

Advancing Learning in Lancaster



TOGETHER WE CAN

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## School District of Lancaster

## Moving from Strategy into Action and Results

June 28, 2011

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### **The District Management Council**

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**School District of Lancaster**  
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**Process Summary**

The District Management Council (DMC) is partnering with the School District of Lancaster to support SDOL's strategic plan implementation efforts. Specifically, DMC is supporting SDOL as it refines and strengthens of a theory of action for raising student achievement.

This document is a needs assessment, conducted for the express purpose of guiding discussion around a theory of action for raising student achievement. It is intended to identify strengths, key strategic alignment opportunities, and relevant best practices. This document utilizes the framework of the continuous improvement model. It does not try to determine what is good or bad, but rather, it identifies places to focus in order to move the district to the next level of performance.

This document is divided into four sections:

- **Section I: Commendations:** This section identifies key district strengths, focused on strengths that the district can leverage as it moves forward.
- **Section II: Strategic Implementation and Alignment:** This section identifies the need to strengthen and deploy a theory of action that will guide all other decisions.
- **Section III: Academic Best Practices:** This section addresses some specific academic approaches that the district may want consider as it refines its theory of action.
- **Section IV: Resource Allocation Implications:** This section explores some of the resource implications of the academic best practices.

This document respects the reality that school districts are complex organizations tasked with a multitude of expectations, unfunded mandates, priorities, and responsibilities. To that end, only a small number of high-potential, high-impact opportunities are identified. A short, targeted plan is more beneficial than a long laundry list of observations, options, and possible actions.

The research includes extensive in-person interviews with many stakeholders, a deep look at many types of data, classroom visits, surveys, and benchmarking against best practices and like communities. Extensive financial analyses and reviews of existing reports and district documents were also conducted.

This document is intended to play a role in the discussion, development, and refinement of a theory of action. It will be incorporated into a series of workshops and retreats with the superintendent, the district leadership team, and the district school board. Ultimately, a refined and strengthened theory of action for raising student achievement will result.

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It is important to note that opportunities addressed are not seen as opportunities to realize immediate cost savings and would instead require significant research, planning, and thoughtfulness in order to be successfully implemented.

The entire DMC team thanks the staff of the School District of Lancaster for its cooperation, hospitality, and obvious commitment to the students of Lancaster.

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## Section I: Commendations

The School District of Lancaster should be proud of its accomplishments. This school district has many aspects worthy of commendation. These accomplishments include:

### **1. Staff members demonstrate passion and commitment.**

Staff members are clearly committed to ensuring that students thrive. Being an educator in an urban district is a demanding job, especially during times of tight budgets, rising expectations, and increasing numbers of students with disabilities and limited English proficiency. Although in some districts this leads to a sense of defeat, the SDOL staff expressed just the opposite. Most staff members are excited to work in the School District of Lancaster—many discussed the conscious decision to work in the School District of Lancaster over other districts because of a desire to see the students in Lancaster succeed. Staff consistently communicated their desire and willingness to do what is best for all of their students.

### **2. Staff and leadership believe in the district’s potential and share a vision of SDOL as a great place for all students to receive an education.**

Many staff and district leaders described a strong belief that the district has the potential to be an even better place for all students to learn and be prepared to succeed as adults. Staff and leadership spoke of the belief that the School District of Lancaster could be a district that sets a positive and innovative example of a highly successful urban district. Continuing to apply focus to the energy and optimism behind this vision will likely be critical as the district seeks to build upon and accumulate greater successes.

### **3. The district has developed a broad portfolio of community partnerships and in-kind services in order to meet all types of student needs.**

The district has cultivated an impressive array of wrap-around and in-kind services from community organizations, focused on meeting many of the needs of students that the district serves. In an urban district with SDOL’s characteristics—including high mobility and a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students—strategic management and coordination of these services can provide students with supports that will significantly increase their chances for success in the classroom. The district currently receives over \$10,000,000 in services and staff equivalents from its community partnerships, and interviews indicated that there is potential for these partnerships and services to be expanded even further. Components of these partnerships include:

- Approximately \$3,600,000 in behavioral health services for students
- A \$500,000 community schools effort

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- Numerous partnerships focused on school safety and first response, substance abuse prevention and counseling, juvenile crime prevention and intervention, public health, and child abuse/neglect intervention and prevention
- Active partnerships with faith-based organizations, higher education, businesses and funders, local government, and cultural and civic organizations
- Over 50 FTEs that are provided to serve the district

While ensuring that community partnerships are directly aligned with district priorities and needs must continue to guide the attainment and maintenance of these partnerships, it is commendable that the district has cultivated so many community resources as a means of building student resilience.

#### **4. All of the district's elementary schools achieved at least a year's worth of academic growth for students, with some achieving substantially more than a year's academic growth.**

Despite mixed success making AYP, all of the district's elementary schools were found, through the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS), to have supported students in making at least one year's worth of academic growth. In fact, some elementary schools produced PVAAS growth indices that suggested they had helped students make significantly more than one year's growth. This achievement is particularly commendable as research has shown that students who can read on grade level by third grade have more than a ninety percent chance of graduating from high school on time.

### **Elementary school PVAAS growth indices**

<b>School name</b>	<b>Average growth index (AGI)</b>	<b>% of students passing PSSA</b>
Ross Elementary School	6.2	65
Price Elementary School	5.9	57
George Washington Elementary School	5.2	56
Fulton Elementary School	5.0	58
Wickersham Elementary School	4.6	85
Hamilton Elementary School	4.2	71
Burrowes School	3.7	59
Thomas Wharton Elementary School	3.6	70
King Elementary School	1.9	64
James Buchanan Elementary School	1.1	71
Elizabeth R Martin Elementary School	1.1	83
Carter and MacRae Elementary School	0.3	52
Lafayette Elementary School	0.1	64

*Note:*

AGI > 0 = The average achieving student in this school achieved at least a year's worth of academic growth in a year. A larger AGI provides more evidence that more than a year's worth of growth was experienced by the average student in this school.

AGI < 0 = The average achieving student in this school achieved less than a year's worth of academic growth in a year. A smaller AGI provides more evidence that less than a year's worth of growth was experienced by the average student in this school.

Ensuring that all students are able to make significant academic gains, particularly those who enter school struggling or behind their peers, is a critical responsibility of urban school districts. Similarly, the elementary level is a critical time for students to gain a solid skill foundation that will enable them to succeed as they advance in school. While elementary schools in Lancaster are still struggling to help all students reach proficiency, there are significant gains being made for these students, which indicates the success of some of the current efforts to support students.

### **5. The district has made significant progress in its efforts to identify and provide supports to struggling students, especially at the elementary schools.**

District leadership and staff recognize the need to support and remediate the many students in the district who struggle to stay on grade level. Many steps have been taking to advance the district's efforts to remediate these students:

- Standardizing parts of the curriculum and providing pacing guides
- Increasing the availability of data and time allotted to use data

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- Standardizing time allotted to interventions.

Additionally, the district has chosen to deploy instructional coaches and professional development embedded in schools and classrooms, which is a best practice. While some expressed concern about the consistency and quality of some of these efforts, the momentum and direction generated by these efforts will likely continue to drive focus and improvement around the way that the district identifies and supports struggling students.

## **6. The district has a strong data system and is developing a culture of data-driven decision making.**

The district has a strong data infrastructure and management system that continues to improve. Many district and school-based staff are aware of the importance of data and are eager to see it used appropriately, both to improve management decisions and inform instruction for individual students.

While there was some concern that the vision and understanding of the importance of data-driven decision making was not shared district-wide, there is a definite sense of momentum and priority towards expanding and strengthening the use of data in schools and across the district. In interviews, staff also articulated areas where they hoped for more widespread and consistent use of data.

## Section II: Strategic Alignment

### 1. Strengthen and build consensus around a clear theory of action for raising student achievement.

The district maintains a large roster of activities and initiatives focused on a range of priorities that were articulated during interviews and visits. Staff discussed the importance of teacher evaluation, academic remediation initiatives, community partnerships, parental engagement efforts, community engagement efforts, student resiliency, principal quality, an updated and standardized curriculum, and differentiated instruction—among many others.

While a complex organization is expected to have many activities ongoing, our interviews, data collection, and visits revealed that many of the district’s activities and initiatives may benefit from being prioritized according to a broader plan and theory for how the district will raise student achievement.

Interviews suggested that currently many staff and departments are operating under their own, individualized theories of action. Developing a tighter organizational focus could enhance the district’s ability to rapidly improve student achievement.

#### 1a. Continue to build a deep sense of urgency around the many students in the district who are struggling.

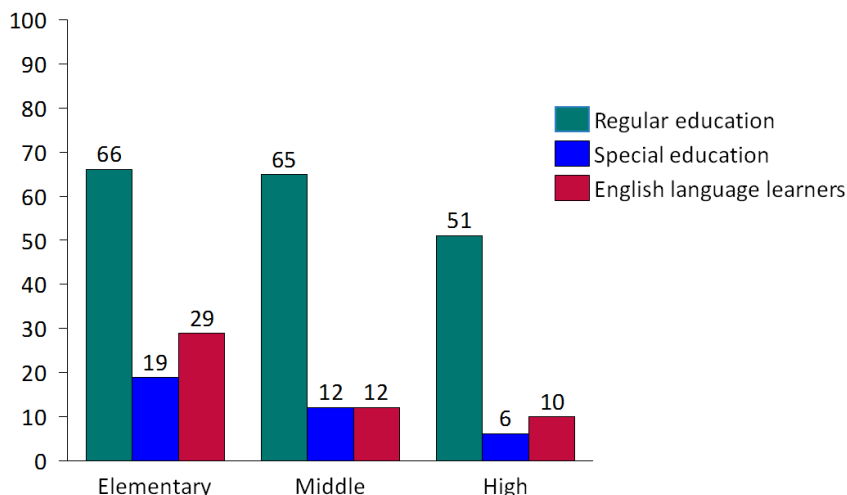
Based on PSSA data, many of the district’s students appear to be struggling to stay on grade level.

#### District PSSA reading proficiency (2010)

	Percent proficient
Elementary	52%
Middle	47%
High	38%

- Almost half of district elementary school students are not proficient; over half of middle school students are not proficient, and sixty percent of high school students are not on grade level.

## Proficiency rates on PSSA reading (2010)



Note: Regular education figure is an estimate based on identification data provided.

- Fewer than 1 in 5 students with an IEP or identified as an English Language Learner are reaching grade level expectations
- Proficiency declines as students progress to middle and high school among students with IEPs, English Language Learners, and students in general education

At present, a student who is struggling or is barely proficient in elementary school is not likely to become proficient as he or she advances to middle and high school. A strategy most likely to raise student achievement would be one crafted to address the needs of all struggling learners in the district—those who have been identified for special education and/or ELL services, as well as students who are just struggling.

### **1b. Identify the underlying cultural beliefs and assumptions that are and that are not theories of action.**

Interviews and surveys suggested that currently, many SDOL staff have their own implicit assumptions about what it will take to significantly raise student achievement, and significant variation exists among those assumptions. In developing the theory of action and determining district priorities, identifying the distinction between a theory of action, a priority, and a practice can help tighten the district's focus. Interviews suggested that there may be a focus on certain concepts or components of strategies instead of a broader theory of action. One such example: the concept of differentiation. Other similar examples are discussed in the next opportunity.

- Data collection, interviews, and visits revealed that the district places a significant focus on 'differentiation' as a strategy for raising student achievement.

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- The term differentiation came up in many different district plans and documents
- When asked about what they thought would raise student achievement,

While differentiation, or ensuring that ‘one size does not fit all,’ is a valuable strategy, on its own it does not constitute a complete theory of action. Differentiation can mean many things to many people, and it is an extremely difficult practice for teachers to implement effectively. It also does not address many of the best practices shown to increase student achievement, such as a clear definition of standards and outcomes, increased time on task, or the content expertise of the teacher. If ‘differentiation’ is regarded as the theory of action, other, more actionable instructional issues such as a gap in the curriculum or the addressing of behavior issues may be entirely ignored.

For districts that have built and deployed robust theory of action, keeping the focus off of terms that could cause confusion has been essential. Building a robust theory of action often involves articulating an understanding of root causes and levers for raising student achievement. Using the above example, differentiation can be part of an instructional strategy that is connected to a theory of action, but it does not suffice as a theory of action itself.

### **1c. Refine and strengthen a theory for how the district will raise student achievement based on district strengths, shared vision, and core values.**

A theory of action is a set of beliefs, policies, and practices connected by logic rules. In short, it is what you believe will work, how you plan to do it, and why you think it will be successful. There is no one right theory of action for helping struggling students. Each district requires a plan that reflects its values, human capital, resources, and history.

In the School District of Lancaster, there are many positive efforts and widely varying ideas about what will raise student achievement. There is also significant expertise and knowledge of best practice among the district’s staff. However, during interviews, visits, and in surveys, when we pressed staff for a theory of exactly how and why these efforts and initiatives will raise student achievement, we heard many ideas and significant enthusiasm, but there was little indication of a unifying structure—a fully developed theory of action.

Is more better? Interviews suggested the presence of a common belief that maintaining a roster with a large number of initiatives will, by nature of volume, increase district chances for success. While the intentions underlying this belief are positive, having a large number of activities and initiatives can actually:

- divert resources away from those which are most important or effective
- waste resources by duplicating efforts
- fragment leadership and staff time and attention
- limit opportunities to define and measure success

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Without a clearer theory of action uniting the district, efforts may be less focused and increasingly scattered, resulting in a constant flurry of dispersed activity and limiting opportunities to see rapid gains in student achievement.

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## **2. Align existing structures and initiatives with the new theory of action, and strengthen the process for ensuring alignment on an ongoing basis.**

The development of a clear theory of action and clear priorities can be akin to drawing a line in the sand—some initiatives may become critical while others, though well-intentioned, may not relate to a top priority but still demand significant resources.

Developing and executing on a clear theory of action can drive:

- A sense of priority around initiatives and activities that are most closely aligned with the theory of action
- A common language and understanding to facilitate difficult ‘de-prioritization’ discussions
- An understanding of how resources can be most efficiently and effectively used across departments and focused on what works for student achievement
- A focus among leadership and staff on a tight set of initiatives

There are several, specific areas that the district may want to revisit and engage following the formulation of a strong theory of action.

### **2a. Ensure that every department and building has a well-developed plan that is aligned with the district’s theory of action.**

To deploy a well-developed theory of action, each department and will need a well-developed plan that sets measurable interim and final goals, is prioritized, and identifies accountable parties. Currently, many district leaders are able to produce plans and articulate measurable goals, initiatives, and accountability structures. Significant effort has also ensured that the generation of certain mandated documents, such as School Improvement Plans, is aligned, measurable, and practical. However, interviews and visits also indicated the need for the development of common procedures, language, and understanding around identifying priorities, goals, and measures:

- Many departments and sites have plans and articulated goals, but some do not
- Existing plans lack an explicit tie to a district-wide theory of action
- Many plans were not time bound or did not indicate who would be accountable for a certain initiative or goal
- Departmental and site plans appear to live in departmental or site silos. It is unclear how far these plans inform cross-departmental and cross-functional discussions
- The quality and specificity of some goals, indicators of success, and priorities varied significantly, indicating an opportunity to provide more structure around how plans are developed

Translating the theory of action into priorities and measurable goals and finding a way to continually align departments and sites is a critical step in deploying a theory of action. Identifying a consistent process and set of expectations for each department and site to plan can increase the cohesiveness of the district and the sense of buy-in to a theory of action.

**2b. Ensure that the small learning community (SLC) model at the high school supports the district's theory of action for supporting struggling students.**

The district's current small learning community model was initiated for a number of reasons:

- Building construction of the high school
- Funding available for SLCs
- A new idea for addressing student academic need
- An opportunity to give students increased communal ties with a small cohort of peers
- A chance for students to receive more academic attention from teachers
- A chance for more of a mentorship relationship to develop between students and teachers

Given the large number of students who are struggling and the fiscal pressures that the district is facing, a review of the current model's implementation to determine if it is in line with the district's theory of action may be warranted.

Interviews, visits, surveys, and data collection revealed the following aspects of the SLCs that may benefit further exploration:

Are SLCs the best way to ensure that students are ready for a post-high school pathway?

- Interviews and data indicate that many students leave the district with gaps in reading, writing, and math, suggesting that aspects of the current model are not developing core skills in all students
- Academic support early in high school may be better developed to ensure that students are able to demonstrate proficiency in core subjects
- There may be benefit to reviewing the delivery and scheduling of vocational training. One approach used by some districts requires students to demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing and math before pursuing vocational paths in the high school.

Is having 8 different types of SLCs too many?

- Interviews indicated that some of the training and opportunities that students receive through the SLCs may be available through community partnerships or apprenticeships,

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meaning that the district could be duplicating educational opportunities that could be delivered at lower cost elsewhere

- Maintaining 8 different SLCs has several implications for the staffing required for such a complex structure. Reviewing each SLC may give the district an opportunity to identify what is working best and focus its efforts there.

Because the small learning community model is the essence of how the district has chosen to educate high school students, ensuring that the implementation of the SLC model is aligned with the district's theory of action is a critical aspect of raising achievement at the high school level.

## **2c. Ensure the implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) is aligned with the district's theory of action and its needs.**

The district has made significant progress rolling out RTI across elementary schools as a way of supporting struggling students. Individual principals have been given significant autonomy over how the RTI process is implemented at their respective schools. However, interviews, visits, and data collection revealed several areas of RTI implementation which might warrant closer review following the refinement of a focused theory of action.

RTI appears to differ significantly from building to building and within school levels in many ways, including:

- how students are grouped
- what materials and strategies are used
- who is providing the intervention
- the certification or qualifications of staff providing interventions
- how staff are scheduled and used to support RTI

In a district with highly mobile populations and a high number of economically disadvantaged students, there may be several benefits to increasing consistency across buildings including:

- eased transitions for mobile students
- clearer expectations across the district for student performance
- greater ability to identify a specific learning need and apply the most appropriate strategy
- greater commonality in materials used across the district
- greater ability to identify and spread successful practices

Ensuring that RTI implementation is aligned with the district's theory of action may increase the successes of the district's elementary schools.

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## **2d. Ensure alignment between staffing strategies and the district's theory of action.**

The district appears to use co-teaching extensively as a service delivery model to support struggling students. Co-teaching is thought of as a way for students to be included in a general education class and benefit from the general education teacher as well as from an ESL or Learning Support teacher.

Research suggests that co-teaching has little incremental benefit over classes taught by a single teacher, even with students with disabilities included. Co-teaching is also expensive, even when compared to other intensive interventions.

Co-teaching may not be the most effective or cost-effective strategy for raising student achievement in Lancaster, and more importantly, it may not be directly connected to the district's theory of action. Many districts have seen that reducing the amount of co-teaching can result in the freeing up of significant resources that can be directed towards priorities that fall within the district's theory of action, and most importantly, create conditions in which student achievement is more likely to increase.

## **2e. Continue to inventory items that will need to be examined for alignment with the theory of action.**

The opportunities above cite specific instances that appear to call for a timely inquiry regarding alignment with the district's theory of action.

This is by no means a comprehensive list but represents areas that emerged during interviews and visits. Other areas to explore will likely emerge as the district develops a sharper focus.

### **3. Streamline the number of activities and initiatives, and implement them thoughtfully and consistently for a sustained period of time.**

The district currently devotes resources to many initiatives. In interviews, staff described how many district leadership changes over the past two decades have resulted in layers upon layers of initiatives and activities. There appears to be a general sense of weariness around the way in which activities and initiatives are adopted, implemented inconsistently, and then discarded or continued haphazardly.

This can have many negative implications for a district:

- It is difficult to tell what is working to raise student achievement and what is wasting resources
- It is almost impossible to determine if lack of success is a result of the activity itself or of ineffective implementation
- Staff may not have a clear sense of priority, meaning that each individual must determine what, if anything, deserves a shifting of their time and energy
- When a new initiative or activity is introduced, it might be met with skepticism rather than enthusiasm, immediately reducing the opportunities for success

Districts that have significantly raised student achievement often maintain cultures that promote trust due to a visible, short list of key priorities, and a focus on strong implementation, including measurable goals, sustained professional development, and monitoring that practices are being implemented.

#### **3a. Value the ‘short list’ of priorities.**

There is no perfect number or set of initiatives that will move a district from ‘good to great.’ There are best practices and successful practices, and many districts that have significantly raised achievement have a number of characteristics and initiatives in common. However, what is perhaps more striking than the types of initiatives that these districts have employed is the value that these districts place on having a short set of initiatives, fully implemented, for a fixed period of time.

For a district with many initiatives, it may be best to start by identifying a few current initiatives that are aligned with a district-wide theory of action, and focus primarily on improving those. Rolling out a package of entirely new initiatives, even if there are very few, may exhaust and frustrate staff.

### **3b. Reduce variation in implementation.**

SDOL staff are highly capable and have a great deal of knowledge and skill. Current initiatives are infused with that expertise and the district-wide commitment to students. However, as Section III will explain, there is a significant variation in how consistently many of the district's practices are implemented. Best practices that are poorly implemented will not yield strong results. SDOL has many pockets of success but also has instances of poorly implemented initiatives.

Limiting variation in the way an initiative or mandate is implemented can actually increase the likelihood that an initiative will succeed. This includes holding the variables of time, quality, and fidelity all consistent. In these instances, planning and deployment are generally focused on identifying and reducing inconsistencies and anticipating barriers to implementation. Further, goal setting, appropriate data, as well as management and accountability structures are all utilized effectively to promote consistency.

While some current district practices promote variation, including the current implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI), the district may want to inventory these practices and explore the value of reducing variation in areas that could significantly impact student achievement.

## **4. Strengthen the culture of collaboration throughout the district**

Securing the buy-in and trust of staff is critical to the success of an initiative. Developing a clear sense of the roles staff have and how those roles best work together can significantly increase the capacity of an organization. Further, when staff are able to work toward a solution that they have helped devise, they are more likely to be just as excited to implement the solution.

The district currently has a long roster of initiatives as well as meeting structures, both of which demand a significant investment on the part of those who plan and those who attend meetings. Interviews and visits suggested that areas of concern to staff include the overlap and lack of clarity around certain roles and responsibilities in the district as well as the current use of many of these meeting times. Both can hinder effective collaboration and limit the performance of a district.

### **4a. Identify and articulate roles and responsibilities around key district priorities.**

In districts that have successfully deployed a theory of action, staff, departments, and buildings collaborate effectively. While tensions between sites and central office generally always exist to some extent, roles and responsibilities can be designed in a way that does not duplicate efforts or waste resources.

Interviews and visits unearthed potential opportunities to manage existing tensions surrounding roles and responsibilities:

- Interviews and surveys suggested that current confusion about roles, responsibilities, and authority may be driving unnecessary tension between school sites and some central office departments as well as within the central office.
- The district's move from site-based leadership to a central leadership model is the cause of some confusion and tension among building leaders. Staff articulated concern about perceived inconsistency behind certain decisions that are centrally managed and others that are site-managed.
- Interviews and surveys indicated that there may be instances of dual and conflicting accountability structures, particularly in instances where a central office department is attempting to check on the implementation of a protocol within the classroom. This was occasionally perceived as undermining authority or ignoring the context of a particular site or situation.

Some immediate opportunities to clarify roles and responsibilities include those surrounding

- Curriculum and its implementation
- The service delivery model to struggling students
- The teacher evaluation process.

Easing these tensions through clarification could promote increased collaboration and trust.

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**4b. Strengthen awareness of district priorities by utilizing current meeting structures to further engage and involve district staff in problem solving.**

Interviews and visits indicated a concern that many of the current structures for meeting time, while well-intentioned, do not maximize opportunities for collaboration, problem-solving, team building, and ownership.

- Some building leaders and central office staff expressed concern that the broad range of topics and activities covered in meetings left no time for real focus
- There was concern that meeting topics did not always seem connected to critical priorities
- Some building leaders and central office staff expressed a desire to have a more entrepreneurial role within meetings and development times. These staff want to use limited time with one another to problem solve, share successful practices, and collectively find ways to increase student achievement
- Some staff expressed a feeling that they're often 'spoken to' about topics but aren't always given an opportunity to actively engage with the topics in a meeting

Given that time is precious resource, steps can be taken to ensure that meeting topics are aligned with the district's theory of action, and that staff have an opportunity to problem solve and collaborate in a way that is commensurate with their talents, roles, and responsibilities.

## **Section III: Best practices for guiding the refinement of the district’s theory of action**

### **1. Explore options to develop a sharper focus around the use of student achievement data**

Districts with SDOL’s profile that have significantly raised achievement have certain characteristics in common, including, as education leader Doug Reeves has termed it, a “laser-like focus” on student achievement and data. Staff in SDOL are aware of the importance of student achievement data, and district leadership have begun building an organization that relies and manages based on data. However, visits and interviews suggested that the district may want to consider rapidly accelerating the use of student achievement data at the school and central office level. Some of the following were areas in which the district may consider advancing this work.

#### **1a. Promoting stronger use of data walls and data visualization.**

Effective data walls can be a critical component of building a culture in which everyone understands and becomes comfortable with a constant focus on student achievement. Most powerfully, such walls can motivate staff and raise expectations. The district is phasing in this practice, and steps can be taken to ensure that the data is in visible places and displays the most useful information.

- Visits demonstrated the practice of placing data on walls, but these were often not displayed in highly visible places or did not seem present at all.
- Among those that did, the data that was displayed was generally not data that gave information about a student’s or a cohort’s growth. Several data posters contained grades given out in classes, which do not necessarily reveal information about proficiency or how much a student knows

Data walls are an excellent way to display student growth information, but they do not seem to be used universally in the district for this purpose. Data walls displaying growth information can allow teachers and principals to examine trends, isolate successful and ineffective practices, and determine focus areas for improvement.

#### **1b. Allowing and encouraging more time to use data.**

Rich sources of data and many visuals displaying data are generally not useful if there is not enough time for leaders and staff to engage and interact with the data, plan and strategize around data, and receive coaching and training connected to information revealed by data.

The district has made significant progress encouraging and structuring times for staff to use data. Many staff discussed frequent—monthly, weekly, or even daily—meetings that involved using

data. However, interviews, visits, and surveys indicated that there was significant inconsistency surrounding these practices.

- Teachers, especially at the secondary level, indicated that there was not always enough time to collaborate and plan using student achievement data
- The current 3-year professional development calendars for district staff represents a significant effort, but the calendars appear to leave little time for curricular professional development based on the latest student achievement and growth data.
- The district has a number of instruments it can use to monitor student growth, but conversations about student growth occurred fairly infrequently during our interviews with district staff. While examining student growth may be an important aspect of the emerging data-driven culture, it is unclear how explicitly or frequently data conversations and displays focus on growth.
- Surveys indicated wide variation in the frequency and type of data utilized by building administrators and teachers

In many high achieving districts, ‘today’s’ data informs tomorrow’s or next week’s professional development session, and student growth and learning is monitored and discussed biweekly, weekly, or even daily.

### **1c. Ensuring consistent principal leadership around the use of data.**

In interviews, principals indicated that using and discussing student achievement data with teachers was a critical part of their role as building leaders. However, interviews with staff indicated that the extent to which principals use data and model the use of data in their buildings varies.

- The frequency of building level activities focused on data varied significantly between schools
- Interviews indicated that principal responsibilities and priorities may not be completely aligned with leading and modeling the use of student achievement data in the building. Interviews and visits suggested that the demands placed on principals’ time did not always allow them to comprehensively lead the data use process
- Interviews indicated that many teachers actively used, supplied data for, and interacted with SchoolNet, the district’s data management system. However, some staff suggested that use of and comfort with SchoolNet varied significantly from teacher to teacher, indicating a variation in professional development or team meetings that require teachers to pull data

In extremely data-focused districts, many activities, such as professional development or team meetings, increase the ‘need’ for a teacher to be actively monitoring and using student achievement data. Further, in these districts, a principal has consistent authority, time, and skill to organize a building in a way that facilitates and promotes the constant review of student data.

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### **1d. Expansive common formative assessments and constant progress monitoring.**

Urban districts that have seen significant gains in student achievement typically use common formative assessments across all grades in key subject areas, multiple times per year—sometimes even monthly, weekly, or even daily. Common formative assessments provide opportunities for students to demonstrate learning and for teachers, principals and district leaders to monitor student learning. A related best practice is to give teachers access to formative assessment results within days of administration, which allows them to make instructional decisions, re-teach when necessary, and identify best practices.

The district has made significant progress around the use of common formative assessments. It has developed a yearly assessment plan which includes quarterly assessments of math, reading, writing, and subject units. The district also actively uses DIBELS, 4Sight, and administers math and writing assessments.

Interviews and visits suggest that there is an opportunity to increase the frequency of common formative assessments and deepen teachers' use of data.

- Some formative assessment occurs through the use of the standard Harcourt and Everyday Math curricula, but interviews suggested that this varied significantly from teacher to teacher. Assessments of this nature do not appear to be required district-wide.
- Interviews and data collection indicated a number of the district's unit tests were not standardized. Ensuring that all students are held to the same standard when they are being assessed for a course and developing consistency across classes could promote collaboration and best practice sharing.
- Interviews and visits indicated a wide variation in the amount of informal formative assessment administered by teachers, suggesting that some teachers have a much clearer picture of their students' progress than others

For a district like Lancaster, where raising student achievement is an urgent concern, quarterly data may not actually be timely enough to make timely and urgent instructional decisions. When growth is critically important, teachers' ability to ensure that students are mastering material, and re-teaching as soon as it becomes evident that students did not grasp a standard, may be critical.

## 2. Consider continuing to increase the focus on elementary reading.

Many elementary students in Lancaster are struggling to master reading. Numerous studies indicate that mastering reading by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is a significant indicator of future academic success. Further, reading is the gateway to all other subjects, including history, science, and even math; students who struggle with reading are likely to struggle in other subjects.

### Elementary PSSA reading proficiency (2010)

	<b>% struggling</b>
Special education	81%
English language learner	71%
Regular education	34%

<b>Total students struggling</b>	<b>48%</b>
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*Note: regular education is an estimate based on data provided.*

- Almost half of elementary school students in SDOL are struggling with reading.
- Many of these students are in special education or are English language learners, but many are not

### 2a. Consider increasing fidelity to best practices for elementary reading.

The National Reading Panel and the What Works Clearinghouse have identified several best practices for elementary reading, all of which must be implemented together in order to see significant gains in reading proficiency.

The district currently implements many of these practices and has made significant progress developing curricula and pacing guides that reflect proficiency expectations for students. However, the variation in implementation appears to be significant, which can compromise the effectiveness of these practices and reduce expected gains in student achievement.

### Best practices in elementary reading and remediation

<b>Best Practice</b>	<b>Current District Practice</b>
1. Clear and rigorous grade-level expectations for reading proficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district scope and sequence document as well as the curriculum and pacing guides articulate clear and rigorous state-aligned, grade-level expectations for reading proficiency.</li> <li>• The implementation of these reading expectations appears to vary from classroom to classroom.</li> </ul>

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<p>2. Frequent measurement of student achievement and growth, influencing instruction and intervention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district currently assesses student achievement and growth using DIBELS, 4Sight, PSSA, and other tests.</li> <li>• The use of growth data appears to vary significantly from classroom to classroom and from building to building.</li> <li>• Surveys indicated that there is a wide variation in how teachers and principals define adequate growth for students.</li> <li>• In many instances, tests influence intervention groupings and instruction, but the extent and quality to which this occurs varies significantly by teacher and school.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Early identification of struggling readers, starting in kindergarten.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district has focused on identifying struggling readers as early as kindergarten.</li> <li>• While this appears to be a widespread practice, it may be beneficial to further verify that this is the current practice.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Immediate and intensive additional instruction for struggling readers, averaging 30 minutes a day and using more than one strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All elementary schools have daily scheduled intervention blocks that last at least 30 minutes each day, and some schools have intervention blocks that last 45 minutes.</li> <li>• Strategies used appear to vary significantly. Some intervention groups may be using more than one strategy, but interventions and the skill of interventionists vary significantly from building to building.</li> <li>• Several building administrators and teachers cited the remediation inconsistencies between buildings as a concern.</li> </ul>
<p>5. Remediation and intervention that are seamlessly connected to each day's full class instruction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some buildings appear to have scheduled time, communication protocols, and expectations that encourage and require collaboration to connect instruction and remediation.</li> <li>• Some buildings, however, appear to have a cadre of intervention staff with very little planning time, limiting the connections that can be made between intervention and instruction.</li> </ul>
<p>6. Balanced instruction in the five areas of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) as part of a 90-minute/day literacy block.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district scope and sequence document references each of these domains as being an important part of reading in each grade level.</li> <li>• District pacing guides examined do not explicitly lay out how balanced instruction in all five domains will occur; however, it is presumed that the pacing guide was created with these standards in mind.</li> <li>• Actual implementation of balanced instruction in these areas is unclear, and interviews, surveys, and visits suggest that there is significant variation in implementation.</li> </ul>

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<p>7. Explicit instruction in phonics in the early grades and comprehension in the later grades.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district scope and sequence document lays out standards that focus on explicit phonics instruction in the early grades and comprehension in the later grades</li> <li>• Implementation of this practice appears to vary significantly by school and by teacher. While it is an articulated expectation of the district, actual practice appears to vary significantly.</li> </ul>
<p>8. A skilled teacher trained in reading instruction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district employs very few reading specialists and enlists a broad range of individuals to conduct interventions, very few who have had extensive training in reading.</li> <li>• The district also uses staff who are not certified teachers to deliver reading instruction and intervention. While there is no doubt that these are passionate and helpful individuals, teaching reading is difficult and requires a high level of expertise.</li> </ul>

Comparing some of the practices in Lancaster to identified best practices in elementary reading unearth potential opportunities to explore areas related to:

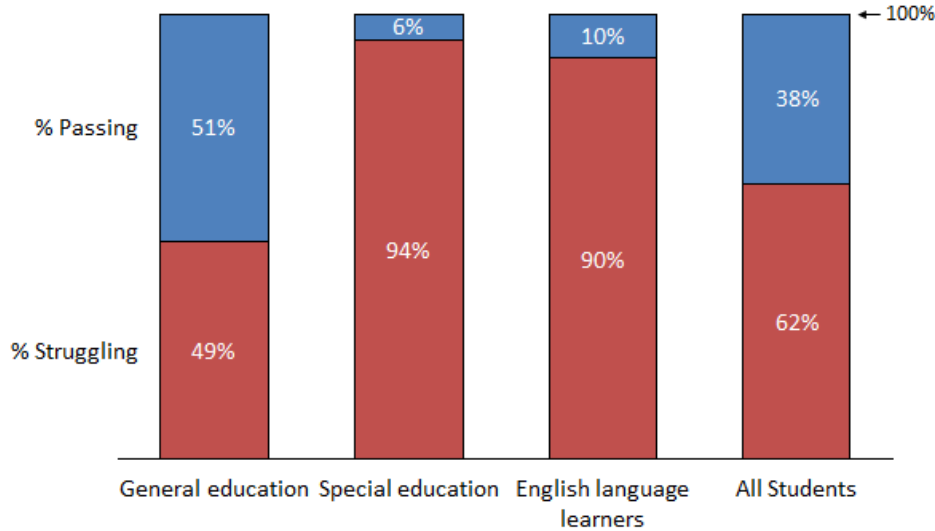
- the implementation of the curriculum and pacing guides
- the way in which instruction and remediation are delivered
- the way assessment data is used
- the content expertise of individuals delivering intervention

It is important to note that practices outlined above have only been proven successful if all used and fully implemented together. Implementing 6 or even 7 with moderate fidelity will not result in significant achievement gains. Because of this, planning to incorporate a best-practices focus on elementary reading requires a broader conversation about theory of action and resource allocation.

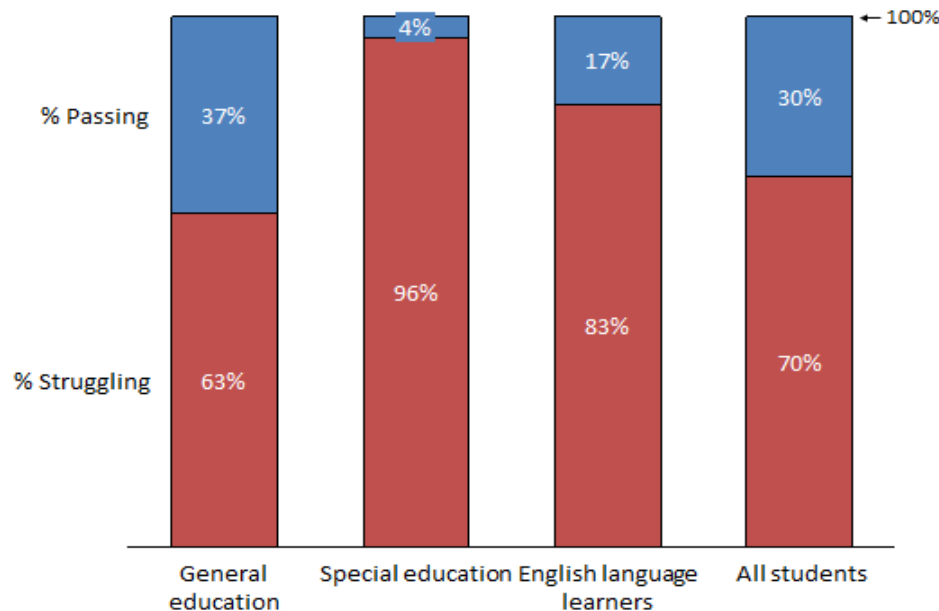
### 3. Consider greater alignment with known best practices for remediation at the secondary level.

The district has recently focused significant attention on raising student achievement at the secondary level, including several leadership and instructional changes. However, most students at the secondary level are struggling with reading and math.

#### High school PSSA reading proficiency (2010)



#### High school PSSA math proficiency (2010)



Note: Regular education is an estimate based on other figures provided.

- Most 11<sup>th</sup> grade students in Lancaster are not proficient in math or reading, and very few English Language Learners or students with IEPs are proficient

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- Interviews and visits revealed anecdotes of students graduating unable to read, write, or do high-level math necessary for most post-high-school pathways

**3a. Consider strengthening remediation efforts for the secondary level, specifically giving students more time on task with content experts.**

Currently, one of the practices to support struggling students is giving some students extra time through a second class or a remediation block. Data collection indicated that this practice was being used inconsistently, and that given the number of students who struggle to stay on grade level, the number of students receiving extra time and extra support may not be high enough.

- If 60-70% of high school students are not proficient and even more are barely proficient, it would be expected that 60-70% or more students would be receiving extra time and support during the school day to learn material.

There may be an opportunity to more closely align the district’s efforts to known best practices in secondary English and math remediation.

**3b. Consider increasing fidelity to best practices in secondary remediation.**

PSSA scores would indicate that many Lancaster students at the secondary level are struggling and require remediation in order to master grade-level math and English content. Outlined below are best practices in secondary remediation, compiled from a number of sources including The Rennie Center, which have, when all implemented together, successfully raised student achievement in many districts. Focusing on greater alignment with these practices could result in student achievement gains at the secondary level.

<b>Best Practice</b>	<b>Current District Practice</b>
<p><b>1. Make inclusion the preferred setting.</b> Structure general education classes and teachers to be successful inclusion classes, with most instruction provided by general education or content expert special education staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district currently staffs a significant number of learning support teachers, exceptional student specialists, and ESL teachers at the middle and high school levels who serve students in a variety of different settings, many of which are not inclusive in nature.</li> <li>• Additionally, there are a number of students served out-of-district and a high percentage of students in substantially separate programs.</li> <li>• There may be significant potential to increase the inclusiveness of the general education setting. (This is discussed further in the next opportunity.)</li> </ul>

<p><b>2. Use standards based education as a catalyst for change.</b> Staff believe that students with mild to moderate special needs should reach grade level in reading, math, and English.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews suggested that, in some instances, social promotion may be occurring at the secondary level and that students, instead of being promoted after the mastery of grade-level standard, are promoted with their class.</li> <li>• Some suggested that while many staff believe that students can and will achieve at or above grade-level standards, some have low expectations of students and do not hold them to high standards.</li> <li>• In interviews, staff often articulated the importance of standards-based education but discussed shortcomings and inconsistencies in implementation of this.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Provide extra time, a lot of extra time.</b> Time is the variable, not the learning or the standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In some instances, the middle and high schools are providing extra time to students.</li> <li>• The high school and middle schools do identify certain struggling students and provide them with an extra class period.</li> <li>• However, given the large number of students who are not proficient in middle and high school (over half), it appears that many more students could benefit from receiving extra time on task during the school day.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Change, but only a little, the curriculum for students with special needs, while maintaining general education standards.</b> Accommodations are incorporated into daily classroom instruction for all students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some interviews suggested that, in some instances, standards were significantly lower for students with special needs and ELL students.</li> <li>• Some of the current programming and service delivery models for students with special needs may not be allowing these students to attain material that is within their grasp.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Make extensive use of student achievement data.</b> Data reviewed at the student level with both formative and summative assessments measuring absolute achievement and growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Especially compared to the elementary level, a limited number of common formative assessments are administered at the secondary level.</li> <li>• Teachers indicated that they often did not have enough structured time to review the limited data that is available.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Create a belief system embracing students with special needs achieving at high levels.</b> High levels of achievement by students with special needs is the responsibility of all teachers and administrators, not just special education staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews and surveys indicated significant variation around the presence of a belief that students who are English Language Learners, enrolled in special education, or who are economically disadvantaged could achieve at high levels.</li> <li>• Some interviewees were concerned that staff did not believe all students could achieve at high levels.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>7. Foster collaboration.</b> Walls between special education, ESL, and general education are knocked down.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was concern that there is not enough time or structure to foster effective collaboration at the secondary level.</li> <li>• The district employs many special education and ESL teachers, and interviews suggested that some interventions and support given to students is siloed, indicating the greater need and potential for increased collaboration.</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Integrate study skills into core instruction.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was limited evidence to indicate that integrated study skills were consistently a key part of core academic instruction.</li> <li>• Visits and interviews indicate that while many teachers may integrate study skills into their teaching, there is significant variation in the quality and the alignment across classrooms with respect the way these skills are integrated into core instruction.</li> </ul>

Considerations for the district with respect to secondary remediation may include:

- increasing time on task for all struggling students
- ensuring that the culture of secondary schools includes a belief system focused on all students achieving
- adhering to standards-based education model
- increasing the frequency of and subjects covered in formative assessments, strengthening data use, and building collaboration time.
- increased integration of study skills into core instruction

**3c. Consider staff allocation that matches best practice.**

The district invests significantly in vocational, elective teachers, and administrative supports to the small learning community model at the high school level when increasing content expertise support for core instruction may be required to meet student need. Staffing that is more closely aligned with best practice in secondary remediation for a district in which most high school students are not proficient may include increasing core content expertise and reducing elsewhere. Section four identifies current resources allocated to electives at the secondary level.

#### 4. Consider increasing the inclusiveness of the general education setting.

A general education environment where many students with disabilities are included is a demonstrated best practice, can increase student achievement, and can be cost effective. There are areas in which the district may choose to build a more inclusive general education setting.

#### 4a. Continue progress made reducing the number of identified special education students, especially at the secondary level.

While students are always referred to special education with the best of intentions, incorrectly identifying students for special education has not been shown to increase their achievement and can be costly. The district currently has many students who are special education-identified. The special education and student services departments have spent significant time and energy attempting to understand and resolve patterns related to special education identification and are actively invested in the issue.

#### Identified students comparison

Identified students	
School District of Lancaster	18.6%
Pennsylvania	15.1%
Nation	12.0%

*Note: 18.6% is not the rate by which SDOL identifies students for special education. It is the total percentage of all students who, at some point, whether by SDOL or another district, have been identified.*

- The district has a much higher percentage of students identified for special education than does the state or the nation

Examined closely, numbers of special education students are particularly high in two disability areas, specific learning disability and speech or language impairments.

#### Identification rates for SLD and speech or language disabilities

Disability	Number of Students with IEP	Number of Students			Multiple (State)	Multiple (Nation)
		District	State	Nationwide		
Specific learning disabilities	968	8.9%	7.8%	5.1%	1.14	1.74
Speech or language impairments	391	3.6%	2.3%	2.3%	1.56	1.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,359</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>10.1%</b>	<b>7.4%</b>	<b>1.23</b>	<b>1.68</b>

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- The district has significantly more students identified in the specific learning disability and speech and language impairment categories than is typical for the state or the nation.
- Often, given the broad definitions of these categories, students who are struggling can be incorrectly identified as having a disability

The district also currently has many identified students in middle and high school, resulting in percentages of identified students that are significantly higher than the national average.

**% of students with IEPs by grade level\***

	<b>General Population</b>	<b>Students with IEPs</b>	<b>% students with IEPs</b>
Elementary	5,557	787	14%
Middle	2,288	519	23%
High School	3,038	696	23%

Note: Another data set provided showed slightly different numbers, meaning the actual numbers may vary slightly.

- The elementary special education percentage is actually lower than the state rate.
- In middle and high school, almost 1 in 4 students is identified as having a disability
- High identification percentages have been associated with lower overall academic achievement

Recognizing that many of the students who have IEPs may not have been given the IEP in Lancaster, the district might consider strengthening efforts to identify middle and high school students who could be exited from special education, ensuring that students who are struggling but who do not have a disability are not given or do not continue to have IEPs. A reduction of the special education identification rate to state or national averages could lead to both higher student achievement and substantial potential savings.

**4b. Consider increasing inclusionary options for students self-contained classrooms.**

Districts that have significantly raised student achievement for struggling students expose students with mild to moderate special needs to the same rigorous, grade-level curriculum provided to general education students. Research suggests that all but the most severely disabled students (e.g., 3-4% of the total population) can attain grade level proficiency, given more time and content expert teachers.

Over time, the number of special education students in Lancaster with access to grade-level content has been structurally limited. The district has 6.2% of students in substantially separate

classrooms, which rarely teach grade-level standards. Finally, interviews suggested that few students with IEPs, even in inclusionary settings, are expected to reach grade level proficiency.

**Students without access to grade-level content**

	<b>Lancaster</b>	<b>Typical urban district</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Students in out-of-district placements	1.3%	1.2%	+ 0.1%
Students in self-contained classrooms	6.2%	3.0%	+ 3.2%
Total students without access to grade-level standards	7.5%	4.2%	+ 3.3%

The district currently places 6.2% of all students in self-contained classrooms, and nearly 33% of all students with IEPs are placed in self-contained classrooms. This is higher than would be expected for a district of Lancaster’s characteristics. Several factors suggest fewer students need to be placed in such programs.

- In some grade levels, more than half of students in general education in the district are not proficient in math or English. Thus all students, both those with and without an IEP, would benefit from effective core instruction.
- With many students in self-contained having mild or moderate special needs, a separate system of self-contained classrooms may not be warranted or efficient. The needs of students with mild to moderate special needs are very similar to the needs of struggling students in general education.

Increasing inclusion of students currently served in substantially separate classrooms could increase achievement and reduce costs.

**4c. Reconsider the service delivery model for learning support teachers.**

The district currently has 59 learning support teachers working in an inclusion setting, serving 1202 students at a caseload of approximately 20 students per learning support teacher. The district could consider exploring alternative inclusion support models for serving struggling students. Some service delivery models, one of which the district has piloted somewhat at the high school level, serve students with IEPs and struggling students who do not have IEPs alike, as these students largely need the same things.

See the next page for a more detailed example of these models.

**Overview of potential service models to explore**

	<b>Push-in support for struggling students</b>	<b>Pull-out support for struggling students</b>	<b>Supplemental classes for struggling students (“double block”)</b>
Description	Special education teachers push-in to general education classrooms to support struggling students. This includes “inclusion classes” and co-teaching	Special education teachers pull students out in small groups to provide remediation and intervention in addition to core class instruction	A second content classes taught by content expert teacher (often general education teacher) provided in place of some electives for struggling students
Approximate caseload	15-25 students per teacher	20-35 students per teacher	60-75 students per teacher
Strengths and weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Push-in teacher not always content expert</li> <li>• Coordination with general education teacher is difficult</li> <li>• Caseload will always be low because struggling students dispersed across many classrooms</li> <li>• Difficult for special education to provide help and advice while classroom teacher is speaking to class</li> <li>• No extra time on task</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows for targeted support for students who are struggling</li> <li>• Pull out teacher not always content expert</li> <li>• Can be hard to link extra help to core instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doubles time on task for struggling students. Provides an extra 5 hours a week of instruction.</li> <li>• Class size averages 12-15 students</li> <li>• Easier to schedule</li> <li>• Puts content expert teachers in front of students who need great instruction</li> <li>• Can serve both general education and special education students</li> <li>• Easier to link extra help to core instruction.</li> <li>• Cost effective</li> </ul>

*Note: PA law mandates that the maximum caseload for a Learning Support teacher be 50 students unless exception is granted from the state. The third scenario would not require a Learning Support teacher to provide the support to students.*

- The current model of inclusion support in Lancaster assigns an average of 20 students a year to a given teacher (this does not include paraprofessionals).

**Inclusion and learning support teacher caseload**

Students in inclusion classrooms	1,202
Learning support teachers	59
<b>Implied caseload per teacher</b>	<b>20.3</b>

The low caseload could be due to a high amount of ‘push-in’ support as well as co-teaching. National research has not shown push-in inclusion support or co-teaching to be an effective practice for raising student achievement. Resources associated with changing the service delivery model are described in Section IV.

**4d. Consider re-examining the service delivery model for ESL support.**

The district has a complex and varied approach to serving students who are English Language Learners, which includes a cadre of ESL teachers and a focus on ‘push-in’ support and co-teaching. This represents a significant investment in supporting these students. The district, in line with best practices for supporting struggling students, may want to consider:

- more clearly defining the current service delivery model for supporting ELL students
- ensuring a consistent focus on inclusion and immersion
- ensuring these students more time on task with highly skilled instructors
- clarifying expectations around high levels of achievement and growth for these students
- identifying common needs among all struggling learners and using all academic support instructors to meet those needs in place of siloed support

The considerations above are aligned with those outlined for struggling learners as well as students with special needs.

## Section IV: Resource Allocation Implications of Best Practices

This section explores a select number of resource allocation scenarios and considerations related to fully adopting and implementing some best practices discussed in the previous section. None of the changes discussed in this section could occur ‘overnight,’ and most would require further research and changes in service delivery models and scheduling to be implemented.

### 1. Elementary reading resources

In addition to general education teachers, the district also allocates significant resources to staff who, in all or in part, support reading. The district may want to more closely examine all resources currently devoted to reading in order to determine if the current system is aligned with the district’s theory of action and with best practice.

#### 1a. Explore current academic support resources.

**Current elementary academic support resources (in addition to classroom teachers)**

Reading teachers	FTE	Average salary and benefits	Total
Reading support teachers	4	\$75,000	\$301,600

**Other**

ESL teachers	44	\$75,000	\$3,300,000
Learning support teachers	38	\$75,000	\$2,850,000
Instructional coach	16	\$75,000	\$1,200,000
Dean of students*	9	\$75,000	\$675,000
Elementary librarians*	13	\$75,000	\$975,000
Speech and language pathologists	9.6	\$78,000	\$748,800
Exceptional student specialist	8	\$84,500	\$676,000
Elementary learning support para-educators	8	\$15,000	\$120,000

<b>Estimated current investment</b>	<b>\$10,171,400</b>
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\*Note: This program may be cut, indicating that the final total would be smaller than the amount listed

- Out of an over \$10,000,000 investment in academic support, only \$300,000 is invested in reading support teachers.
- Most staff listed above have likely not had to acquire or demonstrate reading instruction expertise in order to be involved in providing reading support.

**1b. Explore potential areas in which resources may be redirected to reading.**

If a focus on implementing all best practices in elementary reading is increased, there may be other areas to explore resources to divert back to reading.

In Lancaster, ‘specials’ teacher staffing may be one such example. The district currently staffs ‘specials’ teachers by building, for the most part providing 3 FTE of these teachers to each elementary school. It may be possible to maintain current levels of ‘specials’ classes with fewer staff.

**Examples of a need based model**

<b>Schools</b>	<b>Classrooms</b>	<b>Total Art, Music, PE FTE needed*</b>	<b>Current FTE</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Buchanan	19	1.6	3.0	<b>1.4</b>
Burrowes	18	1.5	3.0	<b>1.5</b>
Carter & Macrae	17	1.5	3.0	<b>1.5</b>
Fulton	18	1.5	3.0	<b>1.5</b>
Hamilton	19	1.6	3.0	<b>1.4</b>
King	23	2.0	4.0	<b>2.0</b>
Lafayette	20	1.7	3.2	<b>1.5</b>
Martin	12	1.0	2.0	<b>1.0</b>
Price	18	1.5	3.0	<b>1.5</b>
Ross	14	1.2	2.3	<b>1.1</b>
Washington	23	2.0	4.5	<b>2.5</b>
Wharton	11	0.9	2.0	<b>1.1</b>
Wickersham	20	1.7	3.0	<b>1.3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>19.9</b>	<b>39.0</b>	<b>19.1</b>

**Totals**

Current ‘specials’ FTE	39.0
Total FTE necessary (estimated)	19.9
Estimated potential savings (FTE)	19.1
<b>Estimated potential savings</b>	<b>\$1,400,000</b>

Note: ‘Need’ refers to a calculation that estimates total FTE required to provide 40 minutes of enrichment to each class in a building once/week, which is approximately the current level.

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- Depending on the district’s theory of action and strategies for supporting struggling students, re-thinking the ‘specials’ service delivery model may free up resources for investment in reading support for struggling students
- This type of schedule would demand extremely thoughtful scheduling and would have to be deployed centrally.

It is important to note that variation in the way ‘specials’ are scheduled and provided building by building may have to be reduced in order to allow a different service delivery model. This resource shift would require further study and could not be implemented immediately.

## 2. Secondary elective resources

The secondary level, including middle and high school, currently offers many electives to students; in high school, some electives are very closely tied with the particular focus of a small learning community. As it develops and strengthens its theory of action, the district has an opportunity to determine if the current investment is aligned with student needs and the district theory of action.

### Elective teachers at the secondary level

	FTE	Cost
Music teacher	14	\$1,050,000
Art teacher	12	\$900,000
World language teacher	12	\$900,000
Health careers teacher	5	\$375,000
Business education teacher	4	\$300,000
Computer education teacher	3	\$225,000
Early childhood teacher	2	\$150,000
Accounting teacher	1	\$75,000
Business trade teacher	1	\$75,000
CAD teacher	1	\$75,000
Cosmetology teacher	1	\$75,000
Electronics teacher	1	\$75,000
Engineer teacher	1	\$75,000
Family and consumer science teacher	1	\$75,000
Graphic arts teacher	1	\$75,000
Law enforcement teacher	1	\$75,000
Media studies teacher	1	\$75,000
Workplace readiness teacher	1	\$75,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>\$4,725,000</b>

- The district’s \$4,725,000 investment in elective teaching staff can be evaluated for its alignment with the district’s theory of action and priorities

This chart does not reflect other investments made to support the current small learning community structure at the secondary level or other investments such as librarians. Those investments can also be examined for alignment to the theory of action.

### 3. Resources related to increased inclusion

#### 3a. Shifting students from substantially separate to general education.

If the district were to shift the students with mild and moderate disabilities from self-contained classrooms, which are typically 6-15 students, 1 teacher and 1 paraprofessional, to an alternative structure such as joining a class of general education students with part-time support from a special educator, the per pupil cost may decline significantly.

Providing the opportunity for the roughly 320 students\* with mild to moderate disabilities currently served in self-contained classrooms to be included in general education could yield a significant increase in student achievement and savings, which could be reinvested in content expertise academic support.

Depending on class size targets, some portion of this may need to be invested in additional general education teachers to support the increased student population that would be in general education. Moving forward with an effort of this magnitude would require significant planning and additional research.

\*Note: Number was obtained through figures displayed in the previous section

#### 3b. Resources associated with an alternate inclusion service delivery model.

Were the district to review its inclusion model towards a ‘double-block’ or ‘pull-out’ model, there would be significant resource allocation implications, potentially resulting in significant savings to be re-invested in initiatives underlying the district’s theory of action.

#### Current inclusion support

Students with IEPs in general education setting	1202
Learning support teachers	59
Caseload	20.3

**Potential alternative inclusion models**

	<b>25 student caseload</b>	<b>35 student caseload</b>	<b>75 student caseload*</b>
FTE needed	48	35	16
<b>Estimated potential savings</b>	<b>\$825,000</b>	<b>\$1,800,000</b>	<b>\$3,225,000</b>

*Note: This would include both IEP and non-IEP students, and the teacher would not be a learning support teacher. PA law mandates that the maximum caseload for a Learning Support teacher be 50 students unless exception is granted from the state.*

- Exploring alternate service delivery models for the inclusion support could free up resources to be invested elsewhere
- Reducing the use of the co-teaching (described below) could also allow teachers to serve more students and could result in additional potential savings
- This potential savings could be reinvested in core subject content expert teachers.

**3c. Exploring the investment in co-teaching may unearth additional resources.**

Co-teaching is a costly teaching strategy, essentially requiring an investment in a second teacher for each co-taught classroom or class period without providing any additional time on task for a struggling student.

Alternative strategies include using a certified content expert teacher to provide support in addition to the main class period, allowing the content expert teacher to either serve a greater number of students or provide a significant amount of extra time for struggling students. Both options can result in increased student achievement as well as a decrease in spending.

Further inquiry would have to be made into the extent and scope of Lancaster’s current co-teaching model in order to determine what kinds of resources could be made available by exploring other models. However, given the widespread use of co-teaching and push-in support, it is estimated that significant resources encompass this investment.

**3d. Exploring the investment in ESL support may unearth additional resources.**

The district makes a significant investment in ESL support for students who are English learners. Examining this investment may unearth the potential for adopting a more streamlined and focused use of academic support resources. This could potentially yield higher academic achievement, create a greater sense of ownership and expectation around all students achieving at high levels, and allow the district to see greater academic returns on its current investments. A focused and aligned theory of action, including the steps described in Section II, can guide this process.