

# Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools:

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

Submitted to the  
Minneapolis Public Schools

By the  
Council of the Great City Schools



With support from  
The Broad Foundation

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## **Acknowledgments**

The Council of the Great City Schools thanks the many individuals who contributed to this project. Their efforts and commitment were critical to our efforts to present the district with the best possible proposals.

First, we thank Superintendent Thandiwe Peebles. It is not easy to ask one's colleagues for the kind of review conducted by this project. It takes courage and openness. It also requires a commitment to the city's children that is uncompromising. She has that in abundance.

Second, we thank the Board of Education of the Minneapolis Public Schools for their leadership. Each board member was available to us as we conducted this critical review and remained open-minded and committed throughout the process.

Third, we thank the Minneapolis Public Schools staff who provided all the time, documents, and data that the project needed in order to do its work. Their openness and enthusiasm were critical to our understanding of the challenges that Minneapolis faces.

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

Fifth, the Council thanks the school districts that contributed staff to this effort. They included Boston, Broward County (Ft. Lauderdale), Columbus, Duval County (Jacksonville), Fort Worth, Los Angeles, Norfolk, Houston, and San Francisco. 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.

Sixth, the Council thanks the Broad Foundation for their financial support of this endeavor.

Finally, I thank Council staff members Sharon Lewis, Janice Ceperich, Manish Naik, and Bob Carlson whose skills were critical to the success of this effort. And thank you to Dave Koch who drafted the finance chapter.

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND KEY PROPOSALS**

**CHALLENGES**

The Minneapolis Public Schools have been seen historically as one of the better urban school systems in the country. Its academic performance was relatively high; its leadership among the best; its staff thought to be some of the most qualified; and its community considered to be one of the most engaged and committed anywhere.

Many of these things continue to be true. But the district is now seeing signs of deterioration that will only get worse unless important steps are taken. The city's public school system finds itself a year away from being classified by federal law as a "district in need of improvement." Its student enrollment has declined significantly in recent years and projections are for more of the same. Its financial health has been seriously undermined with sizable and repeated budget cuts. And its community is beginning to grow restive about what it is seeing.

In short, the Minneapolis Public Schools are at a critical juncture and its leadership needs to make an important choice about which way the district intends to go. It could slide into further decline or it could take charge of its own future and make sure that it does not suffer the same fate as other urban public school systems across the country that are now trying to dig themselves out of some very deep ruts.

The first path is steep and risky and requires energy, skill, and determination. The second path is easy, safe, and driven by inertia but lined with regrets about what might have been for the next generation of the city's children.

Other urban school systems have faced similar choices between progress and stagnation and few have regretted taking the steeper trail. Children are learning more than before. Test scores are up. And optimism is returning. The message for the Minneapolis Public Schools is that greater payoffs often come from choosing the path of *most* resistance.

In many ways, the district has better than adequate tools to keep itself from flagging. It has a school board that works well together. It has a new superintendent who, despite the challenges of leading change in a school system in transition, has strong skills in raising student achievement. It has many staff members at the district level that are

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among the best in urban education. And it has a teaching force that is experienced and skilled. Many urban school districts with which the Council of the Great City Schools works do not have these assets.

These advantages will have to be put to good use, however, because the system has largely abdicated its instructional responsibilities over the years to the individual schools. The result is what one sees today: inadequate planning for improving student performance, low expectations for children, no accountability for results, haphazard instruction, incoherent programming, and outcomes that put the district on the cusp of state sanctions. We have never seen a major city public school system pull itself out of the difficulties Minneapolis now faces by having everyone in the system aiming in different directions.

The major challenge for the district's leadership will be to continue streamlining and focusing both the school system's instructional program and its finances in a way that defines a clear and relentless direction upward for the system's fortunes.

To address these challenges and set a new direction for the district, the new superintendent, Thandiwe Peebles, asked the Council of the Great City Schools to review the instructional, federal programs, and finances of the Minneapolis Public Schools and propose ways to focus and improve them. The Council assembled Strategic Support Teams, composed of senior managers from other urban school systems, to do the work. The teams looked specifically at the district's curriculum and instructional program, federal programs, and financial operations and prepared a detailed list of recommendations for the superintendent, the school board, and the city. All findings and observations are current at the time when the teams visited the district and generally reflect conditions that the superintendent found when she took her post at the beginning of the 2004-05 school year.

The proposals are summarized below.

### **KEY PROPOSALS**

The Strategic Support Teams are submitting their findings and proposals to the Minneapolis Public Schools in three areas: curriculum and instruction, federal programs, and finance. The following are highlights.

#### **A. Curriculum and Instruction**

The Council of the Great City Schools benchmarked or compared the instructional program of the Minneapolis Public Schools against those of other urban school districts that were making significant progress in raising student achievement. The organization then drew up recommendations to make Minneapolis' instructional practices more like those of districts seeing significant progress. For Minneapolis' programs to be more like these other cities, the district will have to take the following steps:

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

The Minneapolis Public Schools have until recently lacked a comprehensive, districtwide plan for improving student achievement. Developing one will require the school board and the superintendent to create a shared vision for where they want the district to go and what they want the schools to look like. This process is off to a good start, but the district will still need to—

- Articulate in the strongest possible terms—at the school board and superintendent leadership levels—a clear sense of urgency for and commitment to raising student performance for all the children in the Minneapolis Public Schools and an unambiguous message that staff will be held accountable for results.
- Finish the new strategic plan for increasing student achievement that is being developed by the superintendent and take it to the community for input and support.
- Make sure that the new plan articulates a coherent districtwide strategy for raising student performance rather than simply a school-by-school effort.
- Charge the new superintendent with building stronger political bridges to all the community's diverse populations and groups.

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

The Minneapolis Public Schools currently lack a set of goals 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 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) and other assessments—goals that are consistent with the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*.
- Attach timelines to the attainment of district goals.
- 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 (SIP). Make sure the school improvement plans have subgroup targets.

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

Academic goals for the improvement of the Minneapolis Public Schools are of little use unless they are accompanied by the means to hold people responsible for

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attaining them. To devise an accountability system that works across the system, the district will need to—

- Begin placing senior staff, including area superintendents, on performance contracts tied to the attainment of districtwide achievement goals.
- Charge area superintendents with monitoring and supporting student performance school-by-school.
- Begin placing principals on performance contracts tied in part 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 Minneapolis Public Schools have a single reading and math adoption but some of the materials are outdated and need replacing. The district also has scores of other programs to boost student performance. Many of these programs 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—

- Upgrade and put into place by the beginning of the 2005-06 school year a new single, cohesive reading program districtwide that reflects the best scientific research.
- Ensure that the new reading program is closely aligned to the state's standards.
- Conduct an inventory of all programs, materials, models, and software being used at the school level and begin phasing out initiatives that have not proved to be effective or are not consistent with a new instructional program.
- Develop districtwide pacing guides in reading and revise the district's pacing guides in math so that they are in more than quarterly intervals.
- Hire a chief academic officer (CAO) and reorganize the district's instructional division so that it is better aligned with the reforms the district is seeking.

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

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The Minneapolis 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 all district principals and teachers on the upgraded reading program and on reading and math intervention strategies. Allocate at least six of the district’s thirteen release days for this purpose.
- Ensure that professional development is aligned with the district’s strategic goals and differentiated where necessary, including training on supplemental materials, and is mandatory when appropriate.
- Consolidate the staff training and the professional development units at the central office into a single department reporting to a director of professional development.
- Begin phasing out the district’s use of POSAs and TOSAs at the district level and start using more and more of them as reading and math coaches at the school level.
- Standardize district training and directions to reading and math coaches.

### **6. Ensure that districtwide reforms are aligned to the strategic plan and school-by-school achievement targets and are implemented at the classroom level.**

The Minneapolis 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 needs to not only take primary responsibility for raising student achievement districtwide but also—

- Assign a staff member at the central office to coordinate reading and math coaches at the school level.
- Charge area superintendents with monitoring the academic direction of schools.
- Charge the principals with monitoring—in conjunction with coaches—the implementation of a districtwide reading and math program.
- Charge the director of professional development with developing and providing professional development for principals and coaches on how to conduct classroom observations, “walk-through” procedures, and the like.
- Revamp the district’s school improvement planning template to include “schoolwide” projects requirements under federal law.

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

The Minneapolis 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—

- Clarify from the leadership level that the MCA and the MBST are the district's tests of record and the tests on which the district is held accountable for performance by the state.
- Phase out the NALT as the state puts into place testing in each grade under NCLB. Replace it with a nationally-normed test that can be administered in selected grades.
- Press the state department of education to give the student-by-student and year-by-year data that the district would need to conduct its value-added analysis on the MCA.
- Develop and begin implementing a districtwide quarterly or interim assessment measure that can give the district and its schools a better idea of how well students are doing in reading and math over the course of the school year.
- Select a standardized set of diagnostic reading instruments that schools can use to assess reading skills of students throughout the district.

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

The Minneapolis schools have a small but pretty good early childhood initiative that needs to be upgraded, tied to reading and math reforms at the early elementary school level, and better coordinated with other citywide programs. The district's high schools, moreover, need substantial overhaul. The district needs to—

- Charge a curriculum committee with conducting an analysis to determine how well aligned the new “Building Language to Literacy” and “Growing with Math” programs for pre-k are aligned with a new districtwide reading and math program once they are selected.
- Conduct a thorough evaluation of the district's small learning communities and their effect on student achievement, and revamp if the results are not showing an impact on student achievement.
- Standardize core courses at the high school level and conduct a thorough analysis of the rigor of the courses currently offered.
- Conduct a thorough analysis and evaluation of the IMP and CMP math programs and phase it out if the results do not show positive results.

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

Minneapolis has a number of schools that are low-performing or who have not met their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets. Many urban school systems across the country are learning that they can improve their overall performance by targeting efforts on boosting the performance of their lowest-achieving schools. The district needs to—

- Establish a permanent Superintendent's-district-style unit and director to focus on the district's lowest performing schools.
- Select 5 to 10 of the district's lowest-performing schools or schools in "school improvement" status and develop a specific plan of intervention to boost their performance.
- Develop and begin administering mini-assessments in reading and math in the district's lowest performing schools.
- Discuss with the state superintendent of schools how its "school improvement" set-aside program under Title I could be better coordinated with the district's emerging instructional efforts.

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

*No Child Left Behind* includes a number of requirements and provisions that the Minneapolis 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 Minneapolis schools will need to—

- Reorganize the State and Federal Programs office so that it is located under the Finance unit.
- Develop a template defined around the district's academic priorities to guide school-level expenditures of Title I funds.
- Develop an immediate plan for the use of nearly \$4.3 million in unbudgeted Title I and Title II funds.
- Synchronize the "windows" for the district's existing choice programs (magnet, open enrollment, NCLB) into a single choice program and application process.
- Develop and disseminate to parents a catalogue of available SES providers.
- Review cost structure of the district's contract with Sylvan and other SES providers.

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- Develop a comprehensive, staff development plan for meeting the “highly qualified” teacher requirements.
- Consider targeting available Title I funds more closely on the poorest district schools.

### **C. Finance**

The Minneapolis school district has undergone substantial cuts to its budget over the last several years and more cutting appears to be necessary, as the district is projecting a nearly \$20 million deficit next year. To handle some its financial challenges in the near future, the district might consider—

- Charge the superintendent with setting a clear direction for the use of the district’s resources at all levels under the board’s policy guidance.
- Charge each operating unit with developing action plans with appropriate data that specifies how all senior operational divisions intend to enhance revenues, pursue efficiencies, improve effectiveness, identify potential cost savings and improve customer service to employees and the public.
- Reorganize the non-instructional administrative structure to improve the district’s internal management controls, including separating the Finance and Budget operations, and requiring the Finance Office to focus on controllership and treasury functions and the Budget Office to focus on financial planning functions.
- Move expeditiously to implement the district’s major new management and financial (ERP) system.
- Maximize the district’s purchasing efficiencies by adopting the state’s higher formal bidding limits.
- Analyze and recalculate the district’s indirect cost rate to improve cost recoveries on allowable federal (and state) grant programs.
- Encourage the district’s third party administrator to intensify efforts to maximize the district’s potential revenue under the Medicaid reimbursement program.

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

### **OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT**

The Council of the Great City Schools has prepared this report to summarize the findings and recommendations that the organization's Strategic Support Teams made during their visits to the Minneapolis Public Schools.

These teams were requested by Minneapolis schools' Superintendent Thandiwe Peebles and funded by the Broad Foundation. Superintendent Peebles asked the Council to review the school district's instructional program, federal grants, and financial operations as they existed when she took her post at the beginning of the 2004-05 school year.

To carry out its charge, the Council assembled three Strategic Support Teams (SSTs) composed of senior urban school managers who have struggled in their own cities with many of the same issues Minneapolis is facing.

The first team was composed of curriculum and instructional leaders from cities that had significantly increased student achievement over the last several years. The second team was composed of federal program directors with solid reputations for running model departments in their own cities. The third team was composed of finance directors who were operating some of the largest and most complex big city school financial operations in the country.

Council staff with expertise in instructional systems, federal legislation, and management accompanied each of the teams. This report summarizes the findings and proposals of these teams.

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

### **PROJECT GOALS**

The main goals of the Council's review were to:

- Review the instructional programs in the Minneapolis schools and assess their potential for accelerating student achievement.
- Propose course-corrections in the Minneapolis schools' instructional reforms based on strategies that have proven successful in other major urban school systems.

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- Review Title I and other federal programs to determine how well they were aligned with *No Child Left Behind* and how they could be strengthened to help with improving student achievement.
- Review the district's financial operations to assess overall efficiency and to identify potential cost savings.

The Council also sought to identify expertise, resources, strategies, and materials from other city school systems that the Minneapolis Public Schools could use in its work.

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

The first Strategic Support Team, composed of instructional and curriculum leaders from urban school districts making substantial gains in student achievement, visited Minneapolis on September 7-10, 2004. This team analyzed the district's broad instructional strategies, materials, core reading and math programs, organizational structure, assessment programs and professional development efforts. The team also examined district priorities and analyzed how well Minneapolis' strategies appeared to reflect those priorities.

The federal programs and finance teams visited the Minneapolis Public Schools on November 7-10, 2004. The federal program team examined the district's overall alignment with *No Child Left Behind*, organizational structure, use of funds, and general compliance with federal rules and regulations. The finance team reviewed the district's financial operations, organizational structure, and overall fiscal health.

Each team's visit entailed two days of fact-finding and a day devoted to synthesizing the team's findings and proposing preliminary strategies for strengthening district services. Superintendent Thandiwe Peebles was debriefed at the end of each visit. Additional time after the site visit was devoted to conference calls, data analysis, the collection of further information, and to fine-tuning findings and recommendations.

This peer 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 Minneapolis. 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.

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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.

**STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS**

Members of the Strategic Support Teams included the following individuals—

<b>Curriculum &amp; Instruction Team</b>	<b>Title I &amp; Federal Programs Team</b>
<p>Nancy Timmons Former Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Fort Worth Independent School District</p>	<p>Charlotte Harris Director Development Boston Public Schools</p>
<p>Denise Walston Senior Coordinator Mathematics Norfolk Public Schools</p>	<p>Ron Stewart Supervisor of State and Federal Programs Columbus Public Schools</p>
<p>Ricki Price-Baugh Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum &amp; Instructional Development Houston Independent School District</p>	
<p>Phyllis Hunter National Reading Consultant Houston, Texas</p>	
<p>Mary Ellen Gallegos Executive Director Multilingual Programs Department San Francisco Unified School District</p>	
<p>Katherine Blasik Assistant Superintendent Research and Evaluation Broward County (FL) Public Schools</p>	
<p><b>Finance Team</b>  Ken Gotsch</p>	

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Chief Financial Officer Los Angeles Unified School District	
Phoebe Wood Budget Director Columbus Public Schools	
George Latimer Chief Financial Officer Duval County Public Schools	
Dave Koch Former Chief Administrative Officer Los Angeles Unified School District	

### CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT

This report begins with an Executive Summary of the issues facing the Minneapolis Public Schools. The summary also outlines the proposals the Council and its SSTs are making. Chapter 1 of this report presents a brief overview of the characteristics and student performance in Minneapolis. Chapter 2 summarizes the findings and recommendations of the curriculum and instruction team. Chapter 3 summarizes the findings and recommendations of the federal programs team. Chapter 4 summarizes the findings and recommendations of the finance team. And Chapter 5 presents a synopsis of the review and discusses some of the features of the recommendations.

The Appendices of the report include a number of relevant items. Appendix A presents the results of the curriculum and instruction team's comparison of the Minneapolis 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 brief descriptions of the Council of the Great City Schools and The Broad Foundation. Appendix F lists the Strategic Support Team reviews that the Council has conducted over the last several years.

The Council has now conducted nearly 90 Strategic Support Teams in more than 25 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.

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

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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

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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 gaining much traction under their reforms.

We did not examine everything that could possibly be analyzed in the Minneapolis schools. We did not spend time, for example, looking at instructional practices in science or social studies. We also did not look at the district's noninstructional operations, board policies, or staffing levels with any precision. Our focus in this report is exclusively on student achievement, federal programs, and finance, 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
Manish Naik Legislative and Research Specialist Council of the Great City Schools	Janice Ceperich Research Specialist Council of the Great City Schools
Robert Carlson Director of Management Services Council of the Great City Schools	

## CHAPTER 1. BACKGROUND ON THE MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### LEADERSHIP

The Minneapolis Public School district is governed by a seven-member school board. All members are elected citywide to four-year, staggered terms. The board has used a “policy governance” approach to guide its work since 2001. The approach commits the board’s members to work as a team to set the district’s goals, monitor its results, and involve the community.

The school board, which has no committees, meets for its regular business sessions at 4:00 p.m. on the second and last Tuesday of each month. The board derives its authority from the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Legislature and is responsible for selecting the school district’s superintendent and overseeing the district’s budget, curriculum, personnel, and facilities.

The board selected a new superintendent of schools, Thandiwe Peebles, in July 2004 after conducting a national search to replace Carol Johnson, who headed the district from 1997 to 2003. (David Jennings served as interim superintendent between Johnson and Peebles.) Peebles is the fifth superintendent or interim superintendent over the last ten years:

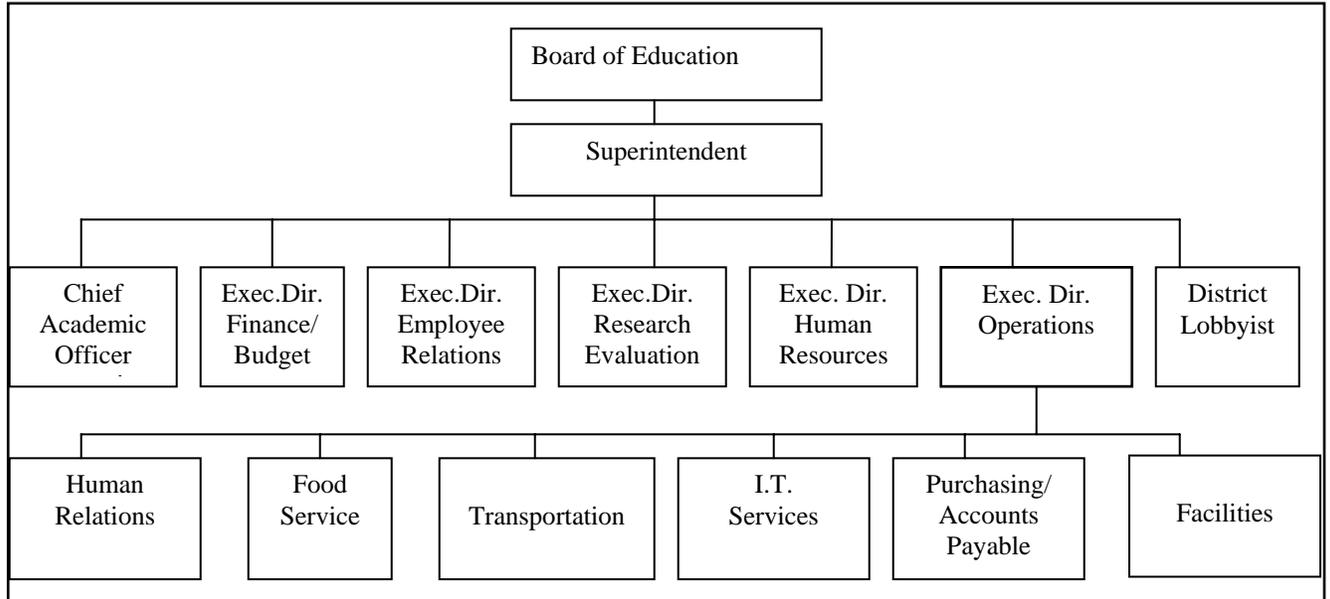
- |                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Peter Hutchinson            | December 1993- June 1997      |
| • Katrina Reed (Interim)      | June 1997-September 1997      |
| • Carol Johnson               | September 1997-September 2003 |
| • David M. Jennings (Interim) | October 2003-June 2004        |
| • Thandiwe Peebles            | July 2004                     |

Since her appointment, Superintendent Peebles has moved aggressively to complete the community engagement process lead by the board of education; review the need to close schools; initiate this review; and draft a preliminary strategic plan to guide the district’s reforms.

### ORGANIZATION

The district’s organizational structure is traditional and straightforward. Reporting to the Superintendent of Schools are the Chief Academic Officer (a new position created as a result of this review), and executive directors of finance and budget, employee relations, research and evaluation, human resources, operations (also a new position), and the district’s lobbyist. (See Figure 1.) The Executive Director of Operations is responsible for human relations, food services, transportation, I.T. services, purchasing and accounts payable, and facilities.

Figure 1. Current Organizational Structure



Until recently, the district had a series of academic superintendents overseeing various grade spans. These individuals are currently being supervised by an interim chief academic officer.

### STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The Minneapolis Public Schools is the largest school system in Minnesota, enrolling some 5.7 percent of the state’s students. The district’s size and demographic characteristics make Minneapolis different from any other school system in the state, save St. Paul.

The Minneapolis Public Schools enrolled some 46,037 students in 2002-2003, the most recent year for which data are available from the National Center for Educational Statistics. The district’s budget documents indicate that the system has lost about 4,600 students from the last projection.

With 67.3 percent of Minneapolis’ students eligible for a free or reduced price lunch, the district’s enrollment is about three times as poor as the statewide average (27.3 percent). The district enrolls about 13.4 percent of the state’s poor students.

In addition, about 42.9 percent of Minneapolis’ study body was African American in 2002-03, 26.4 percent was white, 12.7 percent was Hispanic, and 18.0 percent was Asian, Indian, Hmong, and other immigrant groups.

Finally, some 24.1 percent of Minneapolis’ enrollment is English language learners, compared with 6.1 percent statewide, and 14.0 percent are students with disabilities, about the same as the statewide percentage (13.2 percent).

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**Table 1. Comparison of Minneapolis and Minnesota Schools<sup>2</sup>**

<b>Demographic Data 2002-03</b>			
	<b>Minneapolis</b>	<b>St. Paul</b>	<b>Minnesota</b>
Enrollment	46,037	43,923	846,891
% African American	42.9	26.6	7.4
% Hispanic	12.7	11.0	4.2
% White	26.4	30.8	81.1
% Other	18.0	31.5	7.4
% Free/Reduced Price Lunch	67.3	64.9	27.3
% with IEPs	14.0	15.8	13.2
% English Language Learners	24.1	33.8	6.1
Pupil/Teacher Ratio	14.7	14.9	16.4
Number of Schools	144	125	2,503
Average Enrollment per School	320	351	338
Current Expenditures per Pupil	\$10,861	\$11,577	\$7,619
State Funding Targeting Ratio	1.2	1.1	NA

The average school in Minneapolis enrolls some 320 students, compared with an average of about 338 students per school statewide.<sup>3</sup> (The average school in cities that are members of the Council of the Great City Schools enrolls 708 students. The average school nationwide enrolls about 504 students.) The district, moreover, has fewer students per teachers (14.7) than the statewide average (16.4). And the expenditure per pupil in Minneapolis is similar to St. Paul's but is about 43 percent higher than the state average.

### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Student achievement in the Minneapolis Public Schools has been improving modestly over the last several years, but it remains low compared with statewide averages. Spring 2004 test results indicated that 49.7 percent of the city's third graders scored at or above the state-defined proficiency level on the reading portion of the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA), compared with 73.3 percent of the state's third graders. Some 49.1 percent of the city's fifth graders scored at or above the proficiency level in reading, compared with 75.5 percent of fifth graders statewide. And 52.4 percent of the city's eighth graders passed the Minnesota Basic Standards Test (MBST) in reading, compared with 81.1 percent of eighth graders statewide. (See Graphs 1-3.)

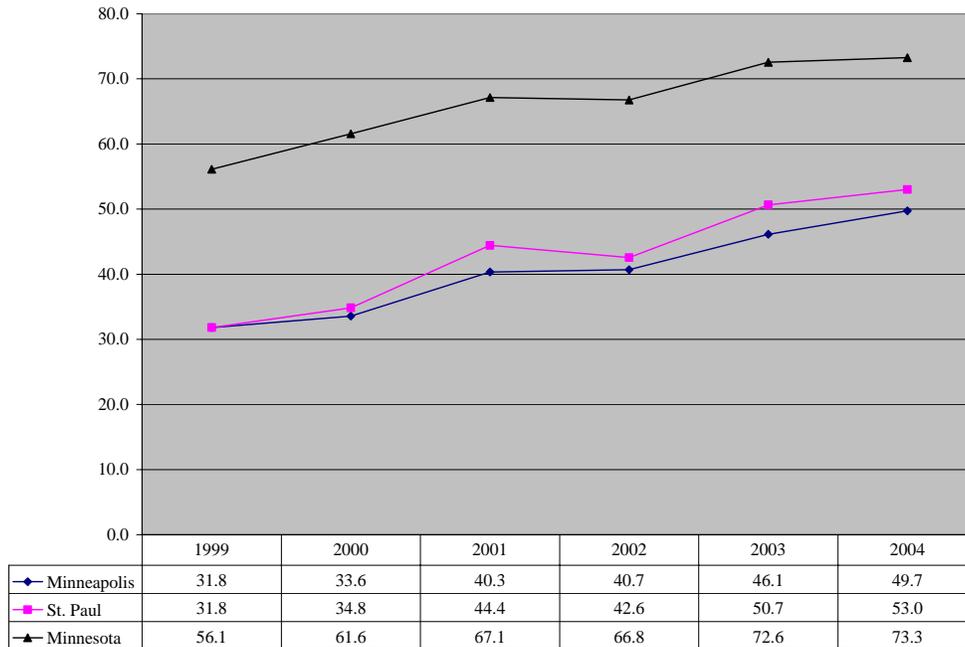
Math scores are similar to those in reading. Some 49.5 percent of Minneapolis' third graders scored at or above the state-defined proficiency levels on the math portion of the MCA in 2004, compared with 70.5 percent of third graders statewide. Some 50.4 percent of the city's fifth graders scored at or above the proficiency level in math, compared with 74.3 percent of fifth graders statewide. And 41.5 percent of the city's eighth graders passed the MBST in math, compared with 70.8 percent of eighth graders statewide. (See Graphs 4-6.)

<sup>2</sup> Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), Common Core of Data, "Public Elementary and Secondary School Universe Survey," 2002-2003.

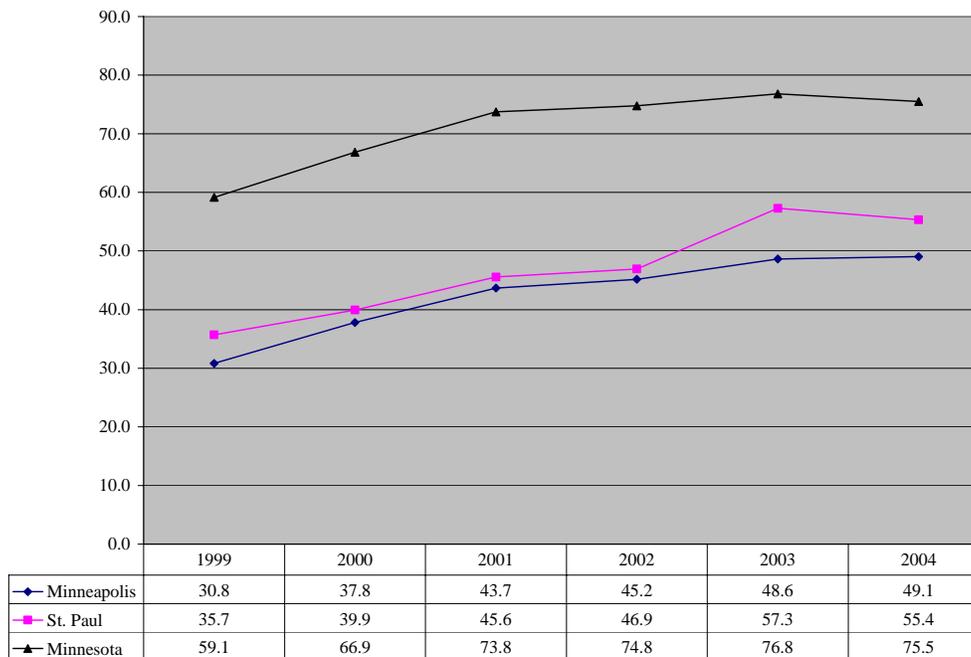
<sup>3</sup> Data includes all schools – elementary, middle, and high.

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

**Graph 1. Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA)  
Reading Grade 3 Percent Scoring Levels III & Above**

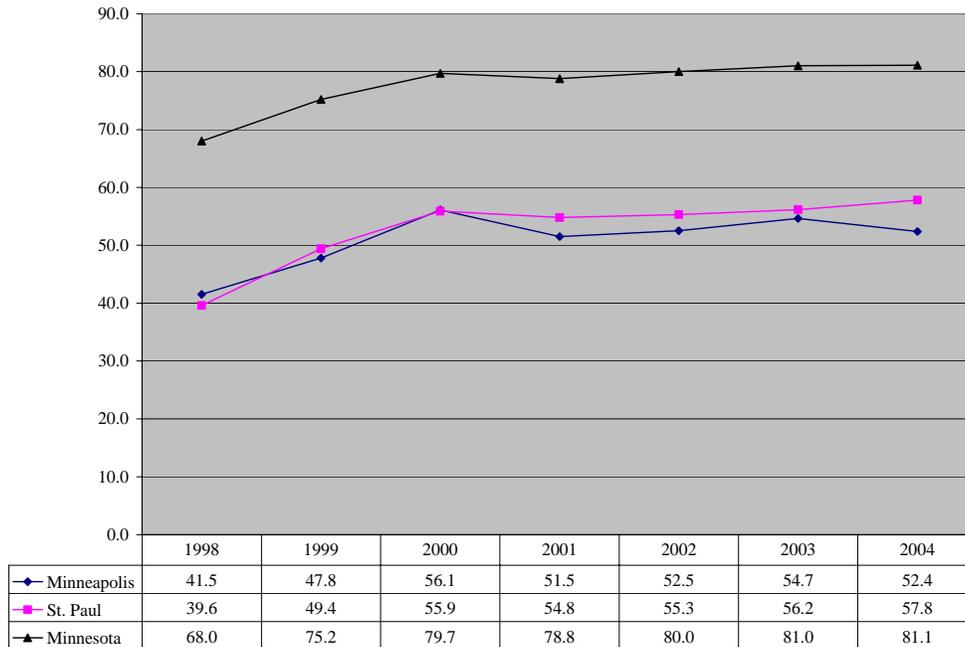


**Graph 2. Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA)  
Reading Grade 5 Percent Scoring Levels III & Above**

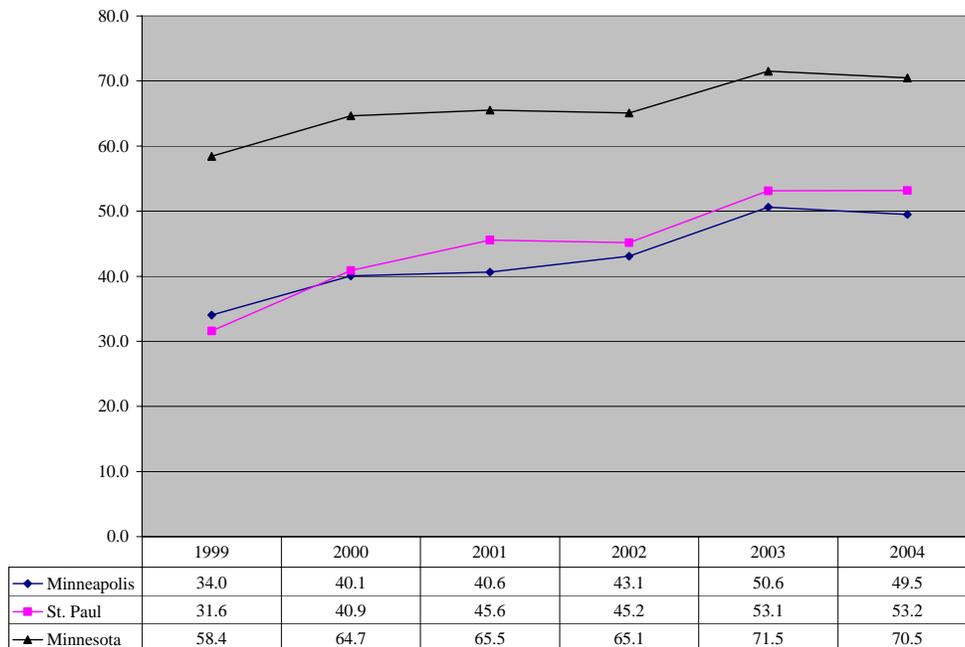


## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

**Graph 3. Minnesota Basic Standards Test (MBST)  
Reading Grade 8 Percent Passing**

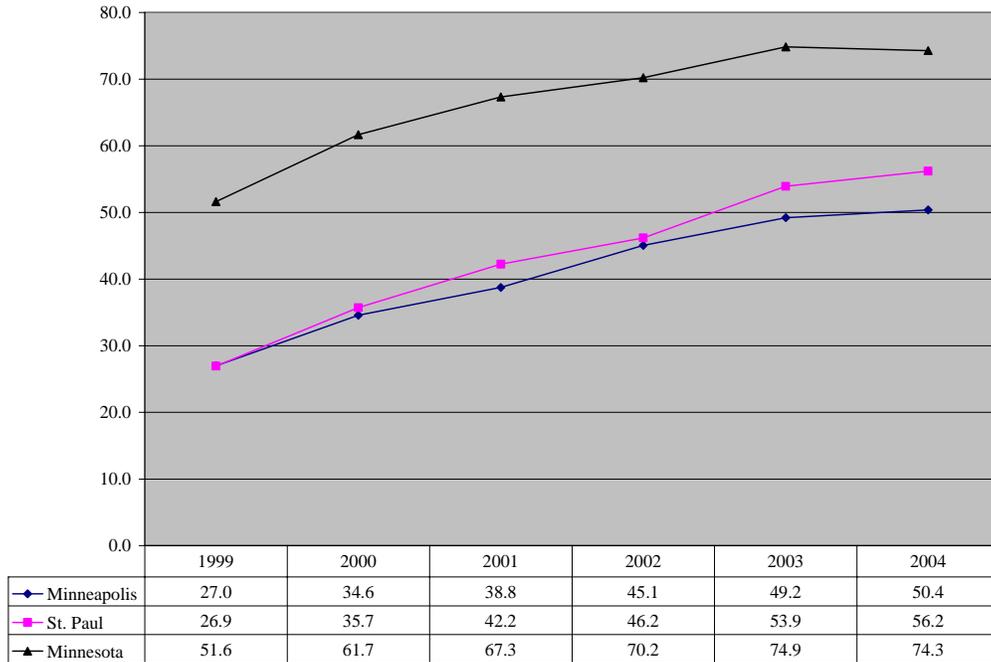


**Graph 4. Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA)  
Mathematics Grade 3 Percent Scoring Levels III & Above**

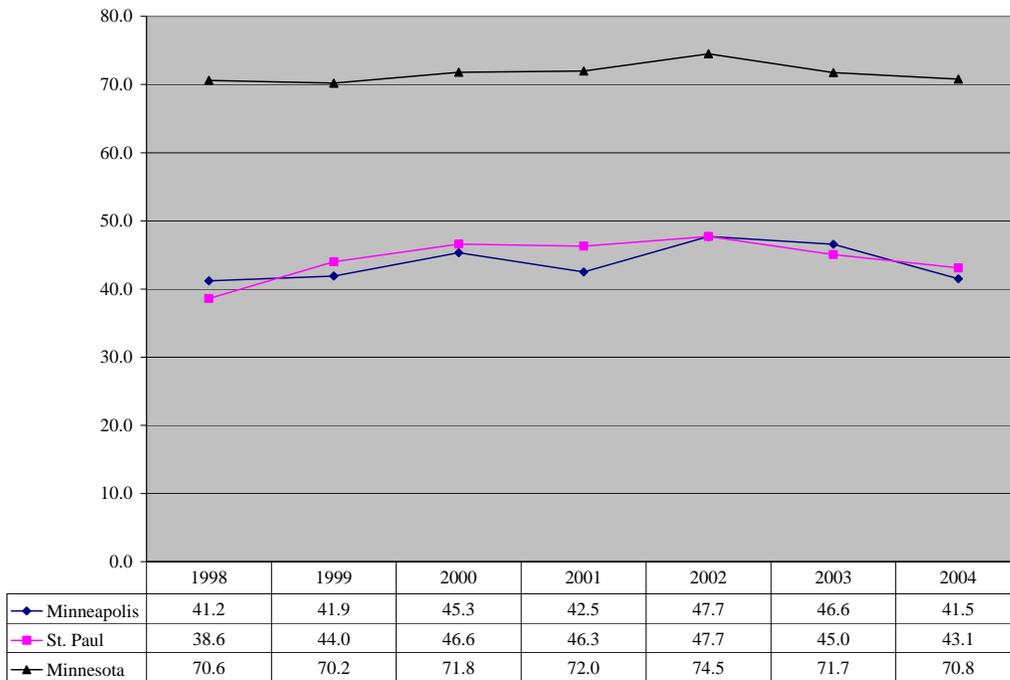


## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

**Graph 5. Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA)  
Mathematics Grade 5 Percent Scoring Levels III & Above**



**Graph 6. Minnesota Basic Standards Test (MBST)  
Mathematics Grade 8 Percent Passing**



## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

The long-term trend line in Minneapolis' reading and math scores look more promising. Since 1999, when the MCA was first administered, the percent of third graders scoring at or above proficiency in reading has increased in Minneapolis from 31.8 percent to 49.7 percent in the spring of 2004.<sup>4</sup> The percent of fifth graders at or above proficiency increased from 30.8 percent to 49.1 percent.<sup>5</sup> And the percent of eighth graders passing the MBST in reading increased from 41.5 percent to 52.4 percent.<sup>6</sup> (See Graphs 1-3.)

Progress in math has also been evident in Minneapolis. The percent of third graders at or above proficiency on the MCA has increased from 34.0 percent in 1999 to 49.5 percent in 2004.<sup>7</sup> The percent of fifth graders at or above proficiency increased from 27.0 percent to 50.4 percent.<sup>8</sup> And the percent of eighth graders passing the MBST in math has increased from 41.2 percent to 41.5 percent.<sup>9</sup> (See Graphs 4-6.)

The achievement gap between Minneapolis' students and students statewide is wide and has not decreased much, if any, over the last six years. The gap in reading, for instance, between Minneapolis' third graders and third graders statewide only decreased from 24.3 percentage points in 1999 to 23.6 percentage points in 2004. The reading gap among fifth graders only declined from 28.3 percentage points to 26.4 points. And the reading gap between the city's eighth graders and eighth graders statewide actually increased from 26.5 percentage points in 1999 to 28.7 points in 2004.

The gap in math between city and state third graders decreased slightly from 24.4 percentage points in 1999 to 21.0 points in 2004. The disparity among fifth graders only declined from 24.6 percentage points to 23.9 and the difference among eighth graders remained virtually unchanged from 29.4 percentage points in 1999 to 29.3 points in 2004. (See Graphs 1-6.)

The state's MCA assessment data also show wide racially-identifiable achievement gaps in Minneapolis and statewide. Data for 2004 indicate that the reading gap between African American and white third graders in Minneapolis was 41.3 percentage points.<sup>10</sup> The gap was 42.7 percentage points among fifth graders in Minneapolis<sup>11</sup> and 43.4 percentage points among eighth graders.<sup>12</sup>

The reading gap between Hispanic and white students was 45.0 percentage points among third graders in Minneapolis,<sup>13</sup> 49.2 percentage points among fifth graders,<sup>14</sup> and 46.0 points among eighth graders.<sup>15</sup> (See Table 2.)

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<sup>4</sup> The statewide percent of grade 3 students at or above reading proficiency increased from 56.1% to 73.3%.

<sup>5</sup> The statewide percent of grade 5 students at or above reading proficiency increased from 59.1% to 75.5%.

<sup>6</sup> The statewide percent of grade 8 students passing the MBST in reading increased from 68.0% to 81.1%.

<sup>7</sup> The statewide percent of grade 3 students at or above proficiency in math increased from 58.4% to 70.5%.

<sup>8</sup> The statewide percent of grade 5 students at or above proficiency in math increased from 51.6% to 74.3%.

<sup>9</sup> The statewide percent of grade 8 students passing the MBST in math increased from 70.6% to 70.8%.

<sup>10</sup> The gap statewide between African American and white student in grade 3 was 34.5 percentage points.

<sup>11</sup> The gap statewide between African American and white student in grade 5 was 34.3 percentage points.

<sup>12</sup> The gap statewide between African American and white student in grade 8 was 37.1 percentage points.

<sup>13</sup> The gap statewide between Hispanic and white student in grade 3 was 36.6 percentage points.

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

**Table 2. Disaggregated MCA and MBST Reading Scores in Minneapolis and Minnesota**

		Minneapolis					Minnesota				
		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Grade											
3 <sup>rd</sup>	White	68.0	72.8	74.4	77.8	79.8	68.0	73.4	73.3	79.4	80.0
	Black	20.6	30.4	28.0	35.9	38.5	28.9	36.8	36.9	43.1	45.5
	Hispanic	24.4	24.2	24.0	28.2	34.8	34.3	39.2	37.2	41.3	43.4
	Asian	14.5	29.9	29.3	37.7	39.7	31.5	43.6	43.5	52.1	54.4
5 <sup>th</sup>	White	69.6	78.6	80.1	81.3	80.7	72.8	80.4	81.5	83.0	81.8
	Black	26.1	31.1	33.3	38.9	38.0	33.1	39.6	42.1	47.5	47.5
	Hispanic	28.1	31.2	29.5	32.0	31.5	40.3	45.5	45.7	48.4	48.8
	Asian	22.3	28.9	32.0	40.1	39.9	38.8	45.5	48.6	58.1	57.0
8 <sup>th</sup>	White	84.0	82.6	84.9	85.9	83.8	84.1	83.6	85.6	86.8	87.2
	Black	41.8	36.9	39.7	42.1	40.4	48.1	45.2	46.5	48.7	50.1
	Hispanic	38.2	38.5	37.9	46.0	37.8	53.1	51.2	52.0	54.6	51.8
	Asian	52.0	42.9	46.4	49.1	44.0	63.1	59.8	60.7	61.7	63.2

The MCA data, moreover, indicate wide racial gaps in math. The void between African American and white third graders in Minneapolis was 45.3 percentage points in 2004.<sup>16</sup> And the gap among fifth graders was 47.5 percentage points<sup>17</sup> and among eighth graders was 50.1 points.<sup>18</sup> The achievement gap in math between Hispanic and white students was 36.9 percentage points among third graders in Minneapolis,<sup>19</sup> 45.8 percentage points among fifth graders,<sup>20</sup> and 41.8 points among eighth graders.<sup>21</sup> (See Table 3.)

**Table 3. Disaggregated MCA and MBST Math Scores in Minneapolis and Minnesota**

		Minneapolis					Minnesota				
		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Grade											
3 <sup>rd</sup>	White	71.9	71.8	73.0	79.3	79.3	70.8	71.7	71.3	77.7	77.0
	Black	24.2	27.7	28.3	35.8	34.0	28.6	30.3	32.7	40.7	39.0
	Hispanic	30.2	25.2	31.3	42.0	42.4	38.4	36.4	36.0	43.8	44.7
	Asian	33.5	41.2	43.9	49.9	44.9	43.2	50.1	50.4	59.4	57.1
5 <sup>th</sup>	White	66.8	74.1	77.4	82.6	82.5	67.7	73.9	76.7	81.4	80.6
	Black	19.3	21.6	30.0	34.0	35.0	22.5	29.0	33.7	39.0	42.5

<sup>14</sup> The gap statewide between Hispanic and white student in grade 5 was 33.0 percentage points.

<sup>15</sup> The gap statewide between Hispanic and white student in grade 8 was 35.4 percentage points.

<sup>16</sup> The gap statewide between African American and white student in grade 3 was 38.0 percentage points.

<sup>17</sup> The gap statewide between African American and white student in grade 5 was 38.1 percentage points.

<sup>18</sup> The gap statewide between African American and white student in grade 8 was 46.4 percentage points.

<sup>19</sup> The gap statewide between Hispanic and white student in grade 3 was 32.3 percentage points.

<sup>20</sup> The gap statewide between Hispanic and white student in grade 5 was 33.5 percentage points.

<sup>21</sup> The gap statewide between Hispanic and white student in grade 8 was 39.3 percentage points.

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

	Hispanic	24.6	34.2	30.1	38.2	36.7	31.3	38.1	41.0	45.7	47.1
	Asian	29.2	34.2	44.9	48.6	50.9	42.1	48.2	54.1	61.5	62.9
8 <sup>th</sup>	White	74.8	74.2	78.8	75.2	73.5	76.6	77.2	80.5	77.8	77.5
	Black	24.5	22.2	30.1	29.8	23.4	30.6	29.7	33.0	33.0	31.1
	Hispanic	29.1	31.7	33.2	39.5	31.7	39.5	40.3	42.9	43.0	38.2
	Asian	55.2	49.7	56.7	57.3	48.5	62.1	59.3	62.2	60.6	57.9

The Minneapolis Public Schools also administer the Northwest Achievement Levels Tests (NALT) in addition to the state tests. The district uses the test to measure growth and reports that NALT “scale scores increase across grade level on a developmental scale similar to height and weight. As students get older, their skills in reading and math should increase.”<sup>22</sup> The NALT is a standardized test that is normed on students in districts using the measure.

Data from the district indicate that scale scores on the NALT increased from grade to grade but remained largely unchanged within grades. Median reading percentile scores in 2003 ranged from a low of 30 in grade 7 to a high of 43 in grade 2. Median math percentile scores ranged from a low of 30 in grade 9 to a high of 63 in grade 3. (See Table 4 below.)

**Table 4. Average NALT Scale Scores and Median Percentile Ranks by Year**

Grade and Year	Reading Mean Scale Scores					Math Mean Scale Scores				
	% Tested	All	ELL	Sp.Ed.	GE*	% Tested	All	ELL	Sp.Ed.	GE*
<b>Grade Two</b>		<b>3151</b>	865	222	2064		<b>3487</b>	1009	228	2250
2001	96%	<b>183</b>	176	166	187	95%	<b>188</b>	183	176	192
2002	96%	<b>183</b>	176	164	188	96%	<b>190</b>	188	180	192
2003	97%	<b>184</b>	177	169	188	97%	<b>192</b>	189	180	194
Percentile 2001		<b>35<sup>th</sup></b>	22 <sup>nd</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	43 <sup>rd</sup>		<b>39<sup>th</sup></b>	25 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	53 <sup>rd</sup>
Percentile 2003		<b>43<sup>rd</sup></b>	29 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	51 <sup>st</sup>		<b>47<sup>th</sup></b>	38 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	56 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Grade Three</b>		<b>3307</b>	926	273	2108		<b>3517</b>	897	330	2290
2001	96%	<b>193</b>	185	177	198	97%	<b>199</b>	195	188	202
2002	96%	<b>193</b>	187	177	198	96%	<b>201</b>	198	190	204
2003	97%	<b>193</b>	185	178	198	96%	<b>203</b>	200	190	205
Percentile 2001		<b>40<sup>th</sup></b>	26 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	51 <sup>st</sup>		<b>50<sup>th</sup></b>	36 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>	59 <sup>th</sup>
Percentile 2003		<b>35<sup>th</sup></b>	23 <sup>rd</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	46 <sup>th</sup>		<b>63<sup>rd</sup></b>	51 <sup>st</sup>	24 <sup>th</sup>	71 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Grade Four</b>		<b>3324</b>	821	386	2117		<b>3667</b>	890	402	2375
2001	95%	<b>199</b>	191	183	205	95%	<b>205</b>	199	195	209
2002	96%	<b>200</b>	192	185	205	95%	<b>207</b>	203	195	211
2003	97%	<b>199</b>	192	185	205	96%	<b>208</b>	204	197	212
Percentile 2001		<b>39<sup>th</sup></b>	23 <sup>rd</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	49 <sup>th</sup>		<b>43<sup>rd</sup></b>	29 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	51 <sup>st</sup>
Percentile 2003		<b>32<sup>nd</sup></b>	20 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	46 <sup>th</sup>		<b>54<sup>th</sup></b>	45 <sup>th</sup>	20 <sup>th</sup>	61 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Grade Five</b>		<b>3553</b>	799	450	2304		<b>3693</b>	806	476	2411
2001	95%	<b>205</b>	195	189	211	95%	<b>212</b>	205	199	216
2002	97%	<b>205</b>	196	191	211	95%	<b>214</b>	207	201	219

<sup>22</sup> Minneapolis Public Schools 2002-2003 Assessment Report

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

2003	98%	<b>206</b>	197	192	212	96%	<b>215</b>	209	202	220
Percentile 2001		<b>32<sup>nd</sup></b>	17 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	44 <sup>th</sup>		<b>40<sup>th</sup></b>	26 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	48 <sup>th</sup>
Percentile 2003		<b>34<sup>th</sup></b>	19 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	47 <sup>th</sup>		<b>48<sup>th</sup></b>	37 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	59 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Grade Six</b>		<b>3377</b>	<i>711</i>	<i>456</i>	<i>2210</i>		<b>3544</b>	<i>780</i>	<i>444</i>	<i>2320</i>
2001	94%	<b>209</b>	198	194	215	94%	<b>217</b>	209	202	222
2002	95%	<b>210</b>	199	195	216	94%	<b>217</b>	208	203	222
2003	97%	<b>210</b>	200	193	216	95%	<b>218</b>	210	203	224
Percentile 2001		<b>30<sup>th</sup></b>	16 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	42 <sup>nd</sup>		<b>38<sup>th</sup></b>	27 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	51 <sup>st</sup>
Percentile 2003		<b>32<sup>nd</sup></b>	17 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	45 <sup>th</sup>		<b>44<sup>th</sup></b>	27 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	56 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Grade Seven</b>		<b>3341</b>	<i>714</i>	<i>442</i>	<i>2185</i>		<b>3252</b>	<i>654</i>	<i>426</i>	<i>2172</i>
2001	93%	<b>213</b>	200	197	220	92%	<b>221</b>	212	204	227
2002	93%	<b>213</b>	202	198	220	94%	<b>222</b>	212	206	229
2003	96%	<b>213</b>	202	197	220	93%	<b>222</b>	213	205	229
Percentile 2001		<b>30<sup>th</sup></b>	15 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	43 <sup>rd</sup>		<b>36<sup>th</sup></b>	23 <sup>rd</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	49 <sup>th</sup>
Percentile 2003		<b>30<sup>th</sup></b>	16 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	44 <sup>th</sup>		<b>39<sup>th</sup></b>	25 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	53 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>Grade 9</b>		<b>2896</b>	<i>608</i>	<i>311</i>	<i>1924</i>		<b>2508</b>	<i>498</i>	<i>268</i>	<i>1742</i>
2001	70%	<b>220</b>	205	206	226	72%	<b>230</b>	218	211	235
2002	73%	<b>220</b>	205	205	226	68%	<b>232</b>	218	213	238
2003	88%	<b>218</b>	203	203	226	73%	<b>231</b>	218	212	238
Percentile 2001		<b>28<sup>th</sup></b>	9 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	45 <sup>th</sup>		<b>30<sup>th</sup></b>	13 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	40 <sup>th</sup>
Percentile 2003		<b>32<sup>nd</sup></b>	11 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	47 <sup>th</sup>		<b>30<sup>th</sup></b>	14 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	42 <sup>nd</sup>

\* GE refers to general education students who are not Special Education or English Language Learners.

\* SOURCE: Minneapolis Public Schools 2002-2003 Assessment Report

The Minneapolis schools also use NALT to “predict whether a student is likely to pass the eighth grade Minnesota Basic Standards Tests (MBST).” The district reports that average reading and math scores in 2002 were at or above the basic-skills cut-scores except in math at the seventh grade. The percentage of eighth graders passing the MBST in 2003 was 54.7 in reading and 46.6 in math.

Finally, the ACT composite score in Minneapolis in 2001 was 20.6, compared with 22.1 statewide and 21.0 nationally. (The average among the Great City Schools is about 19.0.)

### ATTENDANCE, GRADUATION, AND DROPOUT RATES

Statistics from the Minneapolis Public Schools indicate that approximately 53 percent of the district’s students were in attendance at least 95 percent of the time.

The district also reported a high school completion rate in 2002 of 45 percent among students entering the Minneapolis schools for the first time as ninth graders. The rate differed by racial group, however: African American and Hispanic students had a completion rate of 31 percent and white students had a completion rate of 58 percent. The lowest graduation rates were posted among Native American students (15 percent). (See Table 5.)

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

**Table 5. Four-Year Graduation Rates by Race in 2002**

Group	Percent
African American	31
American Indian	15
Asian American	47
Hispanic American	31
White	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>

The district also awarded 48 IB diplomas in the 2003-04 school year (46 at Southwest and 2 at Henry). And some 189 scholarships were granted to graduating seniors in the 2002 school year, much of it from a \$10 million grant from the Win Wallin Family.

Finally, Minnesota (along with 36 other states) uses the national (NCES) definitions for dropouts and high school completion. The NCES reports a dropout rate among students in grades 9-12 in Minneapolis as 14.4 percent, compared with 10.1 percent in St. Paul and 4.3 percent statewide.

### AYP STATUS

The Minneapolis School district has seven schools in “corrective action” under *No Child Left Behind* in 2004-05, eight schools in “school improvement II” status and three regular schools in “school improvement I” status.<sup>23</sup> This is an increase of six regular schools under NCLB sanction since 2003-04. Another 54 of the district’s schools are in “warning” status for not having made AYP for one year. (See Table 6.) The district itself is in “warning” status.

**Table 6. AYP Status of Minneapolis Schools<sup>24</sup>**

	Minneapolis		
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
School Improvement I	8	2	3
School Improvement II	21	10	8
Corrective Action I	0	0	7
Corrective Action II	0	0	0

### FINANCES

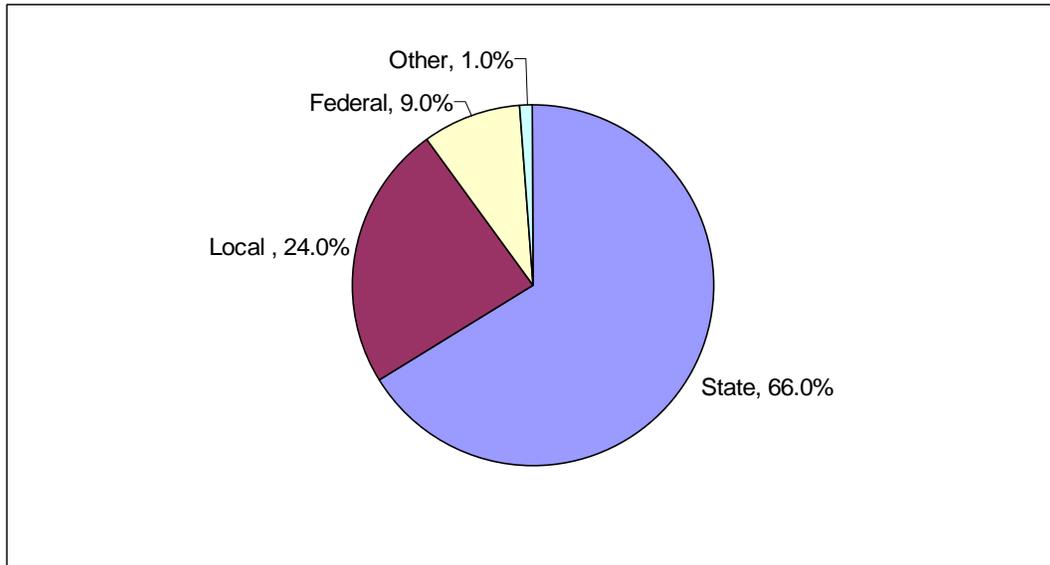
The Minneapolis Public Schools has an FY 2004-05 budget of approximately \$613 million. Some 66 percent of the district’s revenues come from the state, 24 percent come from local tax sources, 9 percent comes from the federal government, and 1 percent from other sources. (See Graph 7 below.)

<sup>23</sup> Two additional alternative schools are also in “school improvement I status.”

<sup>24</sup> The state developed new AYP guidelines for the 2002-03 school year and, therefore, considered that year transitional. Source: Survey on Implementing NCLB in the Great City Schools 2003-04.

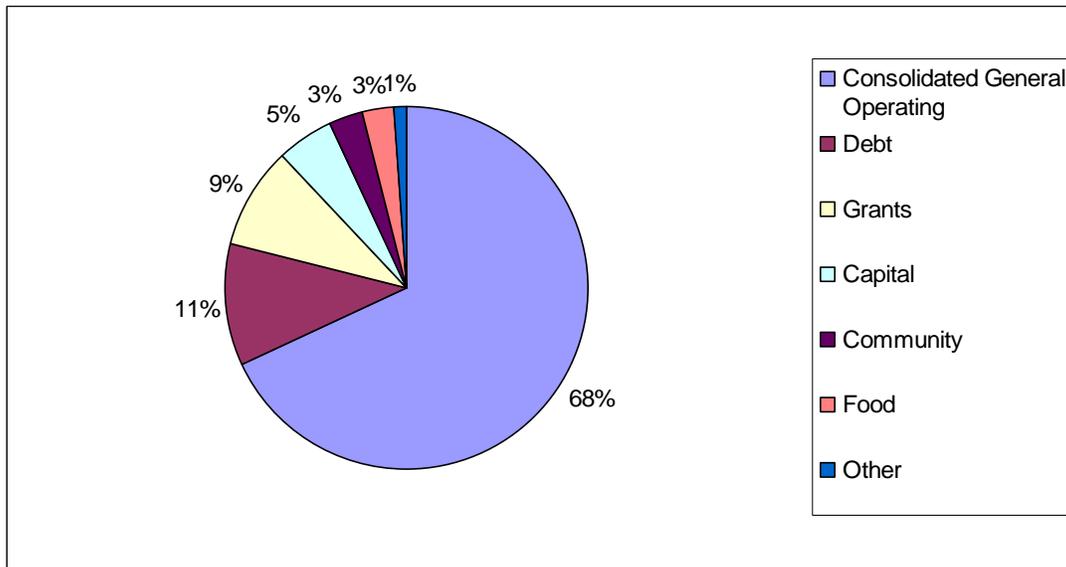
**Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

**Graph 7. Minneapolis School Budgeted Revenues for FY 2004-05<sup>25</sup>**



The district spends about 68 percent of its total expenditures on consolidated general operating expenditures, 11 percent on debt services, 9 percent on grant requirements, 5 percent on capital projects, 3 percent on community services, 3 percent on food services, and 1 percent on other efforts. (See Graph 8 below.)

**Graph 8. Minneapolis School Budgeted Expenditures for FY 2004-05<sup>26</sup>**



<sup>25</sup> 2004-05 Budget, Minneapolis Public Schools, Special School District No. 1. Adopted June 29, 2004.

<sup>26</sup> 2004-05 Budget, Minneapolis Public Schools, Special School District No. 1. Adopted June 29, 2004.

### CHAPTER 2. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

This chapter summarizes the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Support Team on curriculum and instruction at the point when the new superintendent assumed her post at the beginning of the 2004-05 school year. 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>27</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 Minneapolis needs to do to be more like districts that are making strong achievement gains.

#### Highlights

- ★ The district's new superintendent has a strong track record for improving student achievement.
- ★ The district's current site-based curriculum and instructional strategies, which have been in place since 1994, are not likely to allow the system the kinds of coherent strategies it needs to accelerate student performance in the future.
- ★ Critical stakeholders—parents, community, teachers, principals, administrators—are clearly hungry for leadership, direction, and improvement.
- ★ The district's staff is generally knowledgeable, experienced, and committed to the district's success.
- ★ The district's leadership must move aggressively to define a coherent, strategic direction for the school system.
- ★ The district needs to more carefully define its academic goals, strengthen lines of accountability, focus professional development, monitor program implementation, and target the needs of its lowest-performing schools.

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<sup>27</sup> Snipes, J., Doolittle, F., Herlihy, C. (2002). *Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban Schools Systems Improve Student Achievement*. Washington, D.C.: MDRC for the Council of the Great City Schools.

### Findings and Recommendations

The Strategic Support Team assembled by the Council of the Great City Schools interviewed dozens of people and reviewed scores of documents to determine the effectiveness of the instructional program of the Minneapolis public schools. The team devoted most of its attention to reading and math. In general, the team found many highly qualified staff but an instructional program that was not likely to produce strong academic gains in the future. The Team makes a number of proposals to accelerate gains in academic performance.

#### 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.

#### Positive Findings

- The school board is generally considered to be a good board. It follows a “policy governance” approach to leadership that emphasizes student performance and teamwork in the development and oversight of policy. The board is not known for micro-managing the district's administrative operations or interfering with personnel matters to an inordinate degree.
- The district has adopted a straightforward, though somewhat passive, mission statement emphasizing the academic achievement of its students—

*The Minneapolis Public Schools' mission is to ensure that all students learn. We support their growth into knowledgeable, skilled and confident citizens capable of succeeding in their work, personal and family lives into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*

- The board has adopted a Twelve Point Plan for improvement that sets out the district's priorities and overarching goals.<sup>28</sup> The plan places strong emphasis on student performance.

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<sup>28</sup> The Twelve Point Plan indicates that “schools will: (1) Use student data to direct action steps, (2) Ensure quality teaching and focused professional development, (3) Create a more diverse workforce, (4) Target resources to needy schools, (5) Restructure secondary experience to increase graduation and transition to postsecondary, and (6) Reduce over-referral to special education; families and students will (7) improve student attendance, (8) strengthen family-school partnerships and foster positive peer influence, and (9) leverage community partnerships; and together we will: (10) Increase school readiness, (11) Give students more time and greater opportunity, and (12) Increase support for students with behavior related issues.”

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- The school board has also adopted a *District Improvement Plan* (DIA) for 2002-05 that articulates four main goals: (1) Enrich and accelerate academic achievement for all students, (2) Welcome and engage students, families and community in education, (3) Implement accountability systems for providing, assessing, and supporting quality instruction, and (4) Ensure effective and integrated management of the business enterprise. The team thought the DIA offered a good conceptual plan, although few people interviewed knew much about the goals the DIA had set.
- The school board recently initiated and conducted a community engagement process that sought input on the district's direction.
- The school board appears to understand that the district needs to change and reform its efforts if the system is to improve student achievement at a rate the public is demanding.
- The school board underwent a recent national search process that secured a superintendent, Thandiwe Peebles, with a strong track record for improving student achievement. Ms. Peebles had headed the CEO's schools in Cleveland that oversaw gains in that city's lowest performing schools.
- The school board has given the new superintendent authority to reform the district's instructional programs and the superintendent has moved quickly to begin drafting a strategic plan for raising student performance. The draft plan should be ready for board and community input in December, 2004, or early 2005.
- The district's teachers, principals, central office staff, principals, and community appear to understand that what the district is doing is not working as well as it should, and are hungry for direction and improvement.
- District staff and teachers appear to understand that achievement gaps in the district are wide and that student enrollment is declining. Staff and teachers comprehend that the district is under pressure to improve.

### Areas of Concern

- The school board has been excellent in its adherence to policy governance, but the side effect is that this "hands-off" approach has not exhibited much urgency or direction for improving student achievement.
- It is not clear that the school board has established the policies necessary to support or implement the *Twelve Point Plan* it adopted.
- The goals identified in the *District Improvement Agenda* (DIA) are often imprecise and lack the specificity needed to drive the academic work of the

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district or of individual schools. For example, the DIA indicates that the “percentage of schools that have a balance of experienced and new staff increases” and “Passing the MBST each year increases.” The DIA also does not reflect the kinds of goals that are now required under NCLB. Finally, the DIA lacks baseline indicators that would tell the public where the district started in its efforts to improve.

- The district’s overall strategy that relies on site-based instructional leadership and on the skills of its school and central-office personnel is not likely to produce the academic gains that the school system needs to improve at the rate the public wants or that will keep it out of “district improvement” status under *No Child Left Behind*. The school district has used a site-based approach to instruction for well-over ten years, but the result is that the district’s leadership over the years abdicated its responsibility for student achievement to the individual schools. Research on some of the nation’s faster improving urban school districts indicates that they take direct responsibility at the central-office leadership level for defining the district’s instructional program.
- Some critical community organizations report that they feel that the school board has not exercised strong enough leadership over the district during the last several years. Some describe the board as being indecisive, inconsistent, or easily diverted in the face of community pressure. Others describe themselves as being largely disconnected from the district’s decision making process.
- Many principals and teachers reported that they have viewed the central office over the years as irrelevant to their work. The Strategic Support Team heard many comments indicating that principals and teachers have had to create the direction, many of the programs, and much of the technical support that they feel ought to be coming from the central office.
- The perceived lack of direction from the central office has resulted in school-based staff feeling disconnected from central-office decision making.
- No one in the district appears to be viewed by the community as pushing for or leading a systemwide initiative to reform and improve.
- There is a citywide perception of inequities in the school district involving achievement gaps, programs, teacher quality, facilities, and other services. The Strategic Support Team often heard comments from those interviewed about differences between the schools on the north and south sides of town.
- In general, the Minneapolis school district seems to be a system of schools rather than a school system. Many people in the district appear to be doing their “own thing.”

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### Recommendations

Urban districts that have made significant improvements in student performance have school boards that set raising student achievement as their first priority, define the initial vision for the district, and work 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. Convene a meeting (or retreat) of the board and the superintendent to review the superintendent's new draft strategic plan, its broad framework and underlying details to make sure that everyone is in general accord with respect to the district's direction and reforms. (A1)

This process need not occur in a single meeting. A series of discussions that are facilitated by an external person that the board trusts and respects might be more in keeping with the scope of the task. The board should also come to some agreement about the extent of the community input it will seek about the superintendent's new draft plan. Some districts hold community forums, summits, or town hall meetings. Others conduct hearings or school-based forums. Others handle the task internally. No one method is necessarily better than another, but some community input on the draft plan is advisable.

2. Make sure that the new plan articulates a coherent districtwide strategy for raising student performance rather than simply a school-by-school effort, even if this means turning down programs, resources, and initiatives offered by others that do not comport with or are not aligned with the board and superintendent's joint vision of where they want the district to go. (A2)
3. Articulate in the strongest possible terms—at the school board and superintendent leadership levels—a clear sense of urgency and commitment to raising student performance for all the children in the Minneapolis Public Schools. Everyone in the district and across the city should understand that raising student achievement is the school system's highest priority and that all district staff will need to be held accountable for it. (A3)
4. Have the board take the lead in selling the draft reform plan to the community, business leaders, and others. The board needs to “own” and support the reforms with a single voice, particularly when there is the inevitable push-back on portions of the plan. (A4)
5. Conduct a detailed review of board policies to ensure that they are in accord with the new draft strategic plan. The review should focus specifically on policies related to the curriculum, professional development, accountability, and instructional time. (A5)
6. Charge the new superintendent with building stronger political bridges to the community. The community needs to feel they are a part of the superintendent's

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efforts to improve student achievement. This work has begun but must be aggressively continued. (A6)

7. Charge the communications department with developing a community engagement plan that is approved, endorsed, and supported by the board. The Council has a number of community engagement plans from other cities that it can share with the Minneapolis leadership team. (A7)
8. Charge the superintendent with providing the board with regular status reports on progress in the implementation of the strategic plan and trends in student achievement. The plan should be reviewed and updated at least annually. (A8)

### 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 Minneapolis Public Schools.

#### Positive Findings

- The district has generally made serious efforts over the years to set goals for improvement.
- The district produces *Measuring Up*, a bi-annual publication of progress towards the district's goals.
- There is a general recognition from stakeholders inside and outside the district that the school system needed to establish precise goals and explicit strategies to attain those goals.

#### Areas of Concern

- In some cases, the district's goals, where they are explicit, reflect low expectations of student performance. For example, "70% of the students will attend school 95% of the time."
- Many of the district's goals are based on results from the NALT rather than on the state assessment. However good the NALT may be, its results do not count against the goals the district must currently meet under NCLB. (More on this issue is found under the Data section of this chapter.)
- The Strategic Support Team was unable to find any measurable goals either districtwide or school-by-school that related to narrowing or closing the district's

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

racially-identifiable achievement gaps. Targets set in school improvement plans (SIP) were generally set in terms of scale scores rather than proficiency levels. Some lacked numerical goals. Others did not have proficiency targets. Most of the school improvement plans reviewed, moreover, lacked subgroup targets.

- Most of the district staff members that the Strategic Support Team interviewed were unable to identify the state proficiency bars that determined whether their schools met AYP targets.

### **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. Fort 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. Add a set of baseline indicators to the DIA and revise its goals to make sure they are concrete and measurable. (B1)
10. Develop a set of districtwide and school-by-school goals on the MCA tied to NCLB that are measurable and accompanied by a specific timeline. Make sure that the school-by-school goals roll up to the districtwide targets. (B2)
11. Be specific about how each goal and target is measured. For example, “the percentage of students passing the MBST will increase from 32 percent to 54 percent over three years.” (B3)
12. Establish subgroup targets (by race, language, income, and disability status) districtwide and school-by-school that are aligned with NCLB. (B4)
13. Base the district’s and each school’s academic goals and targets on proficiency levels on the state’s MCA and MBST. (B5)
14. Modify the district’s school improvement planning template to include each school’s MCA targets and subgroup goals. (B6)
15. Be sure that the district’s goals include explicit targets for advanced placement course participation, numbers of students taking core courses, graduation and dropout rates, and the like. (B7)

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### 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 Minneapolis Public Schools.

#### Positive Findings

- The new superintendent, Thandiwe Peebles, has been placed on a performance contract by the school board. Her evaluations are tied, in part, to progress in improving academic performance in the Minneapolis Public Schools.
- Staff at the central office told the Strategic Support Team that they support accountability and did not appear to be averse to having more of it infused into the system.
- The district publishes a great deal of data on student performance and is generally transparent about its student results. The data are accessible to the public on the school system's website.<sup>29</sup>
- The district's Voluntary Compliance Agreement with the Office of Civil Rights calls for teachers to use a self-assessment tool to review their classroom instructional programs. (It is not clear how often these data are collected or how they are used.)

#### Areas of Concern

- The superintendent appears to be the *only* person in the school district who is evaluated based at least in part on the district's progress in improving academic performance. No one else in the school system appears to be held accountable for districtwide academic performance.
- There are no consequences for anyone on staff—either in the central office or at the schools—if student achievement does not improve or if racially-identifiable achievement gaps do not narrow.
- Job descriptions do not contain references to improving student achievement at either the district or school levels.

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<sup>29</sup> The Strategic Support Team found a number of typographical and grammatical errors on the district's website. The superintendent should charge the communications department with editing this material. Currently, each department is responsible for placing materials from their own units on the website.

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

- Staff evaluation forms and procedures do not include student achievement as an aspect of personnel assessments. The Performance Review Process, for instance, occurs annually for principals and assistant principals with less than three years tenure and once every three years for others, but does not appear to evaluate staff on the basis of their progress in meeting academic performance targets.

### **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.

1. Place all senior instructional staff, including area superintendents, on performance contracts tied to the attainment of districtwide achievement goals, including goals for the district's subgroups. (C1)
2. Begin developing and phasing in performance contracts for all school principals that are tied to progress in meeting individual school-by-school academic targets. (C2)
3. Charge the human resources department with revamping the job descriptions and evaluation procedures and forms for central office instructional staff and principals to reflect districtwide and school-by-school academic goals. (C3)
4. Revise the district's school improvement planning template to include district and school academic targets, including targets for subgroups. The school improvement plans should also contain descriptions of activities designed to attain subgroup goals, professional development needs and activities, interventions, and parent involvement strategies. (C4)

### **D. Curriculum and 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.<sup>30</sup>

### **Positive Findings**

- There is strong recognition by the district's stakeholders—principals, teachers, central office staff, and the board—that the district needs a more cohesive

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<sup>30</sup> The team did not extensively review the district's science or social studies program.

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instructional program. District staff and teachers also understand that the system is overdue in updating its textbooks, particularly in elementary reading and math.

- The district has placed a high priority on improving its reading and math performance.
- The district has a well-developed system articulating its state standards and MPS grade level expectations.
- The district has begun a mapping project to align its instructional program and how it is implemented in classrooms to the state standards. Many of the central office staff interviewed by the Team were familiar with the mapping project.
- The district has a strong dual language program. In addition, the district uses the state's ELA standards on which to base its instructional program for English language learners, something that not all cities do very well.
- Some principals have actually begun doing their own curriculum alignment efforts in lieu of direction from the central office. While this may present problems with consistency from school to school, it does signal that principals understand the need and value of this alignment.
- The district requires 90 minutes of reading instruction and 60 minutes of math instruction every day, although the district has no way of determining how well the policy is implemented.
- The district uses a wide variety of intervention programs to help students who are not performing at proficiency levels, but there appears to be a limited number of evaluations that have been done on the effectiveness of these programs as far as the team could determine.
- The district uses some of its federal funding (see next chapter) to provide literacy coaches and mentors for its schools.
- The district has secured a federal "Reading First" and a sizable "Early Reading First" grant from the U.S. Department of Education (see next chapter). The "Reading First" grant runs from 2004 to 2006 and is intended to serve some 1,028 students in grades k-3 in four schools: Cityview, Bryn Mawr, Loring, and W. Harry Davis. Schools were selected on the basis of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders scoring below 1420 on the MCA that had at least 85 percent staff support for a project. Program funds are used for professional development, literacy coordinators, TOSAs, instructional materials, assessments, and supplies. The programs use a mix of supplemental materials, interventions, and assessment tools.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Supplemental materials at Cityview, for instance, include CCC, Accelerated Reader, Read Naturally, HM Little Readers, and others. A slightly different mix is used at the other schools.

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- The district has a well-regarded arts program (Arts for Academic Achievement) that has been infused into the instructional program in some 35 schools.<sup>32</sup>

### Areas of Concern

- The district lacks consistency or coherence in its instructional program for reading and math. The system's reliance on site-based management over the years has resulted in a very fractured program that has each school largely shaping its own instructional programs, using different materials, and aiming in different directions. It is difficult for the central office to support the varied programs the schools use, provide professional development or technical assistance to support them, or spur systemwide gains with this school-by-school approach.
- Many of the central office's instructional staff members were not able to differentiate for the Strategic Support Team the difference between the district's curriculum and the programs that the system or its schools purchase. In addition, it was clear to the team that the "reading and math wars" were still being fought out (at least at the central office), a situation that was contributing to the district's lack of instructional cohesion and direction.
- The district has not updated its reading program for several years and is badly in need of a new textbook adoption or updated reading series. The district is using an older version of the Houghton-Mifflin reading program (Invitations to Literacy, 1998) in grades 1-5 and a more recent edition of "Everyday Mathematics."<sup>33</sup> Middle schools use "The Connected Mathematics Program" (CMP).
- The district requires all schools with grades 6-8 to have class sets or individual texts at each grade level. Many use McDougal Littell's Language of Literature Series. High schools have a choice of Language of Literacy or the EMC Series.
- It is also unclear what other instructional materials or programs the district uses because much of it is acquired by the individual schools.<sup>34</sup> The district has little way of knowing whether the materials are aligned with state standards, how much they cost, whether they are up to date, and whether they are effective. The district also does not appear to have any fixed criteria for the selection, retention, or elimination of materials.
- The district's elementary school reading program lacks any kind of pacing system to help guide teachers on when to teach designated skills. The district's math

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<sup>32</sup> The program was initiated with funding from the Annenberg Fund.

<sup>33</sup> "Everyday Mathematics: The University of Chicago School Mathematics Project." Chicago: Everyday Learning Corporation, 2001. The program is augmented by "Connected Mathematics." Menlo Park, Dale Seymour Publications, 1998.

<sup>34</sup> The district does have a recommended set of supplemental materials for reading and math that were selected by a committee of classroom teachers and curriculum specialists. It does not appear that schools are bound by materials on these approved lists, however.

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program has a pacing system but it is built around quarterly intervals and lacks explicit objectives.

- The district lacks a uniform set of instructional interventions that it recommends schools use to boost performance among students who are beginning to fall behind or to accelerate achievement among others.<sup>35</sup>
- The district has approved a large number of high school courses in many core subjects. The district, for example, teaches 134 different math courses. Some of these courses are only taught in a single school or a handful of schools. The multitude of courses cost the district an undetermined amount of money that it probably does not need to be spending and harms the district's ability to ensure uniform course rigor.
- The use of different materials and programs from school-to-school means that students moving between schools over the course of the year may encounter disparate instruction materials, philosophies, and approaches with each move. The problem is exacerbated by high student mobility and the district's system of school choice.
- The district uses a dual-track system for teaching math at the high school level. One track is devoted to a traditional algebra, geometry, and algebra II sequence and the second uses the Interactive Math Project (IMP) system (published by Key Curriculum Press in 1997).<sup>36</sup> Schools are given discretion over how they place students in these tracks. And professional development to support the IMP program was funded by the National Science Foundation.
- The district's course catalogue is very out-of-date.<sup>37</sup>
- Eleven schools use one Comprehensive School Reform model or another. It is not clear that these models have been evaluated to determine what, if any, impact they have had on student performance or whether they are proving to be cost effective.
- The summer school program uses standard commercially available instructional packages that are not differentiated by student need.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The Strategic Support Team identified a number of reading programs (PIC Resources, special education) that the district made available to schools, including Sounds Abound, Road to the Code, Read Well, Horizons, Corrective Reading, Language!, Barnell Loft, Timed Readings-Jamestown, Early Reading Intervention, CCC, Read 180, Ladders to Literacy, Ravenscourt, Merrill Linguistic Readers, Orton Gillingham, Edmark, Milestones, Read Naturally, Language for Learning, Accelerated Reader, Soar to Success, and many others.

<sup>36</sup> PreK-12 Mathematics Curriculum: Overview and Sample Materials for the CCSSO Curriculum Audit, Summer, 2004.

<sup>37</sup> Minneapolis Public Schools, Student Information Network, 1989-90 Common Course Description Directory. Courses approved after this catalogue was published are maintained in separate files in the curriculum office.

<sup>38</sup> Voyager in reading for k-5, Summer Success Literature Kit for 6-8, and MBST test prep for grades 8-12.

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- The district uses Sylvan Learning for its after-school supplemental educational services (SES) program. The program is delivered on school grounds and appears to be the standard Sylvan program. (See next chapter on federal programs.)
- The curriculum and instructional unit of the central office is not organized in a way that would provide coherent instructional leadership for the school district or support for its individual schools. Schools are left on their own to devise an instructional strategy. (Some reporting lines involving federal programs were unclear. See next chapter on federal programs.)
- The central office has become overly reliant on its Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs) to do much of its management and administrative work. These staff members are often very qualified and skilled but they have widely disparate responsibilities without the commensurate pay and rotate out of their positions after no longer than five years.
- The district and probably many of the schools have a large number of consultants, a situation that probably adds to the fractured nature of the instructional program.
- Most schools in the district have “site councils” or “education councils” composed of the principal, parents, students, teachers, specialists, businesses, community groups and others to set goals and make instructional decisions.

### Recommendations

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

1. Begin a thorough review of the district’s pk-12 curriculum in reading and math to make sure that it is— (D1)
  - (a) Defined around what each student should know and do by grade and subject.
  - (b) Aligned with state standards and assessments.
  - (c) Independent of any commercially-developed package or materials.
  - (d) Reviewed by a district curriculum committee, parents, and other special groups.
  - (e) Vertically and horizontally aligned from grade to grade and includes the appropriate scope and sequence.
  - (f) Detailed enough to guide instruction.

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- (g) Paced on a ten-day or two week basis and aligned with the state test (MCA) and the quarterly assessments recommended in the data section of this chapter.<sup>39</sup>
2. Adopt a new upgraded reading textbook series that can be implemented districtwide in the elementary schools (K-5). The easiest step to take might be to simply upgrade the district's old Houghton Mifflin series to the new program, "Nation's Choice."<sup>40</sup> Whatever reading program the district chooses, it should reflect the components and instructional methodologies identified by the National Reading Panel as critical to reading success:<sup>41</sup> (D2)
- *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.
  - *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 1<sup>st</sup> grade; includes a carefully selected set of letter-sound relationships that are organized into a logical sequence; and when it provides teachers with precise directions for the teaching of these relationships.
  - *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 may come next.
  - *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.

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<sup>39</sup> The district might also consider reviewing St. Paul's curriculum to see what might be used in Minneapolis rather than starting from scratch in the development process.

<sup>40</sup> See the next chapter on federal programs for a strategy on how to pay for the reading adoption.

<sup>41</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.

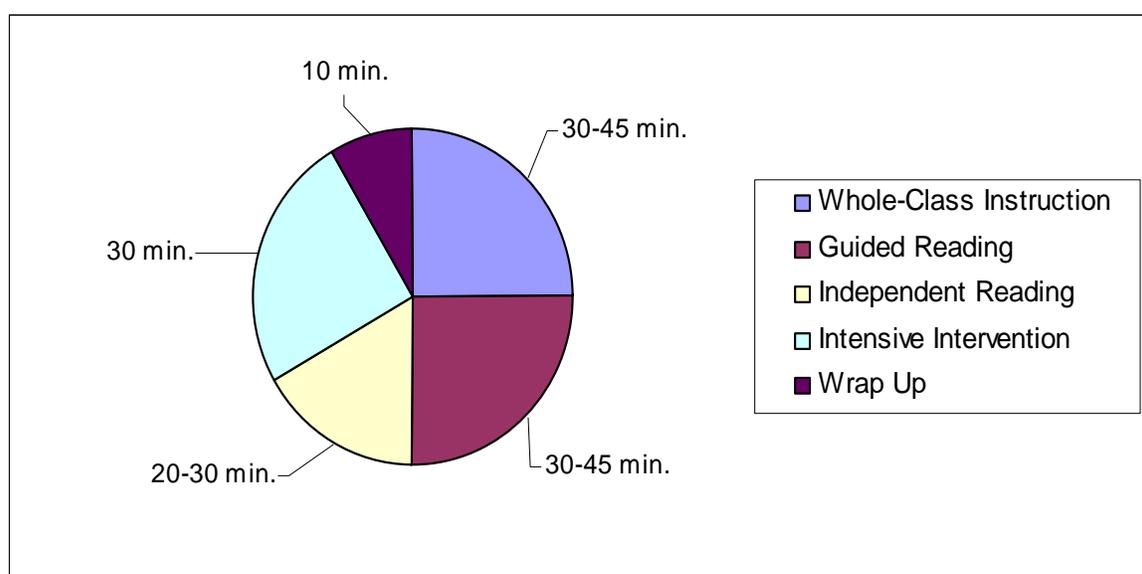
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- *Vocabulary building*: the ability to understand and use words orally and in reading. This component is important because beginning readers use their oral vocabulary to make sense of the words they see in print and need to know what words mean before they can understand what they are reading. Vocabulary can be developed directly when students are explicitly taught both individual words 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.
3. Consider using a literature-based program, in addition to the classroom anthologies, after grade 5 in order to spur comprehension skills. (D3)
  4. Conduct a detailed analysis of the alignment of the new adoption with state standards and assessment; identify any gaps between the commercial package and the state standards; and begin filling those gaps with supplemental materials. (D4)
  5. Identify a series of reading and math intervention programs (aligned with the curriculum) for the schools to use in cases where students are not keeping pace with instruction. Conversely, the district should identify acceleration measures to take students beyond grade level. (The district should make sure that it negotiates for all available professional development, technical assistance, and supplemental materials that the publisher has for a purchase of this size.) (D5)
  6. Require a 120 minute instructional reading block for the district's lowest performing schools. Include time for whole-class instruction, teacher-guided reading, independent reading and writing, and intensive interventions. (D6) (See Graph 9.)
  7. Conduct a school-by-school inventory of models, programs, materials, software, courses, and other items used by the schools; evaluate or assess their effectiveness; and begin phasing some of them out. (D7)
  8. Develop a set of standards to use for the purchase, retention, and elimination of programs, materials, software, and other instructional items. (D8)
  9. Streamline and standardize core courses districtwide in reading, math, and the sciences. Update the district's course catalogue when this is done and establish a more uniform process by which courses are approved. (D9)
  10. Renegotiate the contract with Sylvan to make sure that its program is more aligned with the district's new reading and math program and is more tailored to the individual skill needs of students than the statement of goals suggests. (D10)
  11. Reorganize the curriculum and instruction unit of the school district under a single Chief Academic Officer. (See Figure 2 for recommended organization chart.) (D11)

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12. Redesign the district’s summer school courses so that they are differentiated according to the specific skill deficits of individual students (based on their “Individual Learning Plan”—ILP) rather than being as generic as they now are. (D12)
13. Consider retaining a reading consultant to help the Chief Academic Officer develop and implement a districtwide reading strategy. The position should last for only two to three years and then be phased out. (D13)
14. Conduct or contract for a comprehensive evaluation (academic and cost) of the district’s IMP programs. Consider moving to a single districtwide math program after the evaluation. (D14)

**Graph 9. Structure of 120 Minute Literacy Model (K-5)<sup>42</sup>**



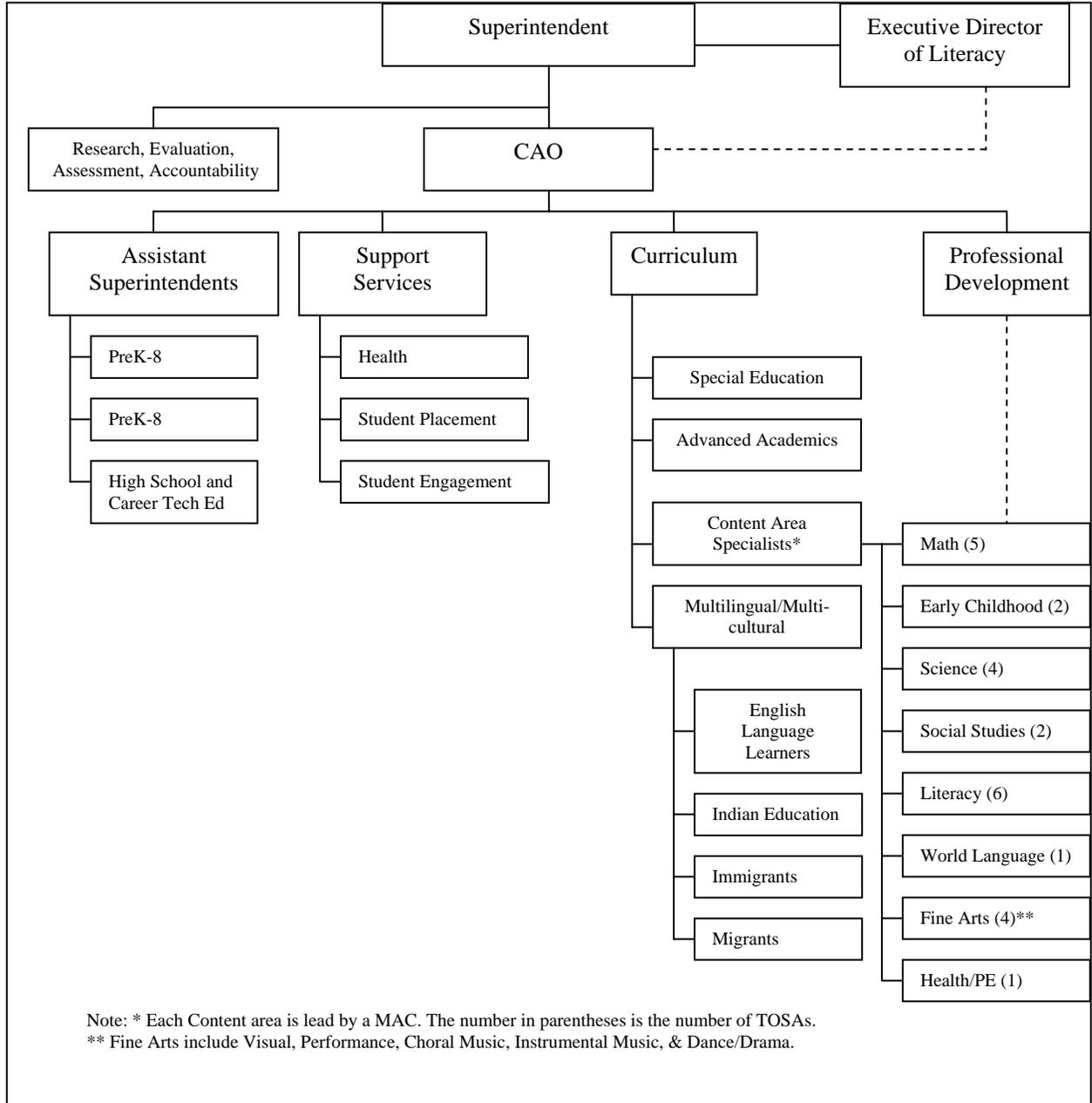
<sup>42</sup> **Whole-class instruction** (30-45 minutes) in core program: should focus on specific instructional activities and the subsequent instructional time used for support and to provide opportunity for practice. The goal is to impart skills using direct and explicit instruction. Time should 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, comprehension, read-alouds, writing, and grammar and writing.

**Small-group teacher-led guided supported 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 re-teaching; 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 aim to close instructional gaps and accelerate learning to attain grade-level performance.

Figure 2. Proposed Organizational Chart for Curriculum and Instruction



15. Consider having the district’s senior instructional staff make a site visit to any of several urban public school systems across the country that are making substantial academic progress to see what their instructional programs look like. (The Council can help set these up.) (D15)

**E. Professional Development and Teacher Quality**

Another feature that improving urban school systems have in common is a high quality and cohesive professional development program that is closely aligned to their

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instructional program. These programs are often defined centrally, but built around the district's articulated curriculum, delivered uniformly across the district, and differentiated in ways that address the specific needs of teachers. These faster-improving districts also find ways to ensure that some of their better teachers are working in schools with the greatest needs.

### Positive Findings

- The school district staff and teachers are generally of high quality and many have been with the district for several years.
- The reading and math institutes held by the district received high praise from people who attended them. Principals were also encouraged to attend the institutes along with their teachers.<sup>43</sup>
- The district has a number of partnerships with local colleges and universities to recruit and certify teachers, including partnerships with Augsburg College, University of St. Thomas, and Concordia University.
- Many principals have taken responsibility for staff training by securing and providing their own professional development.
- The district has any number of large federal grants (see chapter on federal programs) that have mandatory set-asides for professional development. The district has yet to spend or budget some of its federal Title II funds at the time of this review.
- The district and the teachers union generally maintain positive and constructive relations with one another.<sup>44</sup>
- The district's ProPay system, developed in conjunction with the teachers union in 1995, is considered by many staff as having the elements of good professional development for teachers and received generally high marks. (The program awards nearly \$400k in bonuses to teachers going through the program.)
- The district also has a Professional Development Plan (PDP) designed to develop the pedagogical skills of teachers. Most of the district's teachers have participated in the program.
- The district provides a summer professional development opportunities and Professional Development Centers for teachers.

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<sup>43</sup> The institutes are part of the district's Learning Partnership involving CEPRE (University of Pennsylvania), the Annenberg Institute, and the Center for Research in the Context of Teaching (Stanford University) and funded by the MacArthur Foundation.

<sup>44</sup> *Quality Teaching and Learning*. Minneapolis Public Schools and Minneapolis Federation of Teachers Local 59, AFT.

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- Principals can identify Teachers on Special Assignments (TOSAs) to provide support for classroom teachers. Many principals also use portions of their budgets to hire academic coaches.
- The district has as many as thirteen release days for teachers that could be used for professional development.
- The district has an unusually large number of National Board Certified Teachers.
- The district is working to provide all teachers with Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol (SIOP) training.

### Areas of Concern

- Very few teachers (5 percent) are actually accommodated by the reading and math institutes convened by the district. The district also does not appear to have an effective train-the-trainer system by which lessons from the institutes are spread or disseminated. The district was unable to articulate the criteria by which institute participants were selected. Training provided by the institutes did not appear to be differentiated or shaped by school or district performance data. Finally, some schools were under the mistaken impression that they could not participate in both the reading and math institutes, and that they had to choose one or the other.
- The Professional Development Process (PDP) was acclaimed by the central office but was panned by the principals and the teachers interviewed by the Strategic Support Team as a waste of time and paperwork.<sup>45</sup> The process does not appear to be grounded in the state's standards or constitute a meaningful professional development program. Otherwise, the district appears to lack a uniform, coherent professional development strategy or plan.
- The ProPay system is well received by teachers and appears to have a number of components that could contribute to professional growth. (Many of the elements are similar to those found in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards process.) But the effort is too individual to serve as an approach for districtwide professional development.
- The Team found no evidence that any professional development offered by the district was routinely evaluated, monitored for attendance, grounded in student performance data, or differentiated by teacher experience and skills. Nor did the Team find any evidence that the district conducted routine follow-ups on the professional development to see whether skills were being implemented or used.

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<sup>45</sup> About 63 percent of licensed staff indicated in 2003 that the PDP was helpful in supporting and improving instruction.

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- Only two of the thirteen teacher-release days are devoted to any districtwide professional development. Other days and their use are determined at the school level. The system, for its part, appears to lack any systemwide professional development strategy or program, mirroring the fractured nature of the district's instructional program. Most of the professional development provided in the district differs from school to school. The district does not monitor or evaluate the use of these professional development days.
- The teacher contract articulates a wide range of district instructional practices and procedures. The advantage of this is that everyone is clear about the rules, but the downside is that changes in instructional practice are subject to the bargaining table.<sup>46</sup>
- There appears to be very little routine professional development among teachers and staff at the high school level.
- The local coaches hired by the principals do not receive any standardized or uniform training or professional development from the district.
- The district and its schools rely to a large extent on consultants to provide their professional development. There appears to be very little staff capacity inside the district to provide professional development. There also does not appear to be any districtwide standards for the quality, content, or duration of professional development either at the district or school levels.
- The district has only a handful of mentors (reported to the team to number only two to five) to work with new teachers as part of the Professional Assistance and Review (PAR) program. Other mentors have been cut from the budget. Otherwise, the district has no identifiable training or induction program for new teachers.
- The district has made an unusual distinction between professional development and staff training. Each function has its own office and director.
- The district has no way to build its own capacity and human capital because of its reliance on TOSAs and POSAs. There is also no systematic training, evaluation, or monitoring of either the TOSAs or POSAs.
- The teacher contract calls for only 171 instructional days each school year. This number is well below the average nationwide for other major urban school districts.
- The state's seniority rules result in unusual bumping patterns when teachers are laid off, resulting in teachers teaching in areas for which they are certified but

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<sup>46</sup> Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis Federation of Teachers #59. *2003-2005 Teacher Contract*.

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have not taught in for some time. The rules also appear to have the effect of reducing the number of teachers of color who do not have as much seniority in the district. The teaching force lacks the diversity seen in many other urban school systems.<sup>47</sup>

- Four people have been in charge of the Teacher & Instructional Support (TIS) unit over the last four years.<sup>48</sup>

### 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.

1. Develop a standardized, districtwide professional development plan that is closely tied to the district's instructional goals. The 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 and support classroom teachers and principals. (The plan might be developed with a committee of teachers, central office instructional leaders, union representatives, principals, and others.) (E1)
2. Ensure that the professional development plan includes a component to train all teachers and differentiates training by teacher experience level, previous professional development, and student performance. It should also include explicit components for special education, bilingual education, other special populations, and diversity training. (E2)
3. Ensure that the plan includes strategies for upgrading the skills of central office staff, teachers on special assignments, coaches, directors, and assistant superintendents responsible for student achievement. Training should focus on the latest research in reading and math instruction and on central-office responsibilities for providing leadership for the district's instructional program. (E3)
4. Establish a districtwide Principal's Academy to provide professional development on instructional leadership and implementation of the district's reading and math programs. (E4)

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<sup>47</sup> Data available to the team showed that 83 percent of the district's teachers were white, 10 percent were African American, 3 percent were Asian American, 2 percent were Hispanic, and 2 percent were Native American.

<sup>48</sup> The unit is generally responsible for providing leadership and direct services to teachers.

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

5. Charge the research unit with designing a process for evaluating the district's professional development program. Base part of the evaluation on the program's effect on student achievement. (E5)
6. Allocate at least six of the 13 days of release time for districtwide professional development on the implementation of the new reading program, state standards, the district's curriculum, use of supplemental materials, intervention strategies, pacing, classroom management, and other issues. Allocate the remaining seven days to the individual schools to address unique school needs, parental involvement, and the like. (E6)
7. Consolidate the staff training and the professional development units into a single department reporting to a director of professional development. (E7)
8. Charge the content-area office with implementing and monitoring the professional development plan and following up with technical assistance. (E8)
9. Develop a new job description for academic coaches and have TOSAs apply for these new positions, and then reduce the number of TOSAs over time. (See organization chart.) (E9)
10. Provide new field-based coaches with uniform professional development on their areas of responsibility and assign them to the curriculum and instruction unit.<sup>49</sup> (E10)
11. Charge the government affairs unit with developing a legislative strategy to change the state law on the teacher seniority system so that it doesn't so adversely affect the number of teachers of color and the numbers of teachers teaching in new areas. (E11)
12. Charge the human resources department with developing a succession plan for senior staff. A number of staff members have indicated that they are retiring soon, yet there are no plans for replacing them. (E12)

### **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 Minneapolis Public Schools can press their reforms into the schools.

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<sup>49</sup> Coaches would be field-based and would provide direct support to schools and TOSAs would be central office staff developing curriculum and assessments, leading professional development efforts, and coordinating coaches' activities.

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### Positive Findings

- The district has a fairly well-developed school improvement planning process at the schools. The plans are reviewed and approved by the central office.
- The district's schools have hired a series of literacy coaches to help support each school's literacy initiatives.
- The district has a number of TOSAs who could be used to support staff and teachers at the building level.

### Areas of Concern

- The district does not have a formal process for monitoring what happens in the classroom. Part of the reason for this, of course, is that the district does not have a standardized instructional program that it could monitor in the schools.
- The district lacks any “walk-through” process, formal or informal, by which coaches or principals monitor classroom instruction. Many teachers reported to the Strategic Support Team that they rarely saw their principals in the classroom. A few teachers, however, reported the opposite.
- School principals in the district are not required to monitor classroom practice, are not evaluated on it, or trained to do it.
- The district does not have a way to ensure that its quarterly pacing system in math is being followed by math teachers. (There is no pacing system in reading instruction.)
- There is no formal process by which academic superintendents at the central office monitor the practice of school principals, although they do evaluate them.
- The district has no mechanism to tell whether its policy on 90 minutes of reading instruction and 60 minutes of math instruction each day is being implemented. Many teachers the Team talked to indicated that the policy was being followed, but the district has no way to know for sure.
- The school improvement plans lack any connection to the district's strategic plan or academic goals. In addition, the school improvement plans do not appear to roll up to any districtwide plan, in part because the plan is only now being developed. The school improvement plans, moreover, are not tied to the academic goals of their subgroups set by the state under NCLB. And the plans lacks some of the “schoolwide” elements required under federal law. (See chapter on federal programs.)

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- The district also has no systematic mechanism for monitoring the fidelity of implementation of any of the programs that it implements either at the district or school levels.

### 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.

1. Charge the superintendent with meeting regularly with academic superintendents and principals to review school and subgroup achievement data and needed intervention strategies. (F1)
2. Charge the principals with monitoring—in conjunction with coaches—the implementation of a districtwide reading and math program. (F2)
3. Charge the superintendent, as part of the strategic plan, with developing and monitoring a uniform classroom “walk-through” system for principals and coaches. The system should focus on classroom instructional practice, alignment of teaching practice with the curriculum, adherence to pacing guides, and needs for professional development. Begin with reading and math at the elementary level.<sup>50</sup> (F3)
4. Assign a staff member at the central office to be a districtwide reading and math coach coordinator—one for each content area. This person should be located in the curriculum office and charged with coordinating the work of the coaches and keeping them focused on the reading and math programs that the district should be implementing. (F4)
5. Charge the chief academic officer with developing and providing professional development for principals, coaches, TOSAs and department chairs on how to conduct classroom observations, “walk-through” procedures, and the like. (F5)
6. Establish a process by which reading and math coaches can meet or talk about their work on a regular basis. Meetings might be done regionally, by grade, or subject area. (F6)
7. Charge the Chief Academic Officer, coach coordinator, and principals with developing a process and procedure by which reading and math coaches are evaluated. Part of the evaluation should be based on student achievement and should include input from teachers. (F7)

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<sup>50</sup> The team recommends the following consultants to help with this process: Carolyn Downey, University of California at San Diego, (858) 488.5350; 3417 Oceanfront Walk, Suite A, San Diego, CA 92109 for walk-through training or Lauren Resnick at the Institute for Learning (University of Pittsburgh).

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8. Revamp the district’s school improvement planning template to include all “schoolwide” projects requirements under federal law, along with district and school state assessment results and targets (measured in proficiency levels), professional development strategy—tied to a districtwide professional development strategy, strategies for academic acceleration, and budget. (F8)

### G. Assessment and Data Use

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 Minneapolis schools’ student assessment program, how it linked with the state testing effort, and how the district was using data to improve achievement.

#### Positive Findings

- The district administers the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) in grades 3 and 5 in reading and math. It also tests its eighth graders on the Minnesota Basic Standards Test (MBST).<sup>51</sup>
- The district administers the Northwest Achievement Levels Tests (NALT) in grades 2-7 and 9. The district uses the results to conduct some very sophisticated growth and value-added analyses on student performance. NALT results are also used to predict scores on the MBST.
- The head of the district’s testing office is quite knowledgeable in areas of research, assessment, and statistics.
- The district has a quarterly assessment system to measure the mid-year progress of students in mathematics.
- The district is very transparent about its test results, posting nearly all of it on the district’s website.
- The Research, Evaluation, and Assessment Department prepares regular “Teacher Information Reports” to schools. These reports complement the School Information Reports (SIR) and provide detailed information on student performance on specific reading and math strands of the MCA, the MBST, and the NALT. The reports also contain tips for teachers on improving instruction.

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<sup>51</sup> The Minnesota Basic Standard Practice Test is also given to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders to prepare for the MBST and to any 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, or 11<sup>th</sup> graders who need to retake the test.

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- Schools routinely receive professional development on NALT data interpretation and use. The schools have also identified a staff member to coordinate or manage data at the building level.
- The district administers the Test of Emerging Academic English in grades 3-12 to its English language learners.
- The district also administers a school climate survey annually and publishes an annual district testing calendar.

### Areas of Concern

- The district's board and staff seem very confused about the district's "test of record." Much of the board and staff focus most of their attention to the results of and analyses of the NALT, but the district is being held accountable by the state on the district's performance on the MCA and MBST.
- The NALT is a good test but the district should be aware that it lacks open-ended test items like those contained on the MCA. It is also not a true norm-referenced test in the sense that it is normed or standardized on a randomized national sample. The test, instead, is normed on students in districts that administer the NALT.<sup>52</sup> Results of the level test, in addition, are reported in percents and scale (RIT) scores rather than in achievement levels as required under NCLB. (The research office does use NALT equating charts to translate scores into projected proficiency levels.)
- The district's familiarity with and commitment to the NALT has come at the expense of the board's and staff's understanding of the pressure on the district from NCLB. No one interviewed by the Strategic Support Team, for instance, could identify what Minnesota's "Adequate Yearly Progress" targets. In addition, the district's focus on NALT may have created the false impression that student academic achievement was improving faster than it was. The district has invested considerable time, personnel, and expense on the NALT, but the focus on it may have squeezed out other analysis on state assessments that could have given the district a better idea about why it finds itself in "warning" status under NCLB.
- The state does not provide the district—or any district in Minnesota—with adequate breakdowns of test (MCA or MBST) results. Data are reported by

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<sup>52</sup> The norm group includes students from about 321 school districts (ranging in size from under 200 students to over 60,000 students) in 24 states. Minneapolis is one of the few large inner-city school systems in the 2002 Norm Study. Others include Little Rock, Fresno, Indianapolis, and Portland (OR). The *Technical Manual for NWEA Measures of Academic Progress and Achievement Level Tests* states, "The NWEA RIT scale norms are not based on samples of students drawn to match national demographic patterns, but rather include scores from all participating NWEA member districts. They do not represent the ethnic makeup or geographic distribution of a randomly-sampled, national population."

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school, subgroup, student, and strand but not by item. Draft state test data are returned to the district in July and final data are returned in August.

- The MCA is administered by the state in English only.
- The district lacks quarterly assessments in reading and the math quarterlies are apparently voluntary in nature. It is not clear that quarterly math data are rolled up to the central office level for analysis and decision-making purposes.
- The district did not appear to have a regular schedule by which it evaluated their major programs. It was also not clear what the district did with the evaluation data it had.
- There appeared to be some tension or difference of opinion between the curriculum and research units about the development or value of quarterly benchmark assessments.
- The district appears to lack any standards or guidelines for the use of some assessments (e.g., DIBELS).
- The Team saw no evidence that the district used data from its annual school climate survey.
- The legal settlement between the Minneapolis branch of the NAACP and the State of Minnesota, which requires the district to report school-by-school achievement scores on a scale of 1-5 (comprised of student achievement, school climate, attendance and suspension rates and gifted/talented programming) and to provide additional resources to schools with a rating of 2.2 or below for two consecutive years, is probably inconsistent with the state targets being set under NCLB.

### 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.

1. Charge curriculum and research units with developing a set of quarterly benchmark tests in reading, math, and science that are aligned with the state standards, the district's curriculum, and the state assessments. The units should also develop a training program on the use of the tests by school staff. (The technical work could also be contracted out, if necessary.) (G1)
2. Mandate that quarterly assessments be used and ensure that results are returned to schools within seven days of test administration, and that the results are aggregated to the central office level for analysis and follow-up interventions, professional

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development, and technical assistance to the schools that show signs of weak performance. (G2)

3. Begin phasing out the district's use of the NALT as the state's MCA is given in grades 3-8 as required under NCLB. The district's research office ought to be able to continue doing much of its value-added analysis on the MCA results once the state test is administered in each of these grades. In the meanwhile the district leadership should begin to place more emphasis on the MCA to drive instruction, since it is the test on which the district is being held accountable. (G3)
4. Begin urging the state to provide Minneapolis—and other districts—with more complete MCA data student by student, skill by skill, and item by item to help the district's leadership in devising strategies for raising performance and to help with the research unit with the ability to continue doing value-added analyses. The district is capable of doing its own analysis of the results if the state provides the basic data. (G4)
5. Consider replacing the NALT with a traditional norm-referenced test at key grades to give the district true nationally normed comparisons. The new test ought to be as closely aligned with or tailored to the MCA as possible. (G5)
6. Select a standardized set of diagnostic reading instruments that schools can use to assess reading skills of students throughout the district. The Team would recommend any of the following: the DRA, DIBELS, Fox-in-a-Box, or TPRI. The district could also use the reading diagnostic tools that come with a new reading series. (G6)
7. Begin moving on a process to 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. The exams need to be aligned with the MCA. (G7)
8. Charge the research unit with developing a three-five year evaluation plan tied to district goals and major programs/policies. The plan should identify which programs and policies will be evaluated, who will conduct the evaluation (external or district), and frequency of evaluation. Ensure that program evaluations are reported to the board with recommendations on program continuation or modification. The affected department's response to the recommendations should also be included in the report and presented to the board. (G8)
9. Transfer the evaluation monies from relevant external grants to the research unit to fund program evaluations. The research department should also investigate forming regular collaborations with local universities to increase capacity to evaluate programs. (G9)
10. Begin the long-term task of building a data warehouse to easily store student assessment data, attendance, discipline, program participation, course enrollment, and grades. Results should be accessible electronically to teachers and staff. (G10)

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11. Consider calculating a five-year dropout rate to accompany the four-year rate the district now uses. Preliminary research shows that 10-15 percent of students take five years to complete high school. (G11)
12. Develop and administer an annual survey of customer satisfaction of the central office to track perceptions of the central office and its leadership as reforms are put into place.<sup>53</sup> In addition, the district should either do more with the results of its annual school climate survey or drop it. (G12)
13. Develop a monitoring or wall board so that the district's instructional leadership can determine, at a glance, the status of schools in meeting their academic targets. (G13)

### **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 Minneapolis schools and their focus on the elementary schools.

#### **Positive Findings**

- The district has revamped its preschool program to ensure that the neediest students are receiving services. The district's services appear to include outreach, preschool screening, evaluation and placement, home visits and support, childcare, community partnerships, teen parenting, and direct services.
- The district's High Five program provides preschool experiences for children who turn four by September 1. The purpose of the program is to ensure school readiness. Components include literacy and math instruction, and an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) for each student. The district has also worked to expand the program's parent component.
- The district appears to collaborate reasonably well with the city's Headstart programs.
- The district recently purchased the "Building Language to Literacy" and the "Growing with Math" programs for its pre-k efforts. Both programs are considered by the team to be very good.
- The district has recently received a three-year \$4.5 million grant for "Early Reading First" from the U.S. Department of Education.

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<sup>53</sup> Many districts administer such surveys. The Council could provide examples.

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

- The district has also instituted a number of early childhood centers (six).
- The district administers a Beginning Kindergarten Assessment to kindergarten students in September and October each year and follows it with a Winter Kindergarten Progress Check, and End of Kindergarten Assessment. The assessments measure alphabet familiarity, phonological awareness, comprehension, print concepts, vocabulary, counting skills, number order, and patterns.
- An evaluation (using the Kindergarten Reading Fluency) of the district's kindergarten literacy program in 2001-02 showed particularly strong gains among students of color in vocabulary, rhyming, onset phonemes, letter sounds, oral comprehension, and concepts of print. Full-day participants outscored half-day participants in the program using literacy coordinators, small group tutoring, and supplemental literacy materials (Marilyn Adams).
- The district administers the Oral Reading Assessment to all first graders. Students receive scores on numbers of words read correctly, reading expression, and reading comprehension.
- The district's grade level expectations for language arts specifies that students will be able to read—
  - a. At least 60 words per minute by the end of the first grade.
  - b. 94 words per minute by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.
  - c. 115 words per minute by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
  - d. 118 words per minute by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - e. 128 words per minute by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
- The district has had since about 1969 a large and aggressive community education program that has focused on preschool education, parent education, family literacy, youth development, adult education, volunteer services, community building, and the like.

### Areas of Concern

- There appears to be some confusion about who is responsible organizationally for the district's early childhood programs. This may only be temporary as the district is making its current transition with a new superintendent.
- The district does not use a regular set of pre-k assessments or diagnostic tools to assess reading readiness or other skills. A number of instruments are in place.
- The district has not conducted a formal evaluation of its pre-k programs in some years. The result is that the district has no way of knowing whether its early childhood programs are effective.

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- The district has no system in place for monitoring the implementation of the “Building Language to Literacy” and the “Growing with Math” programs.
- The district serves as a flow-through agent for many of the community early childhood programs but the coordination among them is not as great as one might expect. In addition, the district’s own program is fairly small, considering the amount of community resources the district handles.
- It was not clear from the district’s reports that the percentage of students meeting the oral fluency expectations are calculated and reported on a regular basis.

### Recommendations

It is 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.

1. Charge the curriculum department with conducting an analysis to determine how clearly aligned the new “Building Language to Literacy” and “Growing with Math” programs are with the new districtwide reading and math programs that the district will be putting into place. (H1)
2. Begin working on a plan for increasing the size of the district’s pre-k program to serve more of the district’s students. (H2)
3. Charge the research unit with designing and conducting an evaluation of the district’s pre-k programs. (H3)
4. Identify, purchase, and begin using a standardized diagnostic system to assess reading and math developmental levels among pre-k pupils, including those in programs other than High Five. Use the results to improve the quality of the programs and to provide remedial help, where necessary. (H4)
5. Establish a districtwide goal and monitor progress on having each pre-k pupil—(H5)
  - a. Demonstrate knowledge of at least 100 “high frequency words.”
  - b. Identify all 26 letters (upper and lower case) by the end of pre-k.
  - b. Identify at least 13 phonemic sounds by the end of kindergarten.
  - c. Demonstrate print awareness by the end of pre-k.
  - d. Read 60 words per minute by the end of 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

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### I. Middle and High Schools

While many urban school systems that agree 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.

#### Positive Findings

- In 2003, the Minnesota Legislature replaced the state's graduation requirements (Profile of Learning) with new requirements (Academic Standards). The new Academic Standards will be in place for the class of 2008. Students graduating before 2008 have the option of using the old or the new systems. Both systems require passage of the Minnesota Basic Skills Test in reading, math, and writing. Reading and math testing begins in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade; writing in the 10<sup>th</sup>.
- The district operates a number of theme-based Small Learning Communities (SLC).<sup>54</sup> Funding for the SLC initiative has been provided by the McKnight and Bush Foundations. Entrance into the SLCs is by application. The district has done considerable planning and development on the SLCs.
- The district granted 48 IB diplomas (46 at Southwest and 2 at Henry High Schools) during the 2003-04 school year. This is an unusually high number that the district and the city should celebrate.
- Student discipline is often a problem in urban schools but it did not seem to be an overriding issue in the way that the Strategic Support Team sometimes finds in other cities.
- The district offers content-based ESL courses in science and social studies in its high schools.

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<sup>54</sup> The district operates a series of SLCs that are open to students citywide, including SLCs at Edison High School (Business, Finance & Entrepreneurship; Careers in Education & Public Service; and Cosmetology), Patrick Henry High School (International Baccalaureate), North High School (Arts & Media; Computers, Construction, Engineering & Information Technologies: Renaissance; and Summatech), Roosevelt High School (Automotive Services & Collision Repair/Construction Occupations; Health Careers/Medical; and International Business & Information Systems), South High School (Liberal Arts and American Indian), Southwest High School (International Baccalaureate), and Washburn High School (Academy of Hospitality & Tourism; American Studies; Aviation & Aerospace; and International Studies). The district also operates a series of SLCs that are open to students by attendance area only, including SLCs at Edison High School (Engineering, Technology & Design; and Fine Arts), Patrick Henry High School (Commercial & Fine Arts; and Engineering), Roosevelt High School (World Studies), South High School (Environmental Studies), Southwest High School (Arts & Humanities), and Washburn High School (American Studies; Engineering; and Technical Design).

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

- The district has developed a “Creating Successful Readers” program that provides instructional materials to boost reading skills among middle and high school students. The program was developed in conjunction with the Minneapolis Star Tribune and a number of community newspapers.
- A district evaluation of the *Achieve! Minneapolis Workplace Tutoring* program in 2002-03 showed that the 83 participating 8<sup>th</sup> grade students were more likely to have higher MBST scale scores in math than nonparticipating students.<sup>55</sup>
- A district evaluation of the E-Mentoring program in 2002-03 showed that participating 9<sup>th</sup> graders had significantly higher reading scores than control-group students.
- The district has prepared a manual of lesson plans and practice tests, *Mathematics Basic Standards Preparation Materials*, to help prepare students for the MBST.
- The district had also prepared a manual of lesson plans, *Writing Foundations*, to help students who had failed the writing portion of the MBST. The MBST-W was replaced by the MCA. Teachers are still encouraged to use the manual.
- The school district has a vast array of postsecondary, employer, and other partnerships at each of its high schools. Some partners serve in advisory roles; others provide job shadowing, technical assistance, work-based learning, field trips, mentoring, and other services.
- The students of the district are fortunate to be the benefactors of an unusual \$10 million scholarship fund provided by the Win Wallin family for students aspiring to postsecondary education.

### Areas of Concern

- It is unclear if the district has conducted a systematic evaluation of the effects of the “Creating Successful Readers” program to see if it is helping to boost reading skills among middle and high school students.
- The district lacks a systemwide standard for many of its core high school courses. The Team counted 134 different math classes in the district’s course catalogue and accompanying documents.
- The district appears to lack a uniform process for placing students in traditional math and in IMP classes. Placement is inconsistent and dependent upon the policy established at each high school. There is also no systemwide process for offering and placing students in AP courses.

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<sup>55</sup> 2002-03 *Workplace Tutoring* Program Analysis.

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

- The district lacks a systemwide strategy for addressing the low pass-rates of students on the MBST. The teachers interviewed by the Strategic Support Team reported very low performance among students at the middle and high school levels. Little test data exists at the high school level to verify this conclusion but the district reports that nearly 50 percent of first-year algebra students receive a failing grade.
- The district lacks any comprehensive strategy to address low student performance in the middle schools.
- There does not appear to have been any attempt yet to increase the rigor of the district’s core high school courses by vertically aligning or articulating them to AP course content.
- IB courses are only offered at two high schools (Patrick Henry and Southwest) — both of which are on the west side of town. In addition, the district continues to have a low participation rate in AP courses and gifted and talented classes among African American and American Indian students.
- High school schedules vary from school to school. Some schools use block schedules of varying kinds; others do not use them at all. Schools also use widely varying bell times. These differing schedules may have negative effects on students who migrate from school to school but the practice has as much to do with transportation cost-savings as anything else.
- The Strategic Support Team generally supports small learning communities but we saw little evidence that the rigor of the coursework in the district’s SLCs had been systematically examined. The research on the effects of these SLCs on student achievement continues to be weaker than we would like to see. Finally, the district has yet to evaluate the effects of its SLCs on student performance.

### Recommendations

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

1. Include in the district’s instructional strategic plan an explicit component for middle and high school reform, including— (I1)
  - Measurable objectives on dropout rates, attendance, course enrollment patterns, ACT/SAT participation rates, and high school graduation rates.
  - Goals and timelines for placing AP or IB courses in every high school and how the district will “back map” the quality of the district’s high school core courses to align with the high standards of those courses.

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

- Strategy for tracking and evaluating the success of the reforms. Begin with evaluating the effectiveness of the SLCs.
  - Standards and criteria for course offerings and textbook selection.
  - Interventions to help students who have not passed MBST, including strategies for students who are entering grade 8 but are at-risk of not passing the MBST.
  - Strategies for reducing the dropout rate and recovering high school dropouts.
  - Timeframe for implementing more standardized schedules at the high school level (e.g., regular and block schedules) if the budget allows.
  - Diagnosing algebra-readiness in the seventh grade. Include how the results should be used to increase the rigor of middle school math courses and provide tutorial and supplemental assistance to students with weak skills.
  - Strategies to implement a summer bridge program for incoming ninth graders.
2. Consider the option of developing, adopting, and implementing end-of-course exams at the high school level in key subjects. (This recommendation may be controversial because there is mixed data on the effects of high school end-of-course exams. Some research indicates that it helps improve overall performance; and some research suggests that it increases the dropout rate. It is worth the district debating and considering the option, however.) (I2)

### **J. Lowest Performing Students and 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 Minneapolis' strategies to boost achievement in its lowest achieving schools.

#### **Positive Findings**

- The district takes a number of steps to support its lowest-performing schools: academic superintendents meet with the administrative staff of AYP schools, TIS specialists meet with AYP school staff, TIS provides reports and analyses to AYP schools, literacy and math institutes are provided to AYP schools through the district's Learning Partnership, TIS provides intervention strategies and supports, and TIS provides coaches, test-prep and other services.
- The new superintendent, Thandiwe Peebles, has taken personal responsibility for the oversight of the district's lowest performing schools. She has since delegated the day-to-day responsibilities to a staff person.
- Students in AYP schools are offered supplemental tutorial services and afterschool instruction.

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

- The district prepares “Individual Learning Plans” (ILP) for students in summer school and students new to the district. The ILPs articulate each student’s strengths, areas in need of improvement, and goals.
- The district has developed a comprehensive Problem Solving Model for the identification of special education students, reforming special education programs and operations, and had the plan approved by the Office of Civil Rights. (Primary components of the model include: problem identification and analysis, intervention design and implementation, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of intervention effects.) The district uses this progressively-intensive model of intervention—within classroom, intervention assistance team, student support teams, and alternative programming—and in a number of areas in addition to special education. More work remains to be done in improving the district’s special education system, but progress is clearly being made.
- The district’s percentage of students with IEPs (14.0 percent) is approximately the same as the state average (13.2 percent). It appears that the percent of students of color identified for special education has been declining. This is particularly noteworthy as a best practice for other urban school districts across the country.
- The district’s Indian education program was well-received by the Strategic Support Team who thought it had potential to reduce dropouts.<sup>56</sup>
- The district in collaboration with the union has \$400 million to reward schools that are “beating the odds.” (Ratings are made on a 1-to-5 scale.)
- The district has a New Families Center that provides ELL placement and assessment services. Entering students are assessed on the Language Assessment Scales (LAS, Short Version) and the California Achievement Test—Survey Edition (CAT). The center also serves recent but older immigrant students.
- The city of Minneapolis has about 20 charter schools, eight of which are sponsored by the district, another eight of which are sponsored by universities, and four by nonprofit organizations. (All are authorized by the state.)
- The district also holds contracts with 17 organizations to operate 22 contract alternative schools. Students are enrolled in MPS but staff are not employees.

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<sup>56</sup> A 2001-02 evaluation of the Native Academy (NAC), a program developed with MIGIZI Communications for 8<sup>th</sup> grade Native American students in three middle schools feeding into South High School (home of the district’s only Indian magnet program, has shown improved course completion rates, higher MBST reading scores, and better school attendance.

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

### Areas of Concern

- The district lacks a comprehensive strategy or plan for meeting its AYP targets under NCLB. The district is currently in warning status and could slip into “district improvement” status unless a plan is devised and acted on.
- The Strategic Support Team saw little evidence of a program or strategy for the system’s lowest performing schools or students that was different from any other school in the district.
- The type of interventions and supports received by students in the district’s lowest performing schools appeared to be largely dependent on the principal of those schools. The district lacked any separate strategy for these schools and did not have a recommended set of interventions to use in those schools.
- The district’s academic superintendents appear to lack any responsibility for or focus on the district’s lowest performing schools and students.
- The ILPs are an excellent concept but they lack instructional strategies tailored to meet each student’s goals or areas of needed improvement.
- The state is planning to send a series of its consultants into the district to help schools that have not made AYP, but there appears to be little coordination with the district about their training, day-to-day work, or overall strategies. The program is being supported by the state’s “school improvement” set-aside funds under Title I.
- Preliminary data indicate that the district’s 2004 summer school did not meet its enrollment targets and did not prove to be very effective.
- The district’s own data indicate that the system’s lowest-performing schools have the highest teacher turnover rates. The Strategic Support Team did not see any plans for addressing this concern.
- The practice of placing, retaining, and removing teachers based on seniority prevents the poorest schools from keeping good teachers. The district has no incentives for teachers to work in the neediest schools. The seniority system is also undermining the district’s ability to keep young teachers of color and those teaching ELL students that are probably being recruited from the district by suburban schools.
- The Strategic Support Team was generally impressed with the district’s bilingual programs, but it appeared that the system did not have much ownership for the instruction of its English language learners. The bilingual programs appeared separate from and not well-integrated into the district’s overall instructional efforts.

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

- The district, despite recent improvements, continues to have high special education placement rates among African American and Native American males, about 25 percent.<sup>57</sup> The placement rates at individual schools ranged from about 57 percent (Lake Harriett Lower Elementary) to about 8.7 percent (Hale Elementary)—not counting alternative schools and special education centers.

### Recommendations

A number of urban districts have also helped increase citywide achievement by focusing on their lowest-performing schools. Charlotte, Cleveland, San Diego, and New York City are examples. Each of these districts established a sub-unit within its system 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 who brings special attention to the needs of the schools.

1. Establish a permanent CEO's district-style unit and director to focus on the district's lowest performing schools. This person should report directly to the superintendent and work closely with the curriculum department. The new superintendent is familiar with the model since she led such a unit in Cleveland. (J1)
2. Develop a plan for these schools that ensures that they receive extra resources, professional development, technical assistance, interventions, and support. Make sure that the plan defines when schools fall into the category of being the lowest performing (possibly using the AYP tag at a minimum) and when they are released from it. These schools often need extra support even if they are removed from the list at some point. The district's plan also needs a component that focuses explicitly on the district's racially-identifiable achievement gaps. (J2)
3. Work with the teacher's union and state to provide extra incentives to recruit and support teachers in schools with the lowest performance. (J3)
4. Develop and begin administering mini-assessments in reading and math in the district's lowest performing schools. These assessments should be short but aligned to the pacing guides and the quarterly assessments and administered every ten days or so to make sure students are staying on track. These mini-assessments can be developed by teams of district teachers. (J4)
5. Consider the possibility of modifying the ILPs so that they provide individualized student educational plans for each student in the district's lowest performing schools to make sure that these students receive the focus they need to improve. (J5)
6. Discuss with the state superintendent of schools how its "school improvement" set-aside program under Title I could be better coordinated with the district's emerging instructional efforts. (J6)

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<sup>57</sup> December 1, 2003 child count.

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

7. Better integrate the district's ELL programs with the overall instructional efforts. The district also needs to conduct a review of its ELL program's 1) identification procedures, initial assessments, and placements; 2) instructional delivery systems; 3) assessments of linguistic and academic achievement; 4) exit procedures and 5) progress monitoring for 2 years after exit from services. (J7)
8. Strengthen the district's transition program for newcomer immigrant students that will better address these students' unique academic, linguistic, and social needs. The district appears to be at some risk of losing the support of the immigrant community if it does not take steps to bolster the system's transitional supports. (J8)
9. Establish and support a district translation service that is responsible for translating all major documents (school and district) into the primary languages spoken by Minneapolis' students. (J9)
10. Charge the district's affirmative action office with conducting a systemwide review and analysis of the system's equity in staffing, resources, facilities, technology and the like. The Strategic Support Team heard consistent reports about system inequities but did not have the time or resources to analyze the facts. (J10)

## CHAPTER 3. TITLE I AND OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS

This chapter summarizes the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Support Team on federal programs at the point when the new superintendent assumed her post at the beginning of the 2004-05 school year. The chapter is divided into eight major sections that address critical areas in the implementation of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB). The areas include organizational structure, supplemental education services (SES), choice, parental involvement, uses of funds, highly qualified teachers, school improvement, budgeting and program allocations, and other federal grants. Each area presents findings, good and bad, and recommendations.

The Council's Strategic Support Team on Title I and federal programs spent considerable time and energy interviewing district staff, principals, parents, and others, and reviewing documents and materials that described how the Minneapolis Public Schools were implementing their major federal programs. The team looked primarily at how the district had organized its federal programs, how federal funds were being used to boost student achievement, and how well aligned the district's programs were with NCLB.

### Highlights

- ★ The district's federal programs were generally well-run and operated in basic alignment with NCLB.
- ★ The district did not appear to have any glaring NCLB or other federal compliance problems.<sup>58</sup>
- ★ The district could be using its federal resources more effectively to boost student academic performance.
- ★ There was about \$4.3 million in FY04 and FY05 Title I and II monies that had not been spent or budgeted when the team visited that the district could use to make some improvements.
- ★ The district's federal programs staff were not particularly well-organized.

### Findings and Recommendations

The Minneapolis school district operates 79 Title I public or public alternative sites, all of which provide "schoolwide" services. (The district also provides Title I services to 12 private schools.) The district has 7 schools in "corrective action" status under *No Child Left Behind*, 8 schools in "school improvement II," and 3 regular schools in "school improvement I" in 2004-05. More than 54 of the district's public, and public

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<sup>58</sup> The team's work does not constitute an official compliance audit of the district's federal programs but the team did look for glaring compliance problems.

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

and private alternative schools had not made adequate yearly progress for at least one year, and are on the state’s “Watch List.”<sup>59</sup> Many of these schools might be expected to move into school improvement status if they do not show gains in state test scores.

The state of Minnesota set its third grade proficiency bars for the 2004-05 school year at 66.5 percent proficient for reading and 69.6 percent proficient for math. The fifth graders proficiency bars were set at 72.9 percent in reading and 68.9 percent in math. The state has set the minimum subgroup size of 20 students for reporting adequate yearly progress. The following sections summarize the main findings and recommendations from the team’s review.

### **A. Organizational Structure**

The organizational structure of the district is essential to ensure that the school board and superintendent have a sound leadership team in place to oversee operational and instructional duties.

#### **Positive Findings**

- The school district currently has a competent staff with the requisite expertise to implement federal programs.
- The district’s staff is eager to make contributions to increasing student achievement.

#### **Areas of Concern**

- The district lacks the organizational structure to coordinate and optimize state and federal resources, both programmatically and financially. Staff in departments not directly related to state and federal programs did not always seem cognizant of their responsibilities under NCLB.
- The district’s organizational structure makes it difficult to ensure, and monitor, compliance with state and federal rules and regulations.
- The district’s goals for using state and federal programs to boost achievement has not been communicated effectively to middle management, and in turn, has not been shared with building leaders.
- The federal goals and requirements of NCLB are not widely understood throughout the central office, and have not been embedded in the appropriate departments of the school district.

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<sup>59</sup> The number of schools on the state’s “Watch List” for not making adequate yearly progress for one year includes 12 elementary schools, 14 middle and K-8 schools, 8 high schools, and 20 district and private alternative schools.

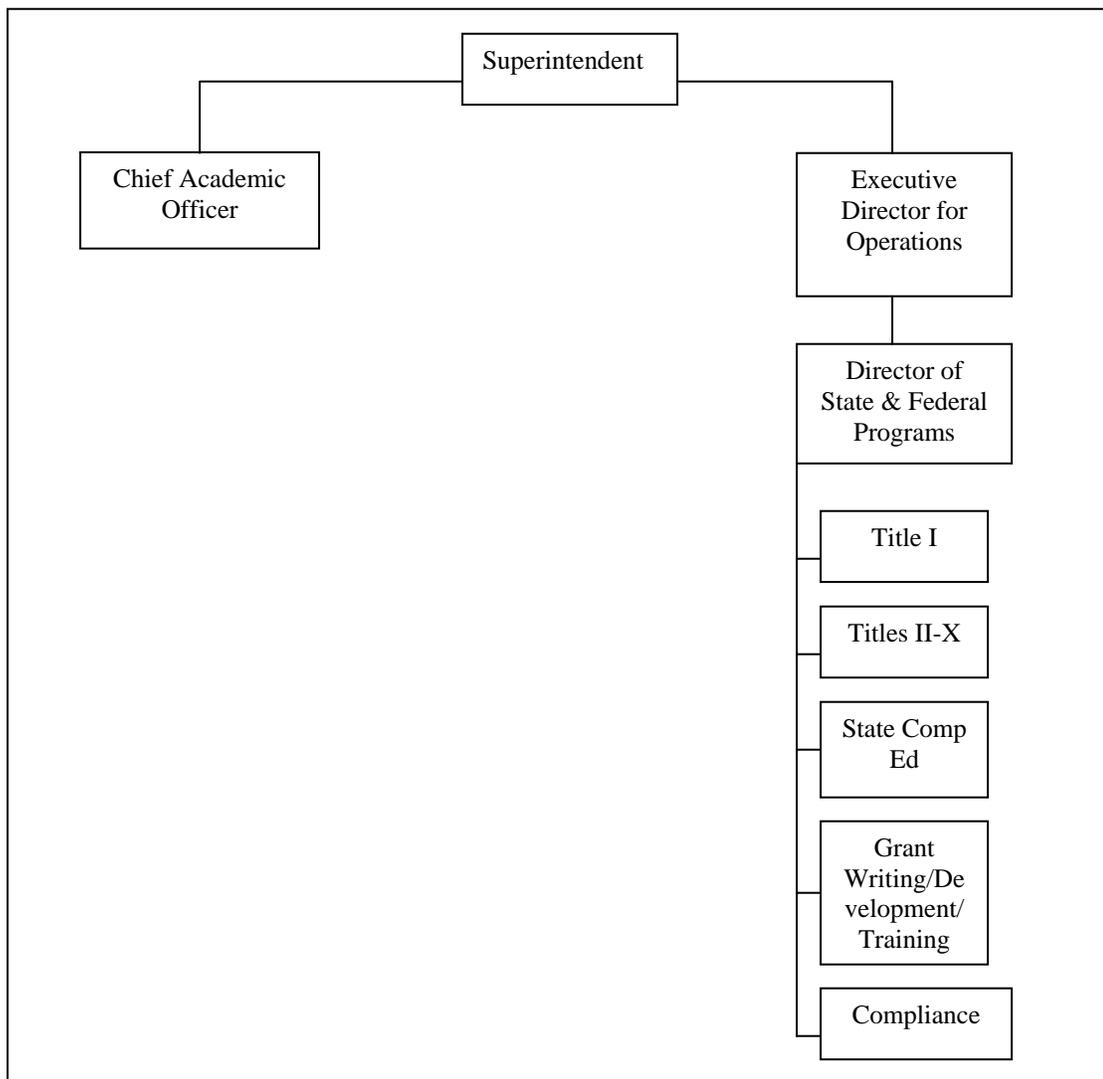
## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

- The district is losing experienced and competent federal programs staff due to retirement, reassignments, and resignations, all of which threaten program quality.

### Recommendations

1. Reorganize the State and Federal Programs office so that it is located under the operations unit. This will allow the district to handle budgetary and compliance tasks better than it currently does. Leave state and federal programmatic decisions on the instructional side of the organizational chart, but do so without creating a Title I-defined office per se. (See proposed organizational chart.) (A1)

**Figure 3. Proposed Organizational Chart for State and Federal Programs<sup>60</sup>**



<sup>60</sup> State and federal programs office would report to the Executive Director of Operations. The office would have to be separate from other finance units to guard against supplanting but would work closely with the finance unit to ensure coordination and cohesiveness.

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

2. Charge the state and federal programs unit with—(A2)
  - Forecasting revenue, participating in leadership level planning and budgeting so that state and federal level goals are incorporated into the district’s strategic planning and annual budget.
  - Providing technical assistance to central office instructional staff on planning state and federal budgets. For example, the Title I director would work with the reading, math and curriculum staff and the Title III specialist would work with the ELL coordinator, etc.
  - Developing the annual consolidated application to the state and liaison with state program officers.
  - Developing applications for state and federal grants.
  - Ensuring compliance with state and federal regulations and procedures.
  - Coordinating state and federal resources with the district’s strategic plan and working with the finance/budget office to ensure all dollars are spent consistent with plans.
  - Training district and school staff on compliance issues and maintaining compliance.
  
3. Evaluate the new unit according to—(A3)
  - The amounts of money that is raises and manages.
  - The degree of collaboration with the instructional office and finance/budget office.
  - Compliance and audit results.
  
4. Institute a mandatory cross-training program to staff in Finance, Research and Assessment, Human Resources, and Instruction on NCLB requirements and how to coordinate them. (A4)

### **B. Funding and 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.

#### **Positive Findings**

- The district was allocated \$19,116,112 in Title I targeted assistance aid for school year 2004-05, down from the previous year’s level because of national shifts in poverty rates. Funds are generally used for extra teachers, instructional materials, programs, supplies, extended time, parent services, supplemental services, and professional development largely at each school’s discretion.
  
- The district was allocated \$4,417,723 in Title II-A aid for school year 2004-05. Funds are used for professional development rather than for class-size reduction.

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

The district uses these funds to support about 28 coaches, its summer Literacy and Math Institutes, building professional learning communities, and activities to align district curriculum and professional development with new state standards.

- The district was allocated \$448,930 in Title II-D aid for school year 2004-05. The district uses the funds to support school media centers, integrate district databases, improve technology access, create better online assessments, deliver staff development, develop a web-based student information system, provide web-based grade-books for teachers, and purchase additional server capacity.
- The district was allocated \$992,002 in Title III funds for school year 2004-05. The district uses the funds to support the New Family Center, provide appropriate language assessments, support the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), provide tutorial supports, support parent liaisons, and the like.
- The district was allocated \$589,164 in Title IV-A funds for school year 2004-05. The district uses these funds to provide drug, alcohol, and tobacco prevention strategies, improve the district's database on disciplinary incidents, provide staff support for the district's diversity initiative, implement the district's Positive School Climate Model, and the like.
- The district was allocated \$335,095 in Title V funds for school year 2004-05. The district uses these funds to support the truancy initiative, support the teen parents program, support the High Five program for preschool students, and provide other services.
- The district's use of Title I funds are in general compliance with NCLB's set-aside requirements. (In addition to choice and supplemental services set-asides, the district sets aside \$1,882,981 in Title I funds: \$816,419 for administration, \$335,101 for indirect costs, \$76,837 for LEA activities, \$198,586 for parent involvement, \$342,000 for homeless education, and \$114,038 for neglected/delinquent services.)
- The remainder of the district's Title I funds, after the required set-asides, have been allocated to schools for direct services--\$17,486,891. Approximately 72 percent of these school-based Title I funds are used for teacher salaries, fringe benefits, and extended time; 16 percent is used for educational assistants; 3.4 percent are used for instructional supplies and materials; 2.1 percent is used for contracted services; 0.9 percent is used for various conference registrations; 0.9 percent is used for technology equipment; and 5.2 percent is used for other.
- The most recent audit by Deloitte & Touché of federal funds showed only a small number of areas where the district was out of compliance with regulations.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Special School District No. 1, Minneapolis, Minnesota. *Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards for the Year Ended June 30, 2003 and Independent Auditors' Reports.*

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

### Areas of Concern

- The district is in basic compliance with federal law but staff needs to watch out for supplement/supplant problems as the general funds budget is cut. The number of staff at the central office and at school sites paid partially by Title I funds is a red flag.
- The district's individual schools use their Title I funds on a wide variety of programs that the central office exercises very little control over.<sup>62</sup> The district provides little direction or guidance to schools on how funds might be better used to spur student achievement.
- The district lacks any systemwide reading and math diagnostic tools that could inform the nature and placement of supplemental materials or interventions strategies funded under Title I. (See chapter on curriculum and instruction.)
- The district lacks any protocols or guidelines for the use of Title I funds at the building level. The result is that schools use their Title I funds for a wide variety of programs and priorities that may or may not corresponds to the district's.
- The titles, responsibilities, and training of literacy staff purchased with Title I and Title II funds vary from school to building. Central-office staff members are not always clear how these monies are being spent at the school site, although a breakdown of funds can be found in the district's consolidated NCLB application.
- Incomplete program planning and budgeting has led to large amounts of carry-forward funds from FY 2004. There is also the potential for additional carry-forward amounts from FY 2005 because some funds have yet to be budgeted. The specific fund amounts include:

Title I Professional Development set-aside – FY 2004	\$767,160
Title I Professional Development set-aside – FY 2005	\$779,000
Title I Unfilled Administrative Salaries – FY 2005	\$105,000

<sup>62</sup> A review of each school's Title I Program Description Form for the 2004-05 school year indicated that schools were spending Title I funds on Plato, Instrumental Enrichment, Orton-Gillingham, Great Leaps, Accelerated Reader, Accelerated Writing, Read 180, Classroom 2000, Accelerated Schools, Read Naturally, Core Knowledge, Word Smart, Success Maker (CCC), Learning Upgrade, Leap Pads, A+ Learning, Direct Instruction (SRA), Rigby Literacy, Goodman Series, Newbridge, Sundance, Ready Readers, Efficient Reading, STAR, NovaNet, Kansas Strategies, Time to Read (AOL/Time Warner), Corrective Reading, Soar to Success, CARS, Early Success, Oral Language Curriculum, Language!, RIF, Great Books, Collins Writing, Success for All, Fast ForWord, Guided Reading, Sustained Silent Reading, Leveled Reading, Skills for Success, Reading Mastery, Voyager, DOT Reading, Explode the Code, Lightspan, Write, Spell Read, Alpha Smart Keyboard, Rosetta Stone, and other reading programs—in addition to a wide variety of software programs, laptop computers, training providers (LDA, Hamline University, the Urban League, the National Urban Alliance, Minnesota State University, Stages Theater Company), diagnostic and assessment tools, and staff time. Math programs included Accelerated Math, CCC-Math, Addison Wesley, Everyday Math, Nimble with Numbers, Saxon Math, and Plato Math, among others.

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Title II-A carryover – FY 2004	\$2,676,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$4,327,160</b>

### Recommendations

1. Develop a template defined around the district’s academic priorities to guide school expenditures of Title I funds at the building level. This template should include professional development and reading and math coaches and teachers, but allow some flexibility to meet specific school needs. (B1)
2. Establish a process by which carry-forward funds are monitored. The duties for monitoring expenditures, and potential carry-forward funding should rest with the budget and finance staff. (See recommendation in previous section.) (B2)
3. Review district needs and determine a one-time use for the carry-forward funds. (The district has some flexibility in the use of the Title II-A carry-forward funds due to federal transferability rules, so is not limited to spending the funds solely on Title II-A activities. The district could transfer approximately \$308,862 of the carry-forward funds into either Title I or Title V.) (B3)

<b>TOTAL Title II-A allocation – FY 2004</b>	<b>\$4,417,723</b>
Amount available for transfer into Title I or Title V (50%)	\$2,208,862
Approximate amount transferred (to date)	\$1,900,000
Approximate amount of funds available for transfer	\$308,862
Title II-A carryover	\$2,676,000
Carryover funds which must remain in Title II-A	\$2,367,138
Carryover funds available for transfer into Titles I or Title V	\$308,862

### C. 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 Findings

- The district provides a flat, Title I per-pupil amount of \$670 per child to each school.<sup>63</sup> (Nonpublic schools receive the same equivalent amount.)
- The district provides Title I funding to all schools that enroll Title I-eligible students. This includes schools with low Title I populations (such as one school

<sup>63</sup> General funding is allocated to schools according to enrollment based on state pupil unit weightings (grades 1-3 weighted at 1.115; kindergarten at 0.557; grades 4-6 at 1.06; and grades 7-12 at 1.3). How funds are spent is decided at the school level.

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

with 11 Title I students) and schools with relatively low concentrations of poverty (55 percent).

- Title I allocations are distributed to 84 percent of the schools in the district.
- After required set-asides, the district allocates 75 percent of its entire Title I allocation to the building level for direct services.

### Areas of Concern

- The relatively uniform manner in which the district allocates its Title I funds to schools does not allow it to concentrate monies into the neediest schools.

### Recommendations

1. Consider making higher Title I per pupil allocations to schools with larger numbers and percentages of poor students. The district has the flexibility to provide higher allocations to schools by grade band if it wants. The district should consider the option. (C1)

### D. 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 18 public schools and 2 public alternative schools that are required to offer transfers.

### Positive Findings

- Minneapolis has districtwide open-enrollment, neighborhood schools, magnets, alternative schools, interdistrict options, online learning, and postsecondary options—providing a wide array of school options to parents and families.
- The district had 19 students who transferred schools last school year due to NCLB.
- The district set-aside the equivalent of 5 percent of its Title I allocation or about \$993,000 to pay for choice options under NCLB in the 2004-05 school year. (This number represents a slight decline from last year due to the district's overall reduction in Title I funds.)

### Areas of Concern

- The enrollment window for choosing an NCLB transfer (October 18) differs from the district's regular school choice and open enrollment windows (January 15).

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

- The district has not provided clear or repeated information to parents on transfer options available under NCLB.
- The district’s policies allowing students unlimited transfers in the same school year exacerbates the problem of high mobility (estimated to be around 46 percent) and undermines efforts at school improvement. Last year, the district reported some 22,000 “transactions” involving students moving in and out of the district or between schools.
- The district has done little planning to date for the possibility that a large number of its schools now in “warning” may have to provide additional transfer options next school year.
- The district’s website describes why parents may want to choose a new school for their child, but does not include information on NCLB or AYP status.
- Parents reported to the Strategic Support Team that the district’s discussions about school closings have caused some confusion about the choice program and the accuracy of the information at the K-8 School Information Fair.

### Recommendations

1. Shorten, simplify, and clarify the letter to parents on choice options available under NCLB. (D1)
2. Synchronize the “windows” for the district’s existing choice programs (magnet, open enrollment, NCLB) into a single choice program and application process. This will ensure that NCLB students will not be at the end of the line for choices. (A district must spend an amount equal to 20 percent of their Title I allocation for both transportation and supplemental services, but when there is low demand for NCLB transportation, the district must spend a greater portion of the 20 percent on supplemental services, often with outside providers.) (D2)
3. Restrict the number of transfer opportunities during a single school year to help address the problem of student mobility. (D3)

### E. Supplemental Education Services

*No Child Left Behind* requires that students in schools that have not made adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years be offered supplemental education services—tutorial and other instructional support services provided outside of regular school hours. Parents are permitted to choose services provided by an assortment of organizations approved by the state, which may also include the district itself. The district is required to offer supplemental service to students at 15 schools this school year.

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### Positive Findings

- The district estimates that approximately 8,000 students are eligible to participate in supplemental educational service (SES) during the 2004-05 school year. Approximately 3-4,000 are expected to participate this school year—up from about 1,400 last year.
- The district was approved to be an SES provider by the state of Minnesota. The district's own program is contracted out to Sylvan, who provided services on school grounds to about 1,100 students last school year (2003-04) and often uses the district's own instructional staff (at \$25/hour). Services were provided afterschool in one-hour blocks, twice a week for 22 weeks.
- The state has approved 26 supplemental education service providers, other than the Minneapolis Public Schools, that operate in the district.<sup>64</sup> The district had contracts with 11 of the providers last year in 10 elementary schools.
- The district budgeted approximately \$3,020,000 for its supplemental educational services program in the 2003-04 school year.
- The district pays for its supplemental services by directing some of its Title II funds into Title V. The district does not need to fund its services this way, but it does allow the district to devote more Title I funds to direct services at the school level.

### Areas of Concern

- The district's SES program this year (2004-05) is not likely to start until right before the Christmas break.
- Sylvan's tutorial program appears to be a generic one that does not explicitly align with the district's basic instructional program. This potential misalignment is exacerbated by the district's not having a standardized program across its schools. The program also does not appear to have an explicit set of strategies for ELL students.
- The district's contract with Sylvan does not appear to give the district enough program hours for the per-pupil amount being paid to make much instructional impact. Preliminary in-house assessments of the program, in fact, appear to show

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<sup>64</sup> A+ Tutoring Service, Academic Action, Babbage Net School, Backpack Tutoring Program, Boost Up Plus, Boys & Girls Clubs (Twin Cities), Cambridge Educational Services, East Side neighborhood Services, Education Station (Sylvan), Failure Free Reading, HAMAA, Hospitality House, HOSTS Learning, Huntington Learning Centers, Kaplan, Kids Reading for Success, La Escuelita, Learning Disabilities Association, Native Academy, Newton Learning (Edison), PLATO Learning, Skylearn, Somali Education Center, Minnesota Literacy Council, Synergy Academy, and Urban Ventures Learning Lab.

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

that the program has had limited effect on districtwide or school-by-school performance.

- The district pays a flat, per-pupil fee to Sylvan (\$1,350 in 2003-04) regardless of the number of students who show up for the tutorials. Other SES providers are compensated based on the number of sessions each student attends.
- The district does not appear to have a system yet for gauging the effectiveness of other SES providers.

### Recommendations

1. Develop and disseminate to parents a catalogue of available SES providers. The number of schools eligible for SES is likely to grow in the near future, and parents should be clear about their options. (E1)
2. Review the per-pupil allocation that the district pays to SES providers. The amount that districts nationwide pay to providers is based on the LEA's overall Title I allocation and Title I population. Both of these figures have decreased in Minneapolis in recent years, but it is not clear that the district's payment rates to providers have decreased accordingly. The district may be paying a higher rate than is necessary under NCLB. (E2)
3. Review the district's contracts with SES providers to make sure that the district is protected on issues relating to—(E3)
  - a. quality control of services.
  - b. amount of time and money for services (per session).
  - c. student attendance at services.
  - d. alignment with district curriculum.
  - e. match between child needs and curriculum.
  - f. rental fees for use of facilities, including utilities.
  - g. evaluation of effectiveness of services (e.g. link to quarterly tests).
  - h. total amount paid per pupil.
  - i. program alignment with state content and performance standards.
4. Review cost structure of the district's contract with Sylvan. The contract appears to afford limited service for the amount of money the district is paying. (E4)
5. Consider using Minneapolis Achieve as the district's SES provider at school sites if a fair arrangement cannot be worked out with Sylvan. (E5)
6. Establish a monitoring system that will permit schools to track student attendance at SES sessions, as well as oversee the alignment of each provider's program with student need and the district's instructional program once it is standardized. (E6)

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

### F. 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 Findings

- The district appears to be in technical compliance with the NCLB requirement that 1 percent of Title I funds be spent on parental involvement.
- The district submitted its school-level Title I school-parent compact to the state department of education on June 18, 2004 as required by law.

#### Areas of Concern

- Parents reported to the Strategic Support Team that they were often confused by communications coming from the school district.
- The district does not appear to have a systemwide parental involvement or outreach program that the Title I effort could supplement.
- It is unclear how, or how effectively, the district's parent involvement set-aside funds are being used. The district lacks much in the way of written descriptions of this program since most of the funds are spent at the school level without direct central office involvement.

#### Recommendations

1. Develop and disseminate an informational brochure on NCLB's SES options. The brochure should provide information in a clear and concise manner, and be translated into as many of the major languages spoken by families in the district as possible. (F1)
2. Articulate a clear, districtwide parental involvement program that NCLB would supplement. (F2)
3. Increase the district's outreach into the community, and host informational sessions and meetings at locations other than on school grounds (such as churches and community group meetings). (F3)

### G. 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.

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

### **Positive Findings**

- The district appears to be spending the required 5 percent of Title I funds to meet the “highly qualified” provisions of NCLB--\$992,931.
- The district requires each school to spend 10 percent of its Title I funds on professional development, regardless of the school’s AYP status.
- The district provides tuition reimbursement to teachers to meet “highly qualified” requirements under NCLB.
- The district has a plan to meet the requirements for “highly qualified” paraprofessionals under NCLB. Currently, about 50 percent of the district’s paraprofessionals are “qualified” under NCLB terms and 100 percent of those hired after the law was signed are “qualified.”

### **Areas of Concern**

- The district does not have a comprehensive plan for meeting NCLB’s “highly qualified” teacher requirements, but it does have a goal of meeting the law’s goals in the requisite time.
- The district lacks a comprehensive, districtwide professional development plan and philosophy. (See professional development section of previous chapter.)
- The district’s Title I literacy coaches are not trained in any uniform fashion systemwide. (See chapter on curriculum and instruction.) The result is probably that the coaches have differing levels of skills and are doing different things from school to school.
- Each school uses its 10 percent Title I set-aside for professional development at its own discretion.

### **Recommendations**

1. Develop a comprehensive, staff development plan for meeting the “highly qualified” teacher requirements. NCLB requires districts to have a plan for meeting the “highly qualified” provisions for all teachers by the 2005-06 school year. (G1)
2. Standardize the training and priorities of all Title I-funded coaches districtwide. (G2)

### **H. School Improvement Planning**

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

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### Findings

- The district operates Title I schoolwide projects at all but about 20 of its (non-Title I) school sites.
- Schools have multiple plans and planning processes which do not roll up into a single districtwide document or initiative. (See chapter on curriculum and instruction.)
- The schoolwide project plans used in the district do not always include all components required by federal law under Section 1114 of NCLB. Required components include—
  - a. comprehensive needs assessments.
  - b. measurable goals for all students (both high and low-performing).
  - c. reform strategies that are scientifically-based.
  - d. schoolwide instructional activities that are scientifically-based in the major subject areas.
  - e. intervention and supplementary programs to meet achievement goals.
  - f. high quality, ongoing professional development.
  - g. strategies to increase parent involvement.
  - h. pre-school transition to elementary schools.
  - i. measures to include the use of assessment results to increase achievement.
  - j. a representative school-based planning team.
  - k. coordination with other federal, state, and local programs in the school, on a programmatic and budgetary basis.
- School improvement plans often do not contain data on proficiency levels in reading and math, subgroup data, or long-range academic goals. (See chapter on curriculum and instruction.)
- Individual schools that have not made AYP have applied for school improvement grants from the state. These grants, however, appear to lack any overarching framework or plan and do not appear to be well-coordinated with the central office. Each school will receive an “external provider” to help guide school-by-school improvement, but the providers appear to have a wide range of disparate skills and do not receive any standard training or professional development that corresponds with district goals.

### Recommendations

1. Require that the school improvement plans include required components of Section 1114 under NCLB. The federal requirements for school improvement plans will provide the district with a mandated, formal, and systemwide template. (H1)

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

2. Review and upgrade the process and criteria for evaluating school improvement plans. Plans are currently approved by central office staff but they have been done without having all the components required by law. (H2)
3. Include reading and proficiency levels and subgroup data in all school improvement plans. (See similar recommendations in curriculum and instruction chapter.) (H3)
4. Meet with officials from the Minnesota Department of Education to begin coordinating the work of the “external providers” being funded by the state for AYP schools. (H4)

### **I. Other Grants**

The school district operates a number of other programs and initiatives, funded through a blend of formula and competitive grants. These include Reading First, afterschool and community programs, and Indian Education.

#### **Positive Findings**

- The district’s afterschool and community education programs are well-subscribed, and popular. The central-office staff members running these programs are enthusiastic and dedicated.
- The district has received grants for “Reading First” (\$350,000) and “Early Reading First” (\$4.5 million) programs.
- The district received a sizable (\$816,421) grant from the U.S. Department of Education to improve student behavior and school climate in four schools (Folwell, Franklin, Northeast, and Sanford) between 1999 and 2002. Program evaluations showed modest but positive effects.<sup>65</sup>
- The district has recently secured a three-year (\$1.1 million) magnet schools assistance grant from the U.S. Department of Education to support IB programs at Hall and Whittier Elementary Schools.
- The district has approximately \$1.2 million to support Comprehensive School Reform programs in 13 district schools.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> “Drug and Violence Prevention Coordinators for Middle Schools,” Minneapolis Public Schools: Final Report, December 18, 2002.

<sup>66</sup> Schools include Andersen Elementary, Banneker, Davis, Hamilton, Henry, Longfellow, North High, Sanford, Sheridan, Windom, Johnson, Whittier, and Edison. Models in use include Integrated Arts, Cognitive Coaching, Responsive Classrooms, Comer Schools, Plan-Do-Check-Act, Effective Schools, U of M Education Trust, and New American High Schools.

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### **Areas of Concern**

- In general, the district does not appear to have a strategy or rationale it uses to seek federal and other outside grants. There also is not a uniform strategy that is apparent for how these grants help the district meet its overall priorities. Each grant seems to be pursued for its own independent purposes.
- There appears to be some confusion at project sites surrounding the requirements of the former “Reading Excellence” program and the new “Reading First” initiative.

### **Recommendations**

1. Develop specific priorities and guidelines for grant writers to ensure that all external grants that the district pursues align with the academic goals and funding objectives of the school system. (I1)
2. Ensure the requirements of “Reading First” are differentiated from those of “Reading Excellence” for project site staff. (I2)

## **CHAPTER 4. FINANCE**

This chapter summarizes the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Support Team on finance at the point when the new superintendent assumed her post at the beginning of the 2004-05 school year. The chapter is divided into three major sections: management, potential revenue enhancements, and potential cost savings. The management section is further subdivided into three subsections: strategic directions, administrative structure, and management systems.

The Council's Strategic Support Team on finance spent considerable time and energy interviewing district staff, principals, and others, and reviewing documents and materials that described how the Minneapolis Public Schools were managing their finances. The team looked primarily at the how the district organized its financial operations, where cost and savings opportunities might be, and how the district's operating systems appeared to be functioning.

### **Highlights**

- ★ The district has a structural finance problem that is being exacerbated by the state finance formula, declining student enrollment, the cost of special education, the board's commitment to reduced class sizes, the site-based management system, building pressure for increased salaries, and an antiquated computer management system.
- ★ The district has squeezed as much savings from its central office operations as is safe to do without putting financial safeguards into serious jeopardy.
- ★ The district needs to reorganize some financial and budget functions and create others to avoid future audit findings.
- ★ Several of the district's operations, transportation and procurement in particular, use cutting edge procedures that can serve as best practices for other urban school systems.

### **Findings and Recommendations**

The Minneapolis Public Schools has a budget of approximately \$613 million for Fiscal Year 2004-05.<sup>67</sup> Some 66 percent of the district's revenues come from the state, 24 percent come from local tax sources, 9 percent comes from the federal government, and 1 percent from other sources. The district spends about 68 percent of its budget on general operating expenses, 11 percent on debt services, 9 percent on grant projects, 5 percent on capital projects, and 7 percent on other efforts, including community services and food services. About 76 percent of the district's general operating budget is allocated to school

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<sup>67</sup> 2004-05 Budget. *Minneapolis Public Schools, Special School District No. 1*. Adopted June 29, 2004.

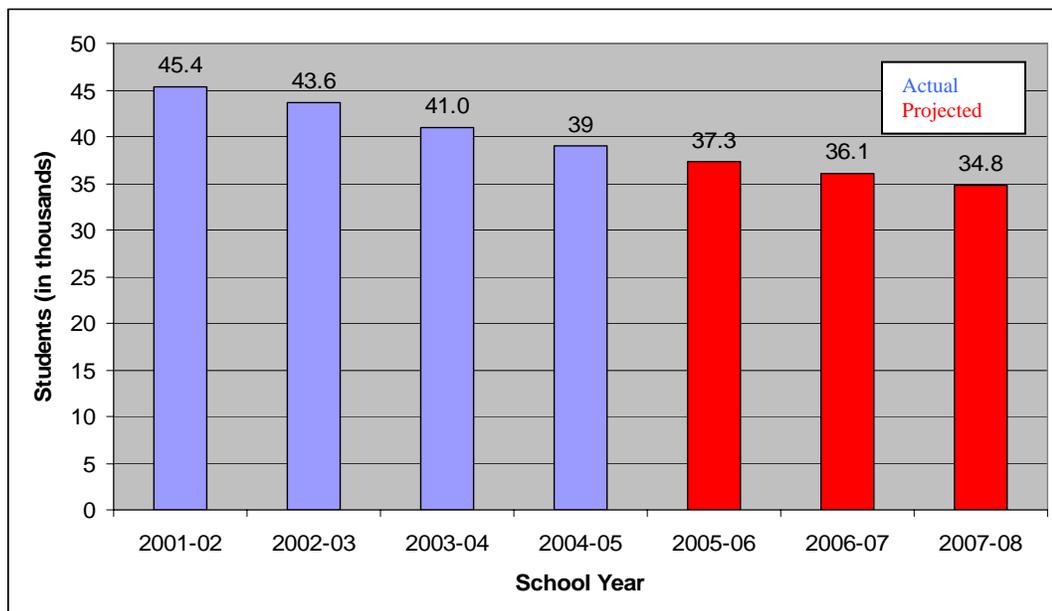
## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

sites. Some 8 percent of the general operating budget is devoted to transportation, 8 percent for facilities, 5 percent for district administrative services, and 3 percent for other costs. Of monies allocated to the school sites, 43 percent is devoted to classroom teachers, 22 percent goes to special education, 13 percent goes to compensatory education, 6 percent is spent on per capita costs, 6 percent is devoted to school administration, 5 percent is spent on Title I services, 2 percent is devoted to ELLs, 1 percent goes to nurses, 1 percent to vocational education services, and 1 percent to miscellaneous expenses. The following sections summarize the main findings and recommendations from the team's review.

### A. Systemic Issues

- In recent years, the major source of *school funds has shifted away from property tax levies to the state school funding formula*. While local property taxes have been reduced significantly in this process, state revenues have not increased proportionally to offset the loss. The result of this shift in school funding is a district that is constantly struggling to maintain income levels necessary to fund its programs.
- The district continues to see *declining student enrollment* due to the decreases in regional birth rates, reductions of in-migration due to federal policy changes, and charter schools. (See Graph 10 below.) The reductions in enrollment have meant reductions in state formula aid. While some variable expenses can be correspondingly reduced, the net impact on the district is negative. The loss of enrollment has also effected school utilization, resulting in a number of schools that are unusually small, programmatically inefficient and proportionally more expensive to administer, operate and maintain.

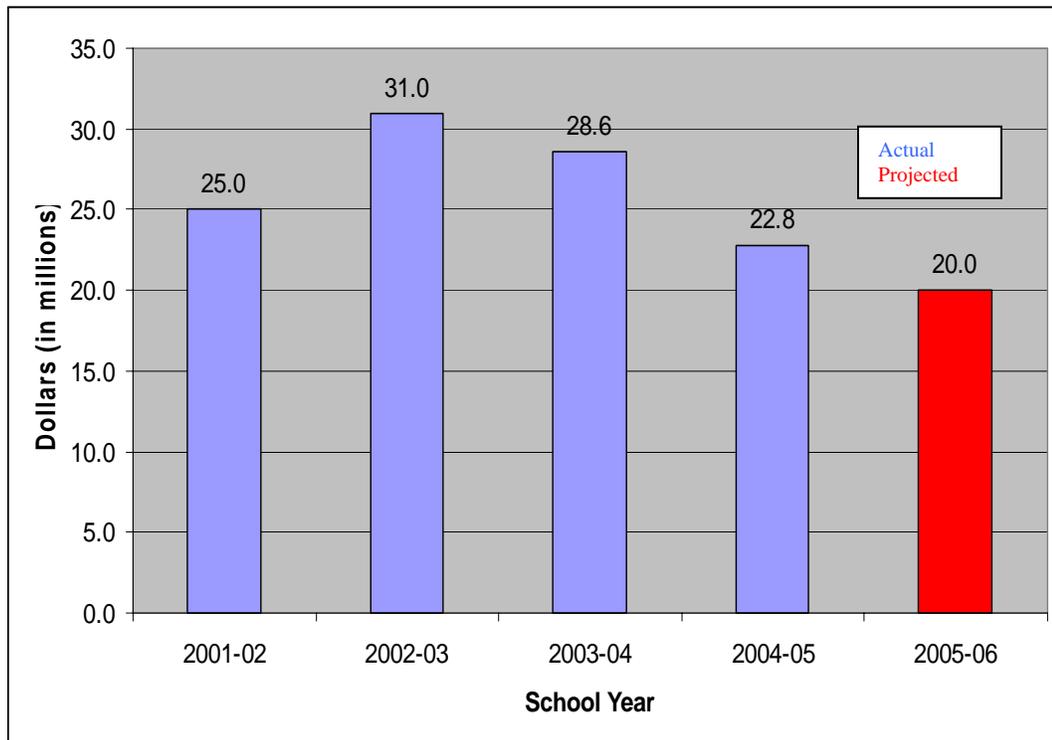
**Graph 10. Actual and Projected District Enrollments**



## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

- The district's *special education programs* have continued to expand despite the district's overall student enrollment decline. State and federal funds have offset some of the costs of these programs but the added costs for providing special education services have exceeded the new revenues. Currently, \$25-\$30 million of general funds are used to support the district's special education efforts.
- The Board of Education made a commitment, backed by a voter referendum, to maintain *reduced class sizes* of 22 in grades K-3, 28 in grades 4-8, and 30 in grades 9-12. This promise is laudable, but smaller class sizes are not fully funded by the marginal tax levy or the state program and are difficult to sustain in the current financial environment.
- The district has been consistent with the national trend using a *school based management* or site-based decision making program to decentralize its operations. As a result, individual schools have developed or adopted a multitude of programs designed to meet localized needs or desires. The cost of program implementation, training, delivery, and evaluation is much more expensive than the standardized curriculum approach being adopted in many other districts and that is recommended for Minneapolis in the curriculum and instruction chapter of this report. Many of these school-based programs have not been evaluated for their cost effectiveness, return on investment, or comparative value to the students of the district.
- The district operates in a highly unionized environment with 14 bargaining units. *Salary increases*, which have been minimal in recent years, have created a pent up demand for improvement. In addition, the cost of employee compensation packages, anticipated to increase by double digit percentages in the coming year, exacerbates the financial pressure on the district.
- The district's *disparate management and computer systems are outdated* and do not communicate with one another electronically. This results in the lack of timely and accurate information on which to base management decisions and may cost the district funds that could come from more accurate enrollment counts.
- Some of these issues are controllable to one degree or another, but others are not. Either way, they have conspired to force the district to make significant budget cuts in each of the past four years. The figure below—Graph 11—shows the gaps between revenues and expenditures in each of the last four budget years and the currently projected short fall of \$20 million for 2005-2006.
- The budget cuts implemented to cover these gaps have included staff reductions, reductions in per capita non-salary allocations to schools, reductions in teachers, educational assistants, trades people, and administrative support functions that have been reduced to skeletal levels in many areas. The finance and budget units, for example, are particularly short of staff, having just two supervisory personnel doing clerical tasks on basic departmental functions.

Graph 11. Actual and Projected Gap between Revenues and Expenditures



### B. Management Operations

The Strategic Support Team also saw areas where the school district could improve the overall effectiveness of its budget and financial operations.

#### *Strategic Directions*

#### Findings

- Major operational units, including staff of the Finance and Budget Department, do not know the Superintendent’s expectations and requirements yet and lack direction related to their roles and responsibilities in meeting them.
- The concept of “customer service” and viewing public and employees as “clients” appears to be a foreign concept to some—but not all—department staff members.

#### Recommendations

1. Take immediate steps to clarify and clearly communicate the Superintendent’s expectations and requirements to the district’s senior staff, management and administrators. (B1)

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

2. Begin development of a multi-year district Strategic Plan with targets, benchmarks, identified responsibility centers, accountability measures and timelines to translate expectations and requirements into action. (B2)
3. Require action plans specifying how all senior operational divisions intend to enhance revenues, pursue efficiencies, improve effectiveness, identify potential cost savings and improve customer service to employees and the public. (B3)

### *Administrative Organization*

#### **Findings**

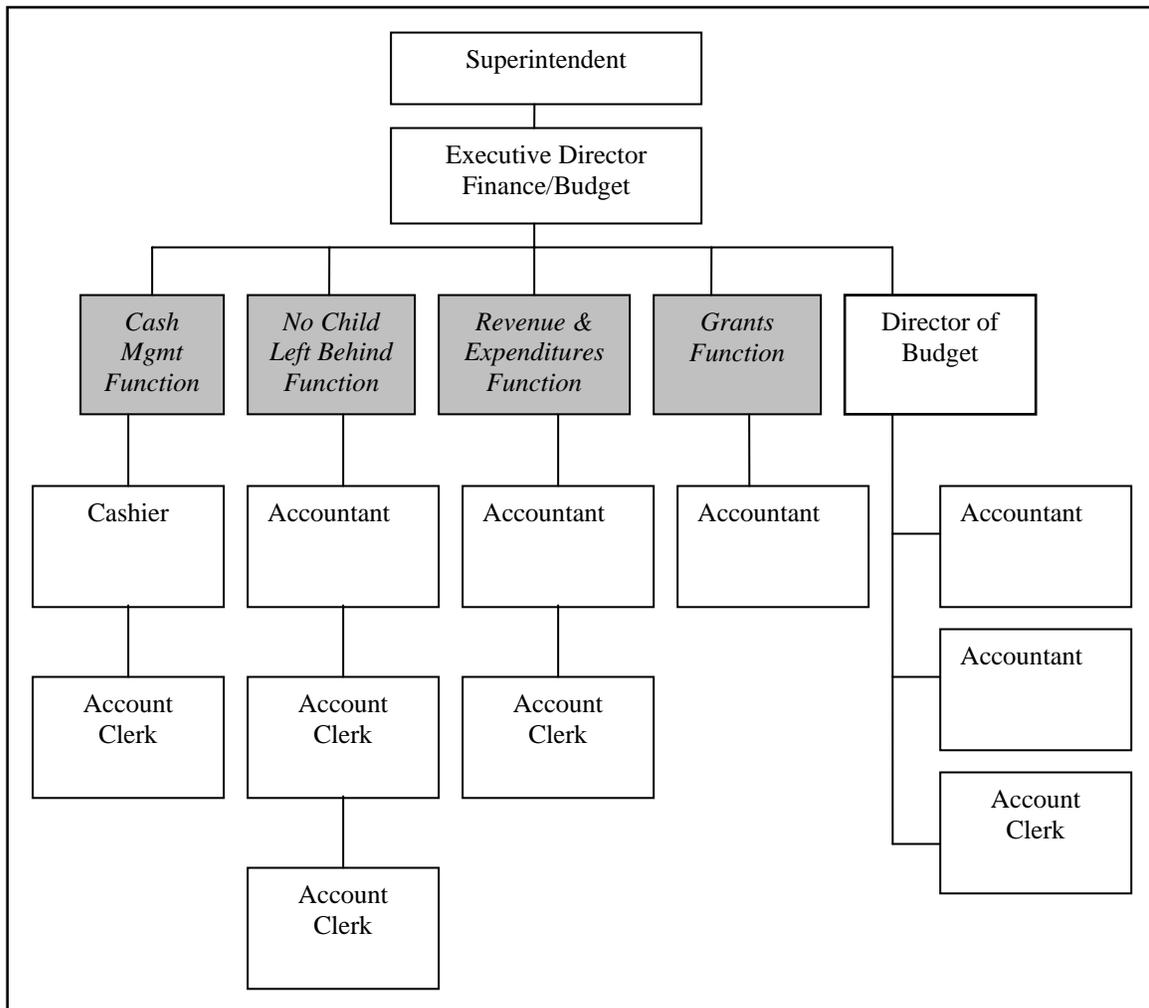
- The district's current organizational structure is traditional and straightforward. The Executive Director of Finance and Budget reports directly to the superintendent.
- The major operational divisions are supported by dedicated, experienced, and competent staff.
- The district's internal audit function was abandoned in recent years as a result of administrative budget cuts.
- The district does not have a Risk Manager; the risk management functions are fragmented or non-existent; there is no formal coordination of risk management activities; there appears to be no work place safety program or hazard mitigation program; and the Worker's Compensation program does not appear to be aggressively managed to reduce cost.
- The Grants Management Office has been eliminated as part of the district's administrative cost reductions, and there are no clear lines of authority or management for grants application.
- The payroll function, which resides in the Human Resources Department, lacks sufficient internal controls because the same unit that sets up the pay rates for employees is also responsible for the actual payment of employees.
- The Accounts Payable function, which is part of the Purchasing Department, lacks satisfactory internal controls because the same unit that sets up purchasing contracts and orders is also making payments to the vendors. In addition, the Accounts Payable personnel are authorized to change vendor addresses in the district's computerized Accounts Payable file, which is a further weakness in internal controls.
- The district does not have a Chief Information Officer (CIO) to manage its information technology efforts, and its current Information Technology leadership

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

appears to lack the experience and leadership to manage the installation of a new management and financial (ERP) system.

- The organizational chart for the Finance and Budget Office is seen in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4. Current Organizational Chart for the Finance and Budget Office**



- The Finance and Budget Office is woefully understaffed, particularly at the management and supervisory levels, resulting in the following deficiencies—
  - There is no treasurer, controller, director of accounting, or head accountants – glaring deficiencies in an organization of this size and complexity.
  - The Director of Finance has the responsibility for reconciling the district’s bank accounts, a task normally assigned to the clerical level.

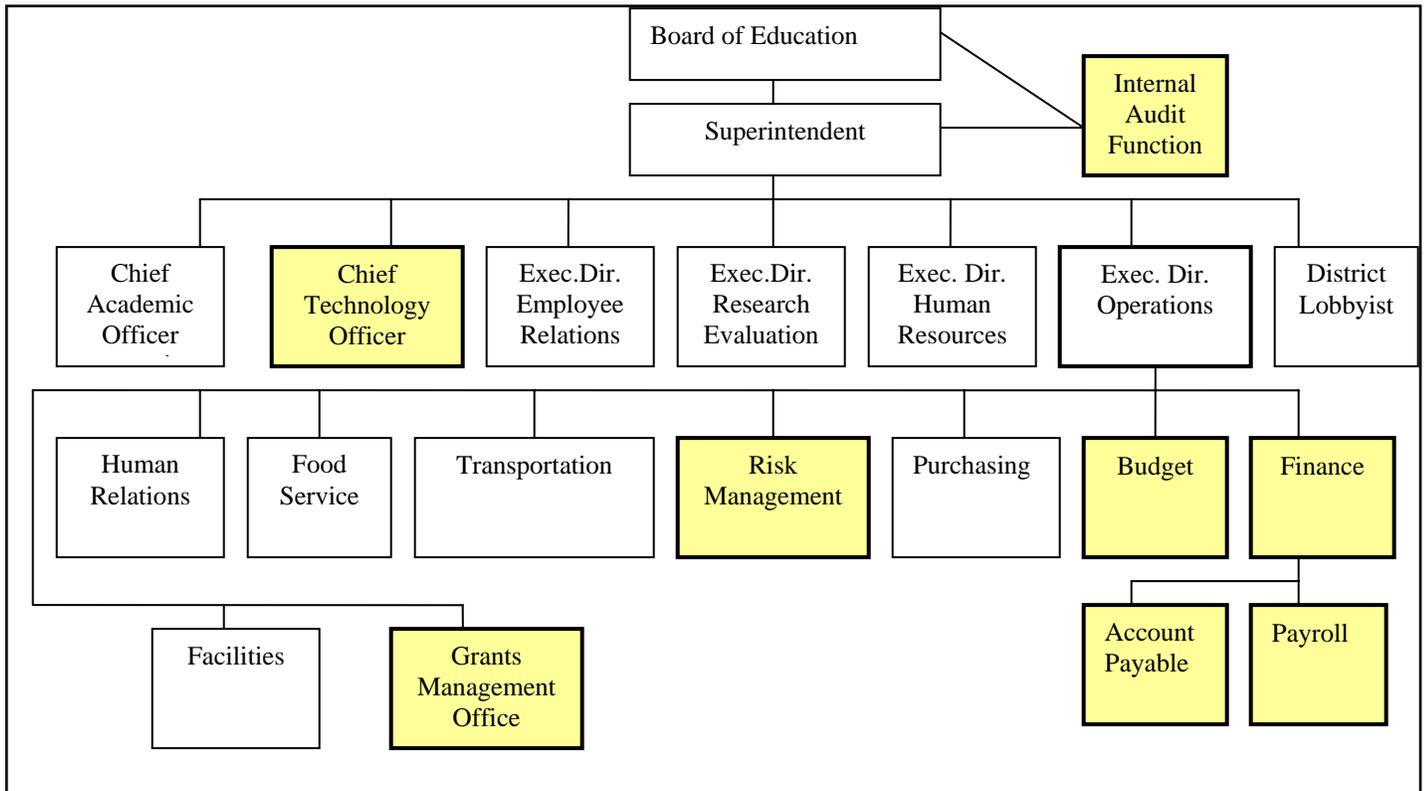
## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

- The Finance department spends little time on analysis, addressing compliance issues, or implementing improvements.
- The Strategic Support Team agrees with the comments of the outside auditors that insufficient staffing has led to incomplete records, failures in updating fixed assets inventory, failures to balance certain accounts on a timely basis, and insufficient staff reviews of journal entries.<sup>68</sup>
- The work load in the Finance and Budget Office is not equally distributed. *No Child Left Behind* functions are staffed disproportionately in other units, for example.
- The district’s financial functions are fragmented and several finance-related positions are found in various other departments.

### Recommendations

1. Reorganize the non-instructional administrative structure to improve the district’s internal management controls by—(See Figure 5 below.) (B4)

**Figure 5. Proposed Organizational Chart for Finance and Budget**



<sup>68</sup> Independent Auditors’ Report. Minneapolis: Deloitte & Touche, January 26, 2004.

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- Establishing an internal audit function, which reports to an Audit Committee of the Board of Education; receives its day-to-day direction from the Superintendent; and contracts with the district's independent auditor, another outside auditor, or is staffed in house.
  - Establishing a Risk Management Function that reports to the Executive Director of Operations and is responsible for all insurance and self-insurance programs, coordinates worker safety programs and aggressively manages workers compensation.
  - Re-establishing a Grants Management Office that reports to the Executive Director of Operations with clear lines of authority for grants application management. (See same recommendation in chapter on federal programs.)
  - Separating the Finance and Budget operations as direct reports to the Executive Director of Operations, and requiring the Finance Office to focus on controllership and treasury functions and the Budget Office to focus on financial planning functions.
  - Establishing a new position of Chief Technology Officer as a direct report to the Superintendent with management responsibilities for the implementation of the district's new management and financial (ERP) computer systems.
  - Removing the payroll functions from the Human Resources department and placing them in the Finance Office to reestablish internal controls over salary payments.
  - Removing the Accounts Payable functions from the Purchasing Department, placing them under the Finance Office to enhance internal controls over vendor payments, and prohibit it from initiating changes to the master vendor file.
2. Conduct a comprehensive review of the Finance and Budget Offices staffing levels with an eye towards consolidating, redeploying and aligning fragmented functions into these offices. (B5)

### *Management and Operating Systems*

#### **Findings**

- The Transportation Department has implemented aggressive cost containment practices, using a five-tier bell schedule to maximize the utilization of its school buses and optimize its school bus routes. The practice is a positive one from the stand point of cost containment but it may have negative instructional consequences for students who migrate from school to school.

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- The cost of transporting students to charter schools continues to exceed dollars provided by well over a million dollars a year.
- The Purchasing Department uses cutting-edge procurement techniques, including Strategic Sourcing, e-Commence, and P-Cards.
- The district has pursued an aggressive “building program” since 1990. The program has resulted in the construction of 16 new schools, the renovation of 28 other schools, and the reduction in maintenance backlogs. The first phase of the program ran from 1994 to 1998 and cost about \$158 million and the second phase ran from 1999 to 2003 and cost some \$122 million. Funding was secured through general obligation bonds and certificates of deposit.<sup>69</sup>
- The maximum bidding limits allowed by state law are not used.
- Privatization efforts have included contracting for incremental transportation services and for selected projects under the aegis of the Maintenance Department. The district has also eliminated its warehouse operations, and outsourced its print shop.
- While one of the nation’s top auditing firms (Deloitte & Touche) is used for annual examinations, there does not seem to be a district policy of periodically rotating outside auditors.
- The district’s management and computer systems, which are outdated and do not electronically communicate with one another, result in the lack of timely and accurate information on which to base management decisions. This situation also contributes to excessive time being spent on reworks—“not getting it right the first time”—in payroll processing.
- There is little evidence of a professional development program for the non-instructional staff. The training that does take place appears to be fragmented. There is no formal training for new employees and no funds from outside sources to get training for existing employees.
- The Accounts Payable unit does not perform an “aging” of outstanding invoices and can not readily determine its effectiveness in paying the district’s bills.
- There is no succession or replacement planning based on pending retirements in the administrative support offices.
- The lack of timely financial information and understaffing of critical financial functions has led to delays in closing the district’s books and the publication of the district’s basic financial reports.

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<sup>69</sup> *Report to Stakeholders, 1990 to 2003*. Minneapolis Public Schools, 2002.

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

### **Recommendations**

1. Maximize the district's purchasing efficiencies by adopting the state's higher formal bidding limits. (B6)
2. Establish a policy of periodically rotating the district's outside audit firm every five to seven years. (B7)
3. Move expeditiously to implement the district's major new management and financial (ERP) computer system. (B8)
4. Develop a comprehensive training and staff development strategy and supporting program with an initial focus on the training of new and newly assigned employees. (B9)
5. Capture data relating to unpaid invoices when they are received in order to develop an "aging" of the district's obligation and develop a performance metric on the timely payment of bills. (B10)
6. Develop a succession or staff replacement plan to provide back up for personnel in key management positions. (B11)
7. Revise procedures and reorder priorities to ensure the timely publication of the district's basic financial documents. (B12)

### **C. Revenue Enhancements**

#### **Findings**

- The district appears to have maximized its opportunities under the federal E-Rate Program, and has used its funds to develop an impressive computer communications infrastructure.
- The district's third party administrator has recovered only \$200,000 under the Medicaid reimbursement program.
- An indirect rate of only 1.8 percent, which seems low compared to other urban school districts, is being charged on allowable federal (and state) grant programs.
- The district may not be recovering all of its costs in the rates it is charging for extended use of its facilities.

#### **Recommendations**

1. Encourage the district's third party administrator to intensify efforts to maximize the district's potential revenue under the Medicaid reimbursement program. (C1)

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

2. Analyze and recalculate the district's indirect cost rate to improve cost recoveries on allowable federal (and state) grant programs. (C2)
3. Analyze and recalculate the rate charged for the extended use of school facilities to ensure the district's full cost recovery. (C3)

### **D. Cost Savings**

#### **Findings**

- The district has pursued aggressive efforts over the last several years to cut costs. Notable efforts include—
  - Shift from a three-tiered school start schedule to a five-tier schedule. (\$3.7 million)
  - Reducing per capita school allocations. (\$4.0 million)
  - Reducing funds for textbooks and other consumables. (\$1.8 million)
  - Eliminating teacher sabbaticals. (\$0.9 million)
  - Reducing the number of school administrators and school contingency resources. (\$1.0 million)
  - Restructuring special education staffing. (\$1.9 million)
  - Freezing salaries. (\$3.9 million)
  - Reducing service administrative staff. (\$6.5 million)
  - Reducing teaching staff due to declining enrollment. (\$ \$9.0 million)
- The district's unreserved-undesignated fund balance has steadily declined to just 0.1 percent in FY2003, an unusually low level that provides little buffer against unforeseen circumstances.
- Virtually all of the district's resources have been allocated to the schools in order to maintain a commitment to class size reduction and the instructional program.
- The district's commitment to class size reduction is not sustainable over time with funds from the marginal tax levy.
- Some schools use discretionary "comp" funds to decrease their class size levels below the districtwide standards. (Schools are required to spend 30 percent of their compensatory education dollars on class-size reduction.)

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

- An adjustment in average class sizes by one student districtwide would generate approximately \$4.3 million annually.<sup>70</sup>
- The district’s school-based management program, a kaleidoscope of programs designed to meet localized needs, have created a number of consequences—
  - Few of these programs have been evaluated for their cost effectiveness, return on investment, or comparative value to the students.
  - The cost of the current approach in terms of program implementation, training, delivery and evaluation is much more than the standardized curriculum approach being adopted in many districts.
- While the district is working to improve school utilization by redirecting the usage of some 18 school sites, the potential for school closures and redirection is closer to 25 to 27 campuses.

### Recommendations

1. Recognize that the board’s commitment to class-size reduction is not sustainable with the revenue generated from the marginal tax levy and that funds must come from the school level if the district is going to launch new systemwide programs or initiatives. (D1)
2. Set limits on the extent to which schools can use discretionary “comp” funds to decrease their class size levels below districtwide standards. (D2)
3. Consider aligning the district’s and school based budget allocations with specifically defined objectives, measures, and established targets to ensure that the district and schools are moving toward the same ultimate goals. (D3)
4. Consider adopting a regular cycle of program evaluations, analytical techniques, and management tools that tie instructional and financial outcomes and costs to the programs acquired by schools. Analytical tools could include—(D4)
  - Return on Investment (ROI), which compares the expected savings or cost avoidances derived from investment of district funds in alternative instructional programs.
  - Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA), which links the benefits (results) to the costs associated with instructional decisions.
  - Accountability Systems, which use standardized, systemic, and repeatable measurements to link results to specific instructional decisions.

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<sup>70</sup> This step would involve eliminating 57.5 teaching positions, including the 0.2 prep specialists for each classroom teacher.

## **CHAPTER 5. SYNOPSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The Strategic Support Teams working on this project found talented and committed people working in the Minneapolis 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 a significant resource for the district. The system's leadership will need to cultivate, support, and deploy them properly if it hopes to keep the district moving forward and outside the clutches of NCLB's sanctions.

Currently, however, the school district is not pulling in the same direction, is not focused enough, and is not providing enough direction to its staff and teachers to keep the system from sliding into decline over the long run. Instead, the district is too site-based instructionally, too fractured, and too unfocused to work like a school system rather than a loose confederation of schools.

The district's schools do not have to be this way. 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 are taking direct responsibility at the central office level for boosting achievement and providing their systems with leadership and focus.

We have borrowed from the lessons learned in these cities to inform the recommendations we are making to the Minneapolis 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 Teams 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.

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

- Establish a clear accountability system for attaining academic goals.
- Standardize cohesive, districtwide instructional strategies and curriculum.
- 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 speed up its reform of high schools.
- Focus on the lowest-performing schools.

These proposals also have implications for how the district spends and tracks its resources, how it organizes its personnel, and how it monitors its performance.

The Council, in summary, is suggesting that the school district take responsibility for the instruction of its children rather than assuming that its schools are taking care of business on their own. Many are, in fact, but a good enough number are not that the district now finds itself a year away from being in “district improvement” status. In short, the district needs to define its instructional and professional development programs more directly, since these activities shape the school system’s bottom line—student achievement. But, at the same time, the system should retain as much decentralized staffing and budgeting as it can. These are not contradictory notions.

Revamping the instructional program of the Minneapolis 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 to boost its bottom line. The current system in Minneapolis does the opposite by allowing schools to set their own agendas and define their own bottom lines. This approach is not producing the kind of results that parents want or students need.

The “top down” approach, however, does present a number of challenges to the district. Historically, many urban school districts have choked off the progress of their individual schools by being too centralized, focusing on regulatory compliance instead of 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

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

more of a problem than a solution and to bypass them in favor of charter schools and other alternative structures.

The criticism of central offices was warranted in many cases because urban school systems were not doing anything that went beyond compliance to spur student achievement. Many principals and teachers interviewed by the Strategic Support Team for this project, in fact, said that they paid little attention to the central office because the leadership was not doing much to help them.

Research, however, is beginning to show that the faster-improving urban school systems across the country 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 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 of being too centralized, of course, involves the possibility that the district will standardize bad practice and do 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

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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 redeployed, 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, she should have the latitude to pick his or her own team without 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.

How this is done may be as important as the “what” in a city that prides itself on community engagement and citizen input. Reorganizing district personnel and focusing staff resources on a common set of priorities and approaches—and getting the support of the community—will require not just technical skill, but the superintendent’s diplomatic and political dexterity in full measure. In that spirit, the district’s leadership should consider taking the new strategic plan back to the community for input and support.

Fifth, there will be complaints about the curriculum becoming too narrow. This is a legitimate concern that the district, which prides itself on the arts and how well they are integrated into the curriculum, 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.

Sixth, there will be a temptation on the part of the district to buy one of the more effective reading programs, even if it is simply an upgrade of its current reading series, 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 instructional programs have to be supported with coherent 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 Minneapolis can’t see similar progress and be one of the best urban school districts in the country.

**APPENDIX A: BENCHMARKING MINNEAPOLIS**

**APPENDIX A: BENCHMARKING MINNEAPOLIS**

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 on split votes.	1	2	3	4	5	Stable working majority on the board and general consensus on how to run the district.	3.3
2. Board policies about student achievement are made with split votes.	1	2	3	4	5	Stable working majority on the board and policies about student achievement are generally supported by the full board.	3.5
3. 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.	3.3
4. 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 monitoring those efforts.	2.8
<b>Shared Vision</b>							
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.	3.2

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

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.	3.0
6. Board and superintendent experience repeated turnover.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent have stable and lengthy relationship.	2.6
<b>Diagnosing Situation</b>							
7. Board and superintendent often make decisions policies/affecting student achievement without first analyzing data.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent jointly analyze factors affecting achievement before making policies/decisions.	2.8
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.	2.8
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.	3.2
10. Board is heavily involved in day-to-day operation of district.	1	2	3	4	5	Board entrusts superintendent to run district.	4.0
<b>Selling Reform</b>							
11. Board and	1	2	3	4	5	Board and	2.8

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superintendent have no concrete or specific goals for district.						superintendent identify concrete and specific goals for district.	
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.	2.8
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.	2.8
14. Board and superintendent continue to give excuses for poor student performance and do not exclaim an urgency or quest for high standards.	1	2	3	4	5	Board and superintendent exclaim urgency, high standards, and no excuses.	2.4
<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.	2.8
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.	2.8
17. Central office operates on a	1	2	3	4	5	Central office is designed so that it	2.6

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

schedule that does not consider schools' immediate problems.						moves to fix schools' immediate problems.	
<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.	3.5
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.	3.0
20. District does not make budget adjustments shifting funds into instructional priorities.	1	2	3	4	5	District shifts existing funds into instructional priorities.	3.0
<b>Educational Strategies</b>							
<b>Setting Goals</b>							
21. District may set somewhat general goals and lack specific targets for principals.	1	2	3	4	5	District sets specific performance goals and principals.	2.2
22. District moves forward with reforms without considering best practices of similar districts.	1	2	3	4	5	District spends time considering what works elsewhere and incorporates "best practices" in their reforms.	2.4
23. District goals lack specific timelines for meeting goals and targets.	1	2	3	4	5	District goals are "SMART" – Stretching, Measurable, Aspiring, Rigorous,	2.0

**Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

						and have a <b>Timeline</b> .	
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.	2.8
<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.	2.8
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.	1.8
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.	1.8
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.	4.4
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.	1.6
<b>Focus on Low Performing Schools</b>							

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

30. District treats all schools the same and has no formalized method of focusing on lowest performing schools.	1	2	3	4	5	District creates and implements a system for improving the performance of lowest performing schools.	3.0
31. District has no formalized process to drive schools forward. The School Improvement Plan exists on paper only.	1	2	3	4	5	District uses the school improvement planning process to drive schools forward.	2.0
32. District lacks detailed interventions for lowest performing schools.	1	2	3	4	5	District has bank of detailed interventions – academic, leadership and operation support, - for lowest performing schools.	2.0
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.	2.7
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.	2.2
35. District has no formalized process for monitoring schools.	1	2	3	4	5	District closely monitors schools throughout the year.	2.4
<b>Unified Curriculum</b>							
36. District has multiple curricula with contrasting instructional	1	2	3	4	5	District adopts or develops uniform curriculum or framework for	1.8

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

approaches.						instruction.	
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 has a tight framework for curriculum.	1.8
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.	2.8
39. District does not differentiate instruction for low-performing students.	1	2	3	4	5	District differentiates instruction for low-performing students.	2.6
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.	2.2
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.	3.3
42. District uses a reading program that is not scientifically-based.	1	2	3	4	5	District uses scientifically-based reading curriculum.	3.3
43. District has no way to ensure that classroom teachers are covering the curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5	District has a formalized system (e.g. pacing guides) to ensure that teachers are covering the curriculum standards.	1.8

**Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

<b>Professional Development</b>							
44. District has no formalized 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.	1.8
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.	2.2
46. District focuses the majority of its professional development on topics not related to classroom practice.	1	2	3	4	5	District focuses the majority of its professional development on classroom practice.	3.0
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.	2.8
<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.	2.0
49. District has no way to determine if	1	2	3	4	5	District has system of encouraging and	1.8

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reforms are being implemented.						monitoring implementation of reforms.	
50. Central office leaves instruction up to individual schools.	1	2	3	4	5	Central office takes responsibility for quality of instruction.	1.8
<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.	2.6
52. District does not have a formalized 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.	2.4
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.	3.2
54. District does not use student assessment results and other data to shape intervention strategies.	1	2	3	4	5	District uses annual and benchmark data to decide on where to target interventions.	2.0
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.	2.4

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

55. 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.	2.4
<b>Starting Early</b>							
56. 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.	2.4
<b>Handling Upper Grades</b>							
57. 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.	3.0
58. 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.	3.4
59. 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.	2.6
60. District lacks plan to introduce AP courses in all high schools.	1	2	3	4	5	District offers AP courses in all district high schools.	2.2

**APPENDIX B: INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED**

**APPENDIX B: INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED**

**Individuals Interviewed by Curriculum and Instruction Team**

- Thandiwe Peebles, Superintendent
- Joseph Erickson, Board Member
- Colleen Baumtrog, Superintendent of Student Support Services
- Kay McLean, Executive Director of Teacher and Instructional Services
- Paula Palmer, Elementary (K-5) Literacy Coordinator
- Stephanie Carlson, Middle Literacy Coordinator
- Pia Payne-Shannon, Secondary Literacy Coordinator
- Maureen Seiwert, Early Childhood
- Ann Bartel, K-12 Mathematics Coordinator
- Gwen Jackson, Elementary Academic Superintendent
- Eleanor Coleman, Middle Academic Superintendent
- Robert McCauley, High School Academic Superintendent
- David Heistad, Research and Evaluation
- Louise Sundin, President, Minneapolis Federation of Teachers
- Catherine Jordan, Achieve! Minneapolis
- Tom Cytron-Hysom, St. Paul Community Literacy Consortium
- Eric Nesheim, St. Paul Community Literacy Consortium
- Wayne Hayes, MN Academic Excellence Foundation
- Karen Pedersen, English Language Learners (POSA)
- Carolyn Yang, Elementary ELL Specialist (TOSA)
- Soua Yang, New Family Center (MAC)
- Tim Brown, Director of Indian Education
- Ann Casey, Assistant Director of Special Education
- Doug Marston, Special Education Administrator
- Dana Carmichael, No Child Left Behind
- Jim Grathwol, Legislation
- Linda Bjorklund, State and Federal Projects
- Lynn Nordgren, Professional Development
- FeLicia McCorvey Preyer, Jordan Park, Parent
- Judy Sharkin-Simons, Cooper Parent
- Aden Amin Awil, Powderhorn, Parent
- Mona Harris, Henry, Parent
- Ossie Brooks James, Lyndale Principal
- Nell Collier, Cityview, Principal
- Jackie Hanson, Anthony Middle, Principal
- Meredith Davis, Sanford Middle Paul, Principal
- Paul McMahan, Henry High, Principal
- Michael Favor, North High, Principal
- Michelle Zenk, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, Andersen Elementary

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

- Kelly Woods, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Teacher, Andersen Elementary
- Roxanne Beasley, Math/Reading Teacher, Powderhorn
- Sue McKeegan, Math Teacher, Folwell
- Gail Foulett-Meyer, Reading Teacher, Folwell
- Lashawn Adams, Language Arts Teacher, Franklin
- Katin Gabrielson, Math Teacher, Franklin
- Tiffany Brooks, Teacher, Franklin
- Carol Schacht, Math Teacher, South High
- Mike Kennedy, Teacher, Southwest High
- Bill Towne, Math Teacher, Southwest High
- Elizabeth Dwith, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, Emerson Spanish Immersion

### **Individuals Interviewed by the Title I and Federal Programs Team**

- Chuck Irrgang, Director of Finance
- Marj Rolland, Director of Budget
- Kay McLean, Director of Curriculum
- Jackie Turner, Director of Student Placement Services and Voluntary School Choice Grant
- Jim Gael, NSF Math Grant Coordinator
- Linda Bjorklund, Administrator of Funded Programs
- Tim Brown, Title VII, Indian Education
- Kristen Schroeder, Administrator of NCLB Compliance
- Sara Bratsch, Administrator of NCLB Finance
- Gwen Jackson, Interim Chief Academic Officer for Curriculum and Instruction
- Jack Tamble, Director of Community Education
- Alan Ickler, Manager of Community Education
- Mary Barbie, Manager of Community Education
- Karen Wells, Principal, Willard
- Denise Wells, Principal, Andersen and Phillips Community
- Jan Parrish, Principal, Green Central
- Louis Boone, Principal, Powderhorn and Banneker
- Mike Favor, Principal, North
- Bruce Gilman, Principal, Roosevelt
- Ali Xiong, Principal, Abraham Lincoln
- Candice Hickenbotham, Title I Coordinator, Green Central
- Leeka Gwanganalie, Title I Coordinator, Abraham Lincoln
- Carrie Rogers, Title I Coordinator, Willard
- Sandra Convoy, Title I Coordinator, Roosevelt
- Jeffrey Buszra, Title I Coordinator, North
- Roxanne Beasley, Title I Coordinator, Powderhorn
- Rosemarie Hunter, Title I Coordinator, Andersen
- Yvonne Trammell, Title I Parent, North
- Pam Hayes, Title I Parent, Roosevelt

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

- Hugo Ochoa, Title I Parent, Andersen
- Rhonda Fields, Title I Parent, Green Central

### **Individuals Interviewed by the Finance Team**

- Dr. Thandiwe Peebles, Superintendent
- Chuck Irrgang, Executive Director Financial & Budget Management
- Marj Rolland, Director of Budget, Financial Analysis
- Bill Lauster, Accountant
- Nick Janowiec, Account Clerk
- Jeff Grilley, Accountant
- Jeri Lofgren, Account Clerk
- Joey Mart, Accountant
- Mike Burns, Cashier
- Faye Fischer, Account Clerk
- Phanida Thammavongs, Accountant
- Sara Bratsch, Accountant
- Char Beyel, Account Clerk
- Kim Phan, Account Clerk
- Kerry Felt, Executive Director, Human Resources
- Susan Revier, Director, Employee Benefits
- James Beach, Director, Payroll
- Dan Hambrock, Executive Director, Operations
- Pam Blackamoore, Director, Transportation
- Clyde Kan, Director, Facilities
- Ben Lander, Transportation Analyst
- Roy Hallanger, Transportation Analyst
- Marggie Ingle, Facilities Analyst
- Greg Mead, Director, Purchasing & Accounts Payable
- Joan Brown, Manager, Accounts Payable
- Coleen Kosloski, Director, IT Services
- Mike Donen, Network and Technology Implementation Specialist
- Ben Peck, Technology Operations Manager

**APPENDIX C: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED**

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**Documents Reviewed by Curriculum and Instruction Team**

- Beating the Odds Demographic Profile & MPS Fact Sheet
- MPS Facts You Should Know, 2003-2004
- Measuring Up, A Report on the Minneapolis Public Schools, 2002
- Twelve Point Plan for Improving the Academic Performance and Graduation Rates of Students of Color
- District Improvement Agenda, 2002-2005
- Background Information on Charter and Contract Alternative Schools
- Organizational Chart 2004-2005
- Leadership Structure, Site-Based Decision Making, Academic Divisions
- Teaching & Instructional Services Organizational Charts
- Teacher Instructional Services Administrative and Non-Administrative Job Descriptions
- Description of Early Childhood Curriculum and Supplemental Materials
- Description of Mathematics Curriculum and Materials
- Samples of Learning Continuum for Reading Strands
- Summary of K-12 Science Curriculum
- Description of Reading/Language Arts Curriculum with names of textbooks/programs/interventions
- District Support to Low-Performing Schools
- District Support to Low-Performing Students
- Secondary Literacy – Anthologies and Supplemental Materials
- Learning Goals by Grade Level
- Minneapolis Public Schools Graduation Requirements
- Language! A Literacy Intervention Curriculum, Instructional Resource Guide for Teachers
- What is an Individual Learning Plan (ILP)?
- Testing Calendar
- Minneapolis Testing Background Information
- High School QPI Points – Sample Reporting
- Application for Conducting Research in MPS
- About the Evaluation Institute
- Sample Teacher Information Report 2001-2002
- Overview – Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting
- K-5 Sample Progress Reports and Criteria, Grade-by-Grade
- District Assessment Results
- Beating the Odds State Assessment Data, 1999-2003
- School Achievement – Informed School Choice
- Minneapolis Public Schools 2002-2003 Districtwide Assessment Results
- Quality Performance Indicators – Background

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- Schools Report Card, 2002 Quality Performance, School-by-School Indicators
- Information on Attendance, Truancy, Suspensions, Graduation Rates and Support to Low-Performing Schools
- Number and Percent of students in AP, IB, and Post Secondary Education Options
- Number and Percent of students participating in the MPS Gifted and Talented Programs
- Special Education Child Count
- Transforming the High School Experience–A Platform of Principles and Practice in MPS
- Transforming the High School Experience–Summary of the MPS plan for Board approval
- Transforming the High School Experience–Findings and Recommendations
- Criteria for Spending Staff Development Funds
- Emerging Framework for School-Based Professional Community
- Professional Development Center Initiative
- PDC 2003-2004 Goals
- 2004 Summer Professional Development Opportunities for High School
- Staff Development, Summer Institute Information
- Professional Development Plan (PDP)
- PDP History
- Achievement of Tenure PDP
- Minneapolis Federation of Teachers 1999-01 Contract, Summary of Achievement of Tenure
- Welcome! Mentoring Service
- Minneapolis Standards of Effective Instruction
- Minneapolis Standards of Effective Instruction – Formal Observation Guide and Forms
- Minneapolis Standards of Effective Instruction – Rubrics
- What Makes a Quality Gifted Talented Program
- Gifted and Talented Continuum of Services
- Special Education – Plan for Improved Literacy Skills
- English Language Learners, Response to Essential Questions
- Indian Education – Background, Placement and Curriculum
- Diversity/Multicultural Education Department
- Arts for Academic Achievement
- Achieve! (background on outreach)
- School Attendance Review Board (SARB) Background
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs and Outcomes CTE Programs and Outcomes, MPS 2002-03
- Small Learning Communities by School and Type
- Performance Assessment of Academic Skills in the Problem Solving Model
- Performance Assessment of Reading in the Problem Solving Model, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition 2000
- Houghton Mifflin, Scope and Sequence, K-6
- Summer School Curriculum for High School MBST Preparation

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- Mathematics Basic Standards Preparation Materials
- Creating Successful Readers, Instructional Materials to Support Reading Across the Curriculum
- English Language Information including:
  - Minnesota Statutes 2003 124 D.59 – 124D.65
  - Languages (Home Language by ELL status)
  - Placement Procedures
  - Exit Procedures
  - Curriculum
- Sample School Information Report
- MPS Sample Evaluation Reports, 2002-2004
- Drug Use and Violence Prevention
- Work Place Tutoring
- E-Mentoring
- Full Day Kindergarten
- Classroom Level Reading Effects
- Native American Academy
- Narrowing the Gap in Early Literacy: Evidence from Minneapolis Public Schools, Kindergarten Assessments
- Core Science Modules for the Elementary and Middle School Grades
- Standards, Curriculum and Assessments for the High School Sciences
- Mathematics Curriculum Summary, Prepared for the CCSSO Curriculum Audit, Summer 2004
- Computer Curriculum Corporation, Reading/LA/Math, Courseware correlated to MPS Content Standards
- Northwest Achievement Levels Test (Research, Evaluation and Assessment)
  - Student Reports
  - Technical Manual
  - Norms Manual
  - Lexile Chart
  - Parent Brochures
  - Practice Books
- Procedures and Activities for Reducing Bias in Screening and Assessment, Office of Civil Rights, Voluntary Compliance Agreement, MPS
- Read 180, Reports Guide, Using Data to Drive Instruction
- Read 180–Reading Strategies
- Read 180—Writing and Grammar Strategies
- Read 180–Reading Strategies
- Connected Mathematics – Computer Test Bank for Assessment and Additional Practice
- Connected Mathematics – Teacher’s Guide, Probability
- Connected Mathematics – Teacher’s Guide, Rational Numbers
- Connected Mathematics – Teacher’s Guide, Geometry
- Everyday Mathematics – Student Reference Book
- Everyday Mathematics – Assessment Handbook, Grade 3

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- Everyday Mathematics – Student Math Journal
- Facts that Last, A Balanced Approach to Memorization
- Practice Worth Repeating, Creative Publications
- Number Sense, Simple Effective Number Sense Experiences
- Nimble with Numbers, Practice Bookshelf Series, Grades 2 & 3
- K-8 Program Overview, Write Source
- Minneapolis Public School, Education and Work-Based Learning, Grades 11-12
- MPS CTE Business Partners & Contacts by High School
- Put Reading First, Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, K-3
- Writing Foundations: Preparing Students for the MBSWT
- A Pre-Engineering Program for Secondary Schools, Brochure
- National Alliance For Pre-Engineering Programs
- Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: A Resource Guide
- 2003-2004 Special Education Child Count, School-by-School
- Five Years of School Information Reports available on-line at [www.incschools.com/mpls/](http://www.incschools.com/mpls/)
- Educating Young Children – High/Scope
- Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs
- Minneapolis Federation of Teachers #59, 2003-2005 Teacher Contract
- Performance Review Process
- *Measuring school performance to improve student achievement: And to reward effective programs*, Dave Heistad and Rick Spicuzza, REA paper, April 2000.
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- *Technical Manual for the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress and Achievement Level Tests*, September 2003
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- NALT Presentation slides
- Grade 6 English/Language Arts – MN Standards & MPS Grade Level Expectations
- Grade 8 English/Language Arts – MN Standards & MPS Grade Level Expectations
- High School English/Language Arts – Grade Level Expectations
- 6-12<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Plan in MPS Memo from Secondary Literacy Specialists regarding
- Model Instructional Reading Program for Middle Schools
- Quality Teaching and Learning, MPS and Minneapolis Federation of Teachers
- Early Childhood Family Services, Maureen Seiwert, Director of Pre Kindergarten Education, August 2004
- K-5 Literacy Coordinator Roles, 2003-04, Paula Palmer, 9/1/04
- School Improvement Plan, Final, 2004-2007 Sample
- Minneapolis Public Schools Calendar – Staff Development
- PIC Resources for Reading Instruction, September 2002
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- Project Manager Handbook, MPS
- Proposal Writing Guide, MPS
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- PDP information and materials from Lynn Nordgren
- Recommended Elementary Language Arts Supplemental Reading Materials List, May 2001, Memo to Director of TIS
- List of Vendors Involved in Materials Review, Memo regarding Classroom Libraries for Independent Reading, February 24, 2004
- K-5 Mathematics, Recommended Supplemental Materials, Summer 2004
- Reading First Schools’ List of Supplemental and Intervention Curriculum, Assessments, and Study Group Topics, Draft 9/10/04
- Reading First Program Subgrant Application,, January 30, 2004
- “Schools First” report at [www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/school-change/sfhome.htm](http://www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/school-change/sfhome.htm)

### **Documents Reviewed by the Title I and Federal Programs Team**

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- 2004-05 Supplemental Budget, Minneapolis Public Schools, Special District No. 1, June 2004
- Worksheet of Federal Title-Funded Salaries, Minneapolis Public Schools, November 2004
- Consolidated Application for No Child Left Behind, Minneapolis Public Schools, 2004-05
- Title I Allocations to Schools, 2004-05 Budget, Minneapolis Public Schools, March 2004
- Adequate Yearly Progress, Minneapolis Public Schools, 2004-05
- Supplemental Educational Services Provider List, Minneapolis Public Schools, 2004-05
- Professional Services Agreement, Minneapolis Public Schools and Sylvan Education Solutions
- Draft Strategic Plan, Minneapolis Public Schools, October 2004
- School Improvement Plan, 2004-2007, Selected School Sites, Minneapolis Public Schools
- Community Education, Learning for Life Funding Source Brochure, Minneapolis Public Schools, 2002-03
- K-8 & Middle School Guide, Minneapolis Public Schools, 2004-05
- Alumni Public Service Announcement, Printed Advertisement, Minneapolis Public Schools
- External Grant Funding, Minneapolis Public Schools, 2004-05
- Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and Independent Auditors’ Report, Deloitte & Touche, Fiscal Year 2003
- Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards and Independent Auditors’ Reports, Deloitte & Touche, Fiscal Year 2003
- Management Letter, Responses to Independent Auditors’ Comments and Recommendations, Minneapolis Public Schools, Fiscal Year 2003
- Report to Stakeholders, Minneapolis Public Schools, 1990 to 2003
- School Application for NCLBAYP Improvement Grant, Minnesota Department of Education, October 2004

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- FY 2002-2003 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and Independent Auditors' Report
- FY 2002-2003 Independent Auditors' report on Student Activities Funds
- Independent Auditors' Comments and Recommendations, January 26, 2004
- Management responses to the Independent Auditors' Comments and Recommendation for the year ended June 30, 2003
- Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards for the Year Ended June 30, 2003 and Independent Auditor's Report.
- FY 2004-05 Budget, Adopted June 29, 2004
- FY 2004-05 Supplemental Budget, June, 2004
- Technology Master Plan 2004-2007
- Five Year Facilities Plan 2001-2006
- Report to Stakeholders 1990 to 2003
- Minneapolis Federation of Teachers # 59 Teachers Contract 2003-2005
- Minnesota Schools Profile Report – Preliminary 2003
- Minneapolis Board of Education's Business Policies (Series 3000)
- Organization Charts for—
  - District
  - Budget and Financial Services
  - Informational Technology Services
  - Human Resources Department
- History of Budget Reductions 2001-2003
- Actual and Projected Enrollments
- Average Daily Membership Reports, by School, 2002-2004
- Health Insurance Benefit Design, effective September 1, 2004
- Five Tier School Bus Transportation Schedule
- Minneapolis Schools' web site at <http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us>

**APPENDIX D: TIMELINE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

**APPENDIX D: TIMELINE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations and proposals made in this report to the Minneapolis Public Schools present a general framework for reforming the instructional and financial components of the school system. This appendix lists the recommendations and proposes a suggested timeline within which the recommendations might be carried out. The team recommends, for instance, that the first recommendation be carried out within the next six months. This timeline is meant as a general guideline only.

<b>Curriculum and Instruction</b>				
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Six Mos.</b>	<b>One Year</b>	<b>Two Years</b>	<b>Three Years</b>
1. Convene a meeting (or retreat) of the board and the superintendent to review the superintendent’s new draft strategic plan, its broad framework and underlying details to make sure that everyone is in general accord with respect to the district’s direction and reforms. (A1)	√			
2. Make sure that the new plan articulates a coherent districtwide strategy for raising student performance rather than simply a school-by-school effort, even if this means turning down programs, resources, and initiatives offered by others that do not comport with or are not aligned with the board and superintendent’s joint vision of where they want the district to go. (A2)	√			
3. Articulate in the strongest possible terms—at the school board and superintendent leadership levels—a clear sense of urgency and commitment to raising student performance for all the children in the Minneapolis Public Schools. Everyone in the district and across the city should understand that raising student achievement is the school system’s highest priority and that all district staff will need to be held accountable for it. (A3)	√			
4. Have the board take the lead in selling the draft reform plan to the community, business leaders, and others. The board needs to “own” and support the reforms with a single voice, particularly when there is the inevitable push-back on portions of the plan. (A4)	√			

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5. Conduct a detailed review of board policies to ensure that they are in accord with the new draft strategic plan. The review should focus specifically on policies related to the curriculum, professional development, accountability, and instructional time. (A5)		√		
6. Charge the new superintendent with building stronger political bridges to the community. The community needs to feel they are a part of the superintendent's efforts to improve student achievement. This work has begun but must be aggressively continued. (A6)	√			
7. Charge the communications department with developing a community engagement plan that is approved, endorsed, and supported by the board. The Council has a number of community engagement plans from other cities that it can share with the Minneapolis leadership team. (A7)		√		
8. Charge the superintendent with providing the board with regular status reports on progress in the implementation of the strategic plan and trends in student achievement. The plan should be reviewed and updated at least annually. (A8)		√		
9. Add a set of baseline indicators to the DIA and revise its goals to make sure they are concrete and measurable. (B1)	√			
10. Develop a set of districtwide and school-by-school goals on the MCA tied to NCLB that are measurable and accompanied by a specific timeline. Make sure that the school-by-school goals roll up to the districtwide targets. (B2)		√		
11. Be specific about how each goal and target is measured. For example, "the percentage of students passing the MBST will increase from 32 percent to 54 percent over three years." (B3)		√		
12. Establish subgroup targets (by race, language, income, and disability status) districtwide and school-by-school that are aligned with NCLB. (B4)		√		

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13. Base the district's and each school's academic goals and targets on proficiency levels on the state's MCA and MBST. (B5)		√		
14. Modify the district's school improvement planning template to include each school's MCA targets and subgroup goals. (B6)		√		
15. Be sure that the district's goals include explicit targets for advanced placement course participation, numbers of students taking core courses, graduation and dropout rates, and the like. (B7)		√		
13. Place all senior instructional staff, including area superintendents, on performance contracts tied to the attainment of districtwide achievement goals, including goals for the district's subgroups. (C1)		√		
14. Begin developing and phasing in performance contracts for all school principals that are tied to progress in meeting individual school-by-school academic targets. (C2)			√	
15. Charge the human resources department with revamping the job descriptions and evaluation procedures and forms for central office instructional staff and principals to reflect districtwide and school-by-school academic goals. (C3)			√	
16. Revise the district's school improvement planning template to include district and school academic targets, including targets for subgroups. The school improvement plans should also contain descriptions of activities designed to attain the goals, professional development needs and activities, interventions, and parent involvement strategies. (C4)		√		
17. Begin a thorough review of the district's pk-12 curriculum in reading and math. (D1)		√		
18. Adopt a new upgraded reading textbook series that can be implemented districtwide in the elementary schools (K-5). The easiest step to take might be to simply upgrade the district's old Houghton Mifflin series to the new program, "Nation's Choice. (D2)		√		

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19. Consider using a literature-based program, in addition to the classroom anthologies, after grade 5 in order to spur comprehension skills. (D3)		√		
20. Conduct a detailed analysis of the alignment of the new adoption with state standards and assessment; identify any gaps between the commercial package and the state standards; and begin filling those gaps with supplemental materials. (D4)		√		
21. Identify a series of reading and math intervention programs (aligned with the curriculum) for the schools to use in cases where students are not keeping pace with instruction. Conversely, the district should identify acceleration measures to take students beyond grade level. (D5)		√		
22. Conduct a school-by-school inventory of models, programs, materials, software, courses, and other items used by the schools; evaluate or assess their effectiveness; and begin phasing some of them out. (D6)		√		
23. Require a 120 minute instructional reading block for the district's lowest performing schools. Include time for whole-class instruction, teacher-guided reading, independent reading and writing, and intensive interventions. (D7)			√	
24. Develop a set of standards to use for the purchase, retention, and elimination of programs, materials, software, and other instructional items. (D8)		√		
25. Streamline and standardize core courses districtwide in reading, math, and the sciences. Update the district's course catalogue when this is done and establish a more uniform process by which courses are approved. (D9)			√	
26. Renegotiate the district's contract with Sylvan to make sure that its program is more aligned with the district's new reading and math program and is tailored to the individual skill needs of participating students. (D10)		√		
27. Reorganize the curriculum and instruction unit of the	√			

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school district under a single Chief Academic Officer. (D11)				
28. Redesign the district’s summer school courses so that they are differentiated according to the specific skill deficits of individual students (based on their “Individual Learning Plan”—ILP) rather than being as generic as they now are. (D12)			√	
29. Consider retaining a reading consultant to help the Chief Academic Officer develop and implement a districtwide reading strategy. The position should last for only two to three years and then be phased out. (D13)	√			
30. Conduct or contract for a comprehensive evaluation (academic and cost) of the district’s IMP programs. Consider moving to a single districtwide math program after the evaluation. (D14)			√	
31. Consider having the district’s senior instructional staff make a site visit to any of several urban public school systems across the country that are making substantial academic progress to see what their instructional programs look like. (The Council can help set these up.) (D15)		√		
32. Develop a standardized, districtwide professional development plan that is closely tied to the district’s instructional goals. The 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 and support classroom teachers and principals. (The plan might be developed with a committee of teachers, central office instructional leaders, union representatives, principals, and others.) (E1)		√		
33. Ensure that the professional development plan includes a component to train all teachers and differentiates training by teacher experience level, previous professional development, and student performance. It should also include explicit		√		

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components for special education, bilingual education, other special populations, and diversity training. (E2)				
34. Ensure that the plan includes strategies for upgrading the skills of central office staff, teachers on special assignments, coaches, directors, and assistant superintendents responsible for student achievement. Training should focus on the latest research in reading and math instruction and on central-office responsibilities for providing leadership for the district’s instructional program. (E3)		√		
35. Establish a districtwide Principal’s Academy to provide professional development on instructional leadership and implementation of the district’s reading and math programs. (E4)			√	
36. Charge the research unit with designing a process for evaluating the district’s professional development program. Base part of the evaluation on the program’s effect on student achievement. (E5)		√		
37. Allocate at least six of the 13 days of release time for districtwide professional development on the implementation of the new reading program, state standards, the district’s curriculum, use of supplemental materials, intervention strategies, pacing, classroom management, and other issues. Allocate the remaining seven days to the individual schools to address unique school needs, parental involvement, and the like. (E6)			√	
38. Consolidate the staff training and the professional development units into a single department reporting to a director of professional development. (E7)		√		
39. Charge the content-area office with implementing and monitoring the professional development plan and following up with technical assistance. (E8)		√		
40. Develop a new job description for academic coaches and have TOSAs apply for these new positions, and then reduce the number of TOSAs over time. (E9)			√	

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41. Provide new field-based coaches with uniform professional development on their areas of responsibility and assign them to the curriculum and instruction unit. (E10)		√		
42. Charge the government affairs unit with developing a legislative strategy to change the state law on the teacher seniority system so that it doesn't so adversely affect the number of teachers of color and the numbers of teachers teaching in new areas. (E11)			√	
43. Charge the human resources department with developing a succession plan for senior staff. A number of staff members have indicated that they are retiring soon, yet there are no plans for replacing them. (E12)		√		
44. Charge the superintendent with meeting regularly with academic superintendents and principals to review school and subgroup achievement data and needed intervention strategies. (F1)	√			
45. Charge the principals with monitoring—in conjunction with coaches—the implementation of a districtwide reading and math program. (F2)		√		
46. Charge the superintendent with developing and monitoring a uniform classroom “walk-through” system for principals and coaches. The system should focus on classroom instructional practice, alignment of teaching practice with the curriculum, adherence to pacing guides, and needs for professional development. Begin with reading and math at the elementary level. (F3)		√		
47. Assign a staff member at the central office to be a districtwide reading and math coach coordinator—one for each content area. This person should be located in the curriculum office and charged with coordinating the work of the coaches and keeping them focused on the reading and math programs that the district should be implementing. (F4)		√		
48. Charge the chief academic officer with developing and providing professional development for principals, coaches, TOSAs and department chairs		√		

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on how to conduct classroom observations, “walk-through” procedures, and the like. (F5)				
49. Establish a process by which reading and math coaches can meet or talk about their work on a regular basis. Meetings might be done regionally, by grade, or subject area. (F6)		√		
50. Charge the Chief Academic Officer, coach coordinator, and principals with developing a process and procedure by which reading and math coaches are evaluated. Part of the evaluation should be based on student achievement and should include input from teachers. (F7)		√		
51. Revamp the district’s school improvement planning template to include “schoolwide” projects requirements under federal law, along with district and school state assessment results and targets (measured in proficiency levels), professional development strategy—tied to a districtwide professional development strategy, strategies for academic acceleration, and budget. (F8)		√		
52. Charge curriculum and research units with developing a set of quarterly benchmark tests in reading, math, and science that are aligned with the state standards, the district’s curriculum, and the state assessments. The units should also develop a training program on the use of the tests by school staff. (The technical work could also be contracted out, if necessary.) (G1)			√	
53. Mandate that quarterly assessments be used and ensure that results are returned to schools within seven days of test administration, and that the results are aggregated to the central office level for analysis and follow-up interventions, professional development, and technical assistance to the schools that show signs of weak performance. (G2)			√	
54. Begin phasing out the district’s use of the NALT as the state’s MCA is given in grades 3-8 as required under NCLB. The district’s research office ought to be able to continue doing much of its value-added analysis on the MCA results once the state test is				√

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<p>administered in each of these grades. In the meanwhile the district leadership should begin to place more emphasis on the MCA to drive instruction, since it is the test on which the district is being held accountable. (G3)</p>				
<p>55. Begin urging the state to provide Minneapolis—and other districts—with more complete MCA data student by student, skill by skill, and item by item to help the district’s leadership in devising strategies for raising performance and to help with the research unit with the ability to continue doing value-added analyses. The district is capable of doing its own analysis of the results if the state provides the basic data. (G4)</p>		√		
<p>56. Consider replacing the NALT with a traditional norm-referenced test at key grades to give the district true nationally normed comparisons. The new test ought to be as closely aligned with or tailored to the MCA as possible. (G5)</p>				√
<p>57. Select a standardized set of diagnostic reading instruments that schools can use to assess reading skills of students throughout the district. The Team would recommend any of the following: the DRA, DIBELS, Fox-in-a-Box, or TPRI. The district could also use the reading diagnostic tools that come with a new reading series. (G6)</p>		√		
<p>58. Begin moving on a process to 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. The exams need to be aligned with the MCA. (G7)</p>			√	
<p>59. Charge the research unit with developing a three-five year evaluation plan tied to district goals and major programs/policies. The plan should identify which programs and policies will be evaluated, who will conduct the evaluation (external or district), and frequency of evaluation. Ensure that program evaluations are reported to the board with recommendations on program continuation or modification. The affected department’s response to the recommendations should also be included in the</p>			√	

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report and presented to the board. (G8)				
60. Transfer the evaluation monies from relevant external grants to the research unit to fund program evaluations. The research department should also investigate forming regular collaborations with local universities to increase capacity to evaluate programs. (G9)			√	
61. Begin the long-term task of building a data warehouse to easily store student assessment data, attendance, discipline, program participation, course enrollment, and grades. Results should be accessible electronically to teachers and staff. (G10)			√	
62. Consider calculating a five-year dropout rate to accompany the four-year rate the district now uses. Preliminary research shows that 10-15 percent of students take five years to complete high school. (G11)		√		
63. Develop and administer an annual survey of customer satisfaction of the central office to track perceptions of the central office and its leadership as reforms are put into place. In addition, the district should either do more with the results of its annual school climate survey or drop it. (G12)		√		
64. Develop a monitoring or wall board so that the district’s instructional leadership can determine, at a glance, the status of schools in meeting their academic targets. (G13)	√			
65. Charge the curriculum department with conducting an analysis to determine how clearly aligned the new “Building Language to Literacy” and “Growing with Math” programs are with the new districtwide reading and math programs that the district will be putting into place. (H1)		√		
66. Begin working on a plan for increasing the size of the district’s pre-k program to serve more of the district’s students. (H2)		√		
67. Charge the research unit with designing and conducting an evaluation of the district’s pre-k			√	

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programs. (H3)				
68. Identify, purchase, and begin using a standardized diagnostic system to assess reading and math developmental levels among pre-k pupils, including those in programs other than High Five. Use the results to improve the quality of the programs and to provide remedial help, where necessary. (H4)			√	
69. Establish a districtwide goal and monitor progress on having each pre-k pupil meet specific performance measures. (H5)			√	
70. Include in the district’s instructional strategic plan an explicit component for middle and high school reform. (I1)		√		
71. Consider the option of developing, adopting, and implementing end-of-course exams at the high school level in key subjects. (I2)			√	
72. Establish a permanent CEO’s district-style unit and director to focus on the district’s lowest performing schools. This person should report directly to the superintendent and work closely with the curriculum department. The new superintendent is familiar with the model since she led such a unit in Cleveland. (J1)		√		
73. Develop a plan for these schools that ensures that they receive extra resources, professional development, technical assistance, interventions, and support. Make sure that the plan defines when schools fall into the category of being the lowest performing (possibly using the AYP tag at a minimum) and when they are released from it. These schools often need extra support even if they are removed from the list at some point. The district’s plan also needs a component that focuses explicitly on the district’s racially-identifiable achievement gaps. (J2)		√		
74. Work with the teacher’s union and state to provide extra incentives to recruit and support teachers in schools with the lowest performance. (J3)		√		
75. Develop and begin administering mini-assessments			√	

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<p>in reading and math in the district’s lowest performing schools. These assessments should be short but aligned to the pacing guides and the quarterly assessments and administered every ten days or so to make sure students are staying on track. These mini-assessments can be developed by teams of district teachers. (J4)</p>				
<p>76. Consider the possibility of modifying the ILPs so that they provide individualized student educational plans for each student in the district’s lowest performing schools to make sure that these students receive the focus they need to improve. (J5)</p>		√		
<p>77. Discuss with the state superintendent of schools how its “school improvement” set-aside program under Title I could be better coordinated with the district’s emerging instructional efforts. (J6)</p>	√			
<p>78. Better integrate the district’s ELL programs with the overall instructional efforts. The district also needs to conduct a review of its ELL program’s 1) identification procedures, initial assessments, and placements; 2) instructional delivery systems; 3) assessments of linguistic and academic achievement; 4) exit procedures and 5) progress monitoring for 2 years after exit from services. (J7)</p>		√		
<p>79. Strengthen the district’s transition program for newcomer immigrant students that will better address these students’ unique academic, linguistic, and social needs. The district appears to be at some risk of losing the support of the immigrant community if it does not take steps to bolster the system’s transitional supports. (J8)</p>			√	
<p>80. Establish and support a district translation service that is responsible for translating all major documents (school and district) into the primary languages spoken by Minneapolis’ students. (J9)</p>			√	
<p>81. Charge the district’s affirmative action office with conducting a systemwide review and analysis of the system’s equity in staffing, resources, facilities, technology and the like. The Strategic Support Team heard consistent reports about system inequities but</p>		√		

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did not have the time or resources to analyze the facts. (J10)				
<b>Title I and Other Federal Programs</b>				
82. Reorganize the State and Federal Programs office so that it is located under the operations or finance unit. (A1)		√		
83. Charge the state and federal programs unit with specific functions. (A2)		√		
84. Evaluate the new unit according to specific criteria. (A3)			√	
85. Institute a mandatory cross-training program to staff in Finance, Research and Assessment, Human Resources, and Instruction on NCLB requirements and how to coordinate them. (A4)		√		
86. Develop a template defined around the district's academic priorities to guide school expenditures of Title I funds at the building level. This template should include professional development and reading and math coaches and teachers, but allow some flexibility to meet specific school needs. (B1)		√		
87. Establish a process by which carry-forward funds are monitored. The duties for monitoring expenditures, and potential carry-forward funding should rest with the budget and finance staff. (B2)	√			
88. Review district needs and determine a one-time use for the carry-forward funds. (B3)	√			
89. Consider making higher Title I per pupil allocations to schools with larger numbers and percentages of poor students. The district has the flexibility to provide higher allocations to schools by grade band if it wants. (C1)		√		
90. Shorten, simplify, and clarify the letter to parents on choice options available under NCLB. (D1)	√			
91. Synchronize the "windows" for the district's existing choice programs (magnet, open enrollment, NCLB) into a single choice program and application process.	√			

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This will ensure that NCLB students will not be at the end of the line for choices. (D2)				
92. Restrict the number of transfer opportunities during a single school year to help address the problem of student mobility. (D3)			√	
93. Develop and disseminate to parents a catalogue of available SES providers. The number of schools eligible for SES is likely to grow in the near future, and parents should be clear about their options. (E1)		√		
94. Review the per-pupil allocation that the district pays to SES providers. (E2)		√		
95. Review the district's contracts with SES providers to make sure that the district is protected on specific issues. (E3)		√		
96. Review cost structure of the district's contract with Sylvan. The contract appears to afford little service for the amount of money the district is paying. (E4)		√		
97. Consider using Minneapolis Achieve as the district's SES provider at school sites if a fair arrangement cannot be worked out with Sylvan. (E5)		√		
98. Establish a monitoring system that will permit schools to track student attendance at SES sessions, as well as oversee the alignment of each provider's program with student need and the district's instructional program once it is standardized. (E6)	√			
99. Develop and disseminate an informational brochure on NCLB's SES options. The brochure should provide information in a clear and concise manner, and be translated into as many of the major languages spoken by families in the district as possible. (F1)		√		
100. Articulate a clear, districtwide parental involvement program that NCLB would supplement. (F2)		√		
101. Increase the district's outreach into the community, and host informational sessions and	√			

**Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

meetings at locations other than on school grounds. (F3)				
102. Develop a comprehensive, staff development plan for meeting the “highly qualified” teacher requirements. NCLB requires districts to have a plan for meeting the “highly qualified” provisions for all teachers by the 2005-06 school year. (G1)		√		
103. Standardize the training and priorities of all Title I-funded coaches districtwide. (G2)		√		
104. Require that the school improvement plans include required components of Section 1114 under NCLB. The federal requirements for school improvement plans will provide the district with a mandated, formal, and systemwide template. (H1)		√		
105. Review and upgrade the process and criteria for evaluating school improvement plans. Plans are currently approved by central office staff but they have been done without having all the components required by law. (H2)		√		
106. Include reading and proficiency levels and subgroup data in all school improvement plans. (See similar recommendations in curriculum and instruction chapter.) (H3)	√			
107. Meet with officials from the Minnesota Department of Education to begin coordinating the work of the “external providers” being funded by the state for AYP schools. (H4)	√			
108. Develop specific priorities and guidelines for grant writers to ensure that all external grants that the district pursues align with the academic goals and funding objectives of the school system. (I1)		√		
109. Ensure the requirements of “Reading First” are differentiated from those of “Reading Excellence” for project site staff. (I2)		√		
<b>Finance</b>				

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110. Take immediate steps to clarify and clearly communicate the Superintendent’s financial expectations and requirements to the district’s senior staff, management and administrators. (B1)	√			
111. Begin development of a multi-year district Strategic Plan with targets, benchmarks, identified responsibility centers, accountability measures and timelines to translate expectations and requirements into action. (B2)		√		
112. Require action plans specifying how all senior operational divisions intend to enhance revenues, pursue efficiencies, improve effectiveness, identify potential cost savings and improve customer service to employees and the public. (B3)		√		
113. Reorganize the non-instructional administrative structure to improve the district’s internal management controls. (B4)		√		
114. Conduct a comprehensive review of the Finance and Budget Offices staffing levels with an eye towards consolidating, redeploying and aligning fragmented functions into these offices. (B5)		√		
115. Maximize the district’s purchasing efficiencies by adopting the state’s higher formal bidding limits. (B6)		√		
116. Establish a policy of periodically rotating the district’s outside audit firm every five to seven years. (B7)			√	
117. Move expeditiously to implement the district’s major new management and financial (ERP) computer system. (B8)		√		
118. Develop a comprehensive training and staff development strategy and supporting program with an initial focus on the training of new and newly assigned employees. (B9)			√	
119. Capture data relating to unpaid invoices when they are received in order to develop an “aging” of the district’s obligation and develop a performance		√		

**Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

metric on the timely payment of bills. (B10)				
120. Develop a succession or staff replacement plan to provide back up for personnel in key management positions. (B11)		√		
121. Revise procedures and reorder priorities to ensure the timely publication of the district’s basic financial documents. (B12)		√		
122. Encourage the district’s third party administrator to intensify efforts to maximize the district’s potential revenue under the Medicaid reimbursement program. (C1)		√		
123. Analyze and recalculate the district’s indirect cost rate to improve cost recoveries on allowable federal (and state) grant programs. (C2)		√		
124. Analyze and recalculate the rate charged for the extended use of school facilities to ensure the district’s full cost recovery. (C3)		√		
125. Recognize that the board’s commitment to class-size reduction is not sustainable with the revenue generated from the marginal tax levy and that funds must come from the school level if the district is going to launch new systemwide programs or initiatives. (D1)		√		
126. Set limits on the extent to which schools can use discretionary “comp” funds to decrease their class size levels below districtwide standards. (D2)		√		
127. Consider aligning the district’s and school based budget allocations with specifically defined objectives, measures, and established targets to ensure that the district and schools are moving toward the same ultimate goals. (D3)			√	
128. Consider adopting a regular cycle of program evaluations, analytical techniques, and management tools that tie instructional and financial outcomes and costs to the programs acquired by schools. (D4)			√	

**APPENDIX E: STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS**

**APPENDIX E: STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS**

**Katherine Blasik**

Katherine Blasik is the Assistant Superintendent for Research and Evaluation for the Broward County (FL) Public Schools. She has held this position since 1994. In her role, Ms. Blasik oversees all testing, accountability, program evaluation, and research for the 260,000 student school system. She serves on the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test Standards-Setting Committee, the South Florida Annenberg Evaluation Advisory Board, and is a Cooperative Fellow for the National Center for Educational Statistics (U.S. Department of Education). She has also published a large number of peer-reviewed papers in major national education journals and sits on the Achievement Gaps Research Advisory Group for the Council of the Great City Schools. Blasik earned her B.A. and M.Ed. from the University of Pennsylvania, a second master's degree from the University of North Dakota, and her Ph.D. in economic policy from the University of Miami.

**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 over 60 of the nation's largest urban public school districts—including Minneapolis. Casserly has been with the organization for 27 years, 12 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, spurred 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.

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### **Mary Ellen Gallegos**

Mary Ellen Gallegos is the Executive Director of the Multilingual Programs Department for the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD). Ms. Gallegos, a native of New Mexico, is a bilingual educator with 30 years of experience. Positions she held in New Mexico include teacher, reading specialist, Title I director, and principal of an urban Albuquerque elementary school. Ms. Gallegos is working toward a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from George Washington University, and has served as adjunct professor at the George Washington University, American University, George Mason University, and Georgetown University. In 1995, she was appointed Director of the Office of Bilingual Education in the District of Columbia Public Schools, and prior to joining SFUSD, was the first bilingual educator in the Title I Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, US Department of Education.

### **Kenneth Gotsch**

Ken Gotsch is the Chief Financial Officer for the Los Angeles Unified School District, the nation's second largest school system. Before going to Los Angeles, Mr. Gotsch was the Chief Fiscal Officer (CFO) of the Chicago Public Schools, the nation's third largest school system, where he was responsible for managing the school district's \$4.5 billion annual budget. Before taking this position in 1995, Mr. Gotsch served as both the Deputy Director of the Department of Revenue's Tax Administration Division and the Manager of Information Services for the City of Chicago. Before joining city government, he served with the Illinois Economic and Fiscal Commission and as an accountant with Price Waterhouse. Mr. Gotsch received his Master of Arts degree in Public Finance from the University of Chicago's Irving Harris Graduate School of Public Policy and a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration and Finance from Marquette University.

### **Charlotte Harris**

Charlotte Harris is the Director of Development for the Boston Public Schools, and has been responsible for grants administration for the district since 1985 and for grants development since 1995. She has written and won \$117 million in competitive grants, coordinated and supported the development of many more millions in competitive grants, and been responsible for preparation of applications and administration for state and federal reimbursement, pass-through, and formula grants that for the 2001-2002 school year totaled \$117,387,481. Since 1985, external funds awarded to the Boston Public Schools have increased from \$32 million to an anticipated \$132 million in FY 2003. External funds – grants and reimbursements – comprise 16.5% of the revenue for the Boston Public Schools. She also served on the federal Title I Negotiated Rulemaking Team for the Council of the Great City Schools during implementation of *No Child Left Behind*. Ms Harris's experience includes 14 years teaching art and English K-12 in Connecticut; a mixed year administering a new testing program for the Connecticut State Department of Education and writing case studies for the Kennedy School of Government; and a year developing policy for a gubernatorial candidate in Massachusetts

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

and consulting in labor and work plan design issues related to administrative reorganizations in Massachusetts and New Jersey, and three years in central administration in personnel, finance and administration in Boston. Ms Harris is a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, holds a Masters of Education from the University of Hartford, and has completed the course work and qualifying paper for a doctorate in Administration, Planning and Social Policy from Harvard Graduate School of Education.

### **Phyllis Hunter**

Phyllis Hunter is a national reading consultant based in Houston, Texas. Before establishing her own company, Dr. Hunter was an education advisor to Governor George W. Bush; one of the architects of the Texas reading program; and a member of the President's Educational Transition Team. Hunter served as "Reading Czar" to Superintendent Rod Paige in the Houston Independent School District and was responsible for leading one of the nation's foremost efforts to improve reading instruction and professional development in the nation's sixth largest school system. In that role, she was responsible for developing the system's "balanced approach" to reading that essentially ended the district's reading wars and led to substantial gains in district reading achievement. Ms. Hunter is a National Fellow of the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh and an Executive Board member of the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE). She has been a principal, teacher, curriculum director, and program coordinator, and has her master's degree from the University of Wisconsin.

### **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 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 (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.

### **George Latimer**

**George Latimer** is the former Associate Superintendent of Administration and Business Services for the Duval County Public Schools, Jacksonville (FL). In this capacity, he directly supervised all non-instructional departments including transportation, food service, maintenance, facility planning and construction, all business services, payroll, risk management, warehousing and distribution among others in his seven years. Prior

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service to Florida school districts included three years as the Deputy Superintendent in Broward County (Ft Lauderdale), Director of Finance and Budget in Manatee County (Bradenton) and Director of Business Services in DeSoto County (Arcadia). Mr. Latimer is a well respected educational leader having provided leadership to several state organizations during his educational career. He is currently semi-retired, performing consulting services to school districts and private industry.

### **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 People's 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; the NAEP Evaluation Committee; the National Academy of Sciences' Appropriate Use of Test Results Advisory Council; the National Center for Education 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.

### **Ricki Price-Baugh**

Ricki Price-Baugh is the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum in the Houston Independent School District. She is responsible for strategic planning and the design implementation, and evaluation of the district's curriculum and instructional initiatives for eight departments: English/language arts, fine arts, early childhood education, foreign language, health/physical education, mathematics, science, and social studies. Since beginning her work thirty years ago at the Houston schools, Dr. Price-Baugh has served as a teacher, department chair, resource coordinator, project manager, and director of curriculum services. Her major accomplishments include a districtwide effort to align curriculum, textbook, and assessment systems, and a substantial increase in student achievement scores in the district. She is a certified curriculum auditor for Phi Delta Kappa and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. Dr. Price-Baugh has her doctoral degree from Baylor University, a master's degree in Spanish literature from the University of Maryland, and a B.A. (magna cum laude) from Tulane University.

### **Ron Stewart**

Ron Stewart serves as the Supervisor of State and Federal Programs for Columbus Public Schools. In 35 years as an educator, his career has included experiences as a teacher, high school principal, senior operations manager, state consultant, and district administrator.

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

Immediately prior to joining Columbus Public Schools three years ago, Mr. Stewart was the associate director of Division of Federal Student Programs with the Ohio Department of Education. In that capacity, he was responsible for the daily operation of 9 statewide grants including the \$350 million Title I grant. He also served with the department in the as a senior consultant in the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. In his work at Columbus Public Schools and in particular the implementation of *No Child Left Behind*, Mr. Stewart provided the leadership for the district to fully implement the Act during its first year. His knowledge and expertise permitted the district to build its own foundation rather than creating new infrastructure. He was recently elected a president of the Ohio Association of Administrators of State and Federal Education Programs that has a state membership of over 900 practitioners. Mr. Stewart completed his undergraduate studies at The Ohio State University and his graduate degree at Xavier University.

### **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.

### **Denise Walston**

Denise Walston is the Senior Coordinator for Mathematics in the Norfolk Public Schools. She has held this post since 1994. She has overseen the district's dramatic improvement in math achievement scores since assuming this post. Ms. Walston is an active member of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics, and has served as president of the Tidewater Council of teachers of Mathematics. She also serves on a number of statewide assessment committees responsible for the development and oversight of Virginia's math standards and testing system. She has her undergraduate degree in mathematics from the University of North Carolina and master's degree in mathematics education from Old Dominion University. Ms. Walston has also taken extensive graduate training from Princeton and George

## **Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools**

Washington universities. She began her career as a high school math teacher in the Norfolk Public Schools.

### **Phoebe Wood**

Phoebe Wood is the Executive Director of Budget and Financial Management for the Columbus Public School District. In that capacity, she oversees the development of the district's \$800 million annual budget. Before joining the school district in 1999, she was a budget analyst with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. She has an undergraduate degree in Music and Business from Baldwin-Wallace College, and she has a Master of Public Policy degree from The Ohio State University.

**APPENDIX F: STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAMS BY THE COUNCIL**

**APPENDIX F: STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAMS BY THE COUNCIL**

City	Area	Date
Albuquerque		
	Facilities and Roofing	2003
	Human Resources	2003
	Information Technology	2003
Anchorage		
	Finance	2004
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
Caddo Parish		
	Facilities	2004
Cleveland		
	Student Assignments	1999, 2000
	Transportation	2000
	Safety and Security	2000
	Facilities Financing	2000
	Facilities Operations	2000
	Transportation	2004
Columbus		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Human Resources	2001
	Facilities Financing	2002
	Finance & Treasury	2003
	Budget	2003
Dayton		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Curriculum & Instruction	2001
	Finance	2001

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

	Communications	2002
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
	Facilities	2004
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
Minneapolis		
	Curriculum & Instruction	2004
	Finance	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
New Orleans		
	Personnel	2001
	Transportation	2002
	Information Technology	2003

## Foundations for Success in the Minneapolis Public Schools

Norfolk		
	Testing & Assessment	2003
Philadelphia		
	Curriculum & Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Food Service	2003
	Facilities	2003
	Transportation	2003
	Human Resources	2004
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

**APPENDIX G: ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS**

## **APPENDIX F: ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS**

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

The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 64 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.

### **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).