its TerraNova data to drive instructional decisions or interventions, although staff members appear to prefer TerraNova data over data provided by the MAP.
- The turnaround time for getting TerraNova results back to the district and schools was reported to be about two months. (The TerraNova is administered in October and results are returned by December 15.) The results, moreover, are not reported in performance levels but in NCEs. (Both metrics should be reported and used.)
- The district-developed math quarterlies are scored by teachers but the results do not appear to be used for systemic reforms in math instruction.
- District staff members are very resistant to the results reported by MAP, arguing instead that the state has set its cut-off scores too high. Staff members claim that the city's poor academic performance is the result of the state's reporting methods, not the result of anything the district itself has done or not done. Staff members take very little ownership for the district's low student achievement levels.
- District staff members appear to lack the skills to use data to influence instruction. Data driven decision making is touted, but there is little evidence that it is done. There is no professional development for district teachers and staff on the use of assessment data.
- The district does not disseminate MAP results to schools disaggregated by the subgroups required under NCLB.
- The district does not administer end-of-course exams in core subjects at high school level.
- The district lacks any system or mechanism for assessing students' algebra-readiness abilities. The district did not have any data on the number of students who repeat math courses at the high school level. The absence of information on course-repeaters is unfortunate because the district is left without data to evaluate its policy on having all students take four years of high school math.
- Data on ESOL students is not integrated into the district's student information system. The bilingual department maintains its own data.

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- The district does not have uniform criteria or an objective diagnostic system by which it makes its special education placement decisions. There is also no uniform pre-referral process. (See chapter on special education.)
- The district appears to use a battery of I.Q. tests to make decisions about placing students in gifted and talented programs. (Staff members indicated that this was a state requirement.)
- The district does not have a system for evaluating its major policies, priorities, or programs on a regularly-scheduled basis.

### **Recommendations**

A common feature in urban districts making rapid gains in student achievement is their use of statistical data. These districts use data to monitor progress, identify schools or students that are starting to slip behind, and decide on intervention strategies to bring students back up to speed.

48. Use the embedded quarterly assessments in the new reading basal instead of the SRI. Require the publisher of the new reading program to tailor its embedded quarterly tests to better align with the MAP.
49. Stop using the SRI as a quarterly or interim assessment tool.
50. Select a diagnostic reading instrument that could be used to assess the reading skills of district students. The team would recommend any of the following: the DRA, DIBELS, Fox in a Box, or TPRI. The district could also secure the reading diagnostic tools that come with the new reading series.
51. Redesign the district's math quarterlies to include more than 18 questions. Align the quarterlies, moreover, to the pacing guides and to MAP.
52. Renegotiate with McGraw-Hill the terms for returning TerraNova results to the district. The turn-around time for test results should be no more than 21 days.
53. Be sure that TerraNova results are presented in both performance levels (basic, advanced, and proficient) and NCE's.
54. Report all assessment results—MAP, TerraNova, and others—by school and all required NCLB subgroups (race, language proficiency, poverty status, and disability status).
55. Charge the math curriculum staff with working with the assessment staff to develop or identify an Algebra readiness assessment that can be used with seven graders. The results should be used to boost the rigor of seventh and eighth grade pre-algebra courses and to increase student skills.

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56. Conduct a detailed analysis of high school students' course taking patterns in math, pass rates, course-repeaters, teacher grades, and an analysis of course rigor. Use the results to reform and improve the math program in the district's high schools.
57. Develop or adopt a series of end-of-course tests in core subjects (at the secondary level) and begin implementing them in the high schools. End-of-course exams need to be aligned with the pacing guides and the MAP.
58. Begin integrating ESOL data kept in the bilingual education office into the district's student information system.
59. Integrate training activities on the instructional uses of TerraNova and MAP data into the district's professional development plan.
60. Create a schedule by which all major instructional programs in the district will be evaluated.

### **H. Early Childhood and Elementary Schools**

It is often difficult for urban school districts to improve everything at once. The districts experiencing success in improving student achievement did not take on the entire system at once. Instead, these districts started their reforms at the early elementary grades and worked up to the middle and high school grades. The Strategic Support Team looked at the sequence of reforms in the St. Louis schools and their focus on the elementary schools.

#### **Positive**

- The district appears to have fairly strong pre-k program.
- Preschool program staff have developed parent handbooks, preschool calendars, progress reports, guides for home visits, and assessment checklists.
- The district's pre-k program has a lower pupil-teacher ratio than many other urban school districts.
- The district has ongoing relationships with other community pre-k programs, such as Head Start.
- The district has a "Parents as Teachers" program and an Even Start program.
- The district's pre-k program works closely with the district's ESOL and special education programs.
- The district has had a full-day kindergarten program for approximately ten years and a full-day pre-k program for approximately four years.

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### **Concerns**

- There are approximately 14,000 three-to-five year old children in the city who are eligible to receive pre-k services, but the district is serving only some 1,500 pupils.
- The district's pre-k program is not vertically aligned to the k-12 program.
- The district lacks a process to transition pupils from pre-k programs to kindergarten. There also is no process to transition pupils from agency programs to school programs. The district also lacks a process for connecting developmental programs in agency care programs to instructional programs in the district.
- The district's literacy coaches do not work with pre-k teachers, thereby missing an opportunity to close reading gaps before pupils get the first grade.
- The district also lacks a diagnostic system for assessing the developmental levels of its pre-k pupils.
- Neither the district's nor the community agencies' pre-k programs have a strong literacy component.
- The district lacks uniform criteria making decisions about special education placements and has no meaningful pre-referral process. (See chapter on special education.)
- The parent training component of the district's pre-k program is weak.

### **Recommendations**

It has been very difficult for urban school districts to improve by trying to raise the academic performance of all grades simultaneously. Instead, many of the fastest improving districts started their reforms at the elementary grades and worked their way up to the middle and high schools. These districts pursued this approach to correct serious curriculum alignment problems in the lower grades and to stem the tide of students entering middle and high schools without solid basic skills.

61. Develop a plan for increasing the number of pre-k students served by the district. The district might consider increasing class-sizes to serve more students, since the current class-sizes are unusually low.
62. Establish a process for transitioning pupils from pre-k to kindergarten and from community care centers to kindergarten.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

63. Revamp the district's pre-k curriculum to focus on literacy and numeracy readiness skills. The district might also work with community agencies to boost the literacy and numeracy components of their programs since they serve large numbers of pupils. Finally, the new reading adoption needs to have a strong pre-k literacy component.
64. Assign the literacy coaches and the new math coaches (see earlier recommendation) to work with pre-k teachers.
65. Purchase and begin administering a diagnostic system to assess pre-k reading and math developmental levels. Use the results of the assessments to boost the quality of the programs and to provide remedial help to pupils where necessary.

### **I. Middle and High Schools**

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

#### **Positive**

- The district has retained literacy coaches for its secondary schools.
- The district requires all students to take four courses of high school math.
- The district's schools have higher average per pupil expenditures than many of their neighboring school districts.

#### **Concerns**

- The overall achievement level of district's high schools appears to be unusually low.
- There appears to be significant inequities in the resources available to magnet schools and those available to comprehensive high schools.
- There are few advanced placement (AP) courses available in the district's comprehensive high schools.
- The district has inconsistent graduation requirements in its high schools. In other words, some schools require 28 credits for graduation, some require 24.
- The district does not provide any extended-time opportunities or other interventions to address the needs of its lowest performing students.



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- The district has a significant problem with discipline in many of its secondary schools.
- The district's high schools have very high annual dropout rates. (Rates would probably be higher if they were calculated as four year rates.)
- Many students are not prepared to complete the district's four year math requirement.

### **Recommendations**

Although fast improving urban school districts began by implementing reforms at the elementary grades they did not overlook the high schools. They developed interventions for struggling students and ensured that all students have an opportunity to learn to high standards.

66. Begin standardizing graduation requirements at the district's high schools.
67. Begin revising the funding formulas by which resources are allocated to magnet and comprehensive high schools. Corrections or weights should be provided for students with special needs.
68. Implement an algebra-readiness diagnostic assessment in the seventh grade and use the results to boost the rigor of middle school math courses and provide tutorial and supplemental assistance to students with weak skills. (Repeat recommendation from data and assessment section.)
69. Offer algebra I to eighth graders who do well on the algebra-readiness diagnostic test.
70. Consider implementing specific programs for middle school students who are struggling in math in order to improve their algebra-readiness skills.<sup>28</sup>
71. Double-block reading and math classes for middle and high school students who have not attained basic skills at the elementary level.
72. Consider the possibility of moving to a set of alternative schedules for students who are struggling with algebra I. For instance, the district might want to consider offering: (a) algebra over one year, one period (traditional); (b) one year, two periods (double block); or two years, one period. The district might consider a range of student scheduling options to deal with the fact that students are often repeating math courses in high schools.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> "Algebraic Thinking" from the National Training Network is an example of such a program.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Rettig, Professor of Education and Director of the Center for School Leadership at James Madison University may be able to assist the district in this area.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

73. Institute a “Positive Behavior Support” program at the middle and high school levels to help improve discipline problems.
74. Back map the rigor of the district’s core high school courses from a 12<sup>th</sup> grade AP level down to the sixth grade. Slowly begin to upgrade the rigor of those courses with better materials, more rigorous curriculum, and professional development. Also, begin to place AP courses in all district high schools.
75. Develop a strategic plan for ameliorating the district’s high dropout rate. Strategies should include counseling, outreach, reclaiming, forecasting, recovery, and the like. This plan should be folded into the district’s instructional strategic plan that is recommended in this report.
76. Develop a summer bridge program for incoming high school students to familiarize them with their new high schools.
77. Begin developing a series of “end-of-course” exams for core subjects at the high school level in order to keep everyone focused on student performance. Exams should be aligned with the MAP.

### **J. Low Performing Schools**

Finally, urban school systems that are seeing substantial improvement in student performance have a targeted strategy to intervene in and boost achievement in their lowest-performing schools. This is often done differently from city to city, but it is done in almost every case. The Strategic Support Team looked at St. Louis’ strategies to boost achievement in its lowest achieving schools.

#### **Positive**

- The district has identified ten of its lowest performing schools as “priority schools” and has developed an initial plan to assist them.
- The district is working to reduce class-sizes in its “priority schools.”

#### **Concerns**

- Few district staff members were aware of the implications of the numbers of St. Louis schools in “warning” under NCLB and the pending sanctions if they move into school improvement status next school year.
- It is not clear how the “priority schools” were selected or what would constitute grounds for releasing them from priority status.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

- The district has not conducted any serious analysis of its “priority schools,” their needs, staffing patterns, resources, materials and programs, or any other feature that would inform an improvement strategy.
- The district does not offer any unique or differentiated professional development for teachers and staff in “priority schools.”
- The district’s written plan to improve the performance of its “priority schools” is weak and does not articulate many steps that are different from those aimed at any other school in the district.
- No one in the district has been assigned to oversee the academic improvements in the “priority schools” and to be responsible for their reform.
- The district and its staff lack any sense of urgency for raising student achievement in the “priority schools.”
- The district does not have a newcomer or welcome center for newly-arrived immigrant or refugee children and their families. The district has a large number of incoming Bosnian students.

### **Recommendations**

A number of urban districts have also helped boost citywide achievement by focusing on their lowest performing schools. Charlotte, Houston, Cleveland, San Diego, and New York City are examples. Each of these districts established a sub-unit within their systems that focused resources and technical assistance on schools that were furthest away from meeting state standards. These units are often overseen by a person with CEO-like powers that brings special attention to the needs of their schools.

78. Name a person to oversee the reform and progress of the district’s “priority schools.” This person should report directly to the Chief Academic Officer or the Superintendent.
79. Develop and institute more frequent interim assessments for the “priority schools.” These “mini-assessments should be very short tests, administered every week to ten days, and aligned with the quarterly or interim assessments.
80. Develop a plan to recruit and reward the best principals and teachers in the district to work in the “priority schools.”
81. Provide a different level and intensity of professional development for staff in the priority schools than is being in other schools throughout the district. Professional development should be tied to the results of the analysis done on this set of schools.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

82. Develop specific criteria by which a school would become a “priority school” and when they would exit that status.
83. Develop a mock state assessment and administer it in the priority schools at least three weeks before the MAP.
84. Begin developing and implementing individualized student reading and math improvement plans for each and every student in the district’s priority schools.
85. Establish a “Rapid Support Team” comprised of the district’s director of curriculum, heads of elementary and secondary schools, directors of math and reading, Title I, and accountability that would analyze and articulate the immediate needs of the district’s lowest-performing schools and develop a plan for giving them extensive support. The team and the principals would meet regularly.
86. Develop an “equity plan” for realigning resources to the district’s lowest performing schools. The plan should include the following components—
  - Administrative support levels.
  - Teacher/student ratios.
  - Support staff.
  - Special education and ESL programming
  - Staffing qualifications.
  - New teacher support.
  - Bonuses to teach in toughest schools (stipends for coursework, advanced degrees, extra pay, etc.)
  - Facility capacity.
  - Instructional materials.
  - Computers and technology.
  - Library books.
  - Co-curricular programs.
87. Consider setting up a newcomer center for immigrant students and families new to the country.

## CHAPTER 3. TITLE I AND OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS

This chapter summarizes the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Support Team's review of the main federal programs of the St. Louis Public Schools. The chapter is divided into two major sections, findings and recommendations. Each section is subdivided into eight subsections. These subsections are defined around areas that are critical to the implementation of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB). The areas include supplemental services, choice, parental involvement, uses of funds, highly qualified teachers, school improvement, budgeting and program allocations, and other federal grants. The findings and recommendations are further divided into areas deserving praise and recognition and areas of concern.

### Findings and Recommendations

The Council's Strategic Support Team on Title I and other federal programs spent considerable time and energy interviewing district staff, parents, and others and devoted substantial energy to reviewing documents and materials describing how the St. Louis Public Schools were implementing their major federal programs. The team was looking primarily at the district's overall alignment with NCLB and at the way the district was using its federal monies to improve student achievement. In general, the team found that the district's federal programs were well-run and largely met the requirements of NCLB.<sup>30</sup> The team also found, however, that the district could be using its federal funds more effectively to boost academic performance.

The district has approximately 82 Title I schools, all but fifteen of which provide "schoolwide" services. (The remainder provides targeted assistance.) Data from the 2002-2003 state testing indicate that St. Louis has approximately 12 schools in stage II of school improvement under *No Child Left Behind*, meaning that they are required to offer choice and supplemental services. No St. Louis schools are in corrective action or reconstitution status, but over fifty schools are in "warning," meaning that they did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for one year. Most might be expected to move into school improvement status if they do not improve on spring 2004 testing.

The state of Missouri has set its proficiency bars for the 2003-04 school year at 20.4 percent proficient for all grade levels in reading and 10.3 percent proficient in math. Minimum subgroup size has been set at 30 students.

The following sections summarize the main findings from the team's review.

#### A. Use of Funds

The federal Title I program is designed to spur student achievement in communities with poor children. School districts receiving funds under the program use them, however, in a variety of ways.

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<sup>30</sup> The team's work does not constitute an official compliance audit of the district's federal programs.

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

### Positive

- The district was allocated \$22,138,124 in Title I targeted assistance aid and \$49,271 in Title I migrant assistance for school year 2003-04. (Missouri is a bypass state for purposes of aid to private schools.)
- The district was allocated \$6,299,358 in Title II-A aid for school year 2003-04. (\$5,402,310 was budgeted.)
- The district's federal programs are generally well-run and in overall alignment with *No Child Left Behind*.
- The district has a strong commitment to parent and family involvement in the schools. The district uses its one percent parent involvement set-aside and varying amounts of the school-by-school allocations to support parent liaisons and family resource staff. The team saw this use of funds as appropriate, given the district's unusually high rate of student mobility.
- The district is also spending about \$1.6 million of its Title I allocation for preschool programs that research indicates can have a powerful effect on student achievement in the early grades.
- Title I funds are used in grades k-8 for both reading and math. No Title I funds are used at the high school level.

### Concerns

- The district does not spend its Title I funds in a way that is consistent with its stated priority on literacy. It also does not spend its resources as effectively as it could to boost student achievement, particularly in reading and math.
- Each school in the district determines how it will use its Title I funds. Sometimes this use is consistent with districtwide priorities; sometimes it is not. Sample schools whose expenditure data were reviewed by the team showed unusually large amounts of Title I funds spent on field trips and materials. The budget for Eliot Elementary Schools, for instance, showed \$17,379 for supplies; Shaw Elementary School showed \$8,000 for field trips and \$30,000 for software; and Long Middle School showed \$60,000 for consultants.
- The district's Title I funds are not consistently used for extended-time learning opportunities (e.g., afterschool or summer school programs). The district still uses a "pull-out" approach. The team heard a number of examples where students were pulled out of one reading class for instruction in another.
- The district uses Title I funds to support the salaries of about 18 literacy coaches, and would like to support the remaining coaches with Title I.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

- The district has about \$3.0 million in budgeted but unexpended Title I funds that it did not use for choice and supplemental services, because participation rates in these programs were low this year. The state required the district to reserve 20 percent of its Title I allocation for these purposes. The funds could now be used for other Title I purposes or could (under a special waiver authority issued by the U.S. Department of Education to handle this special circumstance) be carried forward to next school year.
- The district makes a large investment in its preschool program, but because some 30 percent of the seats in the program are taken by students from outside the district who do not continue in the St. Louis City Public Schools, the district does not see the full benefits of its expenditures in its k-12 system.
- The district does little forecasting of its Title I funds and does not currently predict or how its federal funds are affected by changes in student poverty counts.
- The district loses about \$4 million in Title I funds a year to the suburbs as a result of the inter-district transfer program.
- The district uses its Title II funds to support class-size reduction in grades k-3 and for professional development districtwide. The portion used for class size reduction goes for teachers in grades k-3. The portion used for professional development is devoted to tuition assistance, certification, advanced degrees, PDUs, and conferences. Funds are generally provided on a first-come, first-served basis and are not necessarily spent in a way that is consistent with districtwide academic goals.
- The district does not appear to be setting aside the required five percent of Title I funds to meet the highly-qualified teachers mandate of NCLB.

### **Recommendations**

1. Reprogram the unused reserve in the Title I choice and supplemental services programs (about \$3.0 million) into either a summer school program or into basic program services next school year (2004-05).
2. Shift the support of the literacy coaches now being paid by Title I and the General Operating Budget (GOB) to Title II-A. (About 18 coaches are paid for under Title I and the remaining coaches are paid out of the GOB.) Rewrite the job descriptions of these individuals to focus on reading and professional development to avoid any problem with supplanting. These individuals should be required to have reading certificates. This change saves the district over \$5.0 million in GOB funds that could be devoted to deficit reduction, a reading adoption, or some other purpose. (See subsequent recommendations on how to fund professional development efforts.)

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

3. Reprogram the Title I funds now being used to support the 18 literacy coaches back into the basic Title I program.
4. Eliminate the district's Title I pullout program and replace it with a core reading program, flexible groupings, and extended-day programs (with assigned Title I teachers). The Strategic Support Team recommends *two main options* to the district for using its Title I funds to boost student achievement.

*Option #1:* Reprogram Title I from a school-by-school program that is often used by principals to support staff and other purposes to a district-defined extended-day or afterschool program that is built around the district's stated priorities in reading and math. The district should consider phasing in this reprogramming over two years (and using the \$3.0 million in one-time, unspent choice and supplemental service funds from this year to cushion against reductions in funds to schools.) The district should coordinate its Title IV services, which are used for social services, with the new districtwide Title I afterschool effort. Finally, the district would use the remaining Title I funds (i.e., the off-the-top funds for administration, parent liaisons, neglected and delinquent, professional development, preschool, choice and supplemental services, and charter schools) in the same configuration it does now.

The district would then use its Title I funds in the following way—

Purpose	Amount
Administration (same as current)	\$782,000
Parent and family support (same as current)	\$2,200,000
Neglected and delinquent (same as current)	\$165,000
Professional development for highly qualified (same as current 5%)	\$1,075,000
Pre-school program (same as current)	\$1,600,000
Choice and supplemental services (assume 20% for next year) <sup>31</sup>	\$4,300,000
Charter Schools (same as current)	\$1,300,000
Remainder for districtwide extended-day or afterschool program (includes mandated 10% for professional development).	\$10,078,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$21,500,000</b>

*Option #2:* Allocate the funds to the school level in the manner that the district is currently doing, but require that funds at the school level be used according to a district-defined template that aligns the use of Title I funds with the district's instructional priorities.

Purpose	Amount
Administration (same as current)	\$782,000
Parent and family support (same as current)	\$2,200,000

<sup>31</sup> The team assumed the full 20 percent for choice and supplemental services next year because of the likely increase in the number of schools in school improvement.



## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

Neglected and delinquent (same as current)	\$165,000
Professional development for highly qualified (same as current 5%)	\$1,075,000
Pre-school program (same as current)	\$1,600,000
Choice and supplemental services (assume 20% for next year)	\$4,300,000
Charter Schools (same as current)	\$1,300,000
Remainder spent by the principals but spent according to district-defined instructional priorities, which would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>★ direct instruction in reading and math</li><li>★ supplemental and intervention materials aligned with the core reading and math program</li><li>★ extended-day tutorials</li><li>★ technology for instruction</li></ul>	\$10,078,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$21,500,000</b>

5. Require that all schools reserve 10 percent of their funds for professional development that would then be defined by a districtwide program that aligns with instructional priorities in reading and math.
6. Prohibit the use of Title funds for out-of-town travel, field trips, copying machines, and office supplies.
7. Open negotiations with the state with the goal of recapturing Title I money lost to the suburbs because of the inter-district transfer program.

### B. Choice

*No Child Left Behind* requires that parents of children enrolled in schools that have not made adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years be given the option to transfer to a higher-performing school that is not in need of improvement. The district has 12 schools that are required to offer transfers.

#### Positive

- The district is administering the choice provisions in accordance with the law and in a way that does not exacerbate the system's high mobility rate.
- The district provides students from the eligible schools three choices of other schools.
- The district has a large districtwide transfer program and a large number of magnet schools, resulting in a high number of options for students districtwide. The district is also attempting to mesh its regular transfer program with its NCLB choices.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

- The district has accommodated all students requesting a transfer under NCLB. The district identified forty higher-performing elementary schools and eight higher-performing middle schools that students could transfer into. Building capacity has not been an issue to date.
- Letters consistent with the law were sent to parents informing them of their choices. Letters in multiple languages were sent to parents on August 15, 2003. Parents were given until August 27 to respond with a choice. Letters to parents offering magnet schools and inter-district transfer options (under the desegregation order) were sent on January 30, 2004, for the 2004-05 school year.
- The district is attempting to mesh its magnet, open enrollment, and other choices with its NCLB choices

### **Concerns**

- Participation rates in the NCLB choice program were generally low. There were approximately 5,245 students who were eligible to transfer; about 31 students have done so. The large number of other choices in the district may be absorbing the numbers of students who would otherwise want to move to another school.
- The district has done very little planning to date for the possibility that a large number of schools now in “warning” may have to provide transfer options next school year.

### **Recommendations**

8. Continue to explore ways that the district could consolidate its various choice programs (magnet, open enrollment, NCLB) into a single choice program so that NCLB students are not necessarily the last in line.
9. Prepare for the possibility that the district could have between 40 and 50 additional schools in school improvement that would have to offer transfers next school year (2004-05).

### **C. Supplemental Education Services (SES)**

*No Child Left Behind* also requires that students in schools that have not made adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years be offered tutorial and other instructional support services to students. Parents are permitted to choose services provided by an assortment of organizations approved by the state. The 12 district schools in school improvement are required to provide these services.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

### **Positive**

- The St. Louis Public Schools has been approved by the state to be its own supplemental services provider. The vast majority of parents have chosen to participate in the district's program (called the Data Driven Differentiated Instructional Program—DD-DIP) rather than to use one of the approved external providers.
- There are about 15 external providers that have been approved by the state, but not all providers were selected by parents. State-approved external providers included Sylvan Learning, Kumon Math and Reading Centers, Traveling Tutors, Lightspan, Blue Hills Homes, Brainfuse, ENTEAM, Baddage Net School, Be Smart In-home Tutorial, Club Z, HOSTS, Leatherwoods, and others. The district does not have contracts with providers that parents have not chosen.<sup>32</sup>
- The district sent letters on December 12, 2003, to parents notifying them of supplemental services. The letters were consistent with NCLB's requirements and included descriptions of services offered by the approved external providers.
- The district began its SES program on January 6, 2004, and expects to serve about 750 students before the end of the school year.
- The district's SES program provides afterschool tutorials in reading and math, small-group instruction, and technology-based instruction for participating students. Instruction is being provided by state-certified/licensed teachers using the teaching model used successfully in the Laclede Elementary School.
- The district provides weekly reports to teachers and parents on student progress and has devised a system for monitoring hours and attendance.

### **Concerns**

- The district appears to be spending less money per child on participating SES students than NCLB would require.
- The district's SES program is under-subscribed. It could easily serve 3,500 students with the 20% the state has required the district to set aside from its Title I allocation.
- The district is holding about \$3.0 million in unspent Title I funds from its initial 20% reservation for choice and supplemental services. The state has not set a date at which the district could release the funds for other Title I purposes, so the

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<sup>32</sup> The team did not have access to contracts that have been negotiated, so was unable to assess their contents.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

district might presume that the funds can be released once parent selections have been finalized for the current school year.

- The district has no explicit strategy at the moment for ensuring that its internal SES program or the services offered by external providers align with the district's instructional program.
- The district also does not have a plan for explicitly evaluating the effect of the SES program on the academic achievement of participating students, although the district is collecting assessment data with which an evaluation could be done.

### **Recommendations**

10. Set a closing date by which parents can finish enrolling in SES, after which the district can reprogram the balance of its Title I funds for other Title I purposes. The district should review U.S. Department of Education rules for increased Title I carryover amounts this school year only.
11. Seek clarification from the state on the amounts of spending per child required for external SES providers.

### **D. Parental Involvement**

Federal law requires that monies be set aside from the federal Title I program to support and encourage parent involvement in the schools.

#### **Positive**

- The district treats parent involvement seriously and has a large program to involve parents and families in the schools.
- The district appears to be in technical compliance with NCLB parent requirements, including requirements related to parent compacts, parent rights, the notification of parents about the certification of teachers and substitutes, school improvement plans, and the dissemination of NCLB information. The district is beginning to inform the community about Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).
- The district has a family resource liaison and a social worker at every school. These liaisons help boost attendance and mitigate the effects of a high student mobility rate.
- Parent and family liaisons are supported and trained by the central Title I office (as required by NCLB) and are involved in schoolwide forums and school improvement planning committees.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

### **Concerns**

- The district has a major student mobility problem. The school system has parent and family liaisons in its schools but no real strategy to stabilize the movement of students from one school to another. The inter-district transfer program probably exacerbates the problem. (The mobility problem is beyond the capacity of the district's federal programs to solve on their own.)
- Students who move schools during the school year will not be counted against the AYP targets of either school but their scores will count against the district's targets.

### **Recommendations**

12. Retain Title I and other district support for parent and family school-based staff to help mitigate the effects of high mobility and poverty.

### **E. Highly Qualified Teachers**

*No Child Left Behind* requires that school districts provide their students with teachers that are highly-qualified by the 2005-06 school year.

### **Positive**

- About 85 percent of the district's teachers meet the state's definition for a highly qualified teacher.
- All paraprofessionals (100%) in the district meet NCLB's definition of highly qualified. Paraprofessionals are required by state law to have two years of college (60 semester hours or a two-year certificate).
- The district allocates about \$1.1 million of its Title II-A funds for professional development. About \$406,000 goes to private school programs.
- The district retains about \$716,000 of its Title II-A funds for its professional development program. About \$606,000 of this amount is devoted to tuition assistance, advanced degrees, certification, and PDUs. The remainder is used for travel and attendance at conferences.

### **Concerns**

- Hiring of new coaches has no direct involvement in helping the district meet the highly-qualified requirements under NCLB, despite the significant investment of Title I funds.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

- There is no district plan to provide any special professional development in schools identified for school improvement (the currently-identified schools and those that are about to be identified).
- It is not clear that schools currently in need of improvement are devoting the 10 percent required under NCLB for professional development. (See earlier finding under Use of Funds.)
- It is also unclear whether the district is using the five percent required by Title I to meet “highly qualified” requirements or the 25 percent required by Title II-D for professional development.

### **Recommendations**

13. Require all Title I schools in the district to use 10 percent of their allocations on professional development and require that its use be devoted to a uniform, districtwide professional development effort designed around reading and math achievement.
14. Charge the human resources department with setting up a regular process for collecting, maintaining, monitoring, and disseminating data on the status of teachers and paraprofessionals in meeting NCLB’s “highly qualified” requirements.

### **F. School Improvement Planning**

Federal law has a number of requirements that schools and school districts engage in a formal process of planning for the improvement of individual schools. This process is done in any number of ways.

#### **Positive**

- The school district has done a better job this year of consolidating school improvement plans into a single document.
- School report cards with student performance data and other elements required by NCLB are being released. The report cards are clear and easy to understand.

#### **Concerns**

- The district does not have a districtwide improvement plan that is comparable to the individual school plans.
- School report cards and school improvement plans still do not have performance data disaggregated by race, poverty status, language, or disability as required by NCLB.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

### **Recommendations**

15. The district should develop a districtwide improvement plan with the same components (in the same order) as the individual school plans. (The district may be required to do this anyway if it finds itself in “district improvement” status next year.)
16. Begin disaggregating student test data as required under NCLB and including it in report cards and school improvement plans.
17. Continue melding all school improvement plans into a single format that aligns with NCLB.
18. Ensure that school improvement plans include required support services for students.
19. Include a section in school improvement plans on Title I and other federal, state, and local funds being spent.

### **G. Allocations to Schools and Budgeting**

The federal law and its regulations specify a general set of procedures for how Title I funds are to be allocated to individual schools within any school district. The school districts have some latitude in how this is done, however.

#### **Positive**

- The district’s system for allocating Title I funds to schools is in compliance with the law and appears to be equitable and transparent. Allocations per student range from \$520 to \$593.
- Each eligible Title I school in the district has a budget for the expenditure of federal funds.

#### **Concerns**

- Title I and other funds at the central office and building levels were frozen last summer because of the district’s severe budget crisis. The freeze risked putting the district out of compliance with a number of federal requirements.
- Buildings were put on month-to-month budgets with their general operating funds after the freeze.

### **Recommendations**

20. Refrain from freezing federal program expenditures during a budget crisis without a very careful assessment of the federal regulatory ramifications.

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

### **H. Other Federal Grants**

No Child Left Behind contains a number of other major components besides Title I and Title II (highly qualified teachers). Title III of the program provides funds for English Language Learners. Title IV provides funds for safe and drug free schools. And Reading First provides funds to spur reading performance.

#### **Positive**

- The grants department appears to be making the most of various partnerships and is making every attempt to link with other community resources.
- The district is using its Title II-D funds (\$824,149) to provide READ 180 labs for its middle and high schools.
- The district was allocated \$542,107 in Title III funds in 2003-04 for its ESOL program. The curriculum and federal programs teams thought highly of this program and its director.
- The district was allocated \$681,795 in Title IV-A funds in 2003-04 and is using the monies for social service efforts, counselors, and social workers in its schools. Funds also support the district's safe/drug-free schools efforts and its CHARACTERplus program.
- The district was allocated \$387,323 in Title V funds for 2003-04 and is using the funds for dropout prevention.
- The district received about \$2,596,732 in telecommunications discounts and \$7,847,687 in internal connections in 2003 (year 6) from the e-rate program.
- The district also has a sizable 21<sup>st</sup> Century and large GEAR UP grants.

#### **Concerns**

- The coordinated planning between the Title I office and other district programs has not taken place since the death of the previous Title I director.

#### **Recommendations**

21. Hire a new, full-time director for the district's Title I program to replace Valerie Harvey. The district has a number of good possibilities.
22. Resume central planning for federal programs consistent with districtwide goals and strategies (as used to occur under the previous Title I director).



## CHAPTER 4. SPECIAL EDUCATION

This chapter summarizes the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Support Team on Special Education. Our findings are divided into seven sections and include: over identification, organizational structure, operational and procedural costs, curriculum and professional development, service delivery, technology and student records, and additional concerns. The Team's findings are further subdivided into positive areas and areas of serious concern.

The reader should note that several of items fall into two or more categories. For example, many of the practices that contribute to the over identification of students with disabilities also contribute to the high costs of the district's program. When the practices and policies that contribute to over identification are addressed, costs should diminish. It is not likely, however, that the district will be able to cut costs unilaterally without running afoul of federal law.

### Findings and Recommendations

The Strategic Support Team devoted significant time to interviewing staff, principals, and teachers and reviewing reports, statistics, and program plans. The team's major priority was to examine district practices contributing to the over-identification of students as disabled. The team, moreover, looked at the costs of those services and reviewed the overall effectiveness of the district's special education program. In general, the team found that the district was, in fact, identifying a disproportionately large number of students for special education. There were also a number of reasons beyond the immediate control of the district that were contributing to the over identification. Excess costs appeared to be driven by the over identification and not by program inefficiencies, although much inefficiency was found.

#### A. Over-identification

Over-identification refers to the practice of tagging students as disabled at rates that are higher than national averages. The practice is often more prevalent with certain disabilities. Sometimes, appropriate behavioral and instructional interventions and assessments can ameliorate the problem. In other cases, a good reading program in the early grades can serve to dampen unusually high rates. The team found that a number of factors were contributing to the unusually high identification rates in St. Louis and that a variety of strategies, long-term and short-term, would be needed to lessen the numbers.

#### Positive

- The priority of the St. Louis Public Schools to focus on literacy should help reduce reading difficulties districtwide and lower special education referral rates over the long run.

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- Several school-based staff members reported having participated enthusiastically in problem solving workshops aimed at increasing interventions and reducing referrals of students for special education services.

### **Concerns**

The St. Louis Public Schools identify a disproportionately large number of students as disabled (18.6 %). The national average is between 12 and 13%. The following issues contribute to this high rate of identification.

- The St. Louis Public Schools and many parents apparently treat the district's special education program as the first and best option for students with reading or behavioral problems. The district's main reading program appears to be too weak to be viewed by many parents as preferable to what they can get for their children from special education.
- The district has no systemwide plan or program for providing intervention services (or Child Study) for students prior to their referral to special education. The result is that students are referred immediately to special education without first receiving remedial instruction that might prevent the placement.
- The district lacks any systemwide strategy for helping students who are experiencing academic or behavioral difficulties. This leads to a situation where special education has become the sole alternative for students exhibiting academic or behavioral trouble.
- The district's lack of a comprehensive, uniform reading program, including a program for its struggling readers, is exacerbating the over identification problem.
- The district lacks a comprehensive positive behavior or behavioral intervention program for its students.
- The district also lacks uniform criteria by which students are referred for special education services. The result is that 90-95% of those referred for special education are found eligible.
- Students served through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act apparently are not permitted accommodations on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). The result is that students who might otherwise be served through this option are being identified for IDEA services.
- Some 23.1% of students receiving special education services in the St. Louis Public Schools are identified as mentally retarded, a rate that is more than twice the national average of 10.6%. District staff reported that households may be requesting that children be identified as mentally retarded thinking that they can

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claim Supplemental Security Income that accompanies this identification. The team did not have sufficient data to determine the veracity of this claim.

- District staff also reported that a local initiative, which requires parents of truant children to be placed in jail, has resulted in an increase in the number of parents requesting that their children be identified as disabled in order to prevent these sanctions. Again, the team did not have sufficient data to determine the veracity of this claim.
- The district lacks sufficient numbers of certified teachers in special education and does not have adequate professional development for administrators, teachers, and substitutes on differentiated instructional practices and appropriate interventions to use with students with behavioral or academic difficulties. The result is that teachers are prone to refer students to special education at higher rates than might otherwise be the case.
- Some 10,223 St. Louis city students attend schools outside the city as part of the voluntary desegregation transfer program. About 2,639 (or 25.8%) of these students were identified by county schools as disabled—an identification rate higher than the city rate and almost twice the national average. A significant percentage of these students are apparently returned to the district with an IEP that the city schools must then pay to implement. The result is even higher rates of identification for the city.
- The costs of special education services in the St. Louis Public Schools are high, but do not appear to be out of line with the high number of students classified as disabled. In other words, the district has an over identification problem more than it has an excess program cost problem.

### **Recommendations**

1. Articulate a systemwide philosophy by which the district's general education program is viewed as the primary placement of all students identified in IDEA. Develop and implement an early intervention and support system for students when they are first having reading and behavioral difficulties.
2. Permit the Council of the Great City Schools to provide a Curriculum and Instruction Team to evaluate the district's academic program for all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners in the St. Louis Public Schools.<sup>33</sup>
3. Suspend further districtwide decisions on the acquisition of a new reading program until the Curriculum and Instruction Team makes its recommendations to the superintendent and school board.

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<sup>33</sup> This team has already visited the district and its recommendations are included in the preceding chapter of this report.

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4. Acquire and implement a comprehensive, intensive, research-based reading plan for all students, including struggling readers.
5. Develop systemwide behavior intervention teams to do problem solving in schools having discipline problems. (The team recommends [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org) as a resource.)
6. Disaggregate special education placement data by race/ethnicity, gender, disability, teacher, instrument, school, etc. to determine underlying patterns in the over identification of students. Use the data to determine which schools are over identifying the most and determine priority areas for training both school-based staff and central office staff.
7. Rank order schools in terms of their referral and identification rates, then develop strategies to support schools, such as—
  - a. Compare the highest and lowest ranked schools and their practices related to the identification and referral of students to special education.
  - b. Provide intensive professional development to teachers and staff on intervention strategies and the use of Title I and other resources in schools that have the highest identification rates.
  - c. Identify practices in schools with the lowest referral and identification rates that could be shared with other schools.
8. Initiate discussions with the state about permitting accommodations for Section 504-eligible students during MAP testing. Council of the Great City Schools staff can provide technical assistance on the issue.
9. Provide appropriate training for IEP teams on Section 504 eligibility, so that teams are not automatically serving students under the more expensive provisions of IDEA rather than 504. District staff members appear not to be familiar with their program options under Section 504. The result is that they refer students automatically for services under IDEA.
10. Initiate discussions with federal and/or state Social Security authorities to determine criteria for parent eligibility for income from a child's disability. Communicate the official eligibility criteria to parents and principals and develop specific strategies with Social Security authorities, parents, and principals to reduce inappropriate claims for SSI payments or applications for IDEA eligibility based on misunderstandings about SSI eligibility.
11. Collaborate with local courts and other stakeholders to develop appropriate sanctions for parents of truant students in order to reduce incentives for identifying students with disabilities.

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12. Ensure that attendance policies for students with disabilities are the same as those for their non-disabled peers, unless otherwise delineated on a student's IEP.
13. Provide professional development to district staff (principals and teachers) on the appropriate criteria and standards for identifying students for special education services. Hold staff accountable for adherence to these criteria even when they are under pressure from parents or others. Provide parents notice of procedural safeguards if they wish to dispute identification determinations.
14. Provide training to principals, general education teachers, and special education staff on conducting IEP meetings (The Team recommends [www.JDLAssociates.com](http://www.JDLAssociates.com) as a resource.).
15. Review all assessment instruments and procedures used districtwide for the identification of students with disabilities for potential bias and undue impact on identification. Instruments that are identified as resulting in unusual placement rates should be replaced. Hold staff accountable for implementing recommendations from this review.
16. Establish a standardized assessment battery, appropriate for the student population in St. Louis, that would be used districtwide to identify students with disabilities rather than relying so heavily on teacher judgment. Also, consider including the "response to intervention" model as an alternative to the IQ discrepancy model currently in use for students in St. Louis identified as having a learning disability. When necessary, work with the state to utilize the appropriate models.
17. Provide professional development for teachers, psychologists, principals and support staff on appropriate strategies for instructing diverse learners, including English language learners, African American boys, and students with disabilities. (Consider retaining Janet Graden, Jackie Townsend, or Linda Tilton as consultants to provide this professional development.)
18. Prepare an annual report delineating:
  - a. The percentage of students with IEPs prior to transferring to St. Louis County schools under the voluntary transfer program;
  - b. The number and percentage of these students identified by the county as having a disability;
  - c. The number and percentage of those students found by the county to have a disability who are returned to the St. Louis Public Schools;
  - d. The number and percentage of students, disabled and non-disabled, who return immediately after the child count data is conducted, prior to the administration of

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the MAP, and at other significant milestones during the year that might affect state reimbursement rates; and

- e. Services and associated costs mandated in IEPs written by county officials for voluntary transfer students.
19. If any of the figures on the variables listed above are disproportionately high, immediately initiate discussions with appropriate parties, including school board attorneys, the county, and state officials to address this situation.
20. Develop an annual report on the costs to the school district associated with the voluntary transfer program, including how the excess costs for county students with disabilities are determined.
21. Immediately screen students who have left the city as part of the transfer program unidentified as disabled but who return identified as disabled. Evaluate those students who appear to meet the criteria for exiting special education services, but discontinue services for those who don't and provide this information to state and other monitors.
22. Develop objective standards and criteria for exiting students from special education services when appropriate.

### **B. Organization Structure/Accountability**

While the Division of Special Education and Student Services is primarily responsible for services provided to students with disabilities, every member of the district's staff—central office curriculum developers, general education teachers, principals, and others—are responsible for the education of these children.

#### **Positive**

- Staff members at all levels of the school system are optimistic that the management team (Alvarez & Marsal) and their successors are on the right track to improving the district.
- The ratio of Special Education supervisors to schools is appropriate for the size of the district, and should allow supervisors to focus on both compliance and instruction.
- The newly appointed Executive Directors are beginning to hold principals accountable for compliance issues related to the education of students with disabilities.

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### **Concerns**

- The number of staff (25) reporting directly to the Director of Special Education—span of control—is too large for efficient management of the unit.
- The Special Education Department is physically removed from the main administration building, a situation that contributes to the unit's sense of isolation from decision making and staff coordination.
- There was little evidence of meaningful collaboration between Special Education staff and their curriculum counterparts in the district.
- Special Education supervisors serve as hearing officers for students with disabilities, while the district employs additional hearing officers for non-disabled students.
- The Special Education Department employs three data entry clerks and four file room clerks to manage records of students with disabilities already on file in schools.
- There is little sense of accountability among school-based staff and administration for the education of students with disabilities because so much of the current special education program is centrally controlled.
- Students with disabilities are encouraged to report to the central office's Special Education Department to enroll in the school district.

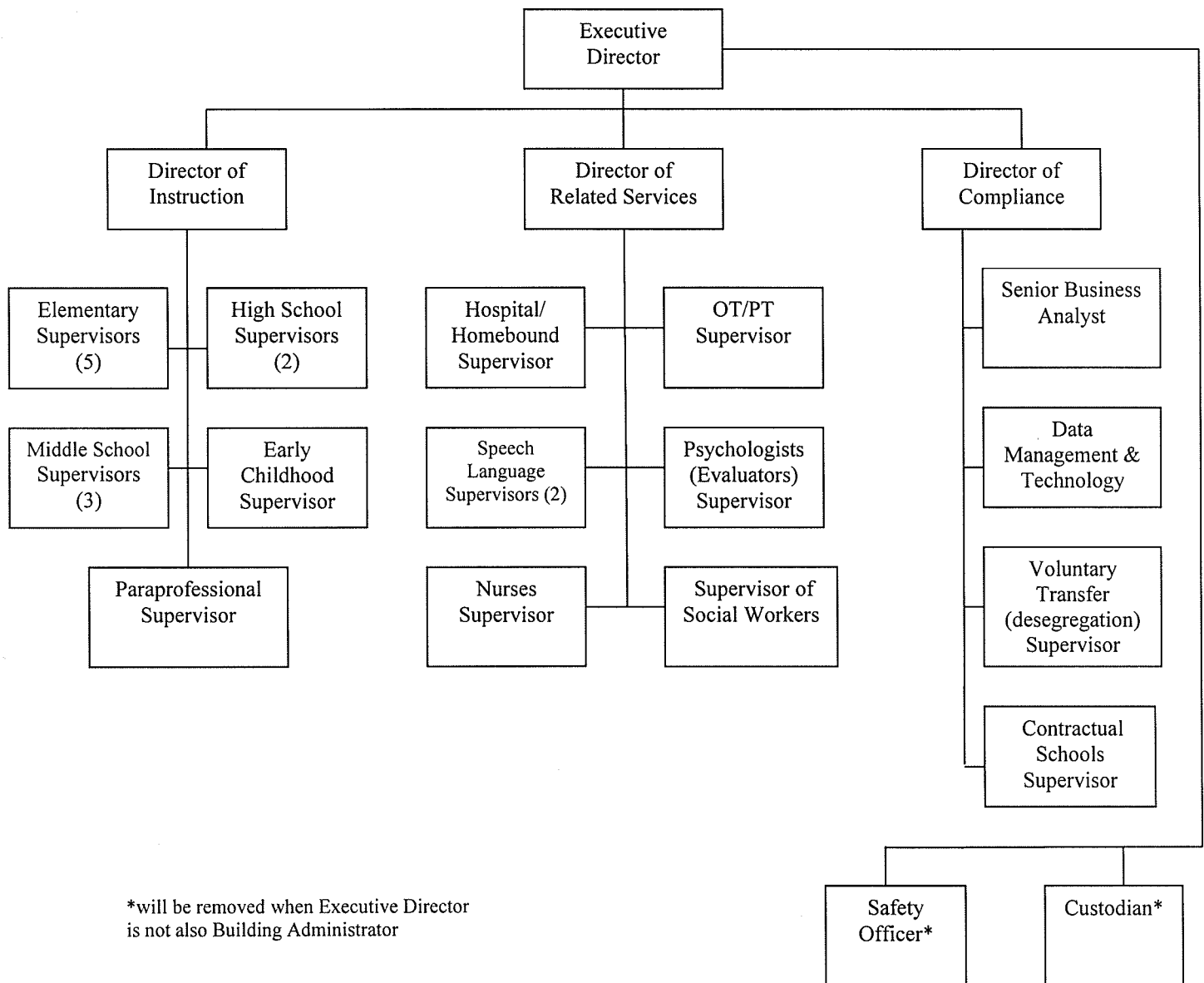
### **Recommendations**

23. Establish a system whereby each school is held accountable for the education of students with disabilities. Parents with questions or concerns about services for their child should contact the principal or the school-based staff responsible for the services first before contacting central office staff. The school-based staff person can then seek assistance from someone within the Division of Special Education and Student Services, if necessary.
24. Decrease the number of people reporting directly to the Executive Director of Special Education. (See proposed organizational chart below.)
25. Move the Special Education Department to the main administration office building to facilitate communications and collaboration with the rest of the district's staff.
26. Mandate collaboration between Special Education staff and general education staff at the central office, campus, and teacher level on areas involving instruction and student services. Consider appointing a facilitator to work with the relevant department heads to develop a plan for central office collaboration and require

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progress reports reflecting progress toward meeting the outcomes. Consider a similar approach to facilitate collaboration at the school level.

### Proposed Organizational Chart for Division of Student Support Services



NOTE: The Team did not review the distribution of secretaries, typists, and other positions below the level of supervisor. These positions are not reflected in this chart.



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27. Require elementary, middle, and high school general-education hearing officers to hear cases for all students, including students with disabilities. Ensure that these hearing officers and principals receive appropriate professional development as to procedures and legal requirements for students with disabilities that differ from those for other students.
28. Develop a plan to be fully implemented by the beginning of next school year (2004-05) for holding principals solely accountable for maintaining student records. Discontinuing the practice of duplicating these records at the central office.
29. Once records are fully within the control of local schools, reconsider the roles of the seven staff (three data entry clerks and four file room clerks) within the central office who are currently responsible for maintaining student records for schools.
30. Consider reassigning the three staff members managing Medicaid reimbursements to the office of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in order to maximize cost recovery.
31. Create procedures to conduct all intake and enrollment of students with disabilities at the neighborhood school site, rather than at the central office. The new procedures should include notices to parents in the spring, flyers in students' final report cards, and public service announcements. The new procedures should be in place by the beginning of next school year and appropriate training should be conducted on implementing the new procedures.
32. Once the new intake procedures have been implemented, reconsider the roles and responsibilities of the four central-office Intake Specialists. The district might reassign them to schools as case managers/teachers if appropriate.
33. Revise the job responsibilities of the supervisor for magnet school placement, magnet high schools, and the voluntary transfer program and divide into two positions.
  - a. A Supervisor of the Voluntary Transfer Program should monitor referrals, identification, and services to the city students attending county schools.
  - b. The second position should be another High School supervisor. The two High School supervisors should be responsible for all ten high schools in the city and be charged with ensuring that students with disabilities are equitably distributed across all ten high schools.
  - c. Assign magnet-related responsibilities, including placement, to the central office responsible for Magnet Schools.
34. Consider renaming the Office of Special Education as the Office of Student Support Services and renaming the Executive Director as the Director of Student Support Services. These designations would reflect the fact that the office includes more than special education services.

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### **C. Operational and Procedural Costs**

Students with disabilities generate both costs and revenues specific to the services they need. While it costs more to educate a student with a disability than it does to educate a non-disabled student, there are several strategies to maximize resources and improve services to students with disabilities. The St. Louis Public Schools has several unique costs associated with educating its students with disabilities that could be reduced through careful monitoring.

#### **Positive**

- The district and its outside management team are committed to understanding the district's revenues and expenses, and allocating these funds in the best interest of the children of St. Louis.
- The newly hired Director of Transportation has an excellent understanding of transportation costs, is renegotiating contracts with bus service providers, and has designated a member of her department to facilitate Special Education-related issues.
- SLPS has had very few child complaints and due process cases, compared with other large urban school districts.

#### **Concerns**

- Student records, including IEPs, are maintained at both the school site and the Special Education central office.
- It was reported to the team that the voluntary transfer program is costing the district an estimated \$2.4 million per year, as SLPS pays the excess cost of educating a city special education student.
- There is a financial incentive for county school districts to identify city students as needing special education services, as they receive 100 percent of their costs of educating a city student from the city, the transfer corporation or the state.
- It was reported to the team that students participating in the voluntary transfer program generally return to the city at two main points during the school year: 1) after child count data are submitted to the state and 2) before MAP testing.
- There are nine non-special education staff being paid for out of the Special Education budget (one "teacher of delinquents," one language arts teacher/Title I, three literacy coaches, one elementary art teacher, one elementary P.E. teacher, one middle school math teacher, and one secondary earth science teacher).

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- The district lacks a way of tracking revenues from special education (e.g. Medicaid reimbursements and IDEA funds) in relation to costs.
- Revenues generated from Medicaid reimbursements (about \$1.3 million forecast for this year) do not accrue to the district's special education budget in a way that would help offset costs.
- The district holds separate meetings to determine student eligibility for IDEA services and another one to create an IEP. The separate meetings are unnecessary and only add to the additional expenditure of time and money.

### **Recommendations**

35. Implement a single school-based, web-based records system (saving the cost of file clerks, paper, etc.), and discontinue the process of having the special education unit in the central office maintain duplicate copies of student records.
36. Create quarterly reports detailing the exact revenues and expenditures associated with the voluntary transfer program. Use these reports to help determine possible cost savings.
37. Work with the county school districts, the transfer corporation, and the state to curtail city expenditures to county districts. Specifically—
  - Monitor the accuracy and appropriateness of all county-conducted referrals, identifications, placements, and service decisions in light of their identification of some 25.8 percent of city children as disabled. Consider creating a short-term monitoring team (possibly consisting of retired special educators) to develop and implement this strategy.
  - Require county districts to submit to SLPS in writing any requests for additional services that would incur additional costs to the city as a result of county-developed IEPs.
  - Monitor and report the timelines under which students with disabilities are being returned to the city and the reasons for these returns (i.e., immediately after child count data are submitted to the state so that funds flow to the county but the child returns to the city, or immediately before MAP testing, so that students who have been taught all year by the county are included in the city's test scores).
38. Consider implementing school-to-school pickup and drop-off transportation procedure (by which students walk to and from their neighborhood schools as opposed to a nearby corner to catch the bus) for all students, including students with disabilities, unless a student's IEP directs otherwise.

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39. Develop and implement clear criteria by which students with disabilities are provided bus pick-up at home, curb, or corner.
40. Remove non-special education staff (art teacher, literacy coaches, etc.) from the special education budget and assign them to the appropriate budget lines.
41. Correct and monitor the special education staffing report to reflect the fact the former special education teachers have sometimes been reclassified as general education teachers but who are still being paid out of the special education budget.
42. Charge the CFO with tracking all special education revenues and expenses—including IDEA, state special education funds, early childhood funds, reimbursements for private placement, and Medicaid—to ensure that they are used in accordance with all federal, state, and local regulations.
43. Review the amount of federal IDEA money received by the district over the last several years. These amounts should have increased, not decreased, as some in the special education office have claimed. (The Council can help the district reconcile the amounts.)
44. Consolidate meetings for determining student eligibility for IDEA services and IEP development into a single session.

### **D. Curriculum and Professional Development**

All teachers, including general education teachers and those who have taught only students with disabilities, are expected to instruct students using the same academic curriculum. To do this, they require intensive professional development and appropriate instructional materials.

#### **Positive**

- The SLPS is consolidating its multiple reading programs into three.
- A full day of professional development on special education-related programs and services was recently provided to all paraprofessionals in the district.

#### **Concerns**

- Special education staff members have not been consistently included in curriculum development meetings or planning sessions, including the district's current literacy initiative.
- The district lacks a systemwide plan for providing professional development to teachers and others to raise student achievement. (See previous chapter.)

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- There is a consistent lack of collaboration between special education and general education teachers and the central office staff in the planning and implementation of professional development.
- The district lacks a plan for providing professional development to its temporarily-certified hires.

### **Recommendations**

45. Ensure that the district's professional development is delivered systemwide; is updated annually to ensure that staff members at all levels of the organization are knowledgeable about the relationships between special education and overall student achievement; and is coordinated between the general and special education units. Training should include special education procedures, legal requirements, and best practices and should involve the school board, superintendent, central office administration, executive directors, principals, school personnel, and parents.
46. Charge the curriculum and instruction units of the district to coordinate their professional development and planning activities with the office of special education, so that the needs of all students are addressed.
47. Ensure that professional development for special education teachers and staff includes information on the standards, curriculum, and assessments that all students must adhere to.
48. Charge the special education and curriculum departments with working together on such items as school walk-throughs, school-level reviews, and planning.
49. Provide common planning times for general education and special education teachers, so that they are better able to coordinate lessons.
50. Develop and implement a plan for moving temporarily certified teachers to full certification.

### **E. Service Delivery Model**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires that students with disabilities be served in the least restrictive environment, meaning that they be provided instruction with their non-disabled peers as much as possible. This practice requires considerable coordination between general education and special education teachers.

#### **Positive**

- The St. Louis Public Schools have recently implemented cross-categorical, self-contained classrooms in order to increase the number of students educated at their home school and to reduce the number of students who require transportation.

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- Several schools in the district are implementing promising “class within a class” models to include students with disabilities in the general education setting.

### **Concerns**

- The district lacks sufficient in-school options for the placement of students with behavioral difficulties.
- The lack of in-school options results in the district’s serving an unusually large number of students in their homes or in private schools, thereby increasing costs and preventing services in the least restrictive environment.
- The district serves a large number of students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms, rather than including these students in general education classrooms with the support of a special education teacher.

### **Recommendations**

51. Create clear criteria and standards for placing and serving students in separate settings, both public and private.
52. Create additional in-school instructional alternatives for students with disabilities in order to dampen the number of homebound placements and decrease the use of private placements.
53. Create a districtwide plan with measurable targets for decreasing the number of students served in segregated, self-contained settings within three years.
54. Build upon the successful “class within a class” model being used in some schools in the district that serve students in general education classrooms. Ensure that general education teachers are provided the professional development and support they need to implement the model appropriately.
55. Create clear standards and criteria for the placement of students in self-contained classrooms. Focus initially on high incidence populations like learning disabled students and Other Health Impaired students (due to an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.)
56. Expand services in self-contained classrooms so that each class is not defined by individual disability. Multiple disabilities should be served in the same classrooms to the extent possible.
57. Continue to provide professional development to school-based staff, including special education and general education teachers, on how to serve disabled students in general education classrooms, including the “class-within-a-class” model, accommodations, and strategies.

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### **F. Technology and Student Records**

Districts across the country are moving to electronic filing and maintenance of IEPs as a means of reducing paperwork, improving efficiency, and monitoring compliance. Districts are also working to integrate their multiple data systems into a single comprehensive, easy-to-access system. The challenges districts are facing include adapting off-the-shelf electronic IEPs to their needs, ensuring that hardware and software systems are in place in every building, and training staff on how to use the new electronic IEPs.

#### **Positive**

- The district appears ready to update their student record system and implement an electronic IEP system.

#### **Concerns**

- The current data management system does not have the capacity to capture student records information or IEP-mandated services in a manner that would allow easy tracking of caseloads, classroom planning, or other data-driven decisions.
- The office of special education could not respond to several simple data requests made by the Strategic Support Team. The team was told that filling the requests would take extensive time and effort. (Phyllis Mahan's unit appeared to be an exception to this problem.)
- The St. Louis Public Schools has done only one assessment to determine student needs for an assistive technology device since the system lost its assistive technology vendor last year.

#### **Recommendations**

58. Implement a web-based IEP recordkeeping process. (The Strategic Support Team recommends any of the following systems: PCG, 4GL, Houston ISD, Pentamation, and Goalview).
59. Develop a technology system that will allow staff members with immediate access to budget, allocations, revenues, and expenditure data.
60. Update the district's data management system so that all items and characteristics necessary to make data-driven decisions are captured and tracked by the system.
61. Provide training to IEP team members on IDEA's requirements for providing assistive technology for students who need it. IDEA will cover the costs of some of

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this technology; the district may have to cover other costs. IEP teams are currently not building assistive technology into the IEPs they are developing.

### **G. Additional Concerns**

Outlined below are additional areas of concern that the Strategic Support Team had with the district's special education operations. Implementation of the following recommendations will help improve the district's academic achievement and result in additional cost savings while educating students with disabilities.

#### **1. Staffing**

##### **Findings**

- Three-hundred of the district's 700 special education teachers are fully certified, 200 are provisionally-certified because they are in the process of obtaining certification through local universities, and 100 are substitute teachers.
- The 100 substitute teachers do not meet the federally mandated "highly qualified" provisions under *No Child Left Behind*.
- The district has no plan for ensuring that the 200 teachers in the process of completing coursework do so within federally mandated timeframes under *No Child Left Behind*.

##### **Recommendations**

62. Charge the human resources office and the special education office with coming up with an aggressive plan to recruit or develop more special education teachers that will meet federal "highly qualified" guidelines.
63. Immediately intensify recruitment efforts to fill shortages in the area of speech/language pathology.
64. Have the human resources and special education office develop (with the help of the CFO) an incentive program to recruit fully-qualified special education teachers and speech/language pathologists. Incentives might include signing bonuses, stipends, etc. (Other Great City Schools districts have had success offering \$3,000 to \$5,000 signing bonuses for special education teachers.)
65. Explore possible distance learning partnerships in order to expand the alternative teacher certification program. (Members of the team recommended Steve Kukic at Sopris West Publishing as having done this for their districts.)
66. Provide professional development to long-term substitutes on special education intervention strategies, IDEA referrals and eligibility standards, and legal



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responsibilities. Implementing this recommendation will minimize legal vulnerabilities and help reduce over identification of students with disabilities.

67. Implement tracking system for monitoring the progress of teachers as they work to obtain their certification.

### **2. Section 504**

#### **Findings**

- It appears that the district may be identifying students who are eligible for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act as eligible under IDEA. Many students being served under IDEA are really eligible under 504.

#### **Recommendations**

68. Provide training to district staff on federal Section 504 regulations.
69. Develop a plan for appropriately implementing Section 504 in the St. Louis Public Schools.
70. Designate a Section 504 coordinator for each school, and assign the designee the task of distinguishing Section 504 eligibility from IDEA eligibility during the referral and identification process, and training appropriate staff on the distinctions.
71. Hold appropriate personnel accountable for implementing the federal regulations.

### **3. Early Childhood Assessment Procedures**

#### **Findings**

- There are 75 children currently waiting for assessments from the early childhood special education department.
- This backlog is partially due to the district's practice of having all assessments done at the central office in a simulated classroom.

#### **Recommendations**

72. Evaluate the current early childhood assessment procedure to prevent waiting lists.
73. Consider testing during the summer months and enhancing the capacity of evaluators to complete assessments at neighborhood schools or centralized locations throughout the district rather than at the central office.

**4. Equitable Enrollment Policies**

**Findings**

- The three comprehensive high schools in the district each have a special education population that is one-third of the schools' total enrollment. The seven magnet high schools have a significantly lower enrollment of special education students. (According to district provided data, the three comprehensive high schools together serve 1,260 students with disabilities, while the seven magnet schools together serve 817 students with disabilities.)

**Recommendations**

74. Develop a school board-endorsed enrollment policy (based on a review of similar policies in other Great City School systems) that distributes students with disabilities equitably across all high schools. As part of the policy development process, the board should consider strategies that will be used to increase applications of students with disabilities to magnet high schools and ways in which selective high schools may accommodate a greater percentage of students with disabilities.
75. Communicate the new enrollment policy and strategies citywide to all staff and parents.
76. Place responsibility for the implementation of the policy under the appropriate deputy superintendent with support from the special education department.
77. Evaluate the success of the first year's implementation of the policy and make changes to it as needed if it does not show progress.

## CHAPTER 5. TEXTBOOK PROCUREMENT

This chapter summarizes the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Support Team on Textbook Procurement. The team's findings and proposals fall into five broad categories: leadership, management, policies, operations, and technology. A number of findings and recommendations overlap categories, however, so the reader might note several items that are repeated.

### Findings and Recommendations

The St. Louis Public Schools experienced a serious problem earlier this school year with textbook shortages and delays in the acquisition and distribution of textbooks to teachers and students. The district also experienced, as a result, significant "bad press" that served to further erode relations with the community. The Strategic Support Team interviewed staff and reviewed a considerable number of documents to arrive at its findings and recommendations.<sup>34</sup> The team was particularly interested in policies and practices that caused problems getting the right number of textbooks into schools and classrooms this school year and what could be done to avoid a reoccurrence of the situation in future years. In general, the team found that the district was at serious risk of repeating the textbook problems if it did not act quickly to resolve a number of outstanding issues.

#### A. Leadership

##### Findings

- There is no sense of urgency among staff members for fixing the textbook problem, which began to surface when a site-based management policy was implemented in 1998.
- There is no executive or management ownership of the textbook procurement problem.
  - a. There has been no executive leadership to resolve the textbook problem since the "Fiscal 2004 Turnaround Initiatives Status Update Report" of November 18, 2003 identified this as a critical issue.
  - b. A school book supply task committee (composed of four book clerks from four high schools) was formed pursuant to the "Fiscal 2004 Turnaround Initiatives Status Update Report," but it did not meet until February 20, 2004.

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<sup>34</sup> The ability of the team to determine all of the underlying issues responsible for the district's recent inability to acquire and distribute textbooks was limited by the unavailability of staff members who were scheduled for interview.

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- c. No project leader was been identified to resolve the procurement problem until the February 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.
  - d. There was an electronic school inventory conducted prior to the SAP implementation, but no one took responsibility for migrating the data to the new system.
- The textbook management process lacks any sense of direction.
  - a. The district has taken steps to conduct a manual inventory of textbooks at each of its school, but the inventory was taken with limited direction and little follow up. The result was that the information gathered was incomplete.
  - b. No one has taken direction for ensuring written policies or procedures were in place for textbook procurement.
  - c. There is approximately \$5.3 million of existing textbook inventory in the Madison Warehouse, but no one knows if these items are usable or obsolete.
  - d. The roles and responsibilities of the curriculum facilitators in the textbook procurement process are not well defined
  - e. The textbook ordering process for next school year has not yet started.
  - f. The team saw multiple inventory reports from varying sources that could not be reconciled. The inventory reports, consequently, have uncertain credibility.
- There is little accountability at any staff level for textbook management.
  - a. Principals are not held accountable for managing their textbook inventory.
  - b. There is inadequate senior management review of textbook requisition orders.
- The district lacks a formally-identified leadership team to ensure cross-functional operations or communications about the textbook procurement issues.
- Reductions in force (RIFs) have left gaps in leadership. The warehouse director was terminated in 1999, for instance, and replaced with the transportation director who assumed the responsibilities for warehouse operations until last year.

### **Recommendations**

1. Establish a clear sense of urgency for fixing the textbook problem and reinforce the “mission-critical” importance of the issue for the district’s strategic objectives and academic performance. This issue should be a major priority for the district and should draw on any resources and management attention needed to solve the problem.

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2. Identify and empower an Executive Sponsor(s) immediately to take charge of coordinating staff around solving the procurement problem for next school year.<sup>35</sup>
3. **Assign accountability** for fixing the problem and ensuring it stays fixed by establishing clear lines of authority, responsibility, and accountability for the various aspects of the textbook acquisition process—from school principals to executive directors to central office support personnel. The assignment of accountability should be directly linked to the action items for problem resolution prepared by the Textbook Committee/ Task Force.
4. Ensure timely executive decisions to keep the procurement process on track. The district should closely monitor key management decisions, including school closures and the related reassignment of students, the assignment and reassignment of school principals and teachers, student placements, etc. that might affect the ability of schools to place timely orders for the appropriate number and type of textbooks.
5. Establish an accountability process at all levels of textbook management, especially at the senior management and principal levels.

### **B. Project Management**

#### **Findings**

- No action plan with timelines, tasks, responsibilities, accountability, and reporting exists to resolve the textbook problem for next school year.
- It appears that a drop-dead order date was set for the year, but it was not followed.
- There is apparently little staff training in both process and technology functions.
- There is also little cross-training for staff to ensure that knowledge stays when a staff person leaves the district.

#### **Recommendations**

6. Appoint an aggressive Project Leader who will manage day-to-day tasks to ensure that the textbook problem is resolved for next school year.
7. Establish immediately a textbook committee comprised of senior managers curriculum, purchasing, warehousing, book clerks, etc. to design and oversee the process of resolving the textbook issues.

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<sup>35</sup> Until the financial crisis is resolved, textbook management should be controlled by an operations team. Once running smoothly, the Executive Sponsor should be on the education side of the house, specifically at the secondary school level.

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8. Charge the textbook committee with the authority to develop and execute creative solutions to the procurement problems; assign responsibilities for the timely execution of decisions and tasks, and set expectations for performance that the leadership will follow.
9. Establish clear goals, objectives, tasks, timelines, and assignments by charging the textbook committee with writing a clear set of written goals and objectives with a sequential list or chart of tasks, timelines, and assignments for relevant individuals. The textbook committee should start with the date by which all textbooks need to be in each classroom and work backwards to establish deadlines for completion of the various tasks that will ensure this timeline is met. Without this level of organization, detail, and follow up, the work of the Task Force risks failure.
10. Establish a clear goal that “one-hundred percent of all textbooks ordered are available to students on the first day of school.”
11. Develop and make available a comprehensive back-up plan that covers contingencies and unmitigated risks such as failures in the district’s computer network and the subsequent unavailability of the network to schools to place textbook orders.

### **C. Policies**

#### **Findings**

- There are no formal policies in the following areas:
  - Adoptions life-cycles
  - Recycle and reuse
  - Textbook take home
  - Lost textbooks
  - Refurbished textbook purchasing
- Written policies and procedures for book orders and inventories were supposed to have been developed by December 20, 2003, pursuant to the “Fiscal 2004 Turnaround Initiatives State Report” but they had not been completed at the time of this review.

#### **Recommendations**

12. Adopt, re-establish, and communicate formal textbook “life cycle” policies. The district should formally adopt a written life cycle policy for core and non-core textbooks and require staff to review titles to ensure that textbooks available to schools comply with the policy.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> While the Team was advised that the district has a life cycle policy for textbook, the Team noted that adoption of textbooks are not completed within the specified timeframe.

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13. Adopt a textbook “take home” policy. The district should adopt a formal policy for “take home” textbooks that includes the specific circumstances under which texts may be taken home by students and the remedies available to the school if this property is not returned by the end of the school year.<sup>37</sup>
14. Adopt a refurbished textbook policy to acquire refurbished textbooks when economically advantageous.
15. Adopt an obsolete and surplus textbook policy. The district should establish written policies and procedures to dispose of obsolete and surplus textbooks. The procedures should describe the processes for effective and efficient recycling of textbooks for use by schools and the community.

### **D. Operations**

#### **Findings**

##### ***Procedures—***

- There are no standard operating procedures in the following areas:
  - Textbook budgeting
  - Textbook inventory management
  - Textbook ordering
  - Textbook distribution
  - Textbook tracking and recovery
- There is no procedure in place to control cost for the 10% overage order of textbooks and instructional aids. The 10% overage order may be appropriate if St. Louis Public Schools exhaust the existing inventory. There is approximately \$5.3 million of textbook located in the Madison warehouse.
- There is no procedure in place at the school-level to manage or minimize textbook loss.
- The textbook adoption process is not well defined and managed.
- During the textbook adoption selection process, the participants are scoring the textbook vendor responses without pricing and cost/benefit consideration.
- It appears that the contract negotiations are being performed without the involvement of procurement experts that may hinder leveraging the potentials.

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<sup>37</sup>The district has an informal policy of providing a second set of textbooks for home use to students at certain grade levels.

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- There is lack of tracking of the student transfers and related recovery of textbooks from the transferred student.

### ***Inventory and Warehouse Management—***

- There is no comprehensive school-level inventory report.
- There is no tracking of book transfers, even manually, from school to school.
- There is no one composite listing of adopted textbooks.
  - The adopted textbook catalog data was excessive, outdated and piece-meal.
  - The combined list of 2,500 items should be cleansed to a manageable amount. Approximately 1,000 items had fewer than 10 orders last year. These items, in addition to obsolete textbooks, should be deleted from the list and the removed from the inventory warehouse.
  - There is no standard procedure in place to review the adopted textbook catalog and compress based on deletion.
  - There are inconsistent ISBN numbers in the textbook catalog.
- There is a perceived textbook distribution problem from the warehouse to school delivery.
  - Currently, there is no system for distribution and tracking textbooks.
  - The interviewed personnel claimed that the delivery time from the warehouse to the schools was two and a half weeks. This is apparently due to having only three delivery trucks.
- The textbook ordering process is a cumbersome, manual process. The schools enter the requisitions electronically. But, school personnel have to print out a manual paper report, physically take the paper report to the Central Office and input into the data in order to place a textbook order.
- Stock items need to be ordered with paper requisition while the non-stock items can be ordered online.
- There is confusion about the roles, functions, and ownership of the new Madison warehouse. There is a perception that Madison inventory personnel are not familiar with public school management and that there is no oversight from the district. In addition, after the inventory moved to Madison Warehouse, there was a perception that no school district personnel could order textbooks from the warehouse.



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- Schools are currently requesting textbooks that are not located in the Madison Warehouse, indicating that the textbook inventory in the warehouse may be old and obsolete.
- Currently, the warehouse textbook data does not indicate critical information to determine obsolescence of the textbook inventory.
- No textbooks have been removed from the Madison warehouse for obsolescence.
- The district has taken steps to conduct a manual inventory of textbooks at each of its school at the beginning of the school year. However, the inventory was taken with limited and poor directions.
  - There was no template or format given to schools to ensure consistency in taking inventory.
  - The information gathered was incomplete.
- The manual inventory conducted in the secondary schools indicated a need for approximately 12,000 books, but the findings were never followed up.
  - Approximately 25% of the 12,000 textbooks are located in the Madison inventory and could have met some of the need.
  - The remaining 75% of the 12,000 textbooks would cost approximately \$146,000 to purchase, but no purchases were made.
- It appears that a drop-dead order date was set for the year but was not followed.
- The textbook ordering process for next school year has not started.

### ***Financial Management—***

- The finance department was not able to provide historical textbook expenditure data for about \$9.5 million. The financial department was unable to identify total expenditure on textbook for the past fiscal year.
- The financial department personnel indicated that there is approximately \$4 million of lost textbooks annually.
- There are few financial analyses being conducted to assess adequacy or reasonableness of the textbook purchases or losses. As a result, decisions may not be data-driven.
- Currently, the district has a \$3 million target for next school year's textbook expenditure, but the figure appears to have been developed with very little analysis. The budget should be developed and calculated based on the historical purchases, lost textbook costs, obsolescence, as well as new enrollment projections. If no adoption is made on new textbooks this year and there is little

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increase in enrollments and limited loss on textbooks, the purchases should not be as high as \$3 million for next fiscal year.

- The process for checking the budget availability is manual.
- Currently, textbook budgets are not allocated to schools, so principals have no incentive to conserve or reduce the hoarding of textbooks.
- There is no consistent use of drop shipment. There is also an assumption that drop shipment is more costly to schools since the warehouse and distribution costs are absorbed at central level and not allocated to school budgets.
- There is currently no analysis of overhead cost to determine whether drop shipment is more financially favorable than warehousing and distribution.
- There is inadequate review of school requisitions order at the senior management level.
- The “Fiscal 2004 Turnaround Initiatives Status Update Report” as of November 18, 2003 states that the inventory of all furniture and equipment in the 16 schools has been obtained and a process was being developed to distribute the furniture, fixture and equipment to the open schools with need. However, little of this task was performed, as there are still boxes of textbooks sitting in the Madison warehouse that must be removed within 15-days from the review date.
- Enrollment projections may not be done on timely basis to estimate the textbook requirements during the textbook planning period.

### ***Performance Management and Accountability—***

- There is a lack of asset accountability. For example, the furniture and textbooks from the 16 closed schools are not accounted for. Schools and certain divisions have not effectively accounted for their hardware and software making asset management and capital planning difficult. Most assets in St. Louis Public Schools are bar-coded, but there is no reader to manage the assets.
- Schools think that the central office is sitting on piles of books.

## **Recommendations**

16. Establish and distribute standard operating procedures throughout the organization in these following areas:
  - Evaluating inventory
  - Updating catalog
  - Determining needs

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- Processing orders
- Delivery and distribution

17. Re-establish the inventory at the schools by conducting the following tasks:

- Conduct an inventory at each school to determine the textbooks issued to students, the excess stored in the storeroom, and damaged and lost textbooks.
- Determine need and purchasing requirements based on enrollment projection
- Compare to warehouse inventory to determine the inventory on hand. The difference should be what the district will need to order for the year

18. Establish monitoring and reporting procedures using payment systems to ensure that the textbook procurements are operating effectively. These processes should include:

- A qualitative and quantitative review of textbook orders by line management and the curriculum department.
- An order tracking and reporting process.
- A project status reporting process from the Task Force to the Chief Operating Officer.
- Accounts payable invoice aging reports.

19. Provide process tools to assist schools with the textbook ordering process. These tools should include—

- A revised and updated Item List for textbooks.
- Ordering templates.
- Textbook request forms for use by department heads and teachers.
- Forms or reports that summarize requests coming from department heads and teachers.
- An electronic copy of the schools' textbook inventory.

20. Consider budgeting textbooks at the school-level.

21. Conduct an arbitration/ reconciliation to clean up the adoption list.

22. Improve the adoption contract negotiation process by involving procurement experts to leverage full cost saving potential. In addition, consider “pricing” as a factor in assessment of potential textbooks.

23. Consider requiring a certification of needs from Principals and Executive Directors to validate requirement adequacy and reasonableness of textbook ordering requests.

24. Assess the necessity for the current size of warehouse. The warehouse was properly arranged and functional, however, the district should perform cost/benefit analyses for unused space if the district is currently paying for this space.

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25. Establish a process for providing oversight of the Madison Warehouse, if a process is not already in place.
26. Remove all obsolete textbooks from the Madison Warehouse inventory, as well as from the adopted textbook catalog.
27. Reconcile the inconsistency between the SAP system and Madison Inventory.
28. Conduct immediately an inventory of the textbooks and furniture from the 16 closed schools and determine usability.
29. Develop a process to distribute, donate, and/or dispose the furniture and textbooks in the 16 closed schools. Or consider moving the usable inventory into the Madison warehouse.<sup>38</sup>
30. Make real-time information available at all levels of the organization and set expectations that decisions will be data-driven.
31. Improve accountability by reconciling inventory, annual expenditures, lost textbook costs, and others.
32. Perform financial analyses to manage the department effectively and efficiently, cost containment, and cost reduction, as well as assess performance of the department.
33. Develop a reasonable budget for next year's textbook expenditure, based on a cleaned adoption list
34. Improve communications with schools by using bulletins, presentations at principals' meetings, and other outlets to post textbook ordering process updates in order to expand communications with schools. The district should also consider creating a location on its web site with pertinent information
35. Conduct staff training, including cross-functional training, for all staff involved in textbook management functions. Make the training in textbook ordering mandatory for at least one representative from each school.

### **E. Technology**

- Available technology, especially the SAP financial system, is underutilized.

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<sup>38</sup> During the review, the Madison warehouse personnel informed us that the space that the textbooks from 16 close schools are stored must be removed and vacated within 15 days.

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- Technology is not used to keep school-level or central office-level information available.
- There is no on-line textbook ordering capability.
- The stock items need to be ordered with paper requisition while the non-stock items can be ordered online.
- There was an electronic record of school inventory prior to SAP system implementation that did not migrate to the new system.
- Currently, there is an inconsistency between SAP system and Madison Inventory reports.
- Although the Fiscal 2004 Turnaround Initiatives Status Update Report as of November 18, 2003 identified March 15, 2004 for implementing the web-based online procurement system called eScout to provide site-based purchasing of school supplies, this target date will not be met. The contract with the vendor was signed, however, the implementation has not commenced.
- Currently, there is limited usage of e-mail system for communication by the district staff.

### **Recommendations**

36. Implement the e-procurement system that the district purchased.
37. Consider on-line textbook ordering.
38. Integrate the Textbook Management System with SAP financial system, purchasing, and other related systems.
39. Determine additional utilization of the SAP system to enhance the textbook management process.<sup>39</sup>
40. Conduct a system selection and Request for Proposal (RFP) process when purchasing a Textbook Management System that handles bar-coding, school-level inventories, cataloging, monitoring, and reporting. A critical success factor in making a successful implementation is to analyze a “fit” gap to identify and document existing processes and determine whether considered software product(s) can address gap(s):

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<sup>39</sup> Consider networking or partnering with other companies using SAP system in St. Louis area (such as Energizer, Anheuser Busch, and Monsanto) for continuous improvements, knowledge sharing, and benchmarking to best practices.

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- Solicit input from various district personnel to be identified as key functional resources to develop a detailed list of general, function, and technical system requirement.
- Identify an Executive Sponsor that will support the implementation initiative.
- Use the above information to create a RFP that should be published and distributed to Textbook Management System vendors, both locally and nationwide.
- Consider reviewing systems that are commonly used in textbook management operations in other comparable districts with proven productivity and functionality.
- Establish a selection committee to review and score RFP responses
- Review and score RFP responses
- Hold vendor demonstrations to review functionalities.
- Identify final vendor for further follow-up.
- Conduct reference calls and perform site visits with selection committee
- Finalize contract with the vendor

41. Implement the selected system. System implementations are complex undertakings that require a considerable amount of planning and effort. Perform system implementation as follow:

- Develop a sound technology implementation plan
- Coordinate with district operations department to plan installation of needed wiring in schools.
- Develop project work plan, estimate cost, and timeline
- Analyze current business processes
- Design new processes design
- Perform conference room pilot setup
- Develop technical architecture requirements
- Develop organizational change plan
- Develop training and knowledge transfer plan
- Perform business system software installation and configuration
- Design and test interfaces
- Develop system rollout plan
- Perform system rollout
- System support and transition to district

42. Provide on-line access to all key policies, procedures, documents, menus, etc.

## CHAPTER 6. SYNOPSIS AND DISCUSSION

The Strategic Support Teams working on this project found talented and committed people working in the St. Louis Public Schools who are making an effort to improve education for children in the city. Their work is done outside the public's view and without much recognition or acknowledgement.

Their efforts are also undertaken without much support from the school system itself, which doesn't really work like a system. It is too fractured and unfocused to be characterized as a functioning organization with a focused instructional direction or strategy.

The district's schools do not have to be this way, however. Any number of major urban school systems across the country are pulling themselves together and beginning to improve student achievement. None of these urban school systems can be said to have attained perfection. But they have taken similar steps that have made their headway possible.

We have borrowed from the lessons learned in these cities to inform the recommendations we are making to the St. Louis schools. We are proposing that the school district and its leadership create a unified instructional direction for itself and its children. We are proposing that the district replace the fractured instructional practices currently in use with a cohesive and comprehensive reading and math plan. We are proposing that the district make clear to its principals, teachers, and staff what it expects children to know and be able to do. We are proposing that the central office be reoriented to provide convincing leadership and support to its schools. And we are proposing that the district's instructional efforts be guided by data collected, analyzed, and used before it is too late in the school year to do anything about the results.

The Council of the Great City Schools and its Strategic Support Team recommend that the school district overhaul its instructional program and replace it with a system that has a unified direction, clear goals, strong accountability, cohesive curriculum, consistent professional development, faithful program implementation, and useful and regular data. This means that the district needs to—

- ★ Develop a coherent and common vision for where it wants to go.
- ★ Set measurable goals for academic improvement and high expectations for performance.
- ★ Establish a clear accountability system for attaining academic goals.
- ★ Standardize cohesive, districtwide instructional strategies and curriculum.

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- ★ Provide districtwide professional development on the implementation of a new comprehensive reading plan and central office instructional support for principals and teachers.
- ★ Ensure that reforms are implemented at the classroom level.
- ★ Use data to monitor progress and decide on instructional interventions.
- ★ Begin reforms at the elementary level but start reforming high schools.
- ★ Focus on the lowest-performing schools.

The Council, in summary, is suggesting that the school district take responsibility for the instruction of its children. The district should establish its instructional and professional development programs, since these activities shape the school system's bottom line, student achievement, but should retain decentralized staffing and budgeting.

The district has made an excellent start on its reforms. The school board has exhibited extraordinary courage in retaining Alvarez & Marsal to close the district's financial deficit and fix many of its operating systems. This work is only the prelude, however, to a much larger task of overhauling the instructional unit and raising student achievement.

Restructuring the instructional program of the St. Louis schools will not be easy, of course. In addition to requiring hard work, the reforms will be resisted on a number of fronts and for a variety of reasons.

First, some people will complain that the reforms are being driven from the "top down." This observation will be partially correct in that we are proposing that the district's leadership take responsibility for the academic performance of the city's children by standardizing the instructional program. Any large, complex organization, public or private, has to control its core functions in order to boost its bottom line. The current system in St. Louis does the opposite by allowing schools to set their own agendas and define their own bottom lines. The result is not producing the kind of results that parents want or students need.

The "top down" approach presents a serious challenge to the reforms being proposed in this report, however. Historically, many urban school districts, including St. Louis, have choked off progress by focusing on regulatory compliance rather than on instructional leadership and support. This bureaucratic emphasis has led school reformers and critics across the country to peg the central offices of major city school systems as more of a problem than a solution and to bypass them in favor of charter schools and other alternative structures.

The criticism was warranted in many cases because urban school systems were not doing anything that went beyond compliance or spurred student achievement.



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Research, however, is beginning to show that the faster-improving urban school systems are abandoning a school-by-school approach to improvement as too slow and too haphazard. They are more likely, instead, to be using a standardized and often prescriptive reading and math curriculum. The approach has allowed these cities to focus more tightly on the implementation of a single plan, provide professional development on what the district expects to be taught, monitor progress, and assess results.

The risk involves the possibility that the district will standardize bad practice and do even greater harm. This is possible if the district develops or adopts curriculum or materials that are not “scientifically-based” or hires a superintendent and staff members who don’t know what they are doing, or reverts to an autocratic, compliance-driven posture towards its schools.

This trade-off between a uniform districtwide instructional program and the current system that allows principals and teachers to decide what to teach will also be described as a choice between a centralized and a decentralized system. What is being proposed, however, is a hybrid that vests curricular and professional development decisions at the central office but vests hiring, budgeting, and other decisions at the school level. It is neither site-based nor centralized in the traditional sense.

There will also be skepticism from school-level staff—and others outside the school system—about whether the central office can redefine itself to support principals and teachers at the building level. The skepticism is well-deserved. The central office has not been an effective instrument of progress or support to school staff in the past. The only real way to counter this charge is to prove the skeptics wrong.

Second, there will be attempts to exempt some high-performing or specialty schools from the standardized approach being proposed here. Most districts find ways to exempt schools if they are doing fine on their own. There is little research on this issue, and we have hesitated to make a solid recommendation to the district on this point because we did not want to create a situation where schools in some sections of town were exempt and schools elsewhere were not. We urge the district to be flexible.

Third, some observers will object to the reforms because they take away the creativity and decision-making authority of teachers. This complaint will also be partially correct. But we would argue that the current level of creativity and instructional decision making has not produced adequate progress for students citywide. The creativity of some teachers may work in their individual classrooms, but the goal of the district should be to raise student performance for all children regardless of which classrooms they attend. Teachers in other cities have often discovered that they were more effective when they were all pulling in the same direction and could work with each other on the most promising approaches to implementing the curriculum.

Fourth, there will be controversy if staff members are removed, as some should be. But if the superintendent is going to be held explicitly accountable for the academic performance of the children in the district, he or she should have the latitude to pick his

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or her own team without board interference. This will also be true for principals. They should be allowed to choose their own teams if they are going to be held accountable for results.

Fifth, there will be complaints that the curriculum will become too narrow. This is a legitimate concern that the district needs to guard against. There is no simple remedy to this problem. But it is important that students master the basic skills, receive grade-level instruction, and see opportunities for acceleration, something that is not currently happening. Eventually, instruction will not become narrower but broader and more differentiated.

Sixth, there will be a temptation on the part of the school district to buy one of the more effective reading programs, as we have proposed in this report, and assume the literacy problem has been solved. It is clear to everyone who has worked to reform urban education, however, that one cannot buy reform off the shelf and expect to get sustained gains. To be effective, good reading and math programs have to be supported with intensive professional development, timely data, and faithful implementation.

Finally, the district will be faced with distractions and fatigue as it works to reform. There will be forces at work that will attempt to take the district off-message. Staying focused on raising student achievement for a prolonged period will be critical if instructional reforms are to work. As the district starts to see progress, it ought to celebrate every small victory. Anyone who has ever tried to remake an urban school system knows that it is not easy or fast.

People who have done this work know that improving urban education is possible. Every city that has chosen to take the steeper path towards reform and improvement has not regretted it. Student achievement is getting better and the public's confidence is growing stronger.

There is no reason to believe that St. Louis can't see the same progress.

## APPENDIX A: BENCHMARKING ST. LOUIS

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

Preconditions for School Reform							
School Board Role							District Score
1. Board is fractured and most decisions are made with split vote.	1	2	3	4	5	Stable working majority on the board and board in general consensus on hold to run the district.	3.0
2. Board spends the majority of its time on the day-to-day operation of schools.	1	2	3	4	5	Board spends the majority of its time on policy issues.	3.0
3. Board devotes a majority of its time discussing non-academic issues.	1	2	3	4	5	Board sets raising student achievement as first priority and devotes majority of its time to those efforts.	3.0
<b>Shared Vision</b>							
4. Board did not set initial vision for the district and encourages superintendent to set vision.	1	2	3	4	5	Board sets initial vision for district and seeks superintendent who matches initial vision.	2.7
5. Board does not set annual measurable goals for superintendent/district.	1	2	3	4	5	Board sets initial goals then Board and superintendent jointly refine vision and goals.	1.3
6. Board and superintendent experience repeated turnover.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent have stable and lengthy relationship.	2.3

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<b>Diagnosing Situation</b>							
7. Board and superintendent often make decisions without analyzing factors affecting achievement.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent jointly analyze factors affecting achievement.	1.5
8. Board and superintendent do not assess strengths and weaknesses of district prior to reform initiatives.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent assess strengths and weaknesses of district prior to reform implementation.	2.0
9. Board and superintendent act quickly on reform initiatives without considering district options and strategies.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent have a plan and act methodically and consider district options and strategies before moving forward with reform.	2.0
10. Board is heavily involved in day-to-day operation of district.	1	2	3	4	5	Board entrusts superintendent to run district.	2.7
<b>Selling Reform</b>							
11. Board and superintendent have no concrete or specific goals for district.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent identify concrete and specific goals for district.	1.3
12. Board and superintendent do not seek input from the community when developing a reform plan.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent meet regularly with community leaders and listen extensively to community needs.	1.7
13. Board and superintendent move forward with reform plans without community input.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent sell goals and plans to schools and community before moving forward.	1.7
14. Board and superintendent continue	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent	2.3

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

to give excuses for poor student performance and do not exclaim an urgency or quest for high standards.						exclaim urgency, high standards, and no excuses.	
<b>Improving Operations</b>							
15. Central office business operations function to the exclusion of student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5	Central office revamps business operations to be more effective to schools.	2.3
16. Central office is not viewed as a support to schools.	1	2	3	4	5	Central office develops new sense of customer service with schools.	1.7
17. Central office operates on a schedule that does not consider schools' immediate problems.	1	2	3	4	5	Central office is designed so that it moves to fix schools' immediate problems.	1.7
<b>Finding Funds</b>							
18. District moves forward with its reforms without attracting new funds.	1	2	3	4	5	District has a plan to build confidence in reforms in order to attract funds.	2.3
19. District may pursue and/or accept funds unrelated to reforms & priorities.	1	2	3	4	5	District pursues and only accepts funds to initiate reforms and launch priorities.	1.7
20. District does not make budget adjustments shifting funds into instructional priorities.	1	2	3	4	5	District shifts existing funds into instructional priorities.	1.7
<b>Educational Strategies</b>							
<b>Setting Goals</b>							
21. District may set more general goals and lack specific targets for principals.	1	2	3	4	5	District sets specific performance goals and principals.	1.0
22. District moves forward with reforms without considering best	1	2	3	4	5	District spends time considering what works elsewhere and	1.5

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

practices of similar districts.						incorporates “best practices” in their reforms.	
23. District goals lack specific timelines for meeting goals and targets.	1	2	3	4	5	District goals are “SMART” – Stretching, Measurable, Aspiring, Rigorous, and have a Timeline.	1.0
24. District focuses its attention on the “problem of the day”.	1	2	3	4	5	District focuses relentlessly on goal to improve student achievement.	2.0
<b>Creating Accountability</b>							
25. District focuses on the state’s accountability system.	1	2	3	4	5	District develops an accountability system that goes beyond state requirements.	1.7
26. District has no formal mechanism for holding senior staff accountable for student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5	District puts all senior staff on performance contracts.	1.0
27. District has no formal mechanism for holding principals accountable for student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5	District puts principals on performance contracts tied to goals.	1.0
28. District has no formal mechanism for holding the superintendent accountable for student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5	District puts superintendent on performance contract tied to goals.	1.0
29. District has no formal mechanism for rewards & recognition for principals and senior staff.	1	2	3	4	5	District has a highly publicized system for rewards & recognition for principals and senior staff.	1.3
<b>Focus on Low Performing Schools</b>							
30. District treats all	1	2	3	4	5	District creates	2.0

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

schools the same and has no formalized method of focusing on lowest performing schools.						system for improving the performance of lowest performing schools.	
31. District has no formalized process to drive schools forward. School Improve Plan exists on paper only.	1	2	3	4	5	District uses school improvement planning process to drive school forward.	1.3
32. District lacks detailed interventions for lowest performing schools.	1	2	3	4	5	District has bank of detailed interventions for lowest performing schools.	1.7
33. District provides the same support and funds to all schools regardless of need.	1	2	3	4	5	District shifts extra help, funds and programs into lowest performing schools.	1.7
34. District lacks plan to improve quality of teachers in lowest performing schools.	1	2	3	4	5	District improves quality of teachers in lowest performing schools.	1.0
35. District has no formalized process for monitoring schools.	1	2	3	4	5	District closely monitors schools throughout the year.	1.7
<b>Unified Curriculum</b>							
36. District has multiple curricula with contrasting instructional approaches.	1	2	3	4	5	District adopts or develops uniform curriculum or framework for instruction.	1.0
37. District's reading and math curriculum permits teachers to decide how to teach students.	1	2	3	4	5	District uses more prescriptive reading and math curriculum or tight framework.	1.0
38. District does not provide additional time for teaching reading and math.	1	2	3	4	5	District provides additional time for teaching reading and math.	2.0
39. District does not	1	2	3	4	5	District differentiates	1.3

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

differentiate instruction for low-performing students.						instruction for low-performing students.	
40. District curriculum relies heavily on textbooks and is not tied to state standards and assessments.	1	2	3	4	5	District curriculum is explicitly aligned to and goes beyond state standards and assessments.	1.3
41. District aligns a “cluster of grades”, e.g. grades 3-5, to its reading and math curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5	District has clear grade-to-grade alignment in curriculum standards.	1.0
42. District uses a reading program that is not scientifically-based.	1	2	3	4	5	District uses scientifically-based reading curriculum.	1.0
43. District has no way to ensure that classroom teachers are covering the curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5	District has a formalize system (pacing guides) to ensure that teachers are covering the curriculum standards.	1.7
<b>Professional Development</b>							
44. District has no formalize way to monitor implementation of the curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5	District closely monitors curriculum implementation through frequent visits to classrooms by curriculum leaders, principals, and other administrators.	1.7
45. District permits a majority of a school’s professional development to be determined locally with very little, if any, time for district activities.	1	2	3	4	5	District has uniform professional development built on curriculum needs with a moderate amount of time allocated for school needs.	1.7
46. District focuses the majority of its	1	2	3	4	5	District focuses the majority of its	2.0



## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

professional development on topics not related to classroom practice.						professional development on classroom practice.	
47. District has no way to support classroom teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	District has formalized way to provide classroom teachers supports when needed.	2.7
<b>Pressing Reforms Down</b>							
48. District reforms are not implemented in a majority of the classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5	District monitors reforms to ensure implementation in all classrooms.	1.3
49. District has no way to determine if reforms are being implemented.	1	2	3	4	5	District has system of encouraging and monitoring implementation of reforms.	1.7
50. Central office leaves instruction up to individual schools.	1	2	3	4	5	Central office takes responsibility for quality of instruction.	1.0
<b>Using Data</b>							
51. District does not have a system in place to monitor system or school progress.	1	2	3	4	5	District has comprehensive accountability system that uses data extensively to monitor system and school progress.	1.7
52. District does not have a formalize way to assesses student progress throughout the school year.	1	2	3	4	5	District assesses and reviews data on student progress throughout school year.	1.7
53. District does not disaggregate data.	1	2	3	4	5	District goes beyond the requirements of NCLB in disaggregating school, staff, and system data.	2.3
54. District does not use	1	2	3	4	5	District uses annual	1.3

## Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools

student assessment and other data to shape intervention strategies.						and benchmark data to decide on where to target interventions.	
55. District does not provide training or provides one time only training in interpretation and use of test score results.	1	2	3	4	5	District provides ongoing training in interpretation and use of test score results to all principals and teachers.	2.0
56. District provides professional development to schools and teachers where they “think” it is needed.	1	2	3	4	5	District uses data to target professional development.	1.7
<b>Starting Early</b>							
57. District has no strategy of where to start the reforms or how to roll them out to all students PK-12.	1	2	3	4	5	District starts reform efforts in early elementary grades and works up.	2.0
<b>Handling Upper Grades</b>							
58. District has not given any thoughts about how to teach older students.	1	2	3	4	5	District has fledgling strategies to teach older students.	1.7
59. District has no interventions at the middle and high school levels.	1	2	3	4	5	District has some research-based middle and high school interventions.	1.7
60. District does not provide additional time for teaching basic skills to students who are behind.	1	2	3	4	5	District doubles up on teaching basic skills to students who are behind.	1.7
61. District lacks plan to introduce AP courses in all high schools.	1	2	3	4	5	District offers AP courses in most if not all district high schools.	1.0

## APPENDIX B: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

### Individuals Interviewed by the Curriculum and Instruction Team

- William Roberti, Acting Superintendent
- Ronald Jackson, Board of Education
- Darnetta Clinksdale, Board of Education
- David Flieg, Deputy Superintendent
- Floyd Crues, Deputy Superintendent
- Delores Green, Title I
- Carol Johnson, Title I
- Gayle Coleman, Director of Mathematics
- Wanda Moore, Director of Early Childhood
- Naheed Chapman, Director of English Language Learners
- Pamela Hughes, Executive Director of High Schools
- Wanda Moore, Executive Director of Elementary Schools
- Joyce Roberts, Executive Director of Middle Schools and Priority Schools
- Rudy Crew, Consultant
- Larry Hutchins, Director of Research, Evaluation, Assessment
- Leslie Lewis, Director of Special Education
- Pat Jones, K-5 Facilitation Officer
- Maureen Gaffigan, Instruction Facilitator
- Paulette Kirkwood, Communication Arts Facilitator Grades 6-12
- Gilda Hester, Professional Development
- Janice Jamieson, Professional Development
- Mary J. Armstrong, Local 420 (Teacher Representative)
- Barbara Houston, Parent Resource Specialist
- Lisa Prader, Parent Resource Specialist
- Donna Strong, Parent Resource Specialist
- Kate Stewart, Parent Resource Specialist
- Nicole Daves, Parent Resource Specialist
- Roland Gunne, Parent Resource Specialist
- Alila Barr, Principal, Baden Elementary School
- Gerald Arbini, Principal, Monroe Elementary School
- Myrtle Reed, Principal, Peabody Elementary School
- James Lange, Principal, Blow Middle School
- David Eaton, Principal, Long Middle School
- Stephen Warmack, Principal, Roosevelt High School
- Stanley Engram, Principal, Central Visual and Performing Arts High School
- Jerry Bolden, Teacher, Oak Hill Elementary School
- LaKeisha Boyce, Teacher, Yeatman Middle School
- Margaret Yates, Teacher, Lafayette Elementary School

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

- Laura Kneehouse, Teacher, Mann Elementary School
- Alan Mitchell, Teacher, Beaumont High School
- Jim Wright, Teacher, Gateway High School
- Susan Reid, Teacher, Compton-Drew Middle School
- Jim Flannigan, Interim Chief Information Officer

### **Individuals Interviewed by the Federal Programs Team**

- Alila Barr, Principal, Baden Elementary School
- Linda Bell, Coordinator for Safe and Drug-free Schools and Character Plus
- Travis Brown, Principal, Beaumont High School
- Everette Carter, Title I and Alternative Education
- Nahed Chapman, Supervisor for ESOL-Bilingual-Migrant Education
- Pearlle Clines, Title I Language Arts Teacher, Baden Elementary School
- Tavonia Daniels, Title I Math Teacher, Bunche International Studies Middle School
- Henry Emphrey, Title I Budget Officer
- Stanley Engram, Principal, Gateway VPA High School
- Jim Flanagan, Chief Information Officer
- David Flieg, Deputy Superintendent
- Gary Forde, Research, Assessment, and Development Evaluator
- Steve Futrell, Technology Administrator
- Maureen Gaffigan, K-5 Communication Arts Facilitator
- Yvette Gilleyen, Federal Programs
- Deloris Green, Title I Coordinator
- Gilda Hester, Supervisor of Professional Development for Title I
- John Hild, USI staff member
- Geneva Jackson, Principal, Eliot Elementary School
- Janice Jamison, Supervisor of Professional Development for Title I
- Carol Johnson, Title I Coordinator
- Doris Johnson, Principal, Bunche International Studies Middle School
- Patricia Jones, K-5 Communication Arts Facilitator
- Paulette Kirkwood, Gr. 6-12 Communication Arts Facilitator
- Jim Lange, Principal, Blow Middle School
- Jessolyn Larry, Technology Administrator
- Doris Magwood, Coordinator for Students in Transition Program
- Wanda Moore, Elementary Education Executive Director
- Charles Pineau, Executive Director for Human Resources
- Linda Potts, Literacy Coach, Blow Middle School
- Linda Riekens, Development Officer
- Rose Thompson, Federal Programs
- Jacqueline Vanderford, Coordinator for Safe and Drug-free Schools and Character Plus

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

### **Individuals Interviewed by the Special Education Team**

- David Flieg, Deputy Superintendent
- Floyd Crues, Deputy Superintendent
- Leslie Lewis, Executive Director of Special Education Department
- Pamela Hughes, Executive Director
- Wanda Moore, Executive Director
- Rick Sirna, Executive Director
- Mary Howard, Elementary School Supervisor
- Berva Washington, Elementary School Supervisor
- Marilyn Mims, Elementary School Supervisor
- Deborah Gibson, Elementary School Supervisor
- Ann Wilson, PEAS Supervisor
- Carrie Sleep, Supervisor of Homebound/Hospital and Non-Public Itinerant Teachers
- Phyllis Mahan, Supervisor of Data Management and Technology
- Tracy Miller, Systems Analyst, Technology
- Lisa Cox, Middle School Supervisor
- Mabel Brown, Speech Language Supervisor
- Yvonne Tate, Speech Language Supervisor
- Eloise Wilson, Assistant Director, Special Education Department
- Carole Shelton, Elementary School Supervisor
- Bea Strong, Supervisor part time paraprofessionals
- Evelyn Givens, Middle School Supervisor
- Ed Radford, Contractual Schools, State School Supervisors
- Vernice Wise, Magnet School Placement, Magnet High Schools, Desegregation Program
- Beverly Stringfellow, High School Supervisor, Alternative High Schools
- Kathy Thomas, Middle School Supervisor
- Sajan George, Management Team CFO
- Harry Rich, CFO
- Wayne Logsdon, Senior Business Analyst
- Manny Silva, COO
- Jim Flanagan, CIO
- Mary Hatfield, Evaluator
- Ray Henry, Assessment Manager
- Dirk deYong, School Board Attorney
- Peg Mooney, School Board Attorney
- Deanna Anderson, Director of Transportation
- Andrea Walker, Principal, Compton Drew Middle School
- Vasilika Tsihliis, Principal, Hodgen Elementary School
- Steve Wormack, Principal, Roosevelt High School
- Terry Johnson, Principal, Webster Middle School
- Travis Brown, Principal, Beaumont High School
- Sally Bloom, Principal, Kottmeyer Elementary School

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

- Lena Waters, Principal, Baden Elementary School
- Jonetta Lewis, Assistant Principal, Vashon High School
- Leona Wootlin, Special Education Teacher, Baden Elementary School
- Andre Johnson, Special Education Teacher, Webster Middle School
- Joyce Williams, Special Education Teacher, Kottmeyer Elementary School
- Mabel xxxx, Special Education Teacher, Compton Drew Middle School
- Paula Granger, Special Education Teacher, Hodgen Elementary School
- Melba Raymond, Special Education Department Head, Roosevelt High School
- Paula Ensley, Special Education Team Leader, Beaumont High School
- Colin Israel , Special Education Teacher, Vashon High School
- Amy Hilgemann, School Board Member
- Rochell More, School Board Member
- Stephanie Thompson, Teacher, Webster Middle School
- Dorteia Sykes, Teacher, Compton Drew Middle School
- Allen Mitchell, Teacher, Beaumont High School
- Ryan Sherp, Teacher, Roosevelt High School
- Nancy Briggs, Teacher, Vashon High School
- Deborah Jackson, Teacher, Hodgen Elementary
- Lee Hart, Teacher, Kottmeyer Elementary
- Darlene Buckner, Parent
- David Thomas, Director, Logos School
- Barbara Litton, Director, Child Center of Our Lady
- Cathy Boyd, Assistant Director, Logos School
- Amy Dantry, Edgewood
- Maury Geisler, Child Haven
- James Fox, Boys and Girls Town
- Harold Cox, Educational Coach
- Vioria Davis, Parent
- Beverly Morehead, Parent
- Nina Murphy, Parent
- Andre Miller, Parent
- Ricky Lake, Parent
- Tom Stuchlik, Medicaid Administrator
- Charles Pineau, Human Resources Director
- Sheila Mankins, Information Systems Analyst
- Larry Hutchins, Executive Director for Assessment
- Mary Ann Daggs, Early Childhood Special Education Supervisor

### **Individuals Interviewed by the Textbook Procurement Team**

- William Roberti, Acting Superintendent
- Jim Flanagan, Chief Information Officer
- Manny Silva, Chief Operating Officer
- Constance Byrd, Buyers and Contracts Coordinators

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

- Margaret Dyer, Buyers and Contracts Coordinators
- Valarie Harriel, Buyers and Contracts Coordinators
- Quintin Long, Interim Purchasing Manager
- Janice Monroe, Buyers and Contracts Coordinators
- Marion Robinson, Buyers and Contracts Coordinators
- Mary Harper, MIS
- Pam Hughes, Executive Director – Secondary Schools
- Elmer Jones, Book Clerk Treasurer
- Ronald Ruffin, Book Clerk Treasurer
- Harry Rich, Chief Financial Officer
- Carrie Stewart, Supervisor Budget Director
- Enos Moss, Treasurer
- Linda McKnight, Fiscal Controller
- Joan McCray, Budget Director
- O.D. Turner, Supervisor Budget Director
- Terry Bullock, Business System/ SAP Support
- Steve Futrell, Business Manager for Technology
- Leslie Lewis, Special Education
- Floyd Crues, Secondary School Deputy Superintendent
- David Flieg, Elementary School Deputy Superintendent
- Joyce Roberts, Executive Director – Middle Schools and Priority Schools
- Wanda Moore, Executive Director – Early Childhood Education
- Rick Sirna, Executive Director – Elementary Schools
- Myrtle Reed, Peabody Elementary School Principal
- Joyce Hill, Clay ACEC Principal
- Anthony Phillips, Book Clerk Treasurer – Metro High School
- Andrea Walker, Compton-Drew Middle School Principal
- Susan Katzman, Career and Technical Education (9-12)
- Olivia White, Social Studies Supervisor (6-12)
- Judy Jones, Social Studies Supervisor (K-5)
- Paulette Kirkwood, Communication Arts (6-12)
- Patricia Jones, Communication Arts (K-5)
- John Petsch, Practical Arts Supervisor (6-12)
- LaVerne Dixon, Math Supervisor
- Loretta Allen, Science Supervisor
- Frank J. Logan, Career and Technical Education (9-12)

## APPENDIX C: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

### Documents Reviewed by the Curriculum and Instruction Team

- Organization Chart, Deputy Superintendent, Secondary and Middle Schools
- Relevant Job Descriptions for Curriculum Staff
- Instructional Coordinator Study, Briefing Paper & Full Report
- Professional Development and MAP Test Achievement in Schools of Opportunity, Briefing Paper & Full Report
- Saint Louis Public Schools, An Annual Report to the Community 2002-2003
- Findings and Recommendations from the CGCS Strategic Support Team on Special Education - *Draft*
- Compliance Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2003, Board of Education of the City of St. Louis
- Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2003, Board of Education of the City of St. Louis
- Comprehensive/Balanced Literacy Framework, K-5 Overview
- Communication Arts, K – 5, Textbooks/Supplementary Materials/References
- Mathematics Curriculum – Instructional Materials
- Curriculum Alignment Guide for Communications Arts, 6-8
- Pacing Guide, Communication Arts
- The Show-Me Standards
- Priority Schools Initiative Improvement Action Plan - Draft
- FY '04 Operational Plan: Strategies, Initiatives, Benchmarks and Deliverables
- Ten Scientifically-based Characteristics of Successful Schools And Five Strategies to Guide their Implementation Across the School District
- Sample Site Visit Forms and Checklists
- Key Elements of a “Blueprint” for Success
- St. Louis Public Schools’ Literacy Initiative
- The St. Louis Model for Systemic Renewal and Accountability
- St. Louis MAP Test Scores, Communication Arts and Math by race and Selected Subgroups
- Dropout Rate and Gifted and Talented Data
- 2003 Preliminary Adequate Yearly Progress for St. Louis City by School
- Testing Calendar 2003-2004
- Sample Reporting forms, MAP
- Sample Reporting forms, Terranova
- Sample Reporting forms, Scholastic Reading Inventory
- Sample Reporting forms, Writing Assessment
- Early Childhood Curriculum, Project Construct aligned with State “Show-Me Standards”
- Early Childhood Curriculum Theme-Based Supplement



## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

- Early Childhood – Professional Development/Supplemental Information 2003-2004 (includes samples from contracted workshops and evaluations by district)
- Early Childhood – Professional Development/Supplemental Information 2002-2003 (includes samples from contracted workshops and evaluations by district)
- Summer Experiences 2003 Implementation Guide
- Gifted and Talented Program Information
- Professional Development, Communication Arts, K-5
- District-Wide Mathematics, Professional Development Schedule
- Induction for New Teachers SLPS 2003-2004
- Professional Development, Science 2003-2004
- Professional Development, Communication Arts, 6-12
- Curriculum Alignment Guide, Draft, Communication Arts 9-12, 2003
- Curriculum Alignment Guide, Draft, Communication Arts 6-8, 2003
- Algebra, Curriculum Guide
- Advanced Algebra, Curriculum Guide
- College Algebra & Trigonometry, Curriculum Guide
- Geometry, Curriculum Guide
- Calculus, Curriculum Guide
- Pre-Calculus/Analytic Geometry/Trigonometry, Curriculum Guide
- Chemistry, Advanced, Curriculum Guide
- Physics, Curriculum Guide Advanced Algebra
- Earth Science, Curriculum Guide
- Biology, Curriculum Guide
- Probability & Statistics, Mathematics Curriculum Guide
- Annual Report to the Community for 2001-2002
- Annual Report to the Community for 2000-2001
- Annual Report to the Community for 1999-2000
- Annual Report to the Community for 1998-1999
- SLPS Mathematics Curriculum, Objectives and Timeline, Instructional Schedule 2003-2004, First Grade
- Diagnostic Assessment #1, Teacher's Instructions and Scoring Guide, First Grade
- SLPS Mathematics Curriculum, Objectives and Timeline, Grades 8-12, 2003-2004, Geometry
- Diagnostic Assessment #3, Geometry, March 2004, SLPS
- Curriculum Division – staff list
- Vision and Core Values – St. Louis Public Schools Board of Education
- K-12 Literacy Plan
- Early Childhood Division, Mission Statement and Programs
- ACT Scores by Level of Academic Preparation 1998-2003 for St. Louis Public Schools, Missouri, and the Nation
- TerraNova Mean Normal Curve Equivalent Scores: All Students, 2000-2003
- TerraNova Performance Objective Indices, Grades 2-9
- St. Louis Magnet Schools Guide, Brochure 2004-2005
- Project PASS (Performance Assessment & Student Success) Standards, 2003-04

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

- Bilingual/ESOL Program Student Pre-Enrollment Information
- List of ESOL/Bilingual Centers
- School Calendars, translated samples
- Letter to Parents and Students, Back to School, Translated Samples
- St. Louis Public Schools ESOL/Bilingual Program, Parents' Handbook, translated samples in Kurdish, Spanish, Arabic, Somali, Vietnamese
- Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) - packet
- Preschool Program Progress Report, Early Childhood Education Division
- Preschool Parent Handbook, Early Childhood Education Division
- ECE Preschool Center Lesson Plan
- Home Visits (HV)/Personalized Instruction (PI) Guide
- Early Childhood Education Preschool Assessment Checklist Guide
- Early Years, Newsletter, January 2004
- Academic Successes for St. Louis Public Schools, Grade 3 Students in Communication Arts
- Special Education Staffing Data by School
- MDESE, Communication Arts, Grade-Level Expectations, Draft  
(<http://www.dese.state.mo.us/divimprove/curriculum>)
- Communication Arts, K-5, Alignment of the Learner Objectives with the Missouri Show-Me Standards

### **Documents Reviewed by the Federal Programs Team**

- SLPS Title I School Building Allocations (2003-04)
- SLPS Title I Budget Availability – 2/20/04
- NCLB School Choice Parent Information Letter
- NCLB School Choice Parental Agreement
- NCLB School Choice Learning Plan
- SLPS Internal Memo on Title I Supplemental Education Services (SES) – 12/5/03
- SLPS Internal Memo on Title I SES – 12/29/03
- SLPS Internal Memorandum on Schoolwide Program Plan Proposals – 4/9/03
- NCLB SES Parent Information Letter
- NCLB SES Parent Information Parental Agreement
- NCLB SES Parent Application
- SLPS SES Data-Driven Differentiated Instructional Program (DD-DIP)
- SLPS SES Instructor Agreement
- SLPS SES Job Description
- SLPS SES Staff Sign-In Sheet
- SLPS SES Classroom Observation Form
- SLPS SES Instructional Staff Outline
- SLPS SES Student Criteria Selection Process
- SLPS SES Parental Notification and Provider Descriptions
- SLPS SES Weekly Student Progress Form
- SLPS SES Integration of Regular Day and Extended Day Feedback Form

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

- SLPS Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Scores – Elementary Schools (2002-03)
- SLPS Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Scores – Middle Schools (2002-03)
- SLPS Presentation to the Board of Education – Literacy Initiative (2/5/04)
- SLPS Reading First Textbook Review Core Reading Program Evaluation Supplement
- Missouri Department of Education Federal Program Allocations to SLPS (2003-04)
- SLPS School Improvement Identification Locations (2003-04)
- SLPS Sample Title I Schoolwide Plan – Blow Middle School
- SLPS Safe and Drug-Free and Character Plus Program Components (2003-04)
- SLPS Information Packet on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program – Federal and State
- SLPS Information Packet on GEAR UP Program
- SLPS Students in Transition Brochure
- SLPS Title I Internal Budget Worksheet
- SLPS Administrative Set-Aside Allocations
- SLPS Test Information and Cut Scores for Students Assigned to Schools (November 2003)
- Professional Development Needs Assessment Survey (2003)
- Professional Development Catalog (2002-03)
- SLPS Unit of Professional Development Teacher Induction Survey (2002-03)
- SLPS Personal Professional Development Plan Form C1
- SLPS Action Plan Worksheet Form AP
- Title I Parent Involvement Staff Meeting Agenda – 10/14/03
- SLPS Mentor Program Activity Log
- SLPS E-Rate Funding History – 12/5/03
- SLPS E-Rate Projects (2004)

### **Documents Reviewed by the Special Education Team**

- Special Education District Profile
- Demographic Data, 1999-2003
- Missouri Special Education Listserv Information
- Memo from state on over and under representation
- Special Education State Profile
- Total and Special Education School Enrollment Numbers
- Special Education Budget
- Allocation of Special Education Classrooms and Teachers by Disability
- Office of Special Education Professional Development Report, 2003-2004 and 2002-2003
- Eligibility for Alternative Assessments
- Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
- Discipline Incidents by Disability
- Special Education Organization Chart and Position Descriptions
- Division of Special Education, 1999-2000
- Special Education Caseload Memos
- Performance Indicators
- IEP

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

- IEP Manual
- Adequate Yearly Progress Data
- Speech Language Screening Summary
- Psychological Educational Assessment Services (PEAS) Handbook
- Forms Used by PEAS Staff
- Programs and Disability Codes
- Missouri State Plan for Special Education
- Local Plan for Compliance with State Regulations
- Revised Procedures for Reevaluations
- Compliance Monitor Guide
- Functions and Responsibilities, Office of Special Education
- Medicaid Administrative Claiming Information
- Strategic Plan, Division of Special Education
- Section 504 Guidelines
- IDEA Complaint Correspondences and Information
- Additional Information on the Division of Special Education
- Information on Private Placements and Contractual Agencies
- Monitoring Self Assessment
- Memo on Compliance with State's Caseload Standards for Special Education Teachers
- Program Review Final Report
- Elementary Reading : Classroom Instruction Diagram
- District Annual Report, 2003-2003
- Special Education MSIP Self Assessment
- District Needs Assessment Report Prepared by 4GL
- Special Education Demographic Information, by Disability, by Sex, and by Race
- Speech and Language Staff Information Sheet
- District Demographic Information by Grade and by Race
- Demographic Information for Students with Disabilities, by Race
- Demographic Information for Students with Disabilities, by Disability
- Demographic Information for Students with Disabilities, by LRE Setting
- Special Education Enrollment by School
- 2002-2003 Special Education Suspension and Expulsion Data
- Longitudinal Data on OHI and LD
- Special Education Director's Recommendations
- Journal of Special Education Leadership featuring article on St. Louis Public Schools
- MediaCross Proposal to Recruit Special Education Teachers
- Memo on Salary Proposal for Speech Language Pathologists
- Cost/Medicaid Revenue Comparisons for Speech Language Services
- Speech and Language Notes
- Speech and Language Statistics
- VICC SSD Analysis (Comparison of total voluntary transfers with number identified for Special Education services)

## **Raising Student Achievement in the St. Louis City Public Schools**

- Special Education Division Summary of Financial Activities, Fiscal Year Ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2003
- Additional Special Education Budget Numbers
- District/Union Contract
- Special Education Summary Schedule Staffing as of 12-09-03

### **Documents Reviewed by the Textbook Procurement Team**

- Textbook Purchasing introduction
- Annual Report (2002-2003)
- Articles
  - a. Under New management – St. Louis Post-Dispatch – June 5, 2003
  - b. Addition by Subtraction – St. Louis Post-Dispatch – June 29, 2003
  - c. New School Managers Say Book Warehouse Illustrates Problems – St. Louis Post-Dispatch – July 3, 2003
  - d. Corporate Influence Takes Hold in Schools – St. Louis Post-Dispatch – December 26, 2003
- Organizational Charts
- 2002-2003 Vendor Payments schedule
- Commodity sort schedule
- Material Groups Breakdown schedule
- G/L account listing showing textbook purchases
- Draft of Approved Textbooks
- Unassigned grades 2003/2004 Textbook Catalog
- Science Curriculum Development/ Implementation
- Fiscal 2004 Turnaround Initiatives – A Status Update as of November 18, 2003
- Draft Operating Plan 2003-2004

## **APPENDIX D: STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS**

### **Robert Carlson**

Robert Carlson is Director of Management Services for the Council of the Great City Schools. In that capacity, he provides Strategic Support Teams for superintendents and senior managers that address operational needs; convenes annual meetings of the organization's chief financial officers, chief operating officers, human resources directors, and chief information officers; fields hundreds of requests for management information; and maintains a web-based management information library. Prior to joining the Council, he was an Executive Assistant in the superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools. He holds an Ed.D. and MA in Administration from The Catholic University of America; a BA in Political Science from Ohio Wesleyan University; and has done advanced graduate work in political science at Syracuse University and the State Universities of New York.

### **Michael Casserly**

Michael Casserly is the Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of some 60 of the nation's largest urban public school districts—including Detroit. Casserly has been with the organization for 26 years, twelve of them as Executive Director. Before heading the group, he was the organization's chief lobbyist on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. and served as its director of research. He led major reforms in federal education laws, garnered significant aid for urban schools across the country, initiated major gains in urban school achievement and management, and advocated for urban school leadership in the standards movement. And he led the organization in the nation's first summit of urban school superintendents and big city mayors. Casserly has a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland and a B.A. from Villanova University.

### **Sue Gamm**

From 1995 to 2003, Sue Gamm was the Chief Specialized Services Officer for the Chicago Public Schools, the third largest school district in the nation. In that capacity, she oversaw a budget of \$600 million and was responsible for: the identification, evaluation, provision of services, and procedural safeguards for 57,000 children with disabilities, including management of a Federal class action settlement agreement on the education of children with disabilities in the least restrictive setting; management of alternative schools for students who have been expelled or have chronic disruptive behavior; management and coordination of the district's Homeless Education Program; and management of pupil support services for all students in the Chicago Public Schools, including an aggressive Medicaid/Children's Health Insurance Program outreach and "Healthy Kids...Healthy Minds" initiative; and coordination of violence prevention, crisis intervention, and the district's alternative safe schools program. Ms. Gamm has received

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numerous awards and served on many national committees relating to her knowledge and service to the Special Education community. In 2002, she made a special presentation to the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education. Prior to her current position, Ms. Gamm worked in the Elementary and Secondary Education Division of the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. She was also a Special Education teacher in the Chicago Public Schools. Ms. Gamm holds a B.A. from the University of Illinois and a J.D. from the DePaul College of Law.

### **Carolyn Guess**

Carolyn Guess has a Master of Education degree from Texas Southern University and a B.S. degree in Elementary Education and Special Education from the University of Texas. Ms. Guess currently serves as the Assistant Superintendent for the Office of Special Education, Houston Independent School District, where provides leadership in the coordination, development and evaluation of instruction and related services for the city's 21,000 students with disabilities. She has also served in other special education posts for HISD, including serving as an elementary, middle, and high school special education teacher, teacher trainer and central office administrator for litigation related to special education. Ms. Guess serves on several committees within the community, on the state level and national level to provide input on issues related to special education. She was selected by the state professional organization as the Special Education Director for the State of Texas for 2002. She participated in the evaluation of Washington D. C. schools, provided technical assistance to other school districts, and presented at local, national and state conferences.

### **Leah Kelly**

Leah Kelly is the Director of Exceptional Student Education for the Broward County Public Schools in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. As the Director, she is responsible for the overall management of the provision of services to over 33,000 students with disabilities. Prior to becoming the Director four years ago, she was the Curriculum Supervisor for the Specific Learning Disabilities Program for 11 years. Her experience prior to that included being a teacher for students with specific learning disabilities and emotional handicaps, a Child Find Specialist for the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) where she screened children from birth to 5 suspected of having a disability, adjunct staff for Florida Atlantic University for undergraduate and graduate courses, and a grant manager, developing an assessment system for the three to five year old population with mild disabilities.

### **David Koch**

**David Koch** is the former Chief Administrative Officer for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). LAUSD is the nation's second largest public school system with over 725,000 students in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade. Mr. Koch's responsibilities encompassed virtually all non-instructional operations of the District including: Finance, Facilities, Information Technology, and all business functions

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(including Procurement). He also served the LAUSD as Business Manager, Executive Director of Information Services, and Deputy Controller. Mr. Koch was also Business Manager for the Kansas City, Missouri Public School District and was with Arthur Young and Company prior to entering public service. He is a graduate of the University of Missouri, and is a Certified Public Accountant in the States of California, Missouri, and Kansas. Since 1999 Mr. Koch has served on multiple Strategic Support Teams and supported other management services provided to Council member districts.

### **Sharon Lewis**

Sharon Lewis is the Director of Research for the Council of the Great City Schools, where she is responsible for developing and operating a research program on the status and challenges of the nation's largest urban public school systems. Ms. Lewis maintains a comprehensive database on urban public schools and is considered a national expert on assessment. She has served as an international educational consultant to the U.S. Department of Defense schools, and has been a State of Michigan delegate to the Soviet Union and the Peoples Republic of China. Ms. Lewis has served on numerous state and national committees including the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing; the National Academy of Sciences, NAEP Evaluation Committee; the National Academy of Sciences, Appropriate Use of Test Results Advisory Council, the U.S. Department of Education, the National Center for Educational Statistics Advisory Panel, the U.S. Congress Technical Advisory Board on Testing in Americas' Schools; the National Center for Education Study on the Inner Cities; and the Technical Review Committee of the Michigan Assessment Program. She also worked for 30 years in the Detroit Public Schools and served as its Assistant Superintendent for Research and School Reform.

### **Janet E. Na**

Janet E. Na is a consultant to the Council of the Great City Schools. She is the Manager of Project Management Office for the Los Angeles Unified School District's Office of Chief Financial Officer. Janet's experience includes strategic, financial, operational, and information technology projects for educational institutions in several large urban school districts, including Albuquerque, Los Angeles, Oakland, San Francisco, and Philadelphia. Her experience in the K-12 public education system encompasses a variety of areas including forecasting, budgeting, strategic planning, change management, business process improvement, and technology applications. Previously, Janet was a Manager at Andersen Business Consulting and a Project Manager for BearingPoint, Inc. Janet also worked as Senior Audit Accountant at Arthur Andersen Assurance Business Advisory Services performing the financial statement audits and due diligence. She holds a BA in East Asian Studies and Business Administration Specialization at University of California at Los Angeles.



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### **Willie Pavlas**

Willie Pavlas is the Textbook Operations Manager for the Houston Independent School District in Houston, Texas. Mr. Pavlas manages the procurement, inventory and distribution of textbooks for the largest school district in Texas with over 211,000 students and 300 campuses. He is also a member of the Board for the Textbook Coordinator's Association of Texas with a membership of over 400 school districts throughout the state. Prior to joining HISD, Mr. Pavlas worked for the Maxwell House Coffee Division of Kraft Foods in Tarrytown, New York as a Category Logistics Manager. His responsibilities included Production Scheduling, Finished Goods distribution and Materials Management. Mr. Pavlas has a BS in Industrial Distribution from the University of Houston.

### **Barbara Pellin**

Barbara Pellin is the former Assistant Superintendent for Student, Family and Community Services in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg public school system. In this role, she was responsible for early childhood education, student services, community services, family services, dropout prevention, after-school enrichment, international services, strategic partnerships, and school health. She has extensive experience in community-based analysis and was responsible for designing the school district's award-winning pre-school literacy program, "Bright Beginnings," for the district's four year olds. She is licensed in Birth through Kindergarten education. The program serves some 3,200 pre-school students. Ms. Pellin was awarded North Carolina's *The Order of the Long Leaf Pine* by Governor Easley for her service and contributions to public education, children, and families. Before joining the Charlotte school system, Ms. Pellin served as the Program Chief for the Parent, Adolescent, and Child Community Health Division of the Mecklenburg County Health Department. She holds a Masters Degree in Public Health and a B.S. in Nursing.

### **Kimberly A. Sangster**

Kimberly A. Sangster, CPPO, CPPB is the Chief Procurement Officer in the Office of Procurement Services for the School District of Philadelphia. Ms. Sangster manages the procurement of supplies, furniture, equipment, textbooks, and food services for the school district. Ms. Sangster previously served as Director of Purchasing and Contract Administration at Chicago Public Schools, Chicago, Illinois. In that role, Ms. Sangster managed the competitive Bid, Request for Proposal and Request for Qualification process for commodities over \$10,000 and professional services over \$25,000. While working for Chicago Public Schools she also served in other procurement roles. She served as Assistant Director of Purchasing, focusing on contractual and procedural issues, and Director of Financial and Administrative Services in the Department of Procurement and Contracts. Ms. Sangster holds a BA in Political Science from Wayne State University, a JD from Wayne State University Law School and a LL.M. with honors in Financial Services Law from the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago-Kent College of Law.

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Ms. Sangster is also a Certified Public Purchasing Officer and Certified Professional Public Buyer through the Universal Public Purchasing Certification Council.

### **Nancy J. Timmons**

Dr. Nancy Timmons is a national consultant specializing in Urban Education. Formerly, she was the Associate Superintendent for Curriculum for the Fort Worth Independent School District., Fort Worth, Texas. In the Fort Worth Independent School District, she has also served as Associate Superintendent for Instruction, Executive Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Staff Development, Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services, and Director of Curriculum. Before joining the Fort Worth Independent School District, she served as Director of Curriculum, Supervisor of English Language Arts and Social Studies, and a middle and high school teacher for the Temple Independent School District, Temple, Texas. Dr. Timmons has extensive experience in curriculum design and development, campus and district planning, school improvement, and staff development. She has been an Adjunct Professor at Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas and has contributed to several textbooks in the area of English Language Arts. She has been listed in *Who's Who in American Education* and is a certified auditor by Curriculum Management Audit Centers, Inc. She has also served on boards for numerous community, civic, and educational organizations and institutions. Dr. Timmons earned her Bachelor of Science degree from Prairie View A&M University, and her Master of Science and Doctor of Education degrees from Baylor University.

## **APPENDIX E: ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Council of the Great City Schools**

The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 60 of the nation's largest urban public school systems. Its Board of Directors is composed of the Superintendent of Schools and one School Board member from each member city. An Executive Committee of 24 individuals, equally divided in number between Superintendents and School Board members, provides regular oversight of the 501(c)(3) organization. The mission of the Council is to advocate for urban public education and assist its members in the improvement of leadership and instruction. The Council provides services to its members in the areas of legislation, research, communications, curriculum and instruction, and management. The group convenes two major conferences each year; conducts studies on urban school conditions and trends; and operates ongoing networks of senior school district managers with responsibilities in such areas as federal programs, operations, finance, personnel, communications, research, technology, and others. The Council was founded in 1956 and incorporated in 1961, and has its headquarters in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit [www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org)

### **The Broad Foundation**

The Broad Foundation is a national entrepreneurial grant-making organization established in 1999 by Eli and Edythe Broad. The Foundation was started with an initial investment of \$100 million that has since been increased by the Broad family to over \$400 million.

The Broad Foundation's mission is to dramatically improve K-12 urban public education through better governance, management and labor relations. In addition to investing in a national portfolio of grants, The Broad Foundation's three flagship initiatives include: The \$1 million Broad Prize for Urban Education, awarded each year to urban school districts making the greatest overall improvement in student achievement while reducing achievement gaps across ethnic and income groups; The Broad Center for Superintendents, a national effort focused on identifying, training and supporting outstanding leaders from education, business, government, nonprofit and the military to become successful urban school superintendents; and The Broad Institute for School Boards, an annual training program for newly elected and appointed school board members designed to increase student achievement through improved governance. For more information, visit [www.broadfoundation.org](http://www.broadfoundation.org).

## APPENDIX F: STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAMS CONDUCTED BY THE COUNCIL

### Strategic Support Teams Conducted by the Council 1998-2004

City	Area	Date
Albuquerque	Facilities and Roofing	2003
	Human Resources	2003
	Information Technology	2003
Broward County	Information Technology	2000
Buffalo	Superintendent Support	2000
	Organizational Structure	2000
	Curriculum & Instruction	2000
	Personnel	2000
	Facilities and Operations	2000
	Communications	2000
	Finance	2000
	Finance II	2003
Cleveland	Student Assignments	1999, 2000
	Transportation	2000
	Safety and Security	2000
	Facilities Financing	2000
	Facilities Operations	2000
Columbus	Superintendent Support	2001
	Human Resources	2001
	Facilities Financing	2002
	Finance & Treasury	2003
	Budget	2003
Dayton	Superintendent Support	2001
	Curriculum & Instruction	2001
	Finance	2001
	Communications	2002

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Denver		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Personnel	2001
Des Moines		
	Budget & Finance	2003
Detroit		
	Curriculum & Instruction	2002
	Assessment	2002
	Communications	2002
	Curriculum & Assessment	2003
	Communications	2003
	Textbook Procurement	2004
Greensboro		
	Bilingual Education	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2003
Jacksonville		
	Organization & Management	2002
	Operations	2002
	Human Resources	2002
	Finance	2002
	Information Technology	2002
Los Angeles		
	Budget and Finance	2002
Miami-Dade County		
	Construction Management	2003
Milwaukee		
	Research & Testing	1999
	Safety and Security	2000
	School Board Support	1999
New Orleans		
	Personnel	2001
	Transportation	2002
	Information Technology	2003
Norfolk		
	Testing & Assessment	2003
Philadelphia		
	Curriculum & Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Food Service	2003

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	Facilities	2003
	Transportation	2003
Providence		
	Business Operations	2001
	MIS and Technology	2001
	Personnel	2001
Richmond		
	Transportation	2003
	Curriculum & Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Special Education	2003
Rochester		
	Finance and Technology	2003
	Transportation	2004
	Food Services	2004
San Francisco		
	Technology	2001
St. Louis		
	Special Education	2003
	Curriculum & Instruction	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
	Textbook Procurement	2004
Washington, D.C.		
	Finance and Procurement	1998
	Personnel	1998
	Communications	1998
	Transportation	1998
	Facilities Management	1998
	Special Education	1998
	Legal and General Counsel	1998
	MIS and Technology	1998
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003