

Identifying Successful Practices for Students with Disabilities in Ohio Schools Final Report

October 2013



Ohio Special Education Research Project

Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities

Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities

Margaret Burley, Executive Director

Ohio Special Education Research Project

**Identifying Successful Practices for Students with Disabilities in
Ohio Schools: Final Report**

Authors:

Karen Sanders, Ph.D. (Principal Investigator)

Sonia Jurich, Ed.D.

Kavita Mittapalli, Ph.D.

Laura Taylor, M.Ed.

Supporting Contributors:

Robert Reece, M.Ed.

Kathleen Schindler, M.A.

Jerry Walker, Ph.D.

Publications as part of this study:

Evidence-Based Practices in Special Education: A Review of the Literature

Identifying Successful Practices for Students with Disabilities in Ohio Schools:

Final Report

OCECD Special Education Research Project: Executive Summary

This study was funded by the Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children.

IDEA Disclaimer Notice

There are no copyright restrictions on this document. However, please cite and credit the source when copying all or part of this document. This document was supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, (Award number H027A130158, CFDA84.027A awarded to the Ohio Department of Education). The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, and no official endorsement by the Department should be inferred.

Acknowledgments

We extend our sincere gratitude to the many organizations and individuals who contributed to this study.

To the *Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children* for providing funding as well as technical guidance and support.

To the *Ohio State Support Team (SST) Network* for assisting with communications and site visit logistics and, generally, being available to lend a helping hand when needed.

To the *Worthington City School District* for serving as the pilot site for testing data collection protocols for site visits.

To our *Advisors*:

Margaret Burley for her leadership and commitment to doing what's right for the kids, and providing us with the parents' perspective.

Greg Browning (Capitol Partners) for guidance on policy and budget considerations.

Larry Magliocca (Professor Emeritus, The Ohio State University) for volunteering his time to review drafts and provide comments.

Ohio Coalition Governing Board for providing insights on behalf of member organizations.

To our "behind the scenes" partners:

Bonnie Sudnick for document preparation

Marcy Thorner (The Grammar Guru) for professional editing; and

Bridget Dritz, Ben Koshland, Sandra Stein, and Word Wizards, Inc., for professional transcription of interview recordings

Cooperating Public School Districts and Public Charter Schools

Last but not least, we wish to express our thanks to the districts and schools that participated in the study. We offer our sincere appreciation and respect to the many individuals who shared their time and experiences toward the goal of improving the lives of Ohio's children. They were gracious hosts for our site visits and made the experience professionally rewarding for all of us.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
METHODS	3
Conceptual Framework	3
Sampling.....	5
Study Design	8
Limitations	12
FINDINGS: CASE STUDIES	14
Public Charter/Community Schools Case Study.....	15
Typology 2 Case Study	24
Typology 3 Case Study	34
Typology 4 Case Study	44
Typology 6 Case Study	53
Typology 7 Case Study	64
Summary	75
FINDINGS: ACROSS TYPOLOGIES.....	78
The Big Picture.....	78
Teacher Voices	82
Leadership Voices	90
Comparing Findings	97
Specific Strategies	99
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	101
Recommendations for practice.....	102
Recommendations for Further Research	113
In summary	115
REFERENCES	116
APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS	120

APPENDIX B: LIST OF PROGRAMS	125
APPENDIX C: RESOURCES	138
APPENDIX D: PROTOCOLS	155
Letter of Invitation to Participate in the Study	156
Site Visit Activities Summary.....	157
Letter to Participants for Site Visit Scheduling.....	161
Interview Questions.....	162
School Walkthrough Rubric.....	172
Letter to Participants with Directions for Online Teacher Survey	177
Teacher Survey.....	178

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Average scale scores in the statewide assessments reading and mathematics at the participant sites.....	8
Table 2: Demographics of survey participants	11
Table 3: Brief demographic characteristics of the public charter school sites	16
Table 4: Main differences between the top- and bottom-ranked public charter schools	23
Table 5: Brief demographic characteristics of the Typology 2 sites	24
Table 6: Main differences between the top- and bottom-ranked LEAs in Typology 2	33
Table 7: Brief demographic characteristics of the Typology 3 sites	34
Table 8: Main differences between the top- and bottom-ranked LEAs in Typology 3	43
Table 9: Brief demographic characteristics of the Typology 4 sites	44
Table 10: Main differences between the top- and bottom-ranked LEAs in Typology 4	52
Table 11: Brief demographic characteristics of the Typology 6 sites	53
Table 12: Main differences between the top- and bottom-ranked LEAs in Typology 6	64
Table 13: Brief demographic characteristics of the Typology 7 sites	65
Table 14: Main differences between the top- and bottom-ranked LEAs in Typology 7	75
Table 15: Similarities and differences across sites	77
Table 16: Comparing high-ranked and lower-ranked sites.....	79
Table 17: Challenges and contributors to the attainment of LEAs’ vision.....	94
Table 18: Comparing findings from the literature review on students with disabilities and the current study.....	98
Table 19: Summary of recommendations for practice.....	103

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Elements of the three-dimensional conceptual framework	4
Figure 2: Teachers’ perceptions regarding schools’ educational vision.....	82
Figure 3: Process for monitoring progress toward goals	83
Figure 4: Teachers’ perceptions of school and district supports.....	84
Figure 5: Teachers’ perceptions about collaboration.....	85
Figure 6: Teachers’ perceptions about time for planning	85
Figure 7: Teachers’ perceptions of LEAs support for professional development*	86
Figure 8: Teachers’ perceptions of availability of resources	87
Figure 9: Teachers’ perceptions of curriculum alignment.....	87
Figure 10: Teachers’ perceptions regarding supports for striving students.....	88
Figure 11: Percentage of students with disabilities in general classrooms*	89
Figure 12: General education teachers’ involvement in assignment of students with disabilities to their classrooms	89
Figure 13: Teachers’ perceptions about community/family engagement.....	90

INTRODUCTION

This Ohio Special Education Research Project (OCECD Research Project) is funded by the Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children (ODE-OEC) to the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD). The OCECD is a statewide nonprofit organization that serves families of infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities in Ohio, and agencies that provide services to them. The OCECD's work involves the efforts of more than 40 parent and professional disability organizations that comprise the Coalition. The Coalition's mission is to ensure that every Ohio child with special needs receives a free, appropriate, public education in the least restrictive environment.

The purpose of the OCECD Research Project is to enhance understanding of the educational achievement of students with disabilities with a particular focus on the reasons that help shape various levels of achievement among similar schools. ODE-OEC, in collaboration with OCECD, outlined context, purpose, and methods for the current study, as well as for a proposed subsequent study to incorporate special education growth analysis for high-, middle-, and low-achieving schools. In addition, dissemination of report findings to project stakeholders was expected. Desired report findings include the identification of replicable best practices from case studies and surveys. The timeline for the current study extended from the formal notification of award on October 1, 2012, to June 30, 2013 (Narrative Description of Grant Activity: Special Education Evaluation Proposal, 2012).

The scope of the current study includes a focus on students with disabilities served at the elementary, middle/junior high, and senior high school levels; identified students in all disability categories; and on various strategies frequently associated with improved/positive outcomes. Established public school district typologies were used to identify sample sites with similar demographic and geographic characteristics, along with performance data for students with disabilities on statewide assessments. Sites also were selected to represent public charter or community schools.

OCECD appointed a research team to develop and implement a plan of study that was rigorous, feasible, and addressed the needs and priorities of OCECD and ODE-OEC. The selected research team brings extensive experience with large scale evaluation studies, education policy and best practices, as well as in-depth understanding of the current and emerging system

of education in Ohio. A coordination meeting with OCECD, ODE-OEC, and the research team was convened to clarify related issues (including ODE identification of sample sites), define respective roles and responsibilities, and agree on tasks and timelines.

An extensive literature review was conducted as a preliminary step. Findings from the literature review informed the design of data collection protocols and identification of practices used in the current study. The literature review is published in a separate report titled, *Evidence-Based Practices in Special Education: A Review of the Literature*. Site visits and interviews for this effort were conducted in Spring 2013.

This *Final Report* includes four chapters and four appendices. The chapters are: Methods; Findings: Case Studies; Findings: Across Typologies; and Conclusions and Recommendations. Appendix A provides definitions of technical terms used in the report (the terms are highlighted in bold letters the first time they appear in this report). Appendix B presents a list of supplemental programs adopted by the schools. Appendix C displays a list of resources for implementation of best practices. Appendix D includes the data collection protocols used in the study.

The *Ohio Special Education Research Project: Executive Summary* synthesizes information from the two previous reports. The *Executive Summary* is geared for readers who are less interested in technical details.

Recommendations for implementation of evidence-based practices are provided, as are recommendations for further research. These are aligned with OCECD and ODE priorities for deepening understanding of best practices and moving the overall system in the direction of improved results. The OCECD FY 2014-2015 *Special Education System Improvement Recommendations* (OCECD, December 2012) call for low-cost, high-impact system design changes. In addition, a new “Straight A” initiative is included within the FY 2014-2015 biennial budget bill (Am. Sub. H.B 59, 2013) to support competitive grants that focus, in part, on achievement and progress for student subgroups.

This OCECD Research Project provides findings and recommendations that support these specific initiatives. It also supports the ongoing work of the OCECD Special Education Redesign Project to identify special education system design problems and related reforms that can improve educational outcomes.

METHODS

The OCECD Research Project was conducted in two stages. The first stage included a review of research on educational practices related to improved performance for students traditionally at-risk for academic failure, that is, mainly students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students. Studies of high-performing schools that include a focus on the performance of economically disadvantaged students have attributes in common with those that focus specifically on students with disabilities, as they both address the challenges of diverse learning needs and closing achievement gaps. The review was conducted between October and December of 2012. The process and findings are presented in a separate report. The findings from the literature review were then used to build the method for the second stage of the project, which was the field study conducted between January and May of 2013.

This section details the methods of data collection and analysis employed in the field study. The data collection protocols and the survey template are included in Appendix D.

Conceptual Framework

Purpose

As requested by OCECD, the purpose of the study was twofold: (1) to provide insight into why geographically and demographically similar districts are achieving substantially different levels of academic progress for students with disabilities; and (2) to provide evidence on practices related to improved academic achievement for students with disabilities that inform ODE's and OCECD's initiatives. The term *practice* is here adopted to describe procedures, initiatives, and/or strategies employed by schools and school districts in their mission to educate Ohio students.

Framework

The review of research highlighted assets and challenges for the education of at-risk students. Assets included the presence of a well-defined and encompassing vision, accompanied by strategies that support the vision's implementation. These support strategies reflected a tripod formed by faculty (hiring practices, professional development, induction processes), curriculum and instruction (exposure to core curriculum, instructional strategies), and external supports

(school district/sponsors, families, and communities). Challenge factors populated all three legs of the tripod, and included, among others, weak collaboration between general and special educators (in Ohio, intervention specialists), focus on compliance rather than instruction, or lack of resources and supports. Federal and state policies defined the platform on which educational practices are implemented.

The findings from the literature review defined a three-dimensional framework that delineated what to collect (1st dimension), from whom (2nd dimension), and at what grade level (3rd dimension). The conceptual framework guided the development of the data collection instruments, the analysis of the data collected from the field, and the presentation of findings. Figure 1 summarizes the framework.

Figure 1: Elements of the three-dimensional conceptual framework

1st Dimension: Topics		2nd Dimension: Roles		3rd Dimension Grade Level
Foundations	Subcomponents	General	Specific	
Vision	Perspectives Contributors Challenges Leadership continuity	Superintendent/ Executive Director	Special Education Director	High
Structure	Funding Infrastructure Organization State role	Curriculum Director	Intervention Specialist	Middle/Junior
Teachers	Hiring practices Professional development Supports Collaboration	Treasurer	Auxiliary services	Elementary
Instruction	Identification and Placement Intervention structure Role of special educator Transitions Technology Specific strategies (programs) Use of data	School administrators		
Supports	Behavior management Continuum of services Parental involvement Community involvement	Teachers		

Sampling

Selection Process

The selection of school districts and community schools that were to participate in the study was conducted by ODE-OEC staff. The selection process included six steps:

Step 1: ODE staff reviewed the list of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) clustered in typologies. Since 1996, ODE clusters its LEAs into typologies according to shared geographic and demographic characteristics. The purpose of developing this typology is to provide a rational basis for making data-driven comparisons of groups of districts that share similar characteristics. Before they reviewed the typology list, ODE staff excluded three types of LEAs: (1) Joint Vocational School Districts, whose students are included in the accountability of traditional districts; (2) Districts that are extremely small or have special circumstances, and for the targeted year (2012) served no students with disabilities; and (3) Large urban districts (Typology 5) for which a district-level analysis was inappropriate, as practices and procedures vary widely among schools.

LEAs grouped into the six typologies were then included in the potential sample listing. It is important to note that, when the sampling process occurred, ODE used the 2007 typology, which included seven categories. In 2013, ODE changed its typologies to address findings from the 2010 Census. The new classification includes eight categories. LEAs were reclassified to fit the new typology and to accommodate for changes in school population. This reclassification, done after the study had started, is not reflected here (Information about the typologies and the 2013 changes are located at <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Data/Frequently-Requested-Data/Typology-of-Ohio-School-Districts>.)

Step 2: ODE staff calculated district-level average scaled scores of the 2012 **Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA)** and **Ohio Graduation Test (OGT)** for reading and mathematics for students in general education (so-called “typical” students) and students with disabilities. The difference or gap between the average scaled scores for the two groups of students was then calculated, and within each typology, the districts were ranked according to the achievement gap.

Step 3: LEAs with gaps in mathematics that ranked within the top and bottom five of each typology were examined further, and those with any of the following characteristics were eliminated from the sample list: (1) Districts with unresolved noncompliance with federal law or

regulations that continue to be under any supervision or sanctions from the Ohio Ethics Commission (OEC); (2) Districts whose gaps for reading scores were inconsistent with those for mathematics; and (3) Districts that had participated recently in another study of which OEC was aware, or made it known to OEC that they wished not to be considered for any such study.

Step 4: A list with the LEAs with the top and bottom ranks for each typology was then provided to the evaluators. In some cases, there was more than one LEA with similar ranks.

Step 5: The research team re-examined the list of potential participants in two ways. First, results from three years of OAA and OGT were taken into account. This step tested whether results of the 2012 state assessments reflected the LEAs habitual performance or a one-time event that resulted from factors extraneous to the LEAs (e.g., natural disasters, closure of schools). No changes in ranking were observed. Second, the academic gap also was re-examined to understand its meaning. Small academic gaps may reflect an overall low achievement. That is, if the performance of the so-called model group is very low, the academic gap may not be large, but the group being compared (in this case, students with disabilities) may still be performing at a low academic level. In this case, the small gap should not be used as a model for best practices. The review of the gap indicated that students with disabilities in LEAs with small academic gaps also were achieving on average above their peers in schools with large gaps. One typology was the exception (typology 6). In this typology, the LEA with the smallest gap had the lowest average performance for all students, including students with disabilities. Alternatively, the LEA with the large gap showed high average performance for all its students. Therefore, the average performance of students with disabilities, rather than gap, defined the high/low terminology used in the study.

Step 6: When the list included more than one LEA with similar scores, the researchers used random selection to determine participation. The final list was then provided to OCECD and ODE for an initial contact with the LEAs.

Public charter or community schools are not clustered in typologies. The list of potential charter participants was provided by the ODE's Office of Community Schools, following similar criteria.

Invitation to participate

The OCECD and ODE sent a joint letter to the superintendents and sponsors of the listed LEAs and charters to announce the study and invite participation. The study's principal

investigator (PI) followed this initial communication with a message to superintendents and sponsors that introduced the research team and provided a detailed description of the study and what it required from each participant. In the message, the PI requested that a site liaison be designated. The liaison had a multiple role that included the following activities: centralize the contact with the researchers, schedule the site visits, prepare the schedule of site visit activities, and ensure teacher participation in the survey. Participation was voluntary and no rewards were offered to participants.

Upon this initial contact, one charter school declined to participate but was replaced by another equally ranked charter. Both sites in Typology 1 also declined participation after a long process of indecision, leaving no time for replacements. Therefore, the study reflects the research on policies and practices of two public charter schools and 10 LEAs clustered in 5 of the 7 typologies from 2007 (a description of the typologies is presented in *Findings: Case Studies*).

Participant names

Privacy of participants was a major concern throughout the study, and during the initial contact with the selected sites, the PI guaranteed that participants would not be identified. For the report, the LEAs and charters are identified by a code that indicates their typology and ranking. For instance, CH is a high achieving charter school for students with disabilities, and 2L is an LEA in typology 2 that shows low performance for students with disabilities. As explained previously, the high and low rankings refer to the site average scores for students with disabilities in the 2012 statewide assessments compared within typologies.

Table 1 displays the list of the study participants with the average scaled scores for reading and mathematics. Two observations are of note regarding the selection process. As the shown in the table, some districts with the lowest average scaled scores in one typology had average scaled scores that matched or exceeded those of the highest ranked district in another typology. Second, in some typology groups, although the gaps in mathematics scores between typical students and students with disabilities were large, the average scaled scores for students with disabilities were higher than the average scaled scores of typical students in other typologies. Therefore, *the top/bottom ranks defined for this study are typology-dependent*.

Table 1: Average scale scores in the statewide assessments reading and mathematics at the participant sites

Code	Reading			Mathematics		
	Typical	SWD*	Gap	Typical	SWD	Gap
CH	413.04	426.67	-13.63	411.96	432.00	-20.04
CL	404.04	389.36	14.69	399.14	383.98	15.17
2H	434.26	411.22	23.04	443.04	415.70	27.34
2L	411.61	387.93	23.68	408.00	379.69	28.31
3H	435.86	414.61	21.25	445.62	417.83	27.79
3L	428.25	391.25	37.00	424.21	384.23	39.98
4H	434.83	420.92	13.91	437.59	412.76	24.83
4L	413.85	382.43	31.42	411.37	378.73	32.64
6H	447.68	415.39	32.28	450.12	409.00	41.12
6L	421.15	391.37	29.78	416.16	380.71	35.45
7H	446.56	428.80	17.76	451.02	428.31	22.71
7L	443.64	409.75	33.89	447.42	400.45	46.97

*SWD = students with disabilities

Source: Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children

Study Design

Design

The study used a comparative case study approach (Yin, 2009) to examine policies, programs, and practices adopted by LEAs and charter schools that share similar geographic and demographic characteristics but differ in levels of academic achievement for students with disabilities. A case study is a descriptive design that does not allow the establishment of causality between academic success and specific practices. However, by collecting the same data from participants on the two ends of the achievement spectrum, the study differentiates those practices that are common to all schools, regardless of achievement, from practices that are exclusive to schools that attain academic success.

Research Questions

The study is informed by two foundational questions:

19. What educational practices may explain different levels of achievement for students with disabilities within school districts and charter schools that share specific demographic characteristics (typologies)?
20. To what extent are these practices shared by educational agencies that display strong

achievement for students with disabilities, regardless of typologies?

Data Collection Methods

The study employs a mixed methods approach. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected using interviews, site visits, and a survey. Triangulation techniques (Patton, 2008) were used to compare and contrast information.

Protocols for the interviews, the rubric for the school walkthrough and the survey questionnaire were developed based on the conceptual framework informed by the literature review (see Figure 1). The walkthrough rubric and the survey were pilot tested in a visit to a volunteer school district that did not participate in the study. The LEA's Director of Pupil Services and Director of Academic Achievement and Professional Development kindly allowed the researchers to visit their schools and test the protocols. Additionally, LEA staff responded to the survey and made comments regarding adequacy of wording, relevance of questions, and potential ambiguity. Comments from this pilot were used to fine-tune the data collection instruments. During the pilot, the researchers also interviewed the ODE's Director and Associate Director of the Office for Exceptional Children, and the OCECD Executive Director. These interviews had a dual objective: to clarify the role of the study within the agencies' vision and to identify any further questions that the study should address.

Data collection activities

Data collection activities included: (a) site visits to the school districts and charter schools; (b) interviews with central office and school personnel; (c) guided school walkthrough observations; and (d) an online survey of teachers.

Site visits: Beginning in January, 2013, electronic invitations were sent to the site liaisons to start scheduling the site visits. In the majority of sites, the special education director was the identified liaison. The liaisons worked closely with the member of the research team who was responsible for organizing the visits. Within 10 days, the team started to receive confirmation dates.

The visits extended from the beginning of March through the last week of April, 2013. Each site received a one-, two-, or three-day visit from one or two members of the research team, according to the number of schools within each LEA. The visits included walkthroughs in schools that represented different grade levels (elementary, middle/junior high, or high school),

and interviews with central office administrators, school administrators, teachers, and support personnel.

In six LEAs, the visit was limited to one researcher, as an accommodation for the short window left to conduct the visits before the start of state assessments. All selected sites, representing 10 LEAs and 2 charter schools, were visited. For the LEAs, the visits included 10 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 1 junior high school, 3 junior high/high schools, and 7 high schools. The researchers were able to visit all of the schools in 8 of the 10 selected LEAs.

The walkthrough rubric, based on the literature review, included a schoolwide component and a classroom component. The school wide component explored the learning environment and addressed the question of to what extent the environment created an atmosphere conducive to learning. As researchers walked through the building, they observed announcements, posters that reflected the vision and behavior expectations, displays of student work, and the presence of technology. The classroom component explored both the environment and the dyad of teaching-learning. The classroom rubric contained elements such as the role of the general education and the special education teacher, student involvement (determined by high-level questioning, project-based learning), use of technology, and level of engagement of students with disabilities. The rubric was completed as a check list (observed/not observed). Each researcher completed the rubric individually and then reconciled their responses to create a common document. Any relevant observation outside of the rubric was registered in complementary notes.

Interviews: During the site visits, central office and school personnel were interviewed. Central office representatives who were interviewed included district superintendent, charter school executive director, director of special education, curriculum director, and treasurer. At the school level, interviews involved the school principal or assistant principal, psychologist, counselors, special education teachers (called *intervention specialists*) as possible within normally scheduled instructional activities, and other student support personnel.

Interviews with central office staff examined the conceptual framework topics displayed in Figure 1 from a district perspective. Interviews with school staff explored the same topics as implemented across different grade levels. A total of 97 interviews were conducted, of which 33 were with representatives of LEA's central office or charter school sponsors, 23 were with student support personnel (counselors, psychologists), and 41 were with administrators from elementary, middle/junior high, and high schools.

The interviews were taped, except at one site. The tapes were then transcribed by outside professional transcribers. For the one site where interviewees requested not to be taped, the interviewers took lengthy notes.

Survey: An online survey was conducted with general and special education teachers from participant sites using Survey Monkey™. The survey explored the conceptual framework topics as implemented at the classroom level. The questionnaire comprised 40 items that included a mix of yes/no questions, open questions, and items to be answered using a five-point scale (from 1 = strongly disagree through 5 = strongly agree).

The link to the survey was activated in the beginning of March, 2013, and remained active through May 15, 2013. As each site visit approached, the site liaison received the invitation to the survey, with a request to relay the information to the teachers. Each participant site received at least four reminders before the link was closed. The site visit researcher(s) reminded the site liaison about the survey during the visit. According to site liaisons, invitations were sent to 814 teachers across the sites and 395 participated for an overall response rate of 48.5%. Across sites, response rates varied from 26.3% to 100.0%. Information by site is not detailed to avoid identification. Table 2 displays the demographics of the survey respondents.

Table 2: Demographics of survey participants

How long have you been teaching at this school?			How long have you been teaching overall?		
Years	Number	%	Years	Number	%
0-1	37	10.6	1-3	29	8.3
2-5	70	20.0	4-6	27	7.7
6-10	69	19.7	7-10	51	14.7
More than 10	174	49.7	11-15	64	18.3
Total	350	100.0	More than 15	178	51.0
Total			Total	349	100.0

What grade level do you currently teach?			What is the highest degree you obtained?		
Levels	Number	%	Degree	Number	%
Elementary	133	40.0	Bachelor's	51	14.7
Middle	61	18.3	Master's/ Master's plus	291	83.9
Junior	10	3.0	Doctoral	5	1.4
High school	90	27.0	Total	347	100.0
Across levels	34	10.2			
Administrators	5	1.5			
Total	333	100.0			

Responses to many of the survey items were forced but not the demographics; hence, the variation in totals. Survey results were used to triangulate information with the data collected from interviews and observations. In sites where response rates were similar for both participants, and at least above 40%, comparisons of means were calculated (*t*-tests or chi-squares). Otherwise, the findings were treated descriptively.

Data Analysis

As observed by Miles and Huberman (1994),

Data reduction is not something separate from analysis. It is part of the analysis. The researchers' decisions—which data chunks to code and which to pull out, which evolving story to tell—are all analytic choices that must be made beforehand. This process sharpens, sorts, focuses, and organizes data in such a way that final conclusions can be drawn and verified. (p. 11)

The data analysis mirrored the conceptual framework that guided the whole study. All data collected were entered in a master project database. Data were coded by hand, rather than using qualitative software, as the team agreed that a thorough sifting through each document would elicit more information. To avoid potential bias acquired during the site visits and interviews, two researchers who had not participated in the site visits coded the data. Moreover, to avoid bias that might have resulted from previous knowledge of achievement levels, for the two initial rounds of data reduction, the researchers doing the data analysis were kept purposefully unaware of ranks and typology.

The rubric and most sections of the survey were entered as percentages or averages. Data from interviews were coded, starting with the large components (e.g., vision, structure, instructional strategies). Within each component, the information was coded into smaller elements. For instance, within vision, coding included elements such as: all students can learn, get students college-ready, get students to pass tests, and so on. At the third round of analysis, a summary from the rubrics, survey, and interviews, aligned by the main components, were entered into one document. At this point, the data were organized by typology but not rank. Only after the typology analysis was done did the researchers include the ranks (high/low) to start the comparison process.

Limitations

The findings presented in this report should be interpreted with three considerations in mind. First, the purpose of the study is to identify educational practices used in school districts

and charter schools that promote good academic performance in the statewide assessments for all students and particularly students with disabilities. The research is descriptive in nature and does not propose causal relationships between specific practices and student outcomes. Second, reflecting the sampling process, findings are first and foremost, Ohio-specific, as only Ohio education agencies are represented. Additionally, generalizations beyond typologies, although not excluded, must be made with caution, as the top and bottom achievement ranking is typology-specific. Third, data for this study were collected during a six-month period in select LEAs and charters across the state. Thus, the data represent a snapshot in time within the districts' and schools' much lengthier trajectories. At the time of the study, all LEAs and charters were, in one way or another, embarking on significant changes to address the **Ohio's New Learning Standards** initiative.

FINDINGS: CASE STUDIES

This section presents the findings from the field-study organized by typologies. A cross-typology analysis is discussed in the next chapter. As a reminder, to maintain privacy, the sites are identified by a code that reflects the typology (e.g., C for Charter, 2 for Typology 2) and the average performance of students with disabilities in the statewide assessments (High and Low). For instance, 2H reflects a Typology 2 district where students with disabilities performed on average higher than similar students in other LEAs within the same typology. As a second reminder, LEAs in Typology 1 declined to participate, and LEAs in Typology 5 (large urban LEAs) were not included by ODE as they did not fit the study's methods. Therefore, the study involved the following typologies:

Public Charter/Community Schools

Typology 2: Rural/agricultural–small student population, low poverty, low to moderate median income;

Typology 3: Rural/small town–moderate to high median income;

Typology 4: Urban– high poverty, low median income;

Typology 6: Urban/suburban–high median income;

Typology 7: Urban/suburban– very low poverty, very high median income.

Each case study is organized by a framework that reflects the findings from the literature review. At the end of each case study is a discussion of similarities and differences between the high and low performing sites. Major headings are as follows:

1. Demographics;
2. Vision (challenges and contributors);
3. Infrastructure;
4. Teaching (hiring practices, professional development, and supports);
5. Learners (identification, Least Restrictive Environment [LRE], continuum of services, transitions, behavior management);
6. Classroom strategies (**co-teaching**, curriculum alignment, use of data, technology, student supports);
7. Family and community involvement; and
8. Similarities and differences.

A note about data: To simplify the presentation of demographic tables, data sources are not included. Sources for the data were as follows: Profile data came from the 2011-2012 **School Report Cards** available at <http://ilrc.ode.state.oh.us/districts>; percentages and numbers are rounded to maintain the LEAs' privacy. Performance, disability classification and least restrictive environment (LRE) were provided by ODE-OEC. Performance data reflect scale scores. The breakdown for disability shows only the most frequent classifications.

Public Charter/Community Schools Case Study

Public charter schools, called Community Schools in Ohio, comprise a sponsor entity and an advisory board that has functions similar to the central office and board of education of traditional public schools. A public charter school (hereafter charter) is considered to operate as a school district for policy and funding purposes. The sponsor establishes policies and procedures that guide the schools' operations. Sponsors may be local or part of a larger organization with headquarters in another locality or even another state. Some of these entities sponsor a number of schools in Ohio and across the nation that may include brick-and-mortar and virtual schools. Although they share sponsors, each school must have its own advisory board formed by community representatives. In some charters, a contractor is hired to assume administrative and financial activities, thus creating a third decision-making body in addition to the sponsor and the board. Similar to many of the public school districts in Ohio, charter schools may contract with private agencies to provide specialized services for students with disabilities, such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and others.

Interviews were conducted with 11 staff members from the two charter schools, including representatives from the sponsor organizations and school administrators. A total of 33 teachers participated in the survey. Response rates for the teacher survey were high for both schools, at 92% (CH) and 100% (CL).

1. Demographics

The two charter schools included in the study are located in impoverished urban areas in two cities. Both schools have large minority populations and serve students from elementary to middle grades (K-8). Table 3 summarizes the sites' demographics and performance information.

Table 3: Brief demographic characteristics of the public charter school sites

Characteristics	Higher-ranked (CH)	Lower-ranked (CL)
Student enrollment (range)	100-150	350-400
Location	Inner City	Inner City
Economically disadvantaged	91%	95%
Minorities	85%	99%
Reading average (typical students)	413.04	404.04
Reading average (students with disabilities)	426.67	389.36
Reading gap*	-13.63	13.66
Mathematics average (typical students)	411.96	399.14
Mathematics average (students with disabilities)	432.00	383.98
Mathematics gap*	-20.04	15.17
Students with disabilities	29%	15%
Specific learning disabilities	0%	47%
Speech-language impairments	21%	16%
Cognitive disabilities	11%	8%
Least Restrictive Environment >80%	100%	92.8%

*gap= average score typical students – average score students with disabilities

2. Vision

Interviewees from both sites indicated a focus on compliance with IDEA requirements. At the CH site, interviewees shared the vision that all children can learn if provided supports. At the CL site, there is a shared vision that students with disabilities should “be educated in the best possible way and in the least restrictive environment” and that the school must “give them the tools they need.”

Challenges to achievement of the vision: Challenges common to both sites included low teacher salaries, resistance to change, and disconnects between home and school. Teacher salaries were not competitive with the surrounding public school districts; either the entry salaries are low or entry salaries may be competitive but there is no pay structure that ensures regular raises. As a consequence, teacher turnover is high. Resistance to change was another frequently mentioned challenge. One CL administrator commented that a major problem is that “teachers shoot for the middle”; that is, they feel more comfortable dealing with the average student and are not prepared to help gifted students or students with disabilities. A special education interviewee from the same LEA commented, “I feel like general education teachers don’t quite understand what we do. And by the same token, I don’t think we fully understand what [they] have to do. So there’s huge disconnect.”

The disconnect between home and school was mentioned by all but one interviewee from both sites. “Parents care,” explained an interviewee, “but most are unable to help” either because they are handling more than one job to make ends meet or because their own level of schooling is limited. Two challenges were mentioned by representatives from one site only: high student mobility (CH) and lack of a continuum of services that addresses the needs of all students (CL).

Contributors to achievement of the vision: Collaboration among special education and general education teachers was a factor articulated by interviewees from both sites as contributing to the attainment of the vision. Collegiality helps teachers overcome their misunderstandings of each other’s roles. “Teachers really care for their students” was a comment heard at both sites. Factors unique to each site were the newly adopted **Value-Added** teacher evaluation, which was seen by at least one CH administrator as having the potential to improve academic outcomes for all students. Interviewees at the CL site commented that the recently adopted **Ohio Improvement Process** (OIP) was having a positive impact on the school by creating an organized system of communication and strategic planning.

According to findings from the teacher survey, both sites had a formal process by which to monitor student progress, and Instructional Specialists (IS) are part of the process. Half of the respondents from both sites stated that those monitoring teams meet weekly (other responses included biweekly, monthly, quarterly, and as needed).

3. Infrastructure

Funding decisions at both sites were made by the sponsor organization or the management contractor, with little or no feedback from school administrators. The principals of charter schools have a marketing role that is not seen in public schools, as charter school principals are responsible for recruiting students to increase school enrollment. The interviews suggested a competition across charter schools regarding teacher hiring and student enrollment.

At both sites, the sponsor representatives are responsible for overseeing a number of schools that might be located across quite large geographic areas. However, representatives from both sites mentioned that they were involved in the operation of each of their schools. At the CH, sponsor staff stated that they visit the school for monitoring and support every other week, and the CL sponsor meets with principals on a weekly basis. The **Ohio State Support Team** (SST) provides assistance to the schools as needed. At the CH site, SST services are contracted through

a regional office located at the other end of the state because of the belief that it offers the best services for them.

The CL site had been in temporary quarters for a long time. Interviewees reported a sense of transiency before they found the current site. The visiting research team commented on the old building and impoverished surroundings and noted that colorful student work displays and decorations create a welcoming environment as people enter the building.

4. Teaching

a. Hiring

CH: The sponsor promotes from within its ranks as a way to foster teacher retention and to provide principals with some autonomy in the hiring process. Survey responses indicated that 73% of the teachers had been at the school for 2 to 5 years and the remaining 27% had been at the school for one year or less. Regarding the highest degree completed, 60% had a Master's degree and 40% had a Bachelor's degree.

CL interviewees mentioned high teacher turnover, citing, on average, a 4-year duration at the school. Responses to the teacher survey showed a greater range of time in school. With a 100% response rate, the survey indicated that 30% of the teachers had been at the school for one year or less, 50% for 2 to 5 years, and 22% for 6 to 10 years. Of the respondents, 61% had a Bachelor's degree and 39% had a Master's degree.

b. Professional development and supports

CH: The interviews and teacher survey indicated a focus on professional development (PD) that includes a monthly in-service training, attendance at conferences, presence of lead teachers as mentors (they receive a subsidy for this role), and a professional learning community (PLC) system. Newly hired teachers have a mentoring system, as required by ODE.

CL: Teachers attend state-sponsored PDs, such as training in the new learning standards, and sponsor staff tries to provide support as needed (and as time allows). In addition to the mentoring system for new teachers, the site has two coaches paid with funds from *No Child Left Behind* (school improvement). One of the coaches focuses on classroom management, and the other focuses on content and instruction.

Responses from the survey suggested that teachers from both sites are quite satisfied with their PD opportunities and with the supports they receive from the administration. For both sites, 50% or more of the teachers had attended a number of PD opportunities related to services for

students with disabilities, which included differentiated instruction, behavior-management strategies, development of standards-based **Individualized Education Programs (IEP)**, and use of data to improve instruction. All of the CH teachers and 80% of the CL teachers indicated that even when a PD topic was not directly related to services for students with disabilities (e.g., curriculum alignment), it included a discussion of how to apply the topic to these students.

5. Learners

a. Identification

CH: The site uses a well-structured, multitiered process of intervention with a preventive approach. According to one interviewee, “Special education is not a place but rather a step.” The school principal is closely involved in the different stages of the process, and the central office staff maintains a close monitoring system. The special educator representative stated that sample lesson plans are reviewed weekly. Compliance is a major focus. IEP meetings are scheduled before or after school or during teacher planning time to avoid class disruption.

CL: The site is adopting a **Response to Intervention (RtI)** process that is still in its inception. The school also is moving toward student-led IEP conferences to start in middle school. The school uses a building substitute teacher who covers the classrooms to free teachers for meetings, including IEP meetings.

b. Least Restrictive Placement

Interviewees from both sites commented that the first choice placement for students with disabilities is the general education classroom. This information was corroborated by ODE-OEC data and responses to the teacher survey. Yet, the implementation of inclusion appears to vary between the two sites. According to a CL interviewee, “[Inclusion] is the goal, but when students misbehave, teachers want them out of the classroom.”

Among the general educators who participated in the survey, 100% of the CH teachers and 85% of the CL teachers indicated that they taught students with disabilities. At both sites, about half stated that students with disabilities represent between 10% and 20% of the total students in their classrooms, and one-third indicated that more than 20% of their students had an IEP. The majority (100% from CH and 82% from CL) confirmed that those students stayed in their classroom for more than 80% of the school day. Close to 60% of the respondents from both sites reported that they are not involved in decisions regarding the assignment of students with

disabilities to their classrooms, and about 40% reported that they were consulted and offered suggestions.

c. Continuum of services

At the CH site, specialized services, such as speech-language therapy or occupational therapy, are contracted out (also a finding for the majority of public school districts visited). However, the CL's sponsor directly hires some of the specialized services providers who work at its schools. This site has a self-contained classroom for students with cognitive disabilities and offers students a life-skills program.

d. Transitions

Both schools serve students through 8th grade and are housed in one building. Therefore, the major transition faced by the students occurs as they leave middle school. Both sites help students and families find high schools that promote similar values. CH staff organizes field trips to neighboring high schools, works with parents to complete applications for scholarships, and takes students for visits to the local university as part of college/career planning. The CL site uses family advocates to help the families find high schools and complete scholarships for parochial schools.

e. Behavior management

The CH site implements Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS). Posters with the "Ten Successful School Behaviors" are displayed throughout the school. Interviewees also mentioned the use of a character education program. According to the psychologist, behavior contracts are implemented with any student who presents challenging behavior, not only students with disabilities. Information from the CL site is contradictory. Some interviewees stated that there were no schoolwide behavioral intervention programs, and other interviewees and survey participants mentioned the use of PBIS.

6. Classroom strategies

a. Co-teaching

One interviewee at the CH site commented that at least two of the ISs are co-teaching. The comment was supported by survey responses. The school administrator tries to maintain a low student-to-teacher ratio (about 18 to 1) in the classrooms. Interviewees at the CL site stated that the school is moving toward co-teaching. At this point, the general educators are responsible for the delivery of instruction, and the ISs provide consultation and work with students

individually. However, as one administrator commented, there are already “some great teams” of general and special educators who work well together.

b. Curriculum alignment

Interviews and survey responses at the CH site indicated that the school is in the process of aligning the curriculum with the new learning standards, including revising the pacing guide and formative assessments. Interviews at the CL site suggested that the focus is still on “aligning the curriculum with the current Ohio standards, particularly those standards more heavily used on OAA’s.” Survey responses painted a different picture, with teachers reporting that their curriculum and lesson plans are already aligned with state standards and they are focusing on the new learning standards.

c. Use of data

The teachers at the CH site use short cycle assessments to identify trends and gaps. Findings are discussed in their weekly teacher-based team (TBT) meetings. To prepare for the state assessments, they use the problem-of-the-day (POD) approach. Each week, the site has a POD that focuses on a state-provided recycled practice-test item. Throughout the week, teachers work with the students to solve the problem. Survey responses reinforced findings from the interviews. At the CL site, administrators indicated that teachers are being trained on the use of formative assessments, and the site expects to have a process in place quite soon. At this point, the focus is on the so-called *bubble* students. These are students who are close to achieving proficiency in the state assessments, but may not necessarily be students with disabilities. Once more, survey responses indicated a disconnect between management and teachers, with teachers stating that they use formative assessments and meet frequently to discuss data.

d. Technology

The schools are not technology-rich but are moving toward expanded technology. CH uses AIMSweb to store data and provide an online progress-monitoring device accessible to teachers. CL is in the process of hiring technology-savvy teachers who will train staff as the site plans to increase the availability of computers and other technology.

e. Student supports

CH: Interviews indicated that staff tries to provide more than one hour daily of supplemental academic support. The school uses a variety of supplemental programs that depend on student need and teacher preference, such as Study Island, Accelerated Reader, Buckle Down,

Skills Bridge, Open Court, Saxon Math, and others. Responses from the teacher survey indicate that the programs are implemented for all students who require supplemental or targeted intervention and not only students with disabilities. The site also uses a one-on-one mentor system for students with disabilities. Mentors are assigned from a teaching cadre at the school. The same mentor is available to the student every day and throughout the year, even during test time. The mentors provide academic support and work on accommodations and modifications. Interviewees commented that this ongoing presence fosters consistency and trust between student and mentor. Mentor-student dyads were observed during the site visits.

CL: The school contracts with a tutoring company and pays stipends to teachers to work with struggling students during the week and on Saturdays. Sponsor staff is planning to introduce a new supplemental intervention (LEAD 21) for students in elementary grades and is in the process of training teachers in use of the new program.

7. Family and community involvement

CH: Interviewees referred to strong parental involvement. The parents are required to provide 20 hours of volunteer services each year at the school. If a parent cannot volunteer at school, the administration finds alternative ways for the parent to fulfill the obligation. Students are required to wear uniforms, and the school makes “gently used” recycled uniforms available for parents who do not have the funds to purchase them. Parents also are involved in the multitiered instructional process and are expected to continue the interventions at home, if appropriate. Students from a neighboring parochial high school volunteer as tutors for the young students. Transportation is an issue when students need to stay late, as the school does not provide transportation.

CL: Interviewees described the many initiatives that have been implemented to bring parents into the schools, such as raffles, celebrations, and others, but overall, participation was described as weak. According to one interviewee, the school “serves mostly students who had a bad experience in public schools and parents come with a baggage.” Yet, they have parents involved in committees.

8. Similarities and Differences

The high (CH) and low (CL)-ranked sites in the charter typology are similar in demographics, size, and location. Both have a majority of students who are African-American and are located in impoverished urban areas. CL has a larger percentage of students with

disabilities (31% vs. 21%), although distribution per disability is similar. Regarding teachers, CH has a larger percentage of teachers with a Master’s degree (60% vs. 33%).

The data collected from these sites showed an interesting contradiction that may (or may not) have influenced results. CH representatives requested that they not be taped for the interviews and were very reserved in their comments, whereas CL representatives agreed to be taped and were quite open in expressing their concerns about the school. On the contrary, the two sites had similar, high rates of survey responses. It appears that the self-criticism from CL’s interviewees were compensated by a strong positive view from their teachers, whereas the CH’s rosy view was not fully shared by its teachers.

Findings suggest that the two sites are looking toward the same goals and adopting similar strategies that include preparation for **Ohio’s New Learning Standards**, use of data to differentiate instruction, adoption of the OIP process, PBIS, and multitiered systems of intervention. The main difference is the stage of implementation. CH is further in the implementation process, while the CL site is just starting. Indeed, many of the CL administrators were new, particularly in the special education area. In terms of lessons learned that can be applied to other sites, these different stages of a similar trajectory offer a good example of what schools can attain if reforms are given time to solidify.

Two strategies used by the high-performing site should be mentioned. One is the parent-volunteer requirement, which brings parents into the school in active roles. The second is the mentor system. This daily mentor may be the key for the success of students with disabilities on the state assessments. The mentors may be instrumental in ensuring that students have appropriate accommodations and in providing the sense of confidence needed by students who struggle academically. Table 4 summarizes major differences between the two sites.

Table 4: Main differences between the top- and bottom-ranked public charter schools

Components	CH	CL
Infrastructure (buildings)	Stable; adequate	Unstable, lack of space
ODE leadership structure	Fully implemented	Beginning
Multitiered system of intervention	Fully implemented	Beginning
Schoolwide behavioral management system	Fully implemented	Beginning
Unique strategies	Parent Volunteer 1:1 mentoring	---

Typology 2 Case Study

Typology 2 includes public school districts that are located in rural/agricultural settings within low to moderate median income areas and that serve small student populations. Interviews were conducted with 15 staff members from the two sites, including superintendents, special education director, curriculum director, school administrators, psychologists, counselors, and ISs. Longevity for the 2H interviewees varied from 1 to 35 years, and for 2L varied from 1 to 15 years, with the majority having no more than two years in their current positions. All schools in both LEAs were visited by the research team. A total of 35 teachers participated in the survey. Response rates were poor: 28% (2H) and 42% (2L).

1. Demographics

Table 5 summarizes demographics and performance data for both LEAs. Regarding demographics, the sites are quite different. The 2H had close to 900 students, and fewer than half of the students (46%) were classified as economically disadvantaged. Although the schools have **open enrollment**, changes in demographics are not happening, explained interviewees, because there are no cities nearby and students come from surrounding areas that are demographically similar.

Table 5: Brief demographic characteristics of the Typology 2 sites

Characteristics	2H	2L
Student enrollment (range)	850-900	400-450
Location	Rural	Rural
Economically disadvantaged	43%	93%
Minorities	3%	85%
Reading average (typical students)	434.26	411.61
Reading average (SWD)	411.22	387.93
Reading gap	23.04	23.68
Mathematics average (typical students)	443.04	408.00
Mathematics average (SWD)	415.70	379.69
Mathematics gap	27.34	28.31
Students with disabilities	12%	19%
Specific learning disabilities	42%	33%
Speech-language impairment	18%	10%
Emotional disabilities	2%	11%
Cognitive disabilities	7%	15%
Least Restrictive Environment > 80%	78%	61%

The 2L site has about 400 students, the majority being economically disadvantaged (85%). According to an interviewee, the area used to be a thriving industrial community, but the factories closed and people moved out. The LEA has an open enrollment policy that brings students from nearby towns.

2. Vision

Interviewees from both LEAs shared the vision that all students can learn if given supports. As a 2H school administrator commented,

We have high expectations for all of our students, and I know that sounds very broad, but . . . we don't believe in hitting the minimum standards. . . . We know all kids can learn, so it's our job to find out the best path for them and push them there.

The 2L site is just coming out of a severe financial crisis, and there was a sense of hope and pride among interviewees. This sense of pride was shared by the 2L special education personnel, who expressed hope that they could make their LEA a successful place for students with disabilities using rigorous identification and placement processes. "In other words, know the needs of the students first then use your district resources to meet those needs adequately," explained a special education leader. According to the 2L superintendent,

Our number one student in our class this year [the valedictorian] is a student with disabilities. . . . That says a lot about our students with disabilities, about what they have overcome and how strong they are.

Challenges to achievement of the vision: To change teachers' perspectives was identified by the majority of interviewees from the two LEAs as the main challenge to achievement of the educational vision. According to one 2H interviewee, general education teachers tend to see students with disabilities as "not my kid . . . it is special education." A 2L interviewee commented that teachers, particularly those with many years in the district, tend to disregard what newcomers say about research and best practices. "This is the way it is done . . . this is the [LEA] way" is the teachers' motto.

Lack of resources was second on the list for both sites. These are small districts, with low enrollment overall, although with large percentages of students with disabilities. The result is a small number of personnel to serve students with a range of different abilities and needs. The sites also share specialized personnel with other LEAs, thus reducing the time available for intervention. Moreover, the most recent economic crisis had a major impact on their students'

families, thus increasing problems such as mobility and absenteeism (because of a lack of transportation or parental supervision).

Contributors to achievement of the vision:

2H: Collaboration and inclusion were the two most frequently cited. Collaboration means partnerships between general and special education teachers, between teachers and administrators, including central office staff, and between schools and families. According to one interviewee, many teachers had taught their students' parents and know the family quite well. The LEA has been including students with disabilities in general education classrooms for about five years, and the process has matured. One IS commented that inclusion not only improves academic performance but fosters students' self-confidence.

2L: Interviewees commented on the process of change in their school district. Only recently have they been able to introduce measures to improve personnel performance. The adoption of the OIP process, particularly the TBT, was mentioned by interviewees as bringing positive changes and moving the LEA toward a more data-driven approach. As expressed by a 2L interviewee, "[In the past], we had a culture that assumed . . . you couldn't [be successful]. So not only did the students feel that way, but the teachers looked at the students that way." What happened at 2L, explained the special education director, was a paradigm shift, and teachers now take ownership for student success, including the success of students with disabilities. Small size was an advantage cited by 2L interviewees, as the superintendent is easily approachable, and everybody knows each other. Therefore, communication is not an issue.

3. Infrastructure

The school administrators from both LEAs said that they are involved in decision-making related to funding, even if the final decision stays with the superintendent and the Board of Education. Interviewees commented that recent funding cuts were hitting instruction. The 2H site no longer had music teachers, and the Board of Education is providing scholarships to defray costs for students. As a 2H interviewee stated, "We've just been dealing, with most districts in the State of Ohio, with having to do more with less."

The research teams that conducted the site visits described two quite different infrastructures. The school buildings at the 2H site were either new or renovated, with lots of light and a warm atmosphere. Buildings at the 2L site were old and lacked space. Rooms that held common spaces, such as libraries, were being transformed into classrooms.

4. Teaching

a. Hiring

2H: The hiring process starts at the school level; the superintendent and Board of Education are part of the second interview that consists of a presentation on a specific topic. One interviewee stated that, when hiring teachers, candidates are sought who show a willingness to go above and beyond expectations. The majority (70%) of the few survey participants had been in the schools for more than 10 years and 92% held a Master's degree.

2L: One school administrator has an internal committee to do the hiring; other interviewees stated that the superintendent is very involved with the hiring process, even if not the only voice. There has been a push to hire teachers who have content knowledge and also a special education background with at least "a functional level understanding of special education." Interviewees commented that teacher turnover is high because salaries are not competitive. Of the teachers who responded to the survey, about a third had fewer than five years in the school, and a third had 10 or more years. All survey participants had a Master's degree.

b. Professional development and supports

At both sites, the psychologists, who are employed by the local **Educational Service Center (ESC)**, provide in-service instruction for teachers on topics related to special education. At the 2H site, the psychologist provided two in-services during the school year, one related to RtI and another on services for students who have attention deficit disorder (ADD). Additionally, the SSTs provide PD, with a focus on new learning standards and upcoming state assessments. Interviewees at the 2L site noted a greater focus on PD as the district improved its financial situation. The site also has coaches hired through *No Child Left Behind*.

5. Learners

a. Identification

2H: Interviews suggested that the site has a well-structured RtI system with a focus on early intervention. Interviewees shared the idea that with RtI, they can reach the students early enough to provide needed services. This concern with a careful, well-documented observation and identification process appears to permeate all grade levels, from preschool through high school. Yet, the other side of this carefully designed system is the feeling that participants are drowning in paperwork. ISs and counselors expressed concern about the amount of reports they have to prepare for each stage of the intervention and identification process. They see this as

reducing the time they have to provide intervention. Because most of the early interventions are conducted by the classroom teacher, it is possible that the “drowning” feeling is schoolwide, although no general education teacher mentioned paperwork in interviews or surveys.

2L: The LEA is in the process of adopting a multitiered system to identify students in need of further intervention or potential identification for special education services. At the IEP stage, the focus is still on compliance. Special education staff noted that many students with IEPs come through open enrollment without appropriate documentation. Additionally, some transfer students have IEP requirements that the site cannot provide, or that staff feels are unnecessary, but parents insist.

At both sites, an attempt is made to schedule IEP meetings during teachers’ planning time. Both LEAs pay for substitutes or use Title I teachers to cover classrooms when teachers need to be absent. One of the 2L schools has a building substitute.

b. Least Restrictive Placement

2H: At the elementary and middle schools, students with disabilities are being taught in general education classrooms for most of the school day. At the high school level, inclusion occurs for science and social studies, and students are pulled to resource rooms for mathematics and English. However, the high school IS described working with students in the general classrooms for a number of mathematics classes, including algebra II and geometry. One school administrator expressed the concern that students with different levels of abilities in one classroom make it impossible for the teacher to address their needs effectively.

2L: Inclusion is a new process. One of the auxiliary personnel commented about not being sure of how it is being implemented. Most of the few teachers that participated in the survey indicated that at least 10% of the students in their classrooms have disabilities. Teachers’ comments on the survey were mostly in support of inclusion but also requested more ISs and aides in the building.

c. Continuum of services

At the 2H site, the few high school students (2 or 3) who were nonreaders are served in self-contained classrooms, according to an administrator. Another student is enrolled in a private virtual school. The middle school IS pulls out the students to a resource room during the 84 minutes of the English language arts (ELA) period. She uses Wilson Reading to work with small groups organized by levels of ability. Students with more severe disabilities are served at the

specialized units operated by the ESC, which also operates the **Career Technical Education Center** (CTEC). The 2L site has a self-contained unit for students with multiple disabilities (MD) at the middle and high school level. An IS and two aides work in the unit.

d. Transitions

Both sites have school visits and orientation days for students who are transitioning from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school. ISs from the different schools meet to talk about the incoming students with disabilities and to introduce the students to the ISs at the new school. At the 2H site, the high school IS teaches some classes at the middle school and, therefore, she is already known to the ascending ninth graders. To prepare students for the departmental structure of the middle school, 4th graders have different teachers for each content area and must transition from one classroom to another (e.g., from the mathematics classroom to the ELA classroom). For students with disabilities who are finishing high school, the teachers prepare a Summary of Performance that explains their achievements, strengths, and weaknesses. “This is the document that they can take to their next employer or their postsecondary education,” explained the special education director.

Interviewees from the 2L site stated that the expectation is that students will pursue a college education. The LEA has 18 students who are taking dual credits, with the first group to graduate this school year. Each year, students from grades 6 to 12 visit at least two college campuses, and the high school counselor starts to work on transitions beginning in their junior year. Students with disabilities participate in the college visits and in conversations about college. This coming school year, the LEA will start a new program geared toward students with disabilities, in partnership with the ESC’s CTEC. The students will take a career interest inventory and participate in a monthly workshop on workplace preparedness.

e. Behavior management

Behavior management is not an area of concern for the 2H, but it is a challenging area for the 2L site, according to the special education director. The two LEAs do not have formal schoolwide programs for behavior management. Counselors may adopt a positive reinforcement plan with rewards for prosocial behavior on a case-by-case basis. At the 2L high school, the counselor uses a contract system that spells out the consequences if the contract is broken (generally suspension). The students and parents must sign the contract. The psychologist talked about a “sensory room” with a piano and a clock that students use “to relax.”

6. Classroom strategies

a. Co-teaching

2H: According to the elementary school principal, co-teaching is working well at grades 3 and 4. It is “a seamless process where a visitor would not identify who is the special or the general educator and much less which are the students with disabilities,” said the principal. For the lower grades (K-2), co-teaching has been a slower process because of teacher turnover. At the middle school, co-teaching was working for grades 7 and 8, according to the administrator, but not as well for grades 5 and 6. The administrator attributed the upper grade success to the fact that the IS has strong content knowledge, whereas the IS commented that co-teaching works differently in different classes and depends on personalities: Some general educators are more comfortable sharing the lesson than others. Co-teaching was observed by the research team during the site visit. At the high school, there is no co-teaching. The high school IS noted that students prefer to go to a different room for support, rather than having the IS in the regular classroom as “it calls too much attention.” General educators and ISs have common planning time, but it is “hit or miss,” as ISs are assigned to too many classrooms.

2L: Co-teaching is starting at the junior high school, but at the time of the interviews, the schools were doing “a little bit of everything”: pulling out students, providing services within the general classroom, and sharing teaching responsibilities. The elementary school administrator stated that there is co-teaching in the building and teachers have common planning time, although the process is new. Interviews with special education personnel indicate an effort toward collaboration between the general education teacher and the IS, and weekly time is reserved for planning. Interviewees noted two challenges for co-teaching: lack of money for substitute teachers (to give time for planning) and resistance from veteran teachers. In the survey, one IS complained that co-teaching in a general classroom moves her outside of her area of expertise.

b. Curriculum alignment

2H: The elementary school has already aligned the curriculum to the learning standards, whereas the middle school is still focused on the current standards. Teachers do item analysis to look at gaps in instruction and are focused on vertical alignment. For instance, 4th grade ELA teachers participate in the middle school English department meetings to ensure curriculum alignment across grades. The high school teachers cross-walked the two curricula (current

standards and new learning standards) to see the differences. It is a challenge for the teachers, explained the administrator, “We are still teaching to those old standards, but trying to integrate more of the new because we’re still being held accountable by the old standards.”

2L: The site is starting the process of aligning the curriculum with the new learning standards. Teachers have been trained and are using the school improvement coaches to help with curriculum mapping. The superintendent is closely involved, according to one interviewee.

c. Schedule

The 2H middle and high schools use a block schedule of 84 minutes for ELA and mathematics. According to one administrator, it took four years to convince the central office to implement the process. Teachers also were resistant but now, there is buy-in. Indeed, according to one interviewee, one teacher stated, “I feel like I was committing educational malpractice” before the block schedule. “Student grades have jumped” after the new schedule was instituted, commented an administrator.

d. Use of data

Both LEAs are using data to monitor student progress and differentiate instruction. At the 2H, data analysis has been in place for a long time, and teachers have been trained to look at different sources of information. Starting in middle school, students are involved in discussion about their progress. At the elementary school, they use quarterly benchmarks from Study Island. The 2L has recently adopted the OIP structure. Teachers are using ProgressBook, an online system for classroom management that is accessible to parents. At the elementary school, teachers display the students’ growth charts in the classroom and ask the students to interpret their charts.

e. Technology

At the 2H, technology is an asset. The classrooms have Smart Boards, purchased by the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), and computers. Alternatively, the 2L site struggles with the lack of technology. According to an interviewee, the site lacks even adaptive technology. However, computers were observed in the classrooms and the schools are using online programs for instruction. Indeed, the superintendent explained that they had to move into online programs to compensate for cuts in teachers.

f. Student supports

2H: At the middle school, the IS uses Wilson Reading for struggling readers. Teachers referred to Study Island and an administrator mentioned Rocket Math as supplemental programs. According to an interviewee, the LEA is not keen on commercial programs,

You can put all the money into all these programs. . . If you don't have good people that are willing to give their time, and give extra time and work with parents [it will not work] . . . so, we're careful not to just jump on every trend. I don't think there's one right way to teach reading. I think if you've got 20 kids, there's probably going to be 20 ways to teach reading.

2L: The schools use Compass Learning for struggling students (not only students with disabilities) as a scheduled class rather than as remediation. They have started tutorials before and after school and have a full-day kindergarten. Survey respondents indicated that they use Reading A-Z and Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) for reading and Compass Learning for mathematics. The programs are used for all students who require targeted intervention, not only students with disabilities.

7. Family and community involvement

2H: Interviewees commented that they have very supportive parents. The schools organize a number of activities to involve parents, including an open lunch policy at the elementary school (parents have lunch with the students at the school). The elementary school has an active PTO. There are no industries or large businesses in the area, but the community tries to help with fundraising and donations. The schools have numerous volunteers who are in the building every day. A nearby military base sends soldiers to tutor the students.

2L: Administrators commented that parents are very supportive, an opinion that was not shared by the special education staff. Staff at all grade levels organizes activities, such as harvest party, student recognition, and parent breakfast, to bring parents into the schools. These efforts appear unsuccessful, and the elementary school has no PTO. For the IEPs, the psychologist mentioned that the teachers conduct home visits. Survey participants gave high ratings for their LEA's relationships with universities and colleges.

8. Similarities and Differences

Differences between the top and bottom ranked sites in this typology draw mostly from three areas: demographics, funding, and length of time spent implementing the process of

improvement. Demographically, these are quite different LEAs, with the top-ranked (2H) having a relatively homogenous, middle income population, and the bottom-ranked (2L) having a high-poverty student body. It is also noteworthy that the 2L site has double the percentage of students with cognitive disabilities and almost five times the percentage of students with emotional disabilities; these two groups tend to struggle in standardized assessments.

Regarding funding, although both sites were cutting teachers to deal with the economic crisis, the 2L had been in a state of fiscal emergency until recently. The focus on dealing with the financial emergency may have delayed the process of dealing with the instructional emergency.

Instructional practices were similar at the two sites, but the 2H has been implementing those practices for a long time and had the time to correct problems in the implementation. It appears that they were comfortable with the initiatives. Alternatively, at the time of the interviews, the 2L schools were just implementing multitiered systems of intervention and using data to differentiate instruction. Co-teaching, if it exists, is incipient.

The first lesson to be learned from this typology is that, when sites are compared, more attention must be devoted to similarities and differences in variables that have direct impact on the outcome being assessed, such as differences in student demographics. The second lesson coincides with the lesson from the Charter typology: Initiatives need time to mature and bring results. A major challenge for the 2L site is whether staff will be able to implement ambitious initiatives, such as RtI and co-teaching, with fidelity while struggling economically. Table 6 summarizes major differences between the two LEAs.

Table 6: Main differences between the top- and bottom-ranked LEAs in Typology 2

Components	2H	2L
Demographics (economically disadvantaged)	46%	87%
Leadership	Long term	Transient
ODE leadership structure	Fully implemented	Beginning
Multitiered system of intervention	Fully implemented	Beginning
Use of data for instruction	Fully implemented	Beginning
Technology	Available	Inadequate
Unique strategy	Block schedule Well-implemented co-teaching	---

Typology 3 Case Study

LEAs clustered in Typology 3 are located in small towns, in rural settings, in areas of moderate to high median income. A total of 13 interviews were conducted, including superintendent, special education director/coordinator, curriculum coordinator, treasurer, school administrators, and psychologist. The 3H interviewees had been in the position for about six years and were planning to continue. Central office personnel at the 3L site had been in the position from 1 to 3 years and were not sure whether they would remain. School administrators had been in their positions for 6 to 18 years. The research team visited all schools at both sites. A total of 70 teachers responded to the survey, with response rate of 100% for the 3H but only 28% for the 3L.

1. Demographics

Table 7 summarizes demographics and performance information for the LEAs. The 3H is a small LEA with a homogenous student population and low poverty level (17%). The 3L site is almost four times larger, with 46% of its student population classified as economically disadvantaged.

Table 7: Brief demographic characteristics of the Typology 3 sites

Characteristics	3H	3L
Student enrollment (range)	450-500	1,500-1,550
Location	Rural/small town	Rural/small town
Economically disadvantaged	13%	45%
Minorities	0%	3%
Reading average (typical students)	435.86	428.25
Reading average (SWD)	414.61	391.25
Reading gap	21.25	37.00
Mathematics average (typical students)	445.62	424.21
Mathematics average (SWD)	417.83	384.23
Mathematics gap	27.79	39.98
Students with disabilities	13%	15%
Specific learning disabilities	51%	38%
Speech-language impairment	21%	13%
Cognitive disabilities	6%	13%
Autism	3%	6%
Least Restrictive Environment > 80%	78%	54%

2. *Vision*

Interviewees from both LEAs shared the vision that all students can learn. “Students must be treated as students, not as exceptional students,” stated an interviewee. The 3L special education coordinator, relatively new in the position, stated,

Our vision is for students to make progress in the education curriculum no matter what the system of delivery is; we want them to be a part of the community, to be leaders in their community. So the expectation shouldn’t be terribly different from . . . a typical student. . . . It’s not okay to be just okay. We want you to do your best; we want you to be successful; we want you to move forward.

Challenges to achievement of the vision: 3H interviewees cited resistance to change and size. According to interviewees, it is difficult to change teachers’ habits. Some veteran teachers “are more flexible than others,” but if given time and leadership continuity, they will move in the direction proposed by the administration. The small size favors communication but also limits the resources available. To fulfill commitments to students with disabilities, the LEA must partner with surrounding area services and the local ESC. The special education staff and most auxiliary services personnel are ESC employees and work only part-time in the schools.

The 3L interviewees cited lack of resources, transient leadership, and parental involvement. In the past couple of years, the LEA had its budget sliced by more than a million dollars and had to cut school personnel. One of the school administrators commented that many teachers will retire this coming school year and will not be replaced. Another interviewee mentioned that the new position of special education coordinator has been very helpful to improve services for students with disabilities, but the position will be cut back because of lack of funds. The results of all the cuts include larger class sizes, larger caseloads for special education personnel, and lack of central office support. Transient leadership is another area of concern. The LEA has had three superintendents in less than 10 years. As superintendent initiatives begin to promote changes, a new administrator is in place with new initiatives. All interviewees mentioned that parental involvement is a challenge. The schools frequently have to reschedule IEP meetings because parents are absent. Although the school uses ProgressBook, which is easily accessible to families, few families use the program to accompany their children’s progress.

Contributors to achievement of the vision: 3H interviewees cited the fact that the superintendent has a special education background, and therefore, understands the needs of

students with disabilities. The other contributor is the small size of district, which means that everybody knows everybody, staff helps each other, families are involved, and the community is supportive. Survey participants gave the LEA high ratings (means of 4.3 and above out of a maximum of 5.0) for high expectations for all students and supports for all students to achieve these expectations. One survey participant commented,

We are a tight family group here and we look out for everyone. If we see a student needs more support, we contact the parents and get them to help. . . . We do not want anyone falling through the cracks.

The 3L school administrators mentioned an open-door policy and visibility with lots of walkthroughs, lots of meetings, and discussion with staff and students. Survey responses were too few for a reliable analysis.

3. Infrastructure

3H: There is a “continued expectation to do more with less,” explained an administrator. To address lack of resources, staff must rely more on each other and be creative. Likewise, the district has been working closely with the ESC and the neighboring LEAs to share resources. For instance, for one of its technology initiatives, 3H leadership established partnerships with other LEAs to attain large numbers and obtain reduced prices. For grants that require large student enrollment to qualify, the LEA partners with the surrounding LEAs, with the ESC in a coordinating role.

3L: A central office interviewee commented that funding priorities are established, but salaries and benefits take the bulk of it. The site used to have a building budget for textbooks and technology but no more. An administrator commented, “That’s the dilemma. . . . We are expected to do [reforms] and probably will have very little to supplement that with financial help or with additional help.”

4. Teaching

a. Hiring

3H: The LEA is located in a stable community with little transiency. Many teachers graduated from the same schools where they had their student teaching practicum and are now teaching. They are members of the community and turnover is low. Responses to the survey indicated that 91% of the teachers had been at the school for more than 10 years and 84% had

been teaching for more than 15 years. The majority had Master's degrees (94%). Caring is the main asset for a new teacher, explained an administrator:

Number one is probably someone that's going to care, because if they care about what's going on, then they're going to be good at everything. . . . The content, anybody can open a book up and dive in, and learn the material, and get it across to [the students].

3L: At the high school, the principal tries to involve teachers in the initial interview, but it is not a requirement. At each grade level, administrators look for different assets. For instance, the elementary school principal looks for teachers who have reading certificates, and the middle school principal tries to hire teachers with special education backgrounds. However, as some interviewees explained, it all depends on the position and the available pool of candidates. Sometimes, they do not have a pool large enough to allow them to be selective. Of the few survey participants, 64% had been at the school for more than 10 years, and 76% had been teaching for 10 or more years; 96% had Masters' degrees.

b. Professional development and supports

3H: The LEA is proud of their successes, which include their scoring consistently in the highest performance category, having a 97%-plus graduation rate, and a performance index above 100. PD was viewed by interviewees as part of this success. Each year, the LEA organizes PD around a broad topic, such as new learning standards or empowerment. The focus this school year was to prepare teachers for the Value-Added evaluation system. Two of its teachers received extensive training in the system and are now holding one-on-one meetings with their peers across the LEA to prepare them.

The LEA also invests in special education. For instance, for the past five years, they have brought experts to work with teachers, students, and parents on interventions for autistic children. The meetings involve both parents of autistic children and parents of students who will share classrooms with these children. The ESC provides PD on new learning standards, topics related to IDEA requirements, and best practices. As one interviewee observed, PD is quite important, as teachers who are coming out of college "don't know what they are getting into," and it takes a while to prepare them. Survey participants rated highly (mean of 4.0 or above out of a maximum of 5.0) all items related to the school leadership's support to teachers, involving teachers in decision-making process, and providing teachers with time to collaborate and share ideas. The majority of the teachers had attended PD related to use of technology (87%),

curriculum alignment (79%), use of data (65%) and assessments (62%) to improve instruction, and differentiated instruction (63%). Development of IEPs was the only topic in the menu that elicited many “no” responses (40%).

3L: Interviewees noted the mentoring program that supports new teachers. The four-year initiative is under the curriculum director’s leadership. The first year comprises a one-on-one mentoring by a lead teacher, and the curriculum director provides mentoring beginning the second year. The curriculum director, recently appointed from within to this newly created position, also conducts monthly meetings with teachers to ensure curriculum alignment, and the ISs participate in these meetings. PD is mostly provided by the local ESC and has been focused on new learning standards. Additionally, the LEA contracted with a consultant for an initiative on “Writing across the Curriculum.”

5. Learners

a. Identification

3H: Interviewees indicated the use of a well-structured system of intervention. According to interviewees, most referrals come when students are in grades 2 or 3, but interventions are placed early, as soon as the teacher or the parent perceives that the student is having difficulties. Staff is keen to use data to inform decisions regarding targeted interventions and, as interventions appear unsuccessful, to indicate further assessment. The ESC provides PD, resources, and guidance, and central office staff is closely involved in the process. The first line of intervention is provided by Title I teachers and tutoring by high school students. ISs also are called to help, even before identification, although students with IEPs are their priority. Teachers use parent interviews or surveys to collect data about the child before the intervention meeting is organized. According to the superintendent,

We try to integrate as much information as we can, but our theory is . . . we want our teachers to work smarter, not harder. We don’t want them to go overboard, but we want them to put the right kind of information in the IEP, so we give them things like graphic organizers to help write a [student] profile.

3L: The special education coordinator and psychologist are changing the identification process. They created check-out forms to help teachers monitor the stages of the process and are providing PD on how to use the forms. One school administrator said, “Before [the reorganization], the IEPs looked all the same” and stated that the team is now working with the

teachers to individualize the process. The staff is seeing more identification at the middle school level, which did not happen previously. The principal attributed this change to the increasing rigor in the curriculum and inadequacies in the previous identification process. The site has an intervention liaison at each grade level to schedule meetings, attend the meetings, and take care of the paperwork (as appropriate).

b. Least Restrictive Placement

3H: Interviewees emphasized that students with disabilities are placed preferentially within general education classrooms. Two ISs work with the students either in the classroom or in a resource room, using a pull-out approach, with help from aides. The majority (89%) of the general education teachers indicated that they were teaching students with disabilities, who remained with them for more than 80% of the school day and comprised no more than 10% of all students in the classroom. About 80% of the teachers reported that they are given time to consult with ISs and received resources and supports. About 20% of the respondents stated that they had not received supports and did not have time for consultation. Comments in the survey were supportive of inclusion.

3L: The schools are starting inclusion at the elementary school level, but at the middle and high school, students are mostly served in resource rooms. The few survey participants indicated that they taught students with disabilities who remained in the room for at least 80% of the school day. However, interviewees mentioned that they did not have time to collaborate with the IS and received no supports.

c. Continuum of services

At both sites, students with disabilities who require specialized services (e.g., blind/visually impaired students), are placed in specialized units operated by the ESC. These units may be located in the LEA building, but students come from surrounding LEAs and funding is pooled through the ESC.

d. Transitions

Both sites organize activities to facilitate the transition of students who are moving to middle or high school. One 3H interviewee explained that transition across schools tend to be smooth, as everybody knows the children and their families. The same comment was made by a 3L interviewee: “Not much of a transition, as we are all in the same building.” Both sites have ESC-run CTECs that are described as rigorous and that focus on postsecondary education. At the

3H site, the CTEC offers a number of dual credit programs that are open to students with disabilities. A 3L administrator commented that about 30% to 40% of students who attend their CTEC program go to college.

e. Behavior management

3H: Interviewees notes that behavior is not an issue and that most of the time, one talk is enough because the student knows that, “I’m probably going to get worse at home.” Strategies such as card systems are teachers’ individual initiatives. The administration uses the Safe and Healthy Schools Survey to examine “hot spots,” that is, places more prone to challenging behaviors, and target those areas for extra attention. The site has a grant-funded, part-time mental health counselor who works with the teachers and students as needed.

3L: The LEA has a partnership with the Integrated Social Services agency, which sends a specialist to talk with students who have behavior or family problems. Staff prepares behavior plans and tends to use positive reinforcements. These are individual initiatives as the schools do not have a unified behavior management program. Interviewees commented that the site has a “sensory room” where students can “relax.”

6. Classroom strategies

a. Co-teaching

3H: According to interviewees, staff “does an excellent job” of collaborating on services for the special needs population. Teachers have common planning time for grade levels or departments, and the small size of the LEA allows easy communication. At the middle school, an administrator commented that there is some team teaching, although not frequent, with the IS in the classroom sharing the delivery of the lesson with the general education teacher.

3L: All teachers have a morning period, between 8:00 and 8:45, which can be used for planning, and the high school staff also has a 30-minute block at the end of the day. However, at this point, the central office is focusing on meeting IDEA requirements, and improving the IEPs, an area deemed by special education as not working well. One of the ISs teaches regular English and social studies classes (she is the only teacher in the classroom). Interviewees hope that the TBTs will provide teachers with greater opportunity to collaborate.

b. Curriculum alignment

3H: The ESC is organizing countywide meetings by grade level and content area for training on the new learning standards. It also is providing two curriculum experts to guide staff

on aligning curricula to the new standards. Currently, staff, including the ISs, is doing curriculum mapping and preparing “I CAN” statements for each standard. The LEA pays for substitutes to free teachers for this work. The ESC also has trained teachers and ISs on extended standards for students who take alternative tests. Teachers are required to assess daily, using quizzes or tests, to ensure that students are learning or modify instruction.

3L: The curriculum coordinator, a new position, has been working with teachers to align the curricula to the new learning standards. Interviewees commented that there was a lot of repetition across grades and the effort is to align curricula both vertically and horizontally. There is no special curriculum for students with disabilities, and the IS is expected to follow the same curriculum with needed modifications. The curriculum coordinator also has promoted a “writing across the curriculum” initiative, which, according to interviewees, has been successful.

c. Use of data

Interviewees at the 3H site commented that they do not have a formal team structure because the LEA is too small, but decisions are data-driven. In the teacher survey, teachers indicated that they used a variety of assessments, including teacher-developed, standardized, and program-specific assessments. The 3L site uses the TBT for discussions of student outcomes, mostly based on results from district benchmarks (reading and mathematics). All students with disabilities, except those with multiple disabilities, take the OAA and OGT, and accommodation is a team decision. Each payday, teachers have to turn in a copy of student work and a report about PD attended. “Some teachers are into data, others not so much,” explained an interviewee. The LEA uses ProgressBook, which parents can access to check their children’s progress.

d. Technology

3H: All LEAs in the county use the same software programs and store data at the ESC’s Information Technology (IT) Center. Teachers can communicate with each other or obtain information about students by connecting with the data storage center. An interviewee gave an example: If an IS has a question about an IEP, central office staff members can look at the form from their computer and provide feedback. IT Center staff has conducted an assessment to understand the needs of the LEA regarding the new online state assessments. Concerns about accommodations for students with disabilities are being discussed. The interviewees described a recent one-on-one initiative that is providing iPads to all freshmen (including those with disabilities). The goal is that all high school students will have iPads within four years. Staff

hopes that the iPads will help students feel more comfortable with technology, as a preparation for the online assessments.

3L: One interviewee summarized the status of technology at the LEA, stating that “not possible; [there’s] no money.” Staff is concerned with the new assessments, which will be online, because they have 30 computers in the whole school and more than 800 students.

e. Student supports

3H: Teachers are flexible on the choice of supplemental programs and there are no schoolwide or grade-wide choices. “Some teachers teach straight from a textbook” and others “haven’t had a textbook in five or six years.” To support struggling students, including those with disabilities, teachers incorporate OAA recycled practice-test items into instructional programs (provided by ODE) and use Buckle Down and Better Test Scores. Reading programs cited in the teacher survey include Lexia Reading, Accelerated Reader, and Wilson Reading. I Excel Math (IXL) is broadly used for mathematics because it is aligned with the Ohio Standards, according to interviewees and survey participants. The use of online programs addresses the LEA’s need to be “thrifty,” as an administrator commented. Either teachers look for free programs online or buy used textbooks.

3L: Teachers and interviewees cited Lexia, Accelerated Reader, Renaissance Reading, and IXL. Lexia is used for students from K-12 and is the tool of choice for students with disabilities in middle and high school, according to the curriculum coordinator. Being an online program, Lexia can be done at home and parents can help; the challenge is that there are few computers (no more than four) in each room, and students must share. New supplemental programs being adopted included Reading Street and enVision Math.

7. Family and community involvement

Interviewees at the 3H site agreed that families are very involved and in times of budget shortage, the community rallies to provide support. The ESC organizes programs for parents and students, including a transition fair for students with disabilities. Alternatively, interviewees from the 3L site commented on lack of parental support. The elementary school principal maintains weekly automated phone communications to keep parents abreast of changes. The community is described as stable, but school staff is seeing more transient students.

8. *Similarities and Differences*

Differences between the top- and bottom-ranked sites in this typology are found in a number of areas. First, although the sites are located in rural communities, the 3L has a considerably larger population of students classified as economically disadvantaged (47%) than 3H (17%). The 3L site also is three times larger and includes a high school, whereas the 3H does not have a high school. How much these characteristics influence test outcomes is a question that this study cannot answer.

Differences also were found in leadership structure, professional development, technology, and the intervention process. Regarding leadership structure, the 3H site has a small but stable leadership with close ties to the community. The LEA has a strong focus on professional development, a technology-rich environment, and a well-developed system of intervention that appears to be working appropriately. Alternatively, the 3L site has had three superintendents in 10 years and only recently emerged from a financial emergency. Resources, including technology, are scarce, and initiatives are all too recent to have had an impact on student outcomes.

A replicable strategy that appears unique to the top-ranked district is the focus on test preparation, which is supported by technology. The question to which only an experimental study can respond is whether this strategy explains the small achievement gap between students with and without disabilities at the 3H site (controlling for differences in demographics). Table 8 summarizes major differences between the two LEAs.

Table 8: Main differences between the top- and bottom-ranked LEAs in Typology 3

Components	3H	3L
Demographics	Small, 17% economically disadvantaged; no high school	Large, 47% economically disadvantaged; high school
Leadership	Stable	Transient
Professional development	Focused, rich	Incipient
Multitiered system of intervention	Well-developed	Incipient
Technology	Rich	Poor
Community support	Close ties	Not involved
Unique strategy	Focus on test preparation with technology support	————

Typology 4 Case Study

LEAs from Typology 4 are located in urban, high poverty areas. Interviews were conducted with 14 staff members, including superintendent, special education director, curriculum coordinator, psychologist, school administrator, intervention specialist, counselor, and general education teacher. The research team visited all schools from the top-ranked LEA (4H), and three schools from the bottom-ranked LEA (4L), one per grade-level span. Longevity in the position among the 4H interviewees varied from 9 to 20 years. Each of the 4L central office staff had been in the position for about one year, as the site is in improvement status under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. A total of 57 teachers responded to the survey for response rates of 68% (4H) and 50% (4L).

1. Demographics

Table 9 summarizes demographic and performance information for the two sites. As noted in the table, the 4H site has a relatively small student population (less than 700), mostly homogenous with mid-level poverty (39%). The 4L site has a significantly larger (close to 4,000) student population, with a high poverty level (77%). It also is noteworthy that 4H has 72% classified with specific learning disabilities (SLD), whereas 4L has only 23% classified as SLD and 42% with cognitive disabilities (CD).

Table 9: Brief demographic characteristics of the Typology 4 sites

Characteristics	4H	4L
Student enrollment (range)	600-650	3,550-4,000
Location	Urban	Urban
Economically disadvantaged	39%	77%
Minorities	8%	68%
Reading average (typical students)	434.83	413.85
Reading average (SWD)	420.92	382.43
Reading gap	13.91	31.42
Mathematics average (typical students)	437.59	411.37
Mathematics average (SWD)	412.76	378.73
Mathematics gap	24.83	32.64
Students with disabilities	14%	20%
Specific learning disabilities	72%	23%
Speech-language impairment	14%	22%
Cognitive disabilities	7%	41%
Least Restrictive Environment > 80%	58%	62%

2. Vision

Both sites expressed the vision that all students can learn and it is the schools' responsibility to find ways to support students. Administrators from both sites described themselves as involved leaders, with a focus on instruction rather than management.

Challenges to achievement of the vision: Interviewees from both LEAs cited resistance to change and open enrollment as challenges. The problem, as a 4H administrator explained, is that veteran teachers have difficulty understanding that “special education is not a fix; it is the beginning of a journey.” Similarly, a 4L auxiliary service staff indicated that when teachers realize that the student has a disability, their reaction is, “It is the IS’s job, not theirs, when it should be both.” Open enrollment is a challenge to both LEAs but for different reasons. For the 4H staff, open enrollment keeps them open but brings large numbers of needy students, and the LEA does not have enough personnel and resources to help them. Of the 2013 kindergarten class, 79% were from open enrollment. The 4L interviewees explain that good students are leaving to go to nearby, smaller LEAs, and the more challenging students stay, particularly those with severe disabilities.

Contributors to achievement of the vision: All 4H interviewees noted three factors: (1) small LEA: everybody knows everybody, easy communication within schools, across schools, and between schools and central office; (2) supportive Board of Education: “If we put in a purchase order, and it is good for the kids, 99% of the time it gets approved”; and (3) competent teachers: according to the psychologist, “Teachers have everything in place well before . . . I am even called in.” All 4L interviewees cited the OIP process, particularly the TBT meetings. Teachers were initially suspicious of the team structure and thought “it was another flavor of the month,” explained an administrator. However, the process is in its third year with full teacher buy-in. Teachers are sharing a variety of interventions for struggling students and improving student outcomes.

Survey respondents from 4H highly rated their schools (means of 4.4 and greater out of 5.0) regarding high expectations for all students and the presence of a plan to achieve these expectations. Mean responses from 4L teachers were significantly lower ($\alpha=0.05$).

3. Infrastructure

At the 4H site, funding is tight, and administrative and teaching positions have been cut. The 7th and 8th grade teachers now must teach both mathematics and science. To obtain extra

resources, the LEA pools resources with neighboring LEAs. For instance, the 4H high school offers calculus to the local LEAs, and another LEA offers chemistry. Because the 4L site is in improvement, money is not an issue, according to interviewees. Moreover, the locality just approved a levy to bring in more money for the LEA. However, both the middle and high schools have been consolidated to cut expenses.

4. Teaching

a. Hiring

4H: Interviewees noted that turnover is very low and the ISs have been in the district for long time. To maximize resources, the LEA tries to hire teachers who have more than one area of expertise, such as mathematics and science. The hiring team involves the school administrator, superintendent, and school board members. Of the teachers who participated in the survey, 64% had been in the school for more than 10 years, and 52% had been teaching for more than 15 years; 24% had been in the school for five years or less. The majority (72%) had a Master's degree, 24% had a Bachelor's degree, and 4% had a doctoral degree.

4L: School administrators commented that teachers were anxious because they knew that they would be let go this coming year due to lower enrollment and the schools' consolidation. For hiring, a school-based committee reviews resumes and makes suggestions, but the superintendent has the final decision. The special education director, involved in hiring for administrative positions, searches for candidates who can establish good communication with parents, as "without that, nothing happens." Assets cited by school administrators and central office staff include: compassion ("students come to school hungry; they cannot perform at their best"), flexibility ("there is no one intervention that works for all students; needs to adapt"), familiarity with urban settings, and if possible, with a dual background (general and special education). Of the survey participants, 30% had been at the school for 5 years or less, 40% between 6 and 10 years, and 30% for 15 years or more. Half of the respondents had been teaching for 11 years or more. Master's degrees were held by 86% of the respondents and 14% had a Bachelor's degree.

b. Professional development and supports

4H: The ISs reported that they attend general education classes to update knowledge. One IS is now auditing algebra II classes to help a student who will attend the course this coming school year. Likewise, general education teachers receive PD on IDEA requirements. PD in the

past school year focused on differentiated instruction, and new learning standards was the previous year's topic. The local ESC brings together teachers from all local LEAs for PD, and the SST also is a PD provider. In the survey, teachers rated highly (means of 4.0 and above out of 5.0) the LEA support for PD. The only item that elicited fewer agreements was related to planning time across grade levels (mean 3.5). More than 70% of the teachers reported that they had attended PD opportunities on differentiated instruction, accommodations, IEP development, and curriculum alignment. Behavior-management strategies was the least attended topic (36%).

4L: The curriculum director has a good partnership with the regional SST and is involved in the preparation of training on co-teaching. New teachers have mentors for a two-year period, under the curriculum director's leadership. The middle school has grade-level common planning time when teachers organize study groups that focus on Marzano's (2007) framework. The elementary school organizes weekly 45-minute time blocks for small group PD sessions that involve all teachers, with coaches from ODE and SST. The SST offers PD on IDEA requirements and is preparing training on the Value-Added evaluation system, which is raising teachers' anxiety, according to an administrator. Auxiliary service personnel explained that the LEA offers support for PD and they have no problems meeting credit requirements for renewal of licensure. In the survey, teachers were supportive of the LEAs' efforts to provide PD (means between 3.5 and 4.0). The majority disagreed that planning time is offered for different grade levels or content areas (mean of 2.9). Between 60% and 80% of the respondents had attended PD related to services for students with disabilities, except behavior management strategies (17%).

5. Learners

a. Identification

Both sites use a multitiered system of intervention and focus on early detection and intervention. Identifications are more frequent at the lower elementary grades and students may be taken off the IEP as they mature, according to interviewees from both LEAs. At the 4H site, the psychologist runs the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) meetings, which are mostly scheduled before or after school or during teachers' planning time to avoid classroom disruption. The 4H schools try to involve students in their IEPs as early as grade 3, but involvement varies according to the student's maturity. At the larger site, the 4L psychologist is present at the meetings only when the possibility arises of a multifunctional evaluation. To accommodate parents, staff uses conference calls or has the IAT meeting at the parents' home.

b. Least Restrictive Placement

4H: At the elementary school level, students with disabilities stay 240 minutes a week in the general education classroom and 160 minutes in the intervention room, where the ISs work with small groups (no more than eight students). The middle school is starting inclusion. The ISs commented that high school students prefer the pull-out strategy rather than their being identified for services within the classroom. In the survey, 65% of the general education teachers indicated that students with disabilities represent about 10% of the students in their classroom; 75% informed that these students stayed in the classroom for at least 80% of the school day. About half reported that they did not have time to plan lessons with the IS nor did they receive support.

4L: According to the special education director, the focus is to expose students with disabilities to as much of the general curriculum as possible. The LEA is moving toward full inclusion and co-teaching. In kindergarten, the students have 20-minute interventions daily and up to one hour daily in grades 3 and 4. At the high school, the IS works with the students during mathematics and reading, but they are in the general classrooms for the other content areas. Although some co-teaching is done, the interviewees commented that the schools do not have enough ISs for the number of students with disabilities (almost at 30% this year). Of the general education teachers who participated in the survey, 30% reported that they taught students with disabilities.

c. Continuum of services

According to interviewees, students with disabilities in the 4HL schools are mostly high-functioning. Students with more severe disabilities (about 6 or 8) are placed in the ESC units, as the schools cannot afford more specialized services. The LEA has a few students with disabilities enrolled in a virtual school with mixed results, according to a special education interviewee. At the 4L sites, students with disabilities present a range of functional levels, and they have self-contained classrooms for nonreaders. The ratio for these classrooms is about 1 IS to 10 students, with support from aides. The alternative school is part of the LEA. Low-functioning students may attend a life-skills program when they enter middle school. Home-schooling is a service provided to students who do not respond well to a group environment. Special education interviewees mentioned a conflict with the main provider of tutoring services (a private, for-profit group) that does not respond to their attempts to communicate.

d. Transitions

Transitions at the 4H sites are generally smooth as the whole district is housed in one building. ESC representatives come to talk to middle school students about available services, including the CTEC. Juniors and seniors can attend the CTEC for half a day and earn certifications, and seniors who have completed their graduation credits can enroll in work-study. The LEA has good relationships with the local state university. At the 4L site, the middle schools organize a summer-school program for rising 5th graders, with the objective of helping students to know each other, accept differences, and learn to work together. “They come from all over town,” explained an interviewee, including “some areas that are very affluent, and others extremely poor.” At the high school, the Gear Up (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate) program helps students transition to the work force, the military, or higher education, with a greater focus on higher education. The school offers career technical education programs, such as automotive and printing, and provides supervised work-study opportunities.

e. Behavior management

According to interviewees and survey respondents, behavior is not a concern at the 4H schools. The psychologist helps teachers to develop individual behavior plans when needed, and students with severely challenging behavior are sent to the ESC alternative school from which they return after goals are met.

Data from interviews and survey confirmed the comment of a 4L administrator that behavior “is our weakest area.” The elementary schools use PBIS, and the upper grades use a system of points for positive behavior. The psychologist is partnering with the local mental health services to provide district-wide PD on behavior management. According to a central office administrator, there is a lack of consistency in applying rules and consequences. Counselors are overwhelmed and have no time to develop good functional behavior-management plans. High school students classified as ED come to schools with a plethora of problems, including dysfunctional families, drugs, poverty, according to an administrator. In his view, “The configuration and intensity of multiple issues [makes the challenge] nearly insoluble within the purview of schools and extant support systems.”

6. Classroom strategies

a. Co-teaching

4H: Interviewees explained that, at the elementary school, the IS goes into the classrooms and helps students in need, even those who do not have an IEP. The IS may deliver part of a lesson but not usually. The general education teachers tend to provide the IS with the lesson plan in advance to allow preparation, as they do not have common planning time. At the high school, the general education teacher communicates with the IS using forms on which they check the students' progress (for each content area). Although the LEA would like to move into co-teaching, they do not have enough ISs to participate in the classrooms while providing the specialized interventions required by the IEPs.

4L: The SST is providing training on co-teaching. "It has been fabulous," commented an auxiliary service provider. The elementary school has started the process, and the plan is to expand to all schools. One of the co-teaching teams was invited to present at a state conference.

b. Curriculum alignment

No information on curriculum alignment was gathered from 4H site. The 4L site has been using the new learning standards at the elementary level, with supports from the Leadership and Learning Center, a Houghton Mifflin Harcourt initiative (<http://www.leadandlearn.com/>). The ISs participated in the training and are involved in the curriculum-mapping process.

c. Use of data

At the 4H schools, all students with disabilities take the regular state assessments. Responses from the survey indicated that teachers use data to identify students in need of targeted intervention or to move students within intervention strategies. The three most common types of assessments used for data analysis include teacher-developed, standardized, and program-specific assessments.

Interviews and survey responses for the 4L site indicated a move toward use of data to differentiate instruction. ISs are part of the TBTs that meet every other week. Teachers use a pre-/post-test strategy to gather data on student progress. Data are disaggregated by student subgroups and discussed during the TBT meetings. The schools use a number of assessments, including AIMSweb, Pro-Ohio, and teacher-developed assessments. One IS commented in the survey that a reason for the poor results in the state tests is that,

Our students with disabilities are able to use a multitude of accommodations to help them be successful. However, during the state testing all these accommodations are taken away except for having the test read to them and extended time.

d. Technology

Both sites have technology, including laptops. The 4H site is becoming wireless, and the 4L is using laptops to provide more computer access to students. The majority (80% or more) of teachers from both LEAs agreed that the schools focus on providing them with resources, including technology to support instruction and adaptive technology. They also agreed that all students, including students with disabilities, have access to these technologies.

e. Student supports

4H: Kindergarten students are tested with the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Literacy (KRA-L) and placed in Success by Six interventions when needed. For elementary school students who are struggling academically, the school offers interventions twice a week geared toward OAA mathematics and reading. High school students tutor their young peers. For upper grade levels, students may receive tutoring from retired teachers either during the school day or after school. Survey respondents indicated the use of Edmark, Reading A-Z, and Raz-Kid, for reading. No supplemental mathematics program was cited.

4L: The LEA has a committee that suggests supplemental programs. The elementary school interviewees reported that they used System 44 Next Generation and Read 180 and Math Solutions. They also contract with a private vendor for tutoring for struggling students. Tutoring services are provided one hour a day, four days a week. The middle school has started a before- and after-school program for re-teaching and remediation, doubled the time for the mathematics block (to 80 minutes), and created an advisory period for extra support. The reading block is 120 minutes.

7. Family and community involvement

The 4H interviewees mentioned supportive parents and community and partnerships with the local university. Interviewees from 4L reported a number of initiatives to involve parents, including a parent liaison position, broadcast calls, weekly folders that must be signed, festivals, celebrations, and home visits. Participation, however, “is a challenge.” For students with disabilities, the schools have regularly scheduled meetings with mental health, juvenile justice,

and family services. Nearby businesses also offer volunteers who come for one hour each week to read to elementary grade students or tutor.

8. Similarities and Differences

The two sites are quite similar in the ways they envision and approach education. Although the 4L is moving toward inclusion and co-teaching, the 4H appears to be comfortable in how it serves students with disabilities. Some differences exist between the sites, but some of these differences result from the way the typologies are defined (community-driven rather than LEA-driven). Therefore, the two LEAs, although located in similar communities, are demographically diverse. Additionally, the 4H serves students with disabilities who are mostly high-functioning, whereas the 4L site serves students with a wide range of abilities, including large numbers of students with cognitive disabilities.

Other differences between the sites include continuity of leadership and supportive community at the 4H versus changing leadership (maybe because of the school improvement status) and a less supportive community at the 4L site. Findings from these LEAs and other districts in this study show that support from families is not so much an outcome of schools' efforts to involve them but mostly of societal factors that are beyond school control. These are not new findings from research. Unfortunately, all the schools can do is minimizing the impact of those factors on students' engagement in learning. Table 10 summarizes the major differences between the two LEAs.

Table 10: Main differences between the top- and bottom-ranked LEAs in Typology 4

Components	4H	4L
Demographics	Relatively small, mid-poverty;	Six times larger, large percentage economically disadvantaged;
Leadership	Stable	Transient
Students with disabilities	72% SLD	Wide range, 41% CD
Community	Supportive	Challenge
Behavior	Not a problem	Challenge
Co-teaching	Not a focus	Implementing
Unique strategy	Focus on PD	Block time; Marzano strategies

Typology 6 Case Study

The Typology 6 LEAs are located in urban or suburban, high median income areas. The research team visited all schools from both LEAs and conducted interviews with 24 staff members, including: superintendent, special education director, curriculum coordinator, psychologist, school principal, intervention specialist, counselors, general education teacher, and speech-language therapist. Permanence in the position among the 6H interviewees varied from 6 to 20 years and from 1 to 6 years at 6L. A total of 118 teachers participated in the survey for response rates of 58% (6H) and 100% (6L).

1. Demographics

Table 11 summarizes the demographics and performance information about the LEAs. It is noteworthy that the 6L site has the smallest achievement gap between typical students and students with disabilities but it also has low achievement for both groups of students. Comparatively, the 6H has a larger gap but a much higher average score for students with disabilities.

Table 11: Brief demographic characteristics of the Typology 6 sites

Characteristics	6H	6L
Student enrollment (range)	1,600-1,650	800-850
Location	Urban	Urban
Economically disadvantaged	4%	56%
Minorities	7%	92%
Reading average (typical students)	447.68	421.15
Reading average (students with disabilities)	415.39	391.37
Reading gap	32.28	29.78
Mathematics average (typical students)	450.12	416.16
Mathematics average (students with disabilities)	409.00	380.71
Mathematics gap	41.12	35.45
Students with disabilities	11%	17%
Specific learning disabilities	44%	36%
Speech-language impairment	10%	4%
Emotional disabilities	3%	13%
Cognitive disabilities	4%	17%
Autism	4%	12%
Other health impairments (minor)	28%	6%
Least Restrictive Environment > 80%	80%	50%

As indicated in the table, although the two sites are located in similar areas, they have quite different student populations. The 6H site has double the enrollment, but low poverty (4%). The 6L has a smaller enrollment with the majority of students from low income (56%) families.

2. Vision

The common denominator across interviews from both LEAs was high expectations for all students. Special education is seen as an integral component of general education. The 6H's superintendent explained, "To push every student to do more than they possibly thought they could do and to do more than their parents thought they could do."

Challenges to achievement of the vision: Three challenges were reported by 6H interviewees: changing teachers' minds, conformism, and keeping up with ODE's initiatives. All interviewees commented that teachers tend to think that students with disabilities are not "their responsibility" but the responsibility of ISs. It is necessary to reshape this perspective so that all assume responsibility for all students. Conformism is the risk run by a successful LEA, as a school administrator commented, "The biggest obstacle to be great is being good. And we could easily talk about how good we are, but we want to be great." Another challenge highlighted by school administrators and special education staff is the status of ongoing flux in Ohio's education system. Many initiatives are being pushed by ODE, including new learning standards, new assessments, and Value-Added assessments. Teachers are having difficulty keeping abreast of all of the initiatives while still teaching. "Are we asking too much from teachers?" asked a school administrator.

Student mobility, outsourcing services, and leadership instability are the challenges cited by 6L administrators and special education staff. The special education director commented that many families are moving into the area, and the number of students with disabilities, including severe disabilities, is increasing. The LEA wants to keep the students in the schools, but being small, it outsources most of its specialized services. The problem with outsourcing is that funding moves out of the LEA to pay for services and transportation, and the LEA loses some control over service quality. Leadership is constantly changing, which impacts communication and continuity of initiatives. The special education director commented, "It has been a revolving door. . . I would like to stay here long enough so that when I pass the torch to somebody else we've got systems in place. . . We need to have some stability."

Contributors to achievement of the vision: For all interviewees at the 6H, leadership is the key to LEA's success. Leaders need to have a clear vision of where to go and also of how to get there. As the superintendent clarified, "It's not only about getting the right people on the bus, but it's getting the right people in the right seats on the bus."

To "get there" requires allocation of resources for attainment of the vision. Teachers need to have "enough tools in their toolboxes," stated a school administrator, and it is the administrators' job to get those tools to them. Resources are scarce and school personnel must be creative. Morale is another important factor to keep "the bus moving." School and LEA leadership pride themselves in maintaining excellent communication with teachers and community and having low teacher turnover. Leadership also has to support teachers when an initiative does not succeed. "Be patient," explained the special education director, "it will not be perfect the first year." Assets of a good leader include: (1) Trust and be trusted and maintain transparency; (2) Recognize people's good ideas and use them; (3) Make the hard decisions that subordinates dread to make ("We don't want a manager, we want a leader); and (4) Know when to leave. "I have not met a lot of superintendents that were effective for 20 years," commented the superintendent, who was getting ready to leave. Survey participants gave high marks (mean of 4.5 and above out of a maximum of 5.0) for all items related to high expectations and the availability of supports to achieve expectations.

6L: The contributing factor cited by all interviewees was collaboration. Interviewees cited examples of collaboration between general education and special education teachers, between school staff and parents, and among students. In the survey, teachers tended to give "middle-of-the-road" marks (around 3.0) to items related to high expectations and supports.

3. Infrastructure

6H: Allocation of funds, according to central office staff and school administrators, is a team decision. The community is very supportive and was celebrating a recently approved levy to renovate the schools. They also are writing grants and working with foundations. The difference, explained a school administrator, is that grant funds were used for extras, "but now they are being used for essentials." Administrators described the LEA as having a flat organization with "little red tape and bureaucracy." All interviewees indicated that the lack of teachers' union is helpful, as they can "ask more from the teachers." However, a school administrator observed that they need to be careful; if they ask too much, teachers will leave.

6L: According to the interviewees, funding decisions are made by the superintendent and treasurer, and although they are supportive, there is no money. Teachers use free online programs or make copies of textbooks to give to the students. The LEA is implementing the OIP process. Teachers meet weekly using an early dismissal day. A school administrator commented that communication flows across the meeting structure. At the high school, the ISs were mixed with the general education teachers for the TBTs but are now grouped into a special education team. According to one of the ISs interviewed,

I like the idea of TBT and I've seen it when I worked in [another LEA], and I have seen the results. It really does well . . . when you have IS mixed with general education teachers. And I really feel that's the fundamental building block.

4. Teaching

a. Hiring

6H: The candidate needs to score 80 or more in Gallup's TeacherInsight® to be interviewed. The first interview involves staff at the interested building. Central office and school administrators stated that they seek candidates who have content knowledge; good communication, particularly with parents; and work hard. According to one interviewee, the pressure to excel comes from everywhere: administrators, peers, parents, and students. The LEA tries to have competitive salaries to attract good candidates. Of the survey respondents, 35% had been at the school for 6 to 10 years and 48% for 11 years or more; 77% had been teaching for more than 10 years. Master's degrees were held by 94%, and 6% had Bachelor's degrees.

6L: The first line of interviews is conducted by school teams. About 20% of the survey participants had been in the school for one year or less, and 35% had been in the school for 11 years or more; 57% had been teaching for more than 10 years. In regard to the highest degree completed, 5% had doctoral degrees, 72% had Master's degrees, and 23% had Bachelor's degrees. ISs used to be ESC employees but are now hired by the LEA.

b. Professional development and supports

6H: About four years ago, the LEA decided to create its own academy to provide in-service training. According to the superintendent, everybody in the district, from teachers to custodians, attend PD at the academy. Staff development is differentiated because "one size does not fit all." Additionally, teacher participation in conferences either as presenters or attendees is supported. The LEA tries to send one representative per building and rotate the groups so that all

teachers have the opportunity to attend conferences. One of the psychologists commented, “I don’t think we were ever denied a request” to attend a conference. The overall idea is “to put people in places where they can be successful” and work with the teachers who are struggling to give them a chance to succeed. Teachers who participated in the survey gave high marks (means around 4.0) to items related to PD, supports for teachers and ISs, and availability of time to plan lessons. Of the survey participants, 60% or more had attended PD on differentiated instruction, use of data, technology, and best practices. IEP development was the least attended topic (50%).

6L: Information is contradictory, with some ISs indicating denial of opportunities for PD and others stating that they had many PD opportunities. The special education director, a new position, stated that teachers are provided PD on PBIS and ISs receive in-service training, mostly on IDEA requirements. Responses to the teacher survey showed low ratings (means of 2.5 or less) for items related to PD. Of the survey respondents, 55% indicated that the LEA supports participation in PD, but curriculum alignment was the only topic in the provided menu that had been attended by more than 50% of the survey respondents.

5. Learners

a. Identification

6H: According to interviewees, most students with disabilities are high functioning and are fully included; many attend advanced placement (AP) classes. The counselor at the high school commented that the major challenge is to figure out accommodations for the college-entrance examinations. School administrators report that they involve parents and students at all stages of the RtI process. The focus is on careful identification of students’ needs to provide early and appropriate interventions. This focus may explain the low percentage of students who are identified as having a disability (10% of the total student enrollment). According to the superintendent,

We don’t want any student on an IEP that doesn’t need one because I don’t think that helps them. Any student that needs one, I don’t want to try and keep them off an IEP. I think the over identification is just as bad as under identification.

According to ISs, the current IEP templates are easy to follow and complete; the problem is that templates are always changing. “When you become a master of it,” there will be another template, stated one IS. According to the special education personnel, the goal is not compliance but a truly individualized IEP that can be understood by all and particularly by the student and

parents. Students in grades 5 or 6 attend the IEP meeting and, by grade 7, they run the meeting. In the meetings, students talk about their goals, their areas of strength and weakness, and what they need to move forward. The IEP “becomes their document,” explained an administrator.

6L: The special education director was recently hired to review all IEPs to ensure that students are correctly identified. According to special education staff, many students who transfer from other LEAs are either misidentified or have an inadequate IEP. However, parents have become used to the support provided by the IEP and refuse to go through an identification process again. At the high school, teachers and ISs try to involve students in the IEP, but students are not interested. Family attendance at IEPs also is a challenge, according to special education interviewees.

b. Least Restrictive Placement

6H: All interviewees agreed that the goal is to maintain all students in the classroom as much as possible. “It may not always work that way,” explained the special education director, “but this is the focus.” Likewise, the LEA’s philosophy is to maintain students in their local school; only in rare occasions is a child sent to special placements. The high school pairs students with different levels of ability in a buddy system to provide extra support for students with disabilities. Of the general educators who participated in the survey, 89% reported that they taught students with disabilities, who comprised fewer than 10% of all students in their classroom (75%), and remained in the room for more than 80% of the school day (85%).

6L: At the elementary schools, AIMSweb is used to place students in tiers for interventions. Fifth graders with disabilities are integrated into the general education classrooms, but 6th graders are still in self-contained classrooms, according to ISs. At the high school, students are mainstreamed for most classes, but ISs have two periods a day when they bring the students to a resource room to do interventions, re-teach or help with homework, as needed. According to the ISs, the success of inclusion depends on the communication between the general education teacher and the IS. The majority of general education teachers who participated in the survey (76%) indicated that they teach students with disabilities, who remained in the classroom for 80% or more of the school day (72%). The percentage of students with disabilities in classrooms varied: 48% of the respondents indicated no more than 10%, 41% reported between 10% and 20%, and 10% indicated more than 20%.

c. Continuum of services

For upper-grade students with severe disabilities, the 6H site offers a life-skills program that includes academic, workplace skills, and overall life skills. Their work-study program is new and is being planned for students in grades 7 through 12. The school has online courses to offer more options to students. In the past year, a number of students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs) attended an online science class and at the time of the interviews, the school was experimenting with an online forensics class.

At the 6L site, middle school students with severe disabilities, particularly the nonreaders, are mostly placed in self-contained classrooms for English and mathematics but are mainstreamed for other content areas. At the high school, the students may remain half a day in the school and attend the CTEC the other part of the day. The ESC-run CTEC has a waiting list and grade point average (GPA) requirements. Not all applicants are accepted.

d. Transitions

Both sites have transition services for students moving from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school. At the 6H, the elementary schools organize joint activities for their 6th graders, and the middle school brings the 7th graders so that students get used to each other and start to make friends. Activities involve a bowling party, a pool party, and even a camping trip. Conversations about career start in junior high, and 90% of the high school graduates, including those with disabilities, attend college. The local foundation has a college and career planning center that supports the schools. The 6L interviewees commented about strong relationships with a number of community colleges that send speakers and organize field trips for juniors and seniors.

e. Behavior management

The elementary school at the 6H site uses Love and Logic as the school-wide behavior management intervention. The upper-grade schools have school climate committees and a system of incentives. However, the interviewees agreed that behavior is not a problem. Even the school's Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) training is shorter (6 hours rather than 8 hours), as the school does not use restraints. At the 6L site, the special education director tried to start PBIS at the elementary school, but "teachers did not follow through." However, 64% of survey participants reported that they used PBIS as their school-wide behavior management program.

Special education staff commented that there is a lack of consistency in how discipline is applied. An IS stated,

[Students] need the structure and there's a lack of it because of the rotating door. When you have two superintendents and six administrators in less than three years . . . that is a problem.

6. Classroom strategies

a. Co-teaching

6H: The LEA introduced co-teaching at the junior high school and at the time of the interviews was expanding this strategy to the elementary school. The junior high teachers discussed their experiences with the elementary school teachers as a training process. The special education director provided PD on various co-teaching models and was partnering with the curriculum director to provide ongoing support and mentoring as the process evolved. They tried to organize the teacher pairs according to teaching styles and keep the pairs together. Students provided positive feedback about the pilot. "When you've got two teachers in there," commented a school administrator, "you've got two and a half somehow." Co-teaching has been more difficult to implement in high school because of content. As the school principal stated, "How to co-teach a 12th grade physics class?" The principal explained that the main concern is

. . . to have the best teachers working with the students with the most needs. Honor students will do well despite of the teacher, but not the other way around. It also sends a message to the school: If these students were not important, the school wouldn't be sending the best teachers [to work with them].

6H: Administrators referred to co-teaching but the ISs were more skeptical. At the middle school, teachers worked in teams with the ISs but the situation seemed more collaboration than co-teaching to some of the respondents. The school tried to place students with teachers whom they preferred. An IS commented that the 7th grade teacher had two 8th grade students with disabilities in her class because they bonded better with her. At the high school, most students were served in resource rooms. Although co-teaching may not have been fully implemented, collaboration occurred at all grade levels between teachers and ISs.

b. Curriculum alignment

6H: The curriculum director was working with the teachers on alignment with the new learning standards. A full day in February was allotted so teachers could work on grade-level and subject-area teams to map their curricula. At the time of the interviews, the teachers were writing

“I CAN” statements that address the standards, adding resources (that do not require the purchase of expensive programs), and preparing formative assessments. Principals brought in substitutes in case the teachers needed more time to finish their work. The plans were submitted online to the Curriculum Director (using the LEA Portal) for review and approval.

6L: School administrators stated that they monitor the delivery of curriculum using ongoing walkthroughs. Teachers are expected to have the lessons’ standard or objective and “I CAN” statements displayed in the classrooms. ISs have a different perception, as demonstrated by a survey comment:

As far as the curriculum is concerned, we have the books, but in terms of total alignment . . . it doesn’t fuse and come together because . . . who is driving it? . . . And if someone is not driving it, it is not going to happen.

c. Use of data

Interviewees and survey respondents from both LEAs commented that they use a variety of assessments to differentiate instruction. At the 6H site, teachers use the CTP and the subscales within the OAA as formative tools. For students who receive supplemental interventions and students with disabilities, the schools use AIMSweb for short-cycle monitoring. According to interviewees, parents were very involved and watched their children’s progress using the online reports. Regarding formative assessments, the LEA had a successful pilot at the middle school and was providing PD on the topic for teachers at all grade levels.

The 6L site also uses AIMSweb. Elementary school students are diagnosed at the beginning of the year using Analytical Reading Inventory (ARI) for placement. Additionally, the LEA uses quarterly benchmarks for core content areas.

d. Technology

6H: The site has a hybrid system to provide computers for all students. Students in grades 1 and 2 have iPads, and students in grades 4 and up have Google Notebooks. Students who use the school machines pay the fee that they traditionally would pay for textbooks. Students who bring their own computers receive a discount. Students and teachers log in using Citrix (a virtual desktop infrastructure) so that they see the same desktop image and resources. The LEA held a one-day training session on technology, and students led the in-service (“they were the instructors; the teachers were the learners”). According to interviewees, computers facilitate the exposure of students in special education to the regular curriculum. For instance, the student

remains in the regular pre-algebra class, with supports from online programs, such as Brain Genie and others. Teachers and students are always suggesting new programs, which are submitted to a council for approval. “There is always a pilot” before the program is accepted, explained a school principal. Lessons are posted online (using Blackboard) so students who miss school do not miss the information. The schools also are trying to offer some classes online, such as AP chemistry, when the number of students does not justify the hiring of a teacher. In the survey, teachers gave high marks (means of 4.5 and above) to all items related to technology.

6L: The site was in the process of buying technology. General education teachers have Smart Boards or Mimeos, but ISs commented that special education staff does not have even simple projectors. Teachers gave low ratings to items related to technology (means below 3.0).

e. Student supports

6H: The middle and high schools adopted the Learning Lab, a 30-minute period in the school day allotted for a variety of activities. For students who are struggling academically, this is the time to ask a teacher for help, complete a formative assessment, or work on the OAA practice test. Gifted and talented students use the time for special projects. Students with disabilities receive specialized interventions. All students take pre-algebra in grade seven and all students must complete a project-based learning each quarter. The Learning Lab is a time for students to receive help with those requirements. To create the Lab, the schools curtailed the transition periods between classes. Survey responses indicated that teachers use a variety of supplemental programs including for reading, Reading A-Z, AIMSweb, Soar to Success, My Skills Tutor, Fountas and Pinnell, and Linda Mood Bell. Mathematics supplemental programs included IXL, Pearson/Scott Foresman, Study Island, and My Skills Tutor.

6L: The high school allocates two periods a day to special education interventions and also created a special period called Study Skills (which appears similar to the Learning Lab described above). For grade 2, teachers were piloting Simple Solutions for mathematics. They were using the OAA practice tests to check for gaps and interventions. A school administrator mentioned that the LEA has extended the school year for special needs students at the elementary and middle school. One of the ISs interviewed mentioned the use of the STAR curriculum for students with autism. ISs write grants to purchase supplemental programs. A high school IS commented that she purchased the Moby Math program to help students who are much

below grade level, and another purchased Ed Helper. Survey responses also indicate the use of Wilson Reading and Passport Reading Journeys.

7. *Family and community involvement*

6H: All interviewees and survey respondents commented on strong family involvement and community support. The administrators have an annual “state of the school” address to which they invite families and community leaders, such as the mayor. The schools profit from active PTOs, volunteers, and foundations. One interviewee explained that the district is affluent and students come to school with preschool experience and background knowledge. The LEA maintains online communication with parents and a portal where parents can comment about services or share experiences with college applications (the site is shared with another local LEA). Some parts of the district are not as wealthy, and the schools try to mix students. “The community is wonderful, but if [staff] is slacking, they will know,” stated an administrator.

6L: Overall, interviewees perceived parents as cooperative and knowledgeable. At the elementary school, a number of activities involve parents and there is an active PTO. ISs commented about belligerent and absent parents who complained about services but were absent from IEPs. One IS used a passport system to maintain communication with parents in which a report card informs parents of how the student spends the day, with a space for feedback. The LEA has a community stakeholder group that includes the mayor, members of the Chamber of Commerce, and religious organizations. They support speakers, field trips, career days, and specific projects.

8. *Similarities and Differences*

The LEAs are quite different in terms of demographics, leadership experience, and strategies. The 6H has a median high income population, longstanding leadership with a clear vision of where to go and how to get there. This vision was shared across all levels. The word *careful* resonated throughout the findings from the sites: careful hiring process, careful assignment of teachers, careful adoption of programs with the use of pilots, careful RtI process that aims at early intervention and involves students, carefully planned transition, and carefully implemented co-teaching. Additionally, the LEA uses technology to reach all students. The 6L is a high poverty LEA, in a state of continuous leadership transition, and therefore, initiatives always are in an incipient stage of implementation. Table 12 summarizes the main differences between the two sites.

Table 12: Main differences between the top- and bottom-ranked LEAs in Typology 6

Components	6H	6L
Demographics	Homogenous, middle high income	High poverty
Leadership	Sustained; clear vision of what and how	Transient
Intervention/Identification	Carefully planned; early focus	Incipient
Inclusion and Co-teaching	Use of pilot; careful planning	Incipient
Technology	Support all students	ISs: no technology
Unique Strategies	Carefully planned transitions Learning Lab Best teachers with most challenging students	--

Typology 7 Case Study

Typology 7 LEAs are located in suburban, high income areas. Within this typology, students at both sites attained high average rates on the state assessments. They differed in the achievement gap between typical students and students with disabilities. The 7H has a smaller gap than the 7L site. The research team visited all schools from both LEAs and conducted interviews with 19 staff members, including the superintendents, special education director, director of education programs, director of instruction and technology, school principals and assistant principal, psychologist, and counselors. Longevity in the position among the 7H interviewees varied from 1 to 20 years. At the 7L site, longevity for central office staff varied from 1 to 5 years, and for school staff from 1 to 20 years. A total of 92 teachers participated in the survey, but response rates were too low and the data had to be disregarded (26% for 7H and 29% for 7L).

1. Demographics

Table 13 displays demographics and performance information for the Typology 7 sites. As shown in the table, the 7L is a larger site, has double the percentage of students in poverty, and double the percentage of students with disabilities, particularly emotional disabilities, when compared to the 7H site.

Table 13: Brief demographic characteristics of the Typology 7 sites

Characteristics	7H	7L
Student enrollment (range)	950-1,000	2,100-2,150
Location	Urban/Suburban	Urban/Suburban
Economically disadvantaged	0%	15%
Minorities	17%	35%
Reading average (typical students)	446.56	443.64
Reading average (students with disabilities)	428.80	409.75
Reading gap	17.76	33.89
Mathematics average (typical students)	451.02	447.42
Mathematics average (students with disabilities)	428.31	400.45
Mathematics gap	22.71	46.97
Students with disabilities	6%	15%
Specific learning disabilities	29%	35%
Emotional disabilities	6%	17%
Autism	21%	11%
Other health impairments (minor)	26%	14%
Least Restrictive Environment > 80%	80%	67%

2. Vision

The climate of high expectations permeates the site, according to all 7H interviewees. High expectations involve students, staff, and families and focus on an environment of continuous improvement. The middle school uses the logo DUCKS, which mean Dependable, Unbiased, Cooperative, Kind Students. A special education staff person explained,

We have high expectations for all students and the fact that they might have an IEP or a 504 plan, it doesn't diminish our expectations at all. We just work really hard to make sure that we provide the support that they need to be successful.

The 7L LEA's vision reflects a concern with addressing students' individual needs. As expressed by the superintendent, the LEA strives to

... provide personalized education for all students and get to the point where we do not have special education. We meet the needs of the students where they are and take them as far as they can go.

Challenges to achievement of the vision: Interviewees from both sites commented that general education teachers are not well-versed in differentiated instruction and lack information on students with disabilities, particularly the more severe disabilities. The 7H site uses consultants to help teachers learn strategies geared to the students' specific needs and abilities. Interviewees from the 7L site commented that the ongoing changes in education, such as new

learning standards, new assessments, and the increasing weight of tests on teachers' evaluations are raising anxiety and creating teachers' resistance toward teaching students with special needs.

The 7L site just went through a change in central office. A school administrator commented,

There is just so much at one time that we're all trying, everyone is trying to wrap their heads around . . . and we've had a lot of change in central office recently so it's kind of getting used to the new people again.

Contributors to achievement of the vision: The small size of the district was the main contributing factor cited by 7H interviewees. Most students start in kindergarten and remain through high school. The special education director commented that the students are polite: "It's a kind of family environment." Indeed, the superintendent reported, "I feel like I am almost the father of this family." This family-like environment was a theme with other interviewees, who highlighted the collaboration across all levels from superintendent to parents. Teachers have small class sizes (about 20) and ISs have low caseloads. Additionally, most parents have a college education and expect their children to go to college. As a guidance counselor commented, "It's cool to be smart here. There's an atmosphere of learning and achievement. . . . The pressure is not to go to college, but to go to a college that is appropriate."

For the 7L central office staff, the main contributing factor to the LEA's success is the support from the Board of Education. The Board of Education tends to approve most of the LEA's requests, such as the technology integration initiative and the hiring of a Special Education Director to coordinate services across schools. Another positive factor, according to school administrators, is teachers' openness to professional development and collaboration.

3. Infrastructure

Comments on funding were similar for both LEAs. In the two districts, IDEA funds do not cover the costs of educating students with disabilities, and the localities provide strong financial support to the schools. The special education personnel in the two sites reinforced the sense of support from the community, Board of Education, superintendent, and the treasurer. At the 7H site, the Board holds a summer retreat with the administrative team to examine performance and define new goals and initiatives. A statement from the 7H superintendent can be applied to both sites: "There's an expectation in our community that [students with disabilities] will not be just served but served well."

4. Teaching

a. Hiring

7H: The LEA has a long hiring process that starts with the superintendent and the building principal, the second interview involves building teachers, and the final interview is a presentation with the top two or three candidates. Sometimes, the candidate is asked to teach to a full classroom, and parents may be present. The LEA seeks teachers who have “passion,” “creativity,” “a lot of professionalism,” and “good communication,” particularly with parents. School administrators commented that teachers are coming out of college without much knowledge. The special education director mentioned that a nearby university has a program for dual certification (general and special education), and the LEA is interested in the program because

I want [teachers] to have tools in their toolbox. If they don't have a lot of tools . . . then that means I have to give it to them. . . They have to be able, in this district, to hit the ground running.

7L: The first interview is with the building principal. For the second interview, the principal brings in a teacher from the same content area to check for content knowledge. Information on the two best candidates is then forwarded to the Central Office, where the decision is made. Teacher assets include “winning personality,” “enthusiasm,” “ability to form relationships with kids,” “Would I want the candidate teaching my kids?” “content knowledge,” and “collaboration.” The process also seeks diversity, as the LEA has a diverse student population. Qualities for special education teachers were described as “an advocate” and “a great salesperson” (to communicate with parents).

b. Professional development and supports

7H: The LEA sets aside funds to support teachers to attend conferences and central office staff provides in-service training. PD attendance is expected. The LEA is part of a consortium of ESCs that focus on Value-Added. Special education staff confirmed the central office's support for PD and volunteer activities that expand horizons and bring new contacts to the LEA. Staff who attend PD outside of the schools must present to the faculty. Staff also is supported to present in conferences. According to a school administrator, “We have to be well informed, because parents are well informed.” All new teachers are assigned a mentor within the same specialization area (e.g., a lead IS will mentor the new IS). Additionally, they are evaluated more

frequently by the school administrator assigned to instruction (principal or assistant principal) to provide feedback on their performance and to hear the teachers' reflections on their progress.

7L: The LEA is involved with the **Schlechty Center for Design Quality**. The site focuses on **professional learning communities** (PLCs), and the teachers received PD from a nationally known expert. Teachers meet by grade level for an hour biweekly (three grade levels meet one week, and the other three grade levels meet in the alternate week). Additionally, staff meeting time is used for collaboration across grades. During the previous school year, staff did a round-robin and offered PD to each other based on their area of expertise. The LEA also supports attendance at conferences. For new hires, the induction process starts in the summer, when the new teachers meet with the school principals and receive training in technology, design quality, and PLCs. The LEA also maintains partnerships with other LEAs (curriculum network) including general and special education staff.

5. Learners

a. Identification

7H: Interviewees commented that the focus is on early intervention because, if students are below grade in grade three, "They will have a much harder time catching up." Students are assessed for both reading and mathematics. According to the special education director, many times simple strategies, such as breaking down assignments, help students to progress without the need for further interventions. Teachers are always checking student progress, and students can redo assignments. Administrators are closely involved in intervention meetings and data analysis meetings. The focus of the IEP monitoring is not compliance, but how the students are doing. High school students run their IEPs. "They need to become their own advocates," stated a special education staff. A simplified IEP format is uploaded to ProgressBook so that teachers and parents can review recommendations and follow progress. As the students enter college, seniors with disabilities receive a full battery of tests to help orient students and families about their needs. If students meet all of their goals and are participating in general education classrooms, they may be taken off of the IEP. According to the psychologist,

I think that the biggest thing that they really do well [at the LEA] is provide the intervention early on for all students. . . . Because when teachers know how to apply those research-based strategies effectively, the students are really going to make good progress . . . and . . . access the curriculum even more effectively.

7L: Interviews were conflicting, as some interviewees noted that they were experienced in using the RTI system, but the special education director stated that the system was not in place. IEP meetings are scheduled preferentially around teachers' and parents' schedules. If the teacher must be absent, the LEA has three "permanent" substitute teachers who can cover classrooms. The special education director reviews IS assignments to ensure that the student's needs match the IS's expertise. The director reviews all IEPs for compliance and administrators must attend all of the IEP meetings. The LEA is being examined for disproportionality. Interviewees commented that students are arriving with so many problems (e.g., addiction, homelessness, dysfunctional families) that exceed the schools' ability to address them.

b. Least Restrictive Environment

7H: Students with disabilities are integrated into general education classrooms with supports. Administrators are careful to look at the placement to ensure that teachers are not overloaded. Administrators try not to cluster students within one classroom, be they gifted or special needs. At the high school, supports are mostly for English and mathematics, although ISs may help with other content areas. They have 2 or 3 students who are not integrated and are served in resource rooms. The special education director commented that the LEA does not have enough ISs to serve all students (6½ for the whole LEA). At the high school, there is an extra period (study hall) during the school day that counts for credit. ISs can use this period for specialized intervention. The LEA special education staff meets before the new school year to discuss the year's challenges and success, identify the needs of new students, look at classroom distributions, and plan for the coming school year. For the upper grades, special education teachers are assigned to individual students "kind of [as] their case managers." All students with disabilities are assigned to an academic assistance period during which they work on IEP goals and objectives, organization, and study skills. Teachers are creating Web sites that upload assignments so that parents can monitor and help their children. The high school has a number of after school clubs (e.g., study club, math lab, and foreign language lab) to support students who are struggling academically, including students with disabilities. Buddy systems (student pillars) pair students who excel in one content area with their peers who struggle in that area.

7L: "Whatever we give our students, we don't buy separate programs; they are embedded," explained the Director of Educational Programs. At the time of the interviews, the LEA was moving toward full inclusion and expected to have all students with SLDs taught in

general classrooms by the following school year. The new teacher contract limits the number of students in a classroom to 24 and 20 in inclusion classes. At the elementary school, the ISs are assigned by classes or teams. Additionally, the elementary school has resource teachers who work with students in need of a more intensive, one-on-one learning environment. The middle school is the “last holdout,” with students still being served with pull-out approaches because the “philosophy clashes” between the ISs and the school administrators.

c. Continuum of services

Both LEAs emphasized inclusion for most students with disabilities, including those with cognitive disabilities who are comfortable in group environment. Paraprofessionals are assigned to students rather than classrooms to provide one-on-one support. For students with severe disabilities, the LEAs work with either private organizations or ESC-operated units.

d. Transitions

The 7H uses a buddy system to help new students integrate into the school. The school contracts with a private organization to provide afterschool tutoring for students who are struggling academically (including students with disabilities). The same organization also provides career technical courses. These courses were described by the interviewees as high-level courses that prepare students to attend universities. Students attend the career classes at the private school and come back to the LEA for the academic classes. All of the students have a folder with accomplishments and challenges, and the folders accompany them through their pathway in the LEA. The 7L LEA works closely with the community services, including an employment consortium that comprises different LEAs. The consortium offers career technology classes and employment training. Both LEAs have strong relationships with nearby universities and colleges and work with them to organize services for their students with disabilities as they enter postsecondary education.

e. Behavior management

7H: The elementary school has a character education program. For the other grade levels, the program is mostly clarification of rules and consequences for breaking the rules. The counselor commented, “There’s pretty low tolerance to both disruption and to . . . the bullying issue.” The community funds a wellness coordinator who does programming on drug and alcohol prevention and works with students who have challenging behaviors.

7L: At the elementary school, students are assigned to small groups, called Pride, under a teacher's leadership. The Pride leader becomes the students' advocate and their advisor. In these small groups, the students learn about the seven habits of highly effective teens. At the middle school, the teachers organize activities, such as dances, to help students gain confidence and act in socially acceptable ways. The high school does not have special programs and tries to focus on personal responsibility. The LEA has organized a committee to address tardiness. The school also has a partnership with a local mental health center that brings social workers into the buildings.

6. Classroom strategies

a. Co-teaching

Interviewees and survey responses at the 7H site indicated that the schools use co-teaching. Indeed, during the hiring process, the special education director looks for ability to collaborate and co-teaching experience. The elementary school organizes planning time during which general education teachers and ISs collaborate and plan lessons. However, many meetings end up happening after school. Although teachers are unionized, there has never been a problem with time for meetings, commented an administrator.

Co-teaching also is the approach used at the 7L site at all grade levels, as self-contained classrooms have been dismantled. Some teaching pairs work better than others, explained an IS. One interviewee cited a 6th grade class in which "you really can't tell the difference between who's on IEP and who isn't." As at the 7H site, teachers are unionized but do not object to afterschool meetings.

b. Curriculum alignment

7H: The schools focus on differentiated instruction and the use of technology to promote differentiation. At the time of the interview, they were mapping the curriculum against the new learning standards to discover the gaps and resources that may be needed. The LEA tends to pilot programs and adopt only those that show positive results. For instance, students in high school are showing a higher proficiency rate in their computer skills as a result of their taking a computer application class, and the LEA is expanding the class to the middle school. At least twice a month, teachers have a half day to meet by grade level and/or departments to work on transition into the new curriculum (substitute teachers cover the classrooms those days). The focus is both horizontal and vertical alignment of curricula, particularly between middle and high

school grades. ISs are part of those teams. Although the LEA is strict about content standards, teachers always have been given autonomy on what to teach and how, “[which] is a surprise in a high-performing district,” commented a newly hired central office representative.

7L: At the time of the interviews, the LEA was “immersed quite heavily” in planning for the new learning standards, with ESC support. Teachers and administrators were considering the strategies and practices that meet the needs of all students for the new learning standards, and were developing formative assessments. The LEA provides release dates for this work, and teachers meet by grade level and content area.

c. Use of data

7H: Teachers had received training on formative assessments and were piloting the new assessments for social studies. The LEA uses Terra Nova to assess elementary grade students, and Terra Nova InView to identify gifted and talented students. The LEA was using Value-Added to monitor growth of students with disabilities. The school also carefully monitors students in the bottom 28 percentile in mathematics and reading for each grade level. Other assessments include benchmarks for reading and mathematics, DIBELS, and CBM Math. The LEA conducts surveys of parents and students to assess satisfaction. Interviewees were concerned that Value-Added might hurt teachers who have high percentages of gifted and talented students or students with multiple disabilities, as robust growth cannot be expected from those two groups. The perception was that Value-Added is slanted toward those who teach average students.

7L: Teachers are trained to use “formative, summative, and short-cycle assessments.” The LEA is piloting a new report-card program, Taskstream, which allows students to upload assignments from each core course, receive feedback from faculty, and resubmit the assignment until they master the content. Teachers administer the Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) three times per year to assess growth and organize small group interventions. “We are getting better . . . in terms of how to access [MAP] results and how to interpret the results,” commented a school administrator.

d. Technology

Both LEAs are technology-driven and have either a technology department or an expert to provide PD and support for teachers and students. At the time of the interviews, both LEAs were implementing technology initiatives to provide computers to all students. These initiatives

are supported by local funding or grants and both use a pilot process to assess the benefits of the initiatives.

The 7H students have iPads, iPods, clickers, and access to a number of online applications and programs such as Google Docs, blogs, Dragon Speech, Alpha Smart, and others. Before initiating its technology program, the LEA conducted surveys with students and staff and organized two open forums with community representatives and practitioners from other LEAs to discuss strategies, costs, and potential benefits. The 7L site is a so-called Google site. The pilot program provides Chromebooks to all 8th graders and plans were to expand the initiative to other grades. As a 7L central office interviewee explained,

Technology provides students with options to learn at their own pace, be able to access resources, have visual applications . . . and offer opportunities for our gifted students to have acceleration within other content and courses.

e. Student supports

7H: The LEA had a pilot program with 3rd graders for Daily 5, a concept designed to help students understand and explain their reading. The students liked it and as of the time of the interviews, all elementary grade teachers were being trained to start the program the following school year. At the middle school, teachers are required to read their students' IEPs and 504 plans before the start of the school year. "It is built in[to] their contract," explained the school administrator. Reading programs used by faculty include Fountas and Pinnell, Wilson Reading, Orton Gillingham, Reading Recovery (for kindergarten students) and Phonics Dance! (elementary school).

7L: Tutoring and supports are provided in partnership with a private organization that works with the student and the family. The Pride groups offer support to middle and high school students. The schools also offer a number of co-curricular activities that focus on team-building, such as Male Minority Leaders and Sister-to-Sister. Unity and Diversity is a program that deals with issues of prejudice through drama. Teachers use a variety of resources to reach students who are struggling academically, including the creation of lessons using YouTube videos. For mathematics, teachers use Everyday Math and at the time of the interview, were trying Math ALEKS. Reading Recovery is a commonly used supplemental reading program. The schools also schedule a resource study hall, staffed by a general education teacher and an IS, which is available to any student who needs extra help. For the coming school year, the high school was

planning to schedule one period of reading and one period of math, followed by one period of targeted intervention for students with disabilities.

7. Family and community involvement

Both schools described their parents as very involved, with “a lot of demands . . . a lot of expectations,” as a 7H interviewee explains. At both sites, parents volunteer during the school day and are involved in a number of committees that deal with funding, curriculum, infrastructure, and others. Both sites have an active PTO. At the 7H site, the PTO is a major source of funding, including for building renovation. A 7H administrator commented that parents want their children to have a well-rounded education, and the schools cannot prioritize one content area over another: science, arts, and foreign languages are all important. At both sites, involvement is strong for the whole community.

The 7L was celebrating the recent approval of a levy to support the schools. Interviewees commented that the community bought a shuttle to help students stay late to catch up academically or participate in sports, and members of the community have taken in homeless children.

8. Similarities and Differences

These are two high-achieving LEAs that are located in different communities and are in different stages of development. The 7H is located in a stable community that has not experienced many changes, while the 7L’s community is quickly changing to become poorer and more diverse. The 7H site appears well-settled in its organization and structure, and keeping up with the changing educational landscape. The schools are preparing for new learning standards and new assessments, incorporating technology to enhance education, and using the Internet to improve communication. This modernization was occurring side by side with well-established instructional processes that provide a sense of stability for the schools. The 7L site also is incorporating new learning standards and technology, while looking for better instructional approaches, such as inclusion and co-teaching.

A subtle difference was detected in examinations of the two LEAs’ visions, and the difference permeated all of the interviews. At the 7H site, students with disabilities appear totally incorporated into each interviewee’s perspective. The focus was on students with a range of abilities and what to do to help them succeed. The IEP was a detail. The word *compliance* was not mentioned in any of the interviews. At the 7L, it appears that students with disabilities

are still a subgroup. Staff is concerned and attentive to the needs of this group and is doing a good job as the group is achieving quite well on the tests, but the word *compliance* is ever-present.

Both LEAs had unique strategies to share with other districts. The main strategy of the 7H was the integration of students with disabilities into the spectrum of abilities and potentials that must be addressed by teachers. How to attain this integration is a challenge that merits exploration. The use of central office staff and teachers from the LEA to present to other LEAs may be a rich experience for all. The also high-achieving 7L was using a system that has been successful in school districts across the country: the small, teacher-student teams that remain together through the school years. No matter what these teams are called (Pride Teams is the name used by the LEA), they provide a supportive network that is particularly important for students who are struggling emotionally, socially, and/or academically. This may explain the success of the 7L's students with disabilities, who attain high average performance scores despite the ongoing demographic changes experienced by the LEA. Table 14 summarizes the main differences between the two sites.

Table 14: Main differences between the top- and bottom-ranked LEAs in Typology 7

Components	7H	7L
Demographics	1,000 students; 0% economically disadvantaged	2,000 students; 35% economically disadvantaged
Performance	High performing, small gap	High performing, larger gap
Community	Stable	Rapidly changing
Intervention/Identification	Well-established, early intervention; student-run IEP	Changing processes
Inclusion and Co-teaching	Well-established	Incipient
Extra support	Study hall	Study hall
Unique strategy	Interventions based on needs not IEP	Pride Teams

Summary

Table 15 summarizes information about the LEAs involved in this study. It is of note that differences in achievement gap between top- and lower-ranked LEAs tend to be about 20 points or less, and for Typology 2, differences are basically nonexistent. At the top-ranked charter school, students with disabilities outperformed, on average, their peers without disabilities

(typical students). Is their 1:1 mentoring system bringing students with disabilities to do so well in the assessments? A more in-depth study of this school is recommended.

Regarding demographics, size (represented here as approximate average daily student enrollment) is not a clear factor in differentiating top- and bottom-ranked LEAs. In some cases, such as Typology 2 and 6, the top-ranked LEA was larger than the lower-ranked one. It is probable that size mediates or moderates other characteristics rather than being a factor that directly influences achievement. There may be a tipping point at which size becomes a challenging factor. For instance, the two largest LEAs (2,000 students and more) have lower achievement within their typologies. The study methods are not appropriate to answer the question as to whether there is an ideal school size for the education of students with disabilities. However, this is a relevant question, as smaller learning community strategies can be adopted to compensate for school size.

In this study, lower-ranked LEAs were more likely to have poor, diversified populations. To deal with the range of abilities and needs among students with disabilities is a considerable challenge. In addition, these schools are also dealing with the range of abilities and needs of a diverse, impoverished population, what brings another layer of challenges to the LEAs.

Two findings from this study merit further attention. First, it is clear that the higher-ranked sites, independent of their typologies, share organizational and instructional characteristics that are not found at the lower-ranked sites. These characteristics include leadership continuity, level of implementation of multiple systems of intervention and supports, presence and use of technology, and level of family and community engagement. Second, higher-ranked sites also use unique strategies that not found at the lower-ranked LEAs, except for Typology 7, which includes two high-achieving sites. These strategies may be a factor in their success with the education of students with disabilities. Chapter 4 revisits these findings as well as the sites' unique strategies and emphasizes teachers' voices in a detailed discussion of survey results.

Table 15: Similarities and differences across sites

	Higher-ranked						Lower-ranked					
	Charter	2	3	4	6	7	Charter	2	3	4	6	7*
Student enrollment	150	900	500	650	1,650	1,000	400	450	1,550	4,000	850	2,150
Location	Inner City	Rural	Small Town	Urban	Urban	Suburban	Inner City	Rural	Small Town	Urban	Urban	Suburban
Economically disadvantaged	91%	43%	13%	39%	4%	0%	95%	93%	45%	77%	56%	15%
Students with disabilities	29%	12%	13%	14%	11%	6%	15%	19%	15%	20%	17%	15%
Reading average (SWD)	426.67	411.22	414.61	420.92	415.39	428.80	389.36	387.93	391.25	382.43	391.37	409.75
Math average (SWD)	432.00	415.70	417.83	412.76	409.00	428.31	383.98	379.69	384.23	378.73	380.71	400.45
Reading gap	-13.63	23.04	21.25	13.91	32.28	17.76	13.66	23.68	37.00	31.42	29.78	33.89
Math gap	-20.04	27.34	27.79	24.83	41.12	22.71	15.17	28.31	39.98	32.64	35.45	46.97
Leadership	Transient	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable	Transient	Transient	Transient	Transient	Transient	Transient
Multitiered intervention processes	Mature	Mature	Mature	Does not use	Mature	Mature	Incipient	Incipient	Incipient	Incipient	Incipient	Changing
Technology to support instruction	Available	Available	Available	Available	Available	Available	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Available
Family engagement	Strong, required	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Not clear	Strong
Unique Strategies	Parent volunteer 1:1 mentoring Cross-age peer tutoring	Technology-driven test preparation	Students involved in IEP since grade 3	Wiki site for parents Learning Lab Peer support Student-led IEP from grade 7	Careful identification Study hall Peer support Student-led IEP at high school	Recent Inclusion strategy	Pride Teams Schlechty Center Study Hall Recent inclusion strategy					

* Both sites in Typology 7 are high achieving; the difference was solely the size of the achievement gap.

FINDINGS: ACROSS TYPOLOGIES

The analysis conducted in the previous chapter identified commonalities and differences among LEAs within each of the six studied typologies. As the analysis proceeded, it became clear that some characteristics, frequently seen at successful LEAs, were not present in those LEAs that are less successful, independent of typology. This chapter re-examines data from the 12 LEAs aggregated into two blocks: successful or high-ranked LEAs (HLEA) and less successful or lower-ranked LEAs (LLEA). As explained in the Methods chapter, success is defined as LEAs with high average scale scores for students with disabilities and/or low achievement gaps between typical students and students with disabilities on the 2012 statewide assessments.

The chapter is divided into four subsections. The first subsection revisits the findings from the case studies to identify the common elements that may distinguish the HLEAs from the LLEAs. The second subsection discusses results from the teacher survey aggregated into the two groups. The third subsection presents an analysis of information obtained during the interviews from LEA leaders: superintendents or regional managers (for charter schools) and special education directors. The goal is to capture these leaders' views on the factors that help or challenge the LEAs as they work to provide quality education for students with disabilities. Findings from these three pieces of information are then summarized at the end of the chapter to create a profile of successful LEAs. The final subsection introduces a few strategies geared to students with disabilities that were observed at some of the successful LEAs.

The Big Picture

HLEAs, compared to the lower-ranked LEAs, tend to have a student population that is more homogenous, less impoverished, and promotes student success on a range of indicators that go beyond results on state assessments. Additionally, as indicated at the end of the previous chapter, *Findings: Case Studies*, these sites share organizational and instructional characteristics that are not commonly seen at the LLEAs. These characteristics include: leadership continuity; use of well-developed, multitiered systems of intervention and supports; the appropriate use of technology to differentiate instruction; strong family engagement; and use of personalized

interventions for struggling students. Table 16 summarizes the demographic, organizational, and instructional characteristics of the studied sites disaggregated by ranking.

Table 16: Comparing high-ranked and lower-ranked sites

Characteristics		HSWD	LSWD
Demographics	Economically disadvantaged	36.7%	63.4%
	Non-White	18.0%	47.7%
	Students with disabilities	15.2%	17.1%
	Students with more severe disabilities ¹	17.7%	31.7%
Outcomes	Average dropout (2006-2010)	1.8%	11.2%
	Performance Index (2011-2012)	104.4	86.6
	Average ACT scores	22.5	19.7
	LRC standards met ²	92.5%	46.7%
Organizational/ Instructional	Less than 80% regular classroom	25.4%	33.4%
	Leadership	Stable (5 of 6)	Transient
	Multitiered systems	Well-developed	Incipient
	Technology	Rich, focused	Mostly poor (5 of 6)
	Family engagement	Engage, demanding	Disengaged
	Targeted interventions	Personalized	Generic

¹ Combined percentage of students classified as multiple disabled, cognitive disabled, autism, OHI-major, or developmentally delayed

² Local Report Card

Leadership: Common sense suggests that continuity of leadership, particularly good leadership, brings stability to the LEAs and allows initiatives to be fully implemented and mature. Styles of leadership were not explored; leaders were not given inventories that would require more time and resources than were available from the researchers and most of all, from participants. However, it appears that style is not a factor. The interview findings suggest that most central office and school staff in all of the studied LEAs were involved, accessible, dedicated to their work, and have the best interests of their students in mind. The main difference was time in the position.

In 5 of the 6 HLEAs, leadership personnel had been in the position for four or more years and superintendents for at least five years. Alternatively, the superintendent of one of the most successful LEAs mentioned that it was time to leave, as “superintendents who stay for more than 20 years” will not be successful. The sense was that after a specific period, leaders may succumb to conformism or become tired. For this superintendent, 20 years was the ceiling. A question that

would be worth exploring is whether there is an ideal period for leaders, a period long enough to allow initiatives to take hold and mature but not so long so that initiatives become stale and conformism takes hold.

Changes in leadership for the LLEAs may be a consequence of their lack of success and an attempt by their Boards of Education (BoE) to hire more successful leaders. Yet, it appears that the BoEs repeat their choices with the new candidates, as leadership keeps changing. The challenge is not only to find the good candidate but to find the good candidate who will stay. Workshops facilitated by human resources experts are a service that professional organizations can offer to BoE members.

Multitiered systems of intervention and supports: A well-developed, multitiered system (MTS) of intervention and supports may be particularly important for students with disabilities. HLEAs tend to use MTS and use them well. The MTSs may not be called Responses to Intervention (RtIs), but they all propose levels of gradually more complex interventions, personalized to the individual student, and with careful assessment of results. At the HLEAs, school personnel had been trained in the process, piloted it, addressed identified problems, and became experts.

The focus of the system is to recognize the students' needs as soon as possible and to ensure that the implemented interventions are appropriate to address these needs. The referral process becomes a step in a series of carefully implemented and assessed stages. Compliance with a set of rules and regulations is not the focus. Indeed, at most of the HLEAs, the word *compliance* did not come up during the interviews. In addition to an appropriate system, timing of interventions is essential. As one of the interviewees expressed, if children are below grade level when they reach grade three the chances that they will overcome the gap become smaller.

LLEAs also are using MTS, but the majority is in the beginning stages, still trying to find their way in terms of how to best apply the process and still concerned with compliance, as there is no mastery. This finding of incipient MTS, added to the finding that LLEAs tend to have high student mobility (generally schools with high poverty populations), may explain the difficulty of these sites in helping struggling students. Students come later into the schools, with large academic gaps, and do not stay long enough to benefit from systems of intervention that are still in their developmental stages.

The same difference in stages of implementation was seen for inclusion and co-teaching. Although the strategies are being implemented by most if not all of the LEAs visited, the level of implementation tends to be quite different in top-ranked versus lower-ranked sites. Likewise, teachers at all sites appear to be involved in analyzing data to inform instruction, but the expertise in the process is quite different across sites.

For the LLEAs, the data suggest a type of cycle in which reforms are initiated by a leader, or under ODE pressure. Within a short time, the leader (school principal, superintendent, director of special education) leaves the position and a new leader arrives with new ideas or a different perspective on how to implement the same process. The “fad of the month,” an expression frequently heard in schools, may reflect teachers’ frustration with constantly trying new initiatives without the ability to fully implement any of them.

Technology: HLEAs tend to be technology-rich but, more importantly, staff is clear on how to use the technology to diversify instruction. As one of the interviewees commented, technology is an ideal way to provide multisensorial stimuli that will reach a variety of students, challenge gifted students, and familiarize all students with resources that are essential to the job market. LLEAs tend to be technology-poor, and therefore, unable to offer their students the wealth of resources provided by computers and the Internet.

Family engagement: HSWD LEAs tend to be located in stable communities, populated by college-educated parents who have the time, energy, and knowledge to provide supports to their schools. These parents and other community members do not need special occasions to come to the schools. They are their children’s advocates, demand the best services, check their children’s progress, volunteer in classrooms, support school initiatives, and engage in fundraising.

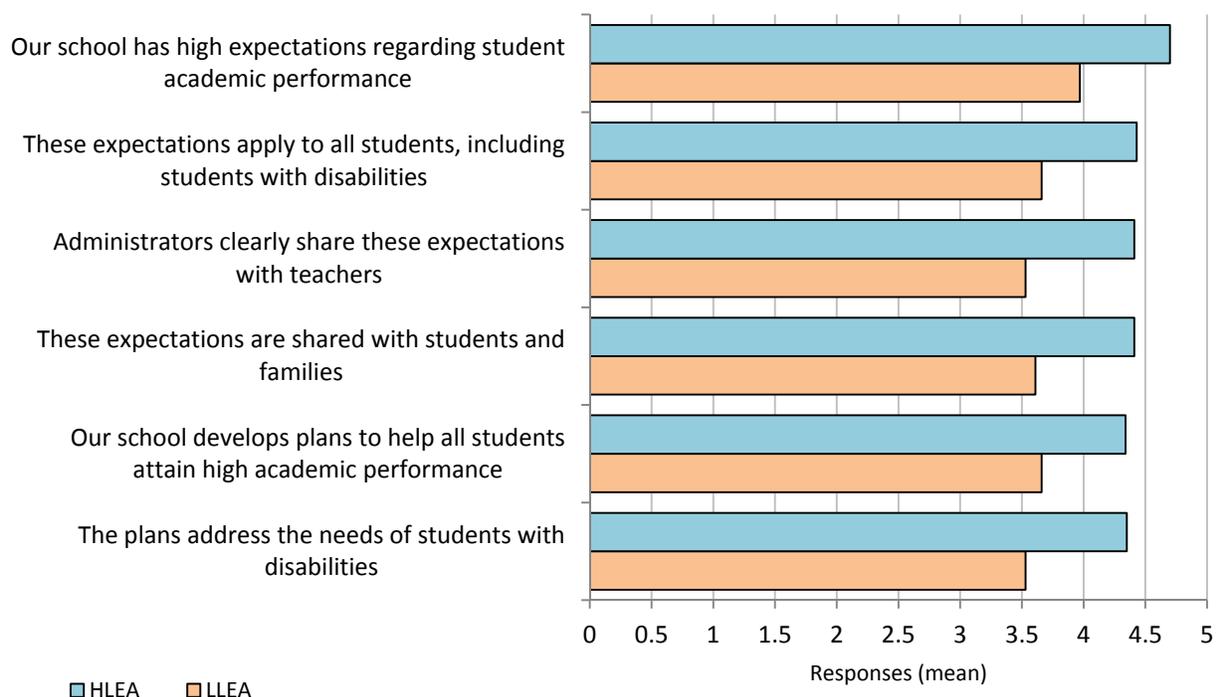
In general, interviews with lower-ranked staff suggested a less engaged community. The schools may invest time and money in activities to attract families but it is an ongoing effort with mixed results. School staff understands that parents have difficulty (e.g., with time and transportation) coming to school to attend meetings. Sometimes, as interviewees in the lower-ranked charter schools commented, parents have had their own bad experiences with schools and do not feel comfortable in a school environment. Whatever the reasons, this gap in communication needs to be bridged so that students who are struggling academically hear the same message and receive appropriate supports in schools and at home. Parent advocacy

organizations are in an ideal position to spread the message that education counts and to help bridge this gap.

Teacher Voices

The teacher survey, conducted between April and May, 2013, revealed striking differences in responses from participants in the two groups of LEAs (HLEAs and LLEAs). Participation from the HLEAs totaled 181 teachers for a response rate of 56.0%; 21 (11%) of these respondents identified themselves as special education teachers. LLEAs' participation included 214 teachers, for a response rate of 43.6%; 60 respondents (28%) were special education teachers. Responses between the two groups of LEAs were compared using independent samples and a t-test ($\alpha = 0.50$) for items addressed with the use of a Likert-type scale, which ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) through 5 (strongly agree). Responses for items that involved categorical data (e.g., yes/no) were compared using Pearson chi square (χ^2) when appropriate. Results from the tests are not included for reasons of space but are available upon request. The survey template is included in Appendix D. The presentation of findings is organized according to the study's conceptual framework.

Figure 2: Teachers' perceptions regarding schools' educational vision

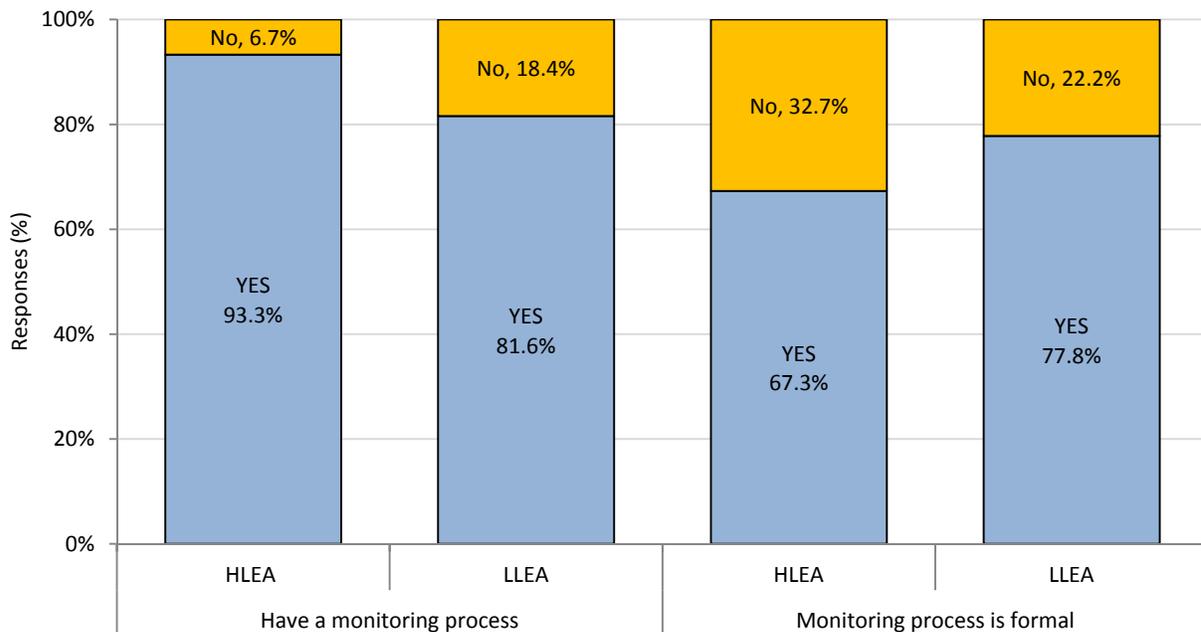


1. Vision

Survey participants were asked to rate their agreement with statements related to the schools' educational vision. The statements probed whether the schools' visions and expectations were shared by all, involved all students, and were supported by implementation plans. Figure 2 displays the percentages of responses related to the first two items (presence of a monitoring system and type of system). As seen in the figure, means for HLEA responses ranged between 4.3 and 4.7 (tending toward agree/strongly agree responses), and means for LLEA responses ranged from 3.5 to 3.9 (tending toward "neither" responses). Differences were robust for all seven statements ($p < .000$).

Figure 3 displays responses related to the process used by the schools to monitor progress toward their goals. A larger percentage of HLEA participants (93.3%) than LLEA respondents (81.6%) indicated that their schools had a process for monitoring of goals. The process was more likely to be seen as informal by HLEA respondents than by their LLEA peers (67.3% vs. 77.8%). Differences were robust for both items ($p < .001$; $p < .031$). The majority (about 90%) of respondents from both groups of LEAs agreed that special education personnel were involved in the process.

Figure 3: Process for monitoring progress toward goals



*n = 179 HLEA; 212 LLEA

2. Teacher support

Four items probed teachers' perceptions on topics such as supports received from school and central office administrators, teachers' involvement in decisions about curriculum and instruction, and availability of time for planning lessons. Figures 4 through 6 display mean responses. For all of the topics except planning time, HLEA respondents were more likely to give higher ratings to their schools (means of 4.0 and above) than LLEA respondents (means around 3.0), and the differences in means between the two groups were robust for all the statements ($p < .000$).

Regarding availability of planning time, however, LLEA ratings tended to be equal or slightly higher than HLEA ratings, with responses tending toward dissatisfaction (around 3.0). The contrast in responses suggests that either HLEA schools do not provide teachers with sufficient time for planning or teachers from high-expectation, high-demand schools also are more demanding.

Figure 4: Teachers' perceptions of school and district supports

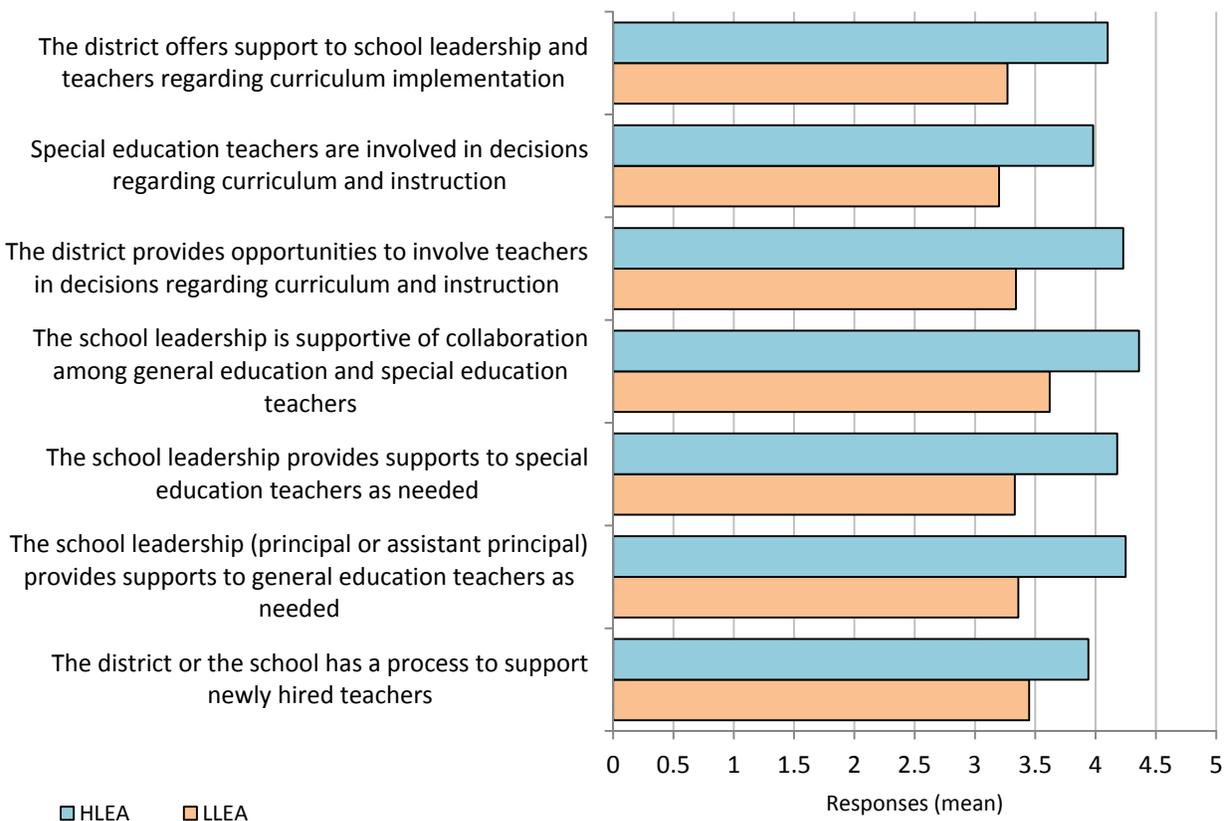


Figure 5: Teachers’ perceptions about collaboration

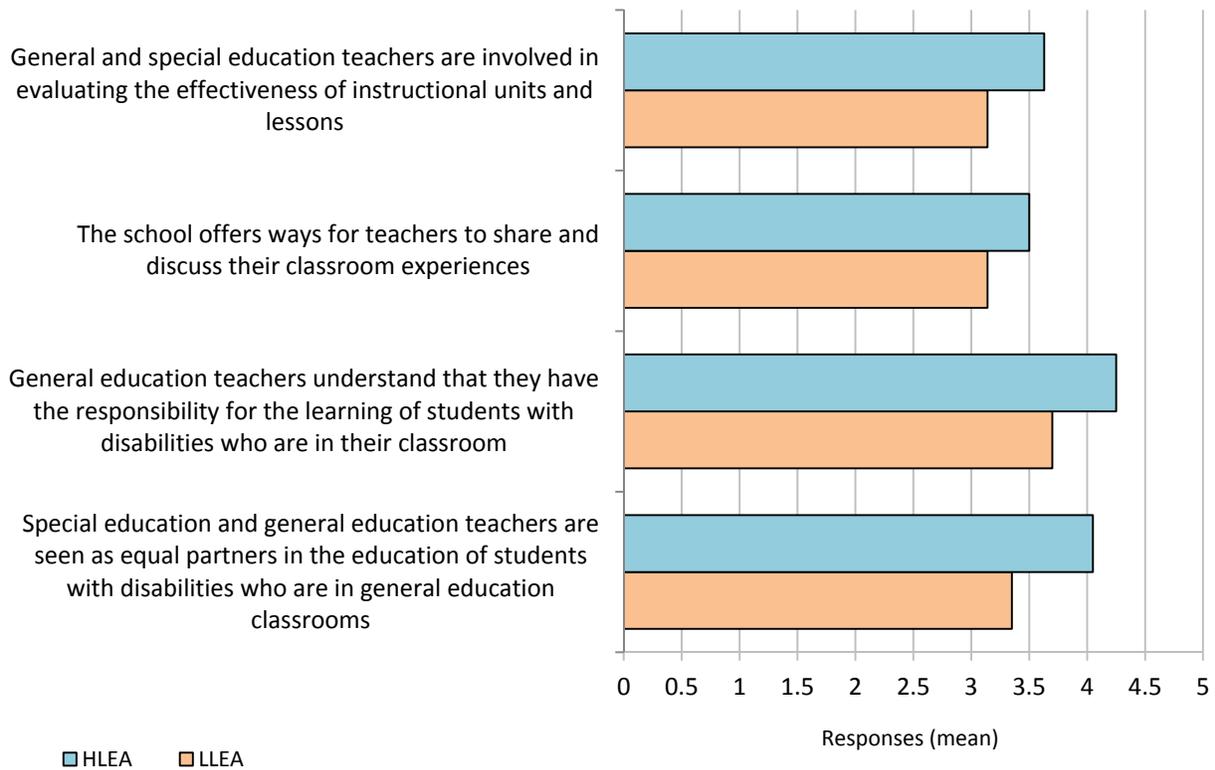
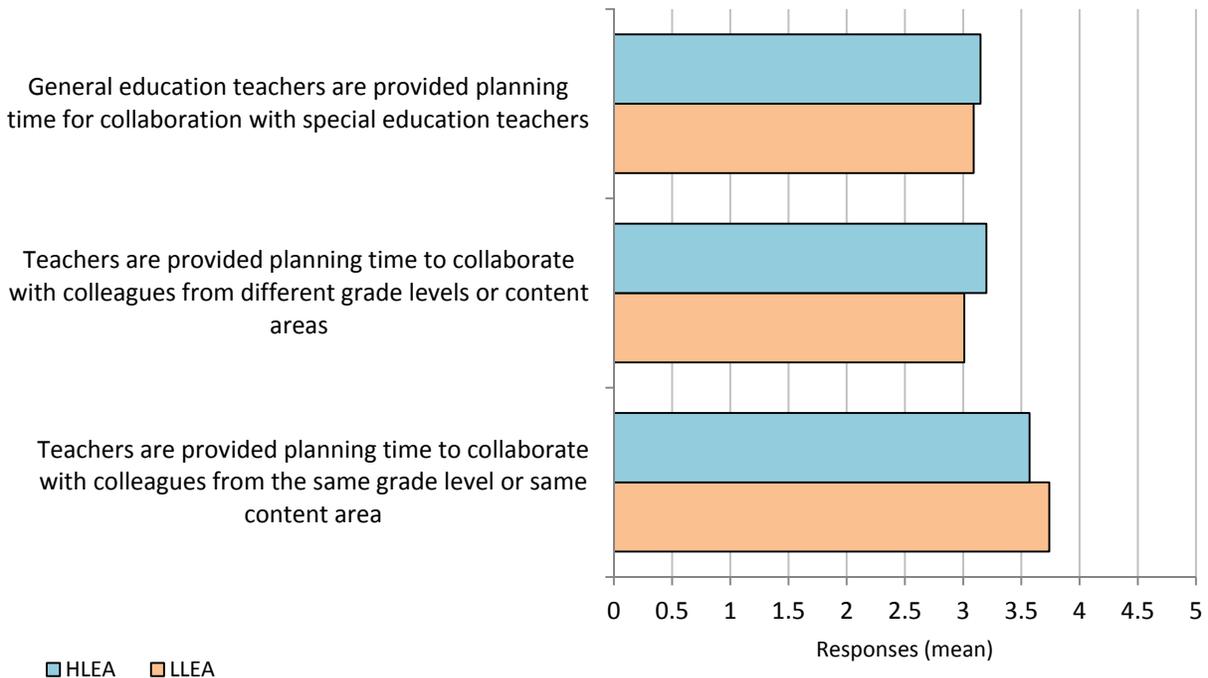
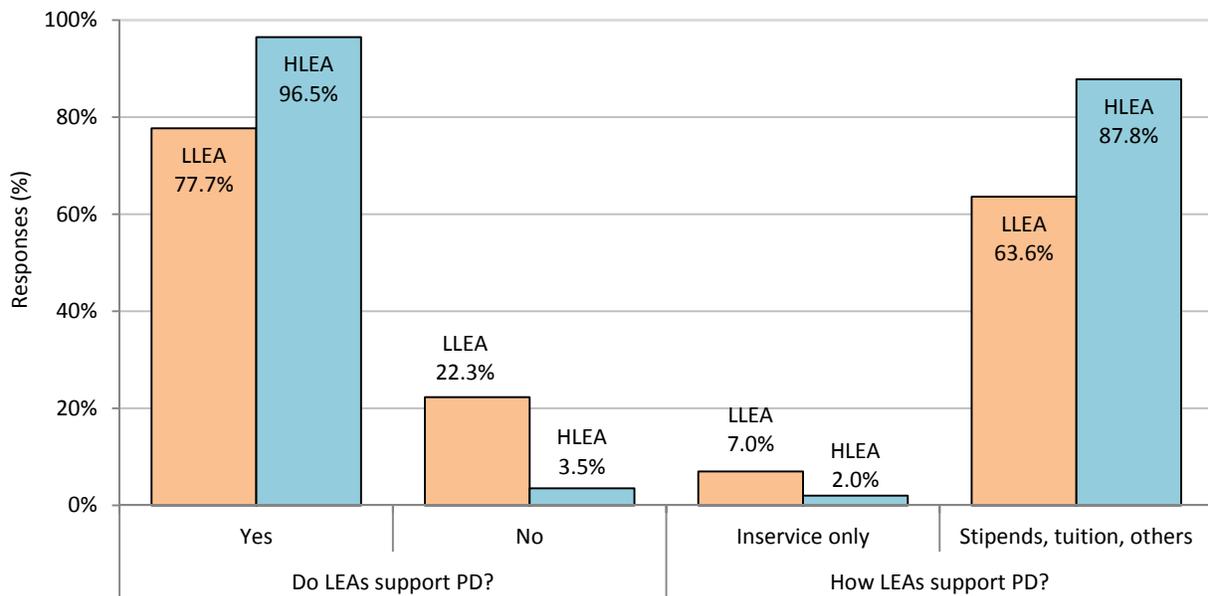


Figure 6: Teachers’ perceptions about time for planning



Regarding professional development (PD), as displayed in Figure 7, more HLEA (96.5%) than LEA respondents (77.7%) stated that their districts supported participation in PD. Likewise, HLEA respondents were more likely (87.8%) to state that the districts supported PD opportunities in a variety of ways than their LLEA peers (62.6%). Differences in mean responses were robust for all items ($p < .000$).

Figure 7: Teachers’ perceptions of LEAs support for professional development*

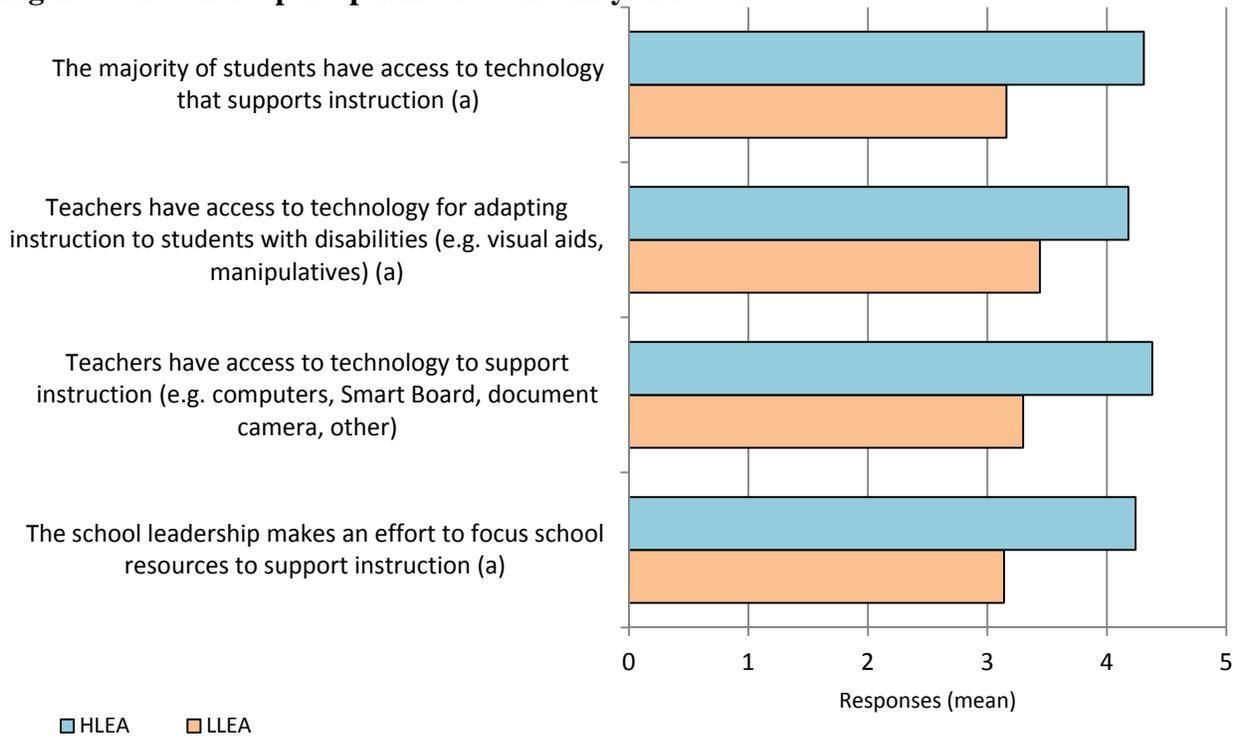


Note. n = 171 HLEAs; 197 LLEAs

3. Instruction

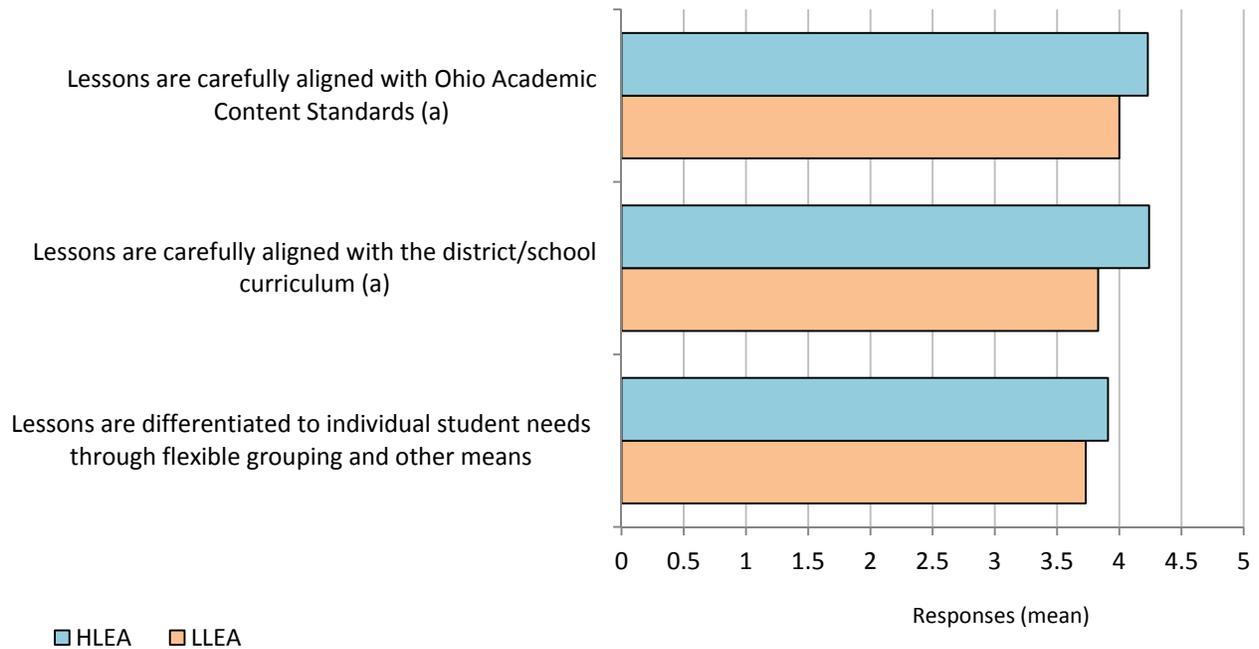
Topics related to availability of technology, curriculum alignment, and availability of supports for students who are struggling academically elicited a similar pattern of responses. HLEA respondents were more likely to give higher ratings to their schools/districts than LLEA respondents, and differences were robust for all but one statement. Mean responses to the statement “lessons are differentiated to individual student needs through flexible grouping and other means” were similar for both groups. Figures 8, 9, and 10 display mean responses for each statement.

Figure 8: Teachers' perceptions of availability of resources



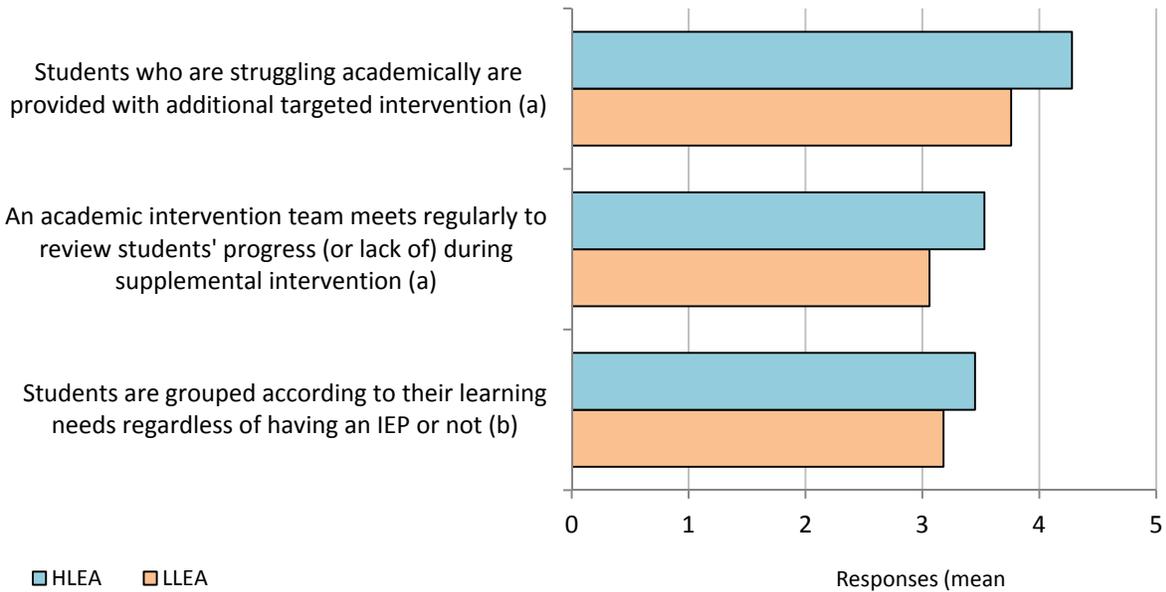
(a) $p < .000$

Figure 9: Teachers' perceptions of curriculum alignment



(a) $p < .000$

Figure 10: Teachers' perceptions regarding supports for striving students



21. p < .000; (b) p < .017

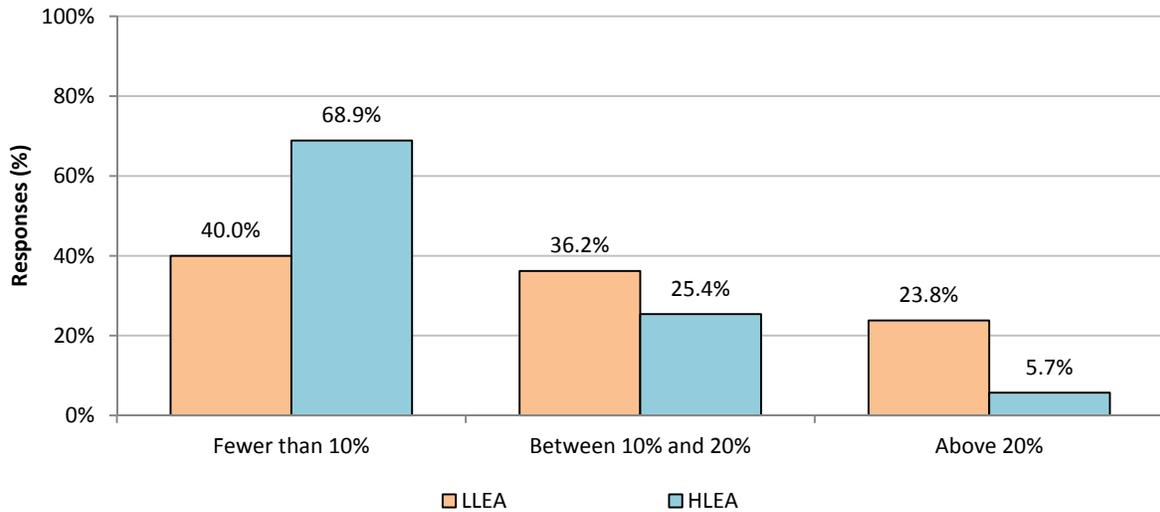
4. Inclusion

Four survey items were geared to general education teachers only. Two items elicited similar responses from the two groups and are not represented in graphics. One item probed whether students with disabilities had been included in their classrooms during the 2012-2013 school year. The majority of teachers from both groups of LEAs responded affirmatively (85.3% HLEA and 80.8% LLEA). The other item probed the time that students with disabilities spent in general education classrooms. The majority of respondents from both groups of LEAs indicated that the students spent more than 80% of the time (82.8% HLEA and 78.1% LLEA) in general education classrooms.

A third item focused on the percentage of students with disabilities in the classrooms. As seen in Figure 11, HLEA respondents were more likely than their LLEA peers to report having fewer than 10% of all classroom students classified as having a disability (p < .000). The fourth item assessed teachers' involvement in the assignment of students with disabilities to their classrooms. In both groups of schools, general education teachers perceived themselves as having little involvement in the assignment process. However, as displayed in Figure 12, HLEA

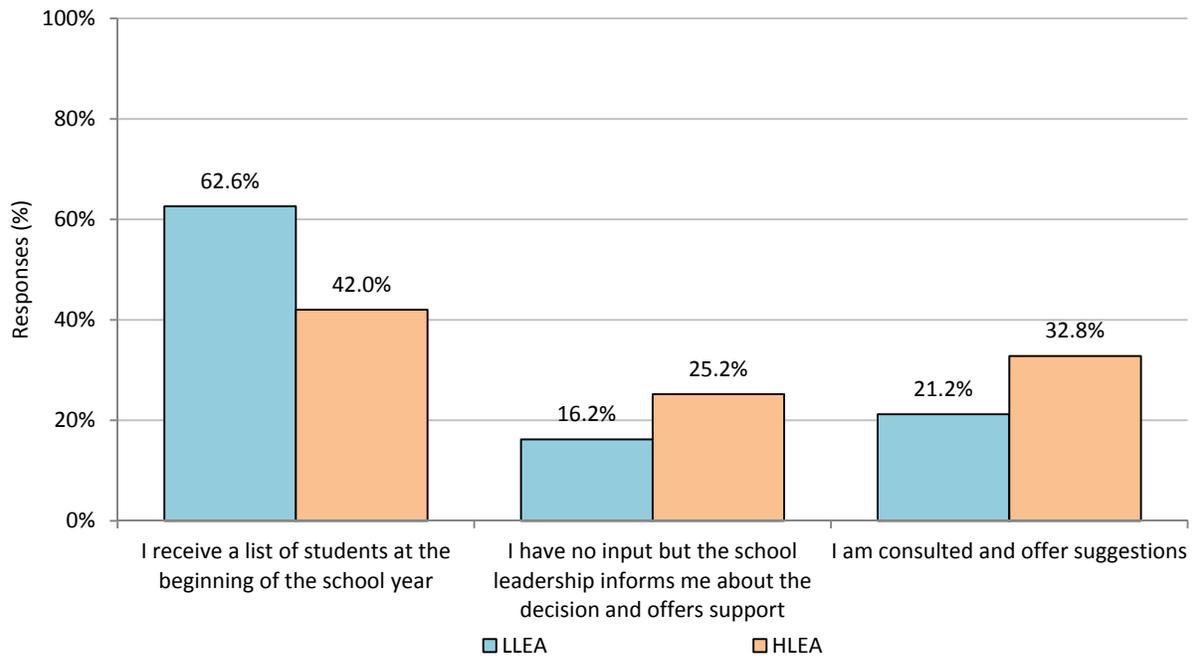
respondents were more likely to report that they were either consulted by the school administrator or offered supports than their LLEA peers (58.0% vs. 37%, respectively).

Figure 11: Percentage of students with disabilities in general classrooms*



Note. n = 122 HLEA; 105 LLEA (only general education teachers responded to this item).

Figure 12: General education teachers' involvement in assignment of students with disabilities to their classrooms

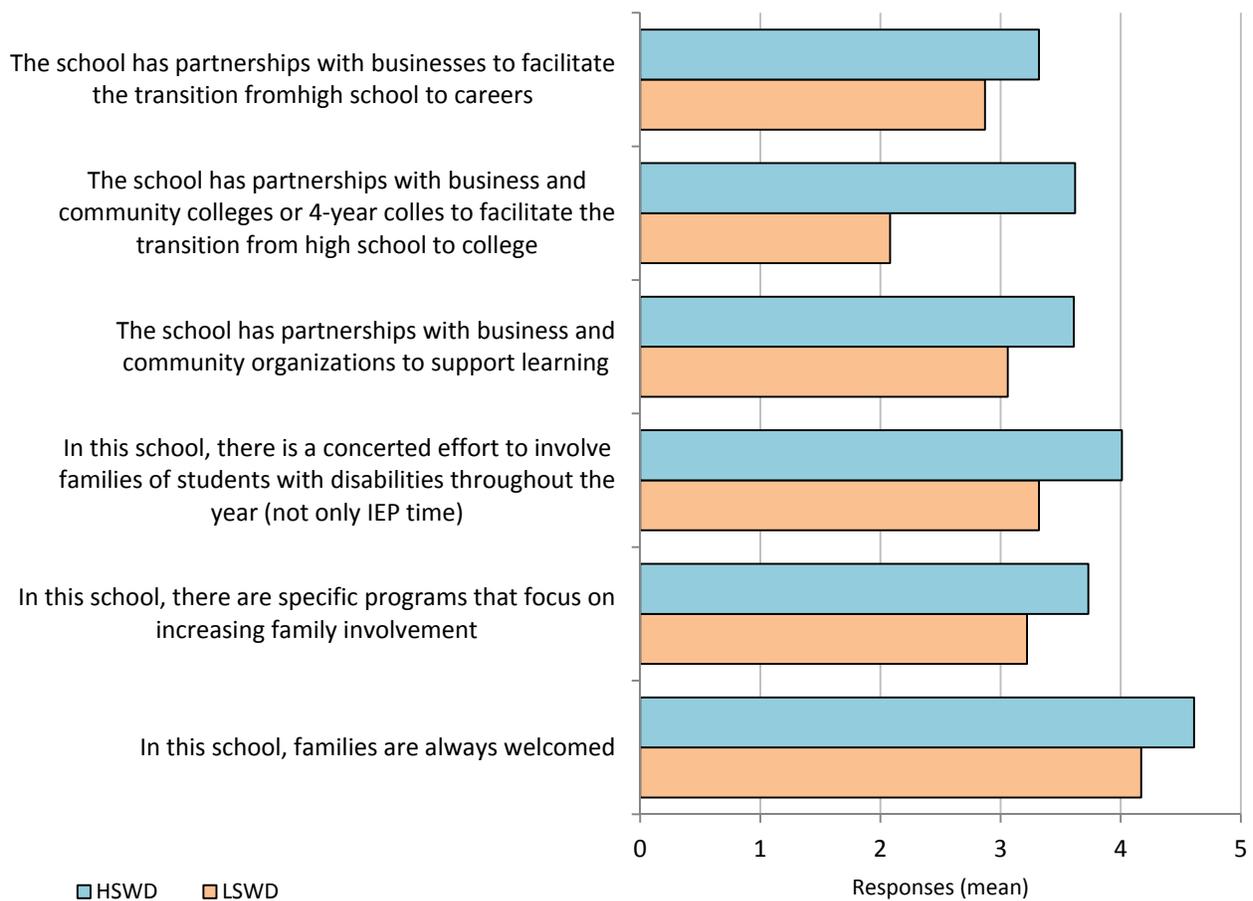


Note. n = 119 HLEA and 99 LLEA; only general education teachers responded to this item.

5. Community and family involvement:

The final set of scale-type items in the survey was related to family and community engagement with the schools. Once more, HLEA respondents were more likely to give high ratings to their schools than LLEA respondents ($p < .000$). Figure 13 displays mean responses for each statement.

Figure 13: Teachers' perceptions about community/family engagement



Leadership Voices

During the interviews, all participants were asked about the LEA's educational vision and the factors that they perceive as contributing to or challenging the attainment of this vision. The vision was found to be quite similar regardless of the LEA's success or typology, as described in the previous chapter, "Findings: Case Studies." The challenging or contributing factors, however, differed.

The previous section summarized responses across all interviewees; this subsection focuses on superintendents and special education directors' perspectives. (In one LEA, the special education director was absent during the visit because of an emergency; another LEA did not have the position. In this case, findings reflect interviews with special education teachers.)

1. Challenging factors

Changing teachers' views: This factor was cited by 4 superintendents and 2 special education directors (6 out of the 12 interviewees) at HLEAs, and 1 superintendent and 2 special education directors from the LLEAs (3 out of 12) LEAs. General education teachers perceived that students with disabilities are not their responsibility. As one of special education leader summarized, "Special education is down the hall."

Professional development: Connected to the factor above is the statement by three superintendents (2 from HLEAs and 1 LLEA) that teachers, particularly new hires, need intensive PD. This is certainly an expensive demand for LEAs that are struggling with shortage of funds. For the charter school leaders, the need for intensive PD is particularly challenging, as they have high teacher turnover because of low teacher salaries and competition from neighboring LEAs and charters.

Changing demographics: Four interviewees from HLEAs and 2 from one LLEA commented on an increase in students with more severe needs. Interviewees attributed this increase to the open enrollment policy. HLEA leaders fear that their high-performing schools are receiving more students with higher needs. LLEA leaders commented that the more challenging students are remaining, while the high-achieving students are being accepted by the receiving schools. Concerns with this changing population include lack of expertise on more severe disabilities and higher demand for resources without a corresponding increase in funds.

Personnel: Not enough specialized staff was a comment from 2 of the 6 special education representatives for the HLEA site and 2 from a LLEA site.

Others: Lack of funds, lack of resources, and lack of time were factors mentioned more frequently by interviewees from LLEA sites. Conflict between school administrators and special education personnel related to delivery of services was a factor mentioned only at LLEA sites.

2. Contributing factors

Collaboration: This factor was cited by five interviewees from HLEA sites and an equal number from LLEA sites. Collaboration involves general education and special education

teachers as well as administrators and teachers, central office, and school staff. Collaboration transcends the size of the district, but small districts have it easier, as mentioned by four HLEA interviewees and one LLEA superintendent. When the entire LEA is contained within a single building, communication is not a problem.

Engaged community: Parents who value education and are engaged with their children's schools are a contributing factor cited by three HLEA interviewees and none of the interviewees from the LLEAs.

Specific instructional strategies: Inclusion was cited by the two leaders from the same HLEA site as a factor that contributes to the LEAs' success. Another HLEA interviewee commented on the success of its tutoring system whereby high school students help elementary school peers. A third comment related to small class sizes at an HLEA site that is trying to keep class sizes small to maintain a well-implemented inclusion process. Interviewees from LLEAs commented on ODE-driven initiatives, such as the Value-Added evaluation system and the Ohio Improvement Process, particularly the teacher-based teams. Although all LLEAs were preparing to implement or had been implementing the initiatives for a short period of time, they shared the hope that the initiatives would help them improve student outcomes.

In a nutshell, within the LEAs studied, characteristics shared by successful LEAs are as follows:

- Communities are stable, and schools have less needy students and more resources to educate them, including technology.
- Leadership (a) remains long enough to forge an educational vision that embraces all students and is shared by all (administrators, teachers, parents, and students); (b) creates positive, supportive relationships with staff; and (c) supports and assesses implementation of instructional initiatives.
- Schools have a positive climate that fosters collaboration among all, and instill a clear vision that the education of students with disabilities is everybody's responsibility (not solely that of special education teachers).
- School personnel are skilled in providing interventions as soon as students show signs of academic struggle and have time to apply and assess the interventions as students (and leaders) remain in the schools;
- School administrators are careful to maintain a balance of abilities and needs within

- classrooms and provide supports and resources to teachers in inclusion classrooms;
- Engaged parents create a bridge between school and home so that students progress.

Typology 7 offered a way to control for the impact of differences in student population on LEAs' academic performance. Both LEAs are similar in size and student population. Although the LLEA has a larger enrollment of economically disadvantaged students, the percentage (15%) is still small to have an impact. Both LEAs can be classified as high achievers, in the sense that students with disabilities score on average above 400 in the state assessments (scale scores). Both LEAs have strong parental engagement, are technology-rich, and have similar instructional strategies. Yet, one has a larger achievement gap between typical students and students with disabilities. The first differing characteristic is that leadership in the LLEA has changed recently, and a result of this change, new initiatives are being implemented, particularly those related to students with disabilities, such as the MTS. Assuming leadership remains, additional visits to the two sites in a couple of years may provide information relevant to the hypotheses that organizational stability is an essential feature for student improvement.

An important challenge highlighted in the case studies and the leadership interviews was the sense that teachers were coming to schools unprepared, particularly to address special needs students. The LEAs felt an obligation to provide ongoing and intensive PD, but special education personnel complained about a lack of clarity in their roles. At the time when schools are struggling with budget cuts, large investments in PD may not be possible or cost effective. Engagement of schools of education in a dialogue on how to change teaching preparation is a pressing need.

Table 17 summarizes the information by typology, level of success with students with disabilities, and interviewee.

Table 17: Challenges and contributors to the attainment of LEAs' vision

Typology		Role	Challenging Factors	Contributing Factors
Charter	HLEA	Manager and Special Ed. Director (group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low salary = high turnover • New teachers need intensive PD • Disconnection home-school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value-added teacher evaluation (promising factor)
	LLEA	Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low salaries = high turnover • New teachers = intensive PD • Inadequate specialized services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collegiality across all staff levels
		Special Ed. Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher mindset regarding special education = intensive PD • Time = not enough time for teaching, special intervention, testing, paperwork • Disconnection home-school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collegiality between general and ISs • Well-developed IAT process • ISs integrated into the teacher-based teams
2	HLEA	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More students with severe cognitive disabilities: how to help? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full inclusion: staff buys into inclusion
		Special Ed. Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion (“boosts” student confidence)
	LLEA	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher mindset = culture of failure (these students cannot learn) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small district; easy communication at all levels
		Special Ed. Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of resources (small staff) • Lack of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear mission that involves all students: “It has been a hard paradigm change.”
3	HLEA	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher mindset regarding special education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration among central office and school staff • Cross-age tutoring (high school students tutoring elementary school peers) • Small LEA = easy communication
		Special Ed. Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher mindset: special education not my responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent has special education background
	LLEA	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disconnection home-school • Lack of funds leading to increased class size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good relationship with community services (for referrals) • School staff does not give up on involving parents
		Special Ed. Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding = skeleton crew • Teacher mindset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership keeps moving toward goals: “stick with the mission no matter what”

Typology		Role	Challenging Factors	Contributing Factors
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clashes with school administrators about how to provide services 	
4	HLEA	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher mindset = culture of failure (these students cannot learn) Intensive PD in differentiated instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small district = easy communication Affluent community that values education
		Special Ed. Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open enrollment = changing student population Understaffed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small district (everybody knows everybody by name) Support from administrators and general education teachers
	LLEA	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open enrollment = nearby districts do not accept challenging students; students with disabilities close to 30% Find well-qualified special education teachers for co-teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good teachers Low turnover TBTs are really working Each building has a special education supervisor (focus on co-teaching)
		Special Ed. Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open enrollment = increase number of students with severe disabilities and no increase in funding Disconnection home-school Coordination of services with private provider Teacher mindset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of new initiatives = inclusion, TBTs = promising changes Dedicated teachers
6	HLEA	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher mindset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear vision of what and how Good relationships = high morale Find the right people and put them in the right positions
		Special Ed. Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher mindset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing discussions of where to go and how to get there Teachers have resources
	LLEA	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small district = not enough resources = must outsource services = loss of control over quality of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great collaboration among general and special education teachers
		Special Ed. Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of funds Disconnection home-school Changing administration (revolving door) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great collaboration among general and special education teachers Good staff, including auxiliary services personnel

Typology		Role	Challenging Factors	Contributing Factors
7	HLEA	Superintendent Special Education Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher mindset • Students arriving with more severe disabilities • Students arriving with more severe disabilities = not enough staff • Disconnection home-school for new students not used to LEAs' regulations and expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged community • Small class sizes • Great collaboration among general and special education teachers • Small district = easy communication • Great collaboration at all levels • Engaged community
	LLEA	Superintendent Special Education Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations exceed ability to meet them = test results do not reflect what students are learning • Clashes with school principals regarding delivery of services (trying to change schedules) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive BoE • Good collaboration among staff • Great collaboration among general and special education teachers • Co-teaching = incipient but moving ahead • All ISs are male and involved in sports = model for students

Comparing Findings

As noted in the introduction, this study was founded upon a review of research on programs and practices adopted by school districts and schools that have been successful in educating students who tend to struggle academically: students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged students.

Table 18 displays similarities and differences between findings from the literature review on students with disabilities and findings from the OCECD Research Project. It is important to observe that findings tend to repeat, regardless of the methods adopted by the researchers or the place where the study happened. A second and equally important discovery is that some of the findings that are traditionally attributed to high-performing LEAs, such as high expectations, also may occur in lower performing LEAs. The key is not so much a difference in vision but the ability of planning the steps to attain the vision and implement the necessary initiatives. Lower performing LEAs may stop at the vision. They either did not plan how to get there, or leadership does not have enough time to implement the initiatives that might help to attain the vision. Therefore, the adoption of a specific strategy is not a guarantee of success. Whatever strategy is adopted, it must be well-planned and well-implemented, carefully monitored, and given time for correction of errors and maturation.

Table 18: Comparing findings from the literature review on students with disabilities and the current study

Categories	Literature Review Findings	OCECD Research Project Findings
IDEA requirements	Early identification Focus on facilitating transition Use of inclusion	Higher ranked LEAs (HR) were more adept to early identification and use of inclusion than lower ranked LEAs (LR). All had programs to facilitate transition across grade levels and postschool
Defining principles	High expectations for all and shared responsibility for achievement	High expectations are a common vision; LEAs differ in the quality of plans to achieve the vision and commitment to the plan
Infrastructure	Creative use of funding New/renovated buildings	Most LEAs try to use funding creatively and renovate buildings when possible; funding is an issue for most LEAs (high or low)
School organization	Clear behavior expectations and positive reinforcement	All schools use positive reinforcement; behavior is not a major finding
	Leadership focused on instruction; no specific style	Major finding was stability of leadership; LR LEAs tend to have transient leadership
	Teacher collaboration, particularly general education and special education	Teacher collaboration is a need, but teachers need time to collaborate and plan lessons together
	Professional learning communities (PLCs)	Not a finding; most higher ranked LEAs did not have PLCs
	Guaranteed planning time to collaborate	Most LEAs (higher or lower ranked) offer grade-level or department-level planning time; rarely time for general and special education teachers to collaborate
	Ongoing PD tailored to teachers' needs	All LEAs are investing in PD, despite shortage of funds. HR LEAs are more systematic in what they offer
External supports	District policies focused on hiring and maintaining high quality personnel	All LEAs had similar hiring processes, were focused on hiring good people, and provided mentoring to new teachers
	District staff supporting instruction at school level	Teachers in HR LEAs perceive higher levels of support from central office than teachers in lower ranked LEAs
	Family involvement	The study suggests that it is rather the family's own values (social capital) that explain why some LEAs have more engaged families.
	Business and higher education partnerships	All LEAs search for partnerships; wealth of partners depend on location
Instructional strategies	Access to core curriculum for all students	Essential; either with inclusion or exposure to core curriculum in resource rooms
	Ongoing assessments with the use of data to inform instruction	All LEAs are moving toward alignment of curriculum with Ohio Learning Standards; HR LEAs were further along in the process
	No specific instructional strategies and programs	It is not the program but the structure of instruction and supports

Specific Strategies

As researchers visited the schools and interviewed personnel, they looked for strategies that the sites were implementing to address the needs of students with disabilities, with an emphasis on the successful sites. Overall, top-ranked and lower-ranked sites tend to use similar strategies (called “generic” in the table above) and even similar supplemental programs. However, a few strategies found in HLEAs appeared particularly useful or promising. Five merit further attention:

Required volunteer time from parents: The charter school in this study, located in an impoverished urban setting, is the only site with an inverted achievement gap (students with disabilities score on average higher than those without disabilities). To enroll their children in that school, parents are required to provide a minimum of 20 hours of volunteer work. Parents who cannot come to the school building may still volunteer by doing at-home activities. This requirement seems a good tool with which to break the barrier between parents and schools so commonly mentioned by sites located in high-poverty areas. Maybe traditional public schools should be allowed to impose mandatory volunteer requirements on their parents.

One-on-one mentoring: Adopted by the same charter school, this system involves teachers who are assigned to one or a small group of students with disabilities and remain with them throughout the year. The teachers familiarize themselves with the students’ needs and their IEPs recommendations, become the students’ advocates, mentor them, and make sure required accommodations are implemented for classroom work and statewide assessments. The continuity of relationship was described as providing familiarity and confidence for the students.

Student-led IEPs: Schools that are involving students in their IEPs indicated a number of positive outcomes. The students familiarize themselves with their strengths and the areas in which they need support, become goal-oriented, and gain confidence in advocating for themselves. During the study, a couple of interviewees commented that schools over-protect students with disabilities and do not prepare them for adult life. Student-run IEPs may be the answer to this potential threat. Although a number of other sites have student-run IEPs, the 4H LEA starts the process earlier, sometimes as early as grade three, “depending on the student level of maturity,” commented an interviewee.

Peer-support systems: Used by the 6H and both sites in Typology 7, in the peer-support system, a student is assigned to provide supports to a student with a disability. (The system also is used for students who struggle in specific academic areas.) Supports can take the form of helping a student with motor impairments to reach the cafeteria or the bus or helping a student with cognitive disability understand a teacher's direction. The peer system is described as beneficial to both students, as it provides the extra help for the student in need while fostering responsibility and leadership in the helper.

Extra scheduled time (learning lab, study hall): The study hall/learning lab is a scheduled time during the school day, generally shorter than the full class period, in which students take the responsibility to search for help for their areas of need. For instance, a student struggling with mathematics will ask for help from a math teacher, and students who are doing well academically may use this time to work on a project or read a book. Students with disabilities may be part of the group that is working on an extra project, receiving assistance from the math teacher, or receiving extra supports from an intervention specialist, depending on their academic needs. The strategy, found in the 6H, 7H and 7L sites, individualizes supports and places greater responsibility on the student to initiate them.

The common thread across these strategies is personalized attention within a structured environment. To learn from the schools that are doing these personalized strategies well, with positive outcomes, is a cost-effective strategy to support struggling schools. To foster student's responsibility is another common element of at least three of those strategies.

A note of caution is merited, however. This is an exploratory study that used qualitative strategies; therefore, it cannot establish that those strategies are the causes of the strong performance of students with disabilities. As discussed in the literature review upon which this study is grounded, a randomized controlled trial (RCT) is the only research design that can establish a cause-effect relationship. RCTs, albeit expensive and difficult to implement, is the best path to answer the questions of what works in the education of special needs students.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As discussed in the companion report, *Evidence-Based Practices in Special Education: A Review of the Literature*, two criteria are recommended to identify evidence-based practices in education: quality of research and quantity of quality research. With these criteria in mind, the strength of the OCECD Research Project relies in its comparative design approach, founded upon a careful conceptual framework that draws from research. The study was able to compare and contrast information to corroborate or contradict findings from this research and the literature on best practices for students at-risk of academic failure. This process allows greater generalization of findings.

The OCECD Research Project highlighted a few strategies that are being adopted by all participating LEAs, higher or lower achievers, such as (1) multitiered systems of intervention that allows early identification of needs and immediate intervention; (2) the use of inclusion, particularly for students with disabilities who are cognitively high-functioning; (3) the emphasis on collaboration between general and special education teachers, including the use of co-teaching; and (4) the emphasis on ongoing analysis of student performance data to inform instruction. The main difference between LEAs on the two extreme of the achievement range was the quality of the implementation of these strategies. The first lesson that can be taken from this study is that, whatever you decide to implement, do it well, give it time to correct mistakes and familiarize teachers with the process, and keep evaluating to be sure that the implementation is done with fidelity. This finding correlates with findings from Implementation Science studies.¹

A second lesson from this study relates to teacher preparation. In both higher-achieving and lower-achieving sites, LEAs are focused and spending heavily on professional development. Part of the professional development is inevitable, as it relates to new state and federal initiatives that must be implemented with care, such as the new Ohio learning standards. However, part is basic pedagogical information, such as preparing IEPs or doing effective collaboration. The point of view frequently shared with the evaluators is that teachers come to the job market unprepared and need intensive preparation to become effective. Such preparation should be unnecessary and is particularly taxing to the LEAs, particularly when they are already struggling to contain costs.

¹ For more information on Implementation Science in social sciences, see the National Implementation Research Network, <http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/>

A third important lesson from the study is the role of early intervention and personalized instruction on improving academic outcomes for students with disabilities. Early intervention is reflected in the care with which high-performing schools conduct their multitiered systems of intervention. Some of the unique strategies highlighted in this report include one-on-one mentoring, Study Hall/Learning Lab, or Pride teams. All these are strategies that place an emphasis on establishing relationships of trust between instructor and student, and greater responsibility on the students for their own learning. Responsibility is also the idea behind the student-led IEPs, an initiative adopted by many high-performing LEAs. Personalized instruction and responsibility are also underlining components of technology initiatives found in some LEAs, whereby students receive their own personal computers (iPods, iPads, laptops) to gain more control over learning process.

These three major lessons taken from the OCECD Research Project are reaffirmed in the literature reviewed for the study. Each of these three lessons brings forth different roles among stakeholders. With these two perspectives in mind (the current study and the literature review), the following recommendations are proposed as a bridge to connect educational research to practices.

Recommendations for practice

Ohio schools are in a period of major redesign and students with disabilities are central to the success of these efforts. This context of change provides opportunities to move the overall system of special education in the direction of improved results. The following recommendations for practice draw from the Ohio Research Project's findings and align with OCECD and ODE policy priorities. The goal is to provide actionable strategies that have the potential to improve academic outcomes for students with disabilities as well as for all Ohioan students.

A total of eight recommendations are organized in three clusters. The first cluster proposes a framework to ensure implementation of quality (evidence-based) practices. The second cluster centers on the alignment between general and special education. The third cluster focuses on two other groups of stakeholders: students and parents. Table 19, on the next page, summarizes the recommendations. A more detailed discussion of each recommendation follows, and suggested resources for implementation are included in Appendix C.

Table 19: Summary of recommendations for practice

Cluster 1: Leadership for implementation of evidence-based practices

Recommendation: Implementation

Develop leadership capacity for implementing evidence-based practices at the district and school levels, with an emphasis on consistency and sustained focus.

Cluster 2: Special education and general education alignment

Recommendation: Multitiered systems of interventions and supports

Fully implement multitiered systems of interventions and supports and use data to inform continuous improvement and redesign.

Recommendation: Co-teaching

Fully implement co-teaching models that enable access to the general education curriculum and intentional collaboration between special education and general education teachers. Use data to inform continuous improvement and redesign.

Recommendation: Teacher preparation

Redesign teacher preparation programs to prepare students more completely for competencies needed to work collaboratively within inclusive settings, including new roles and responsibilities for intervention specialists and differentiated instruction for general education teachers.

Recommendation: Professional development

Provide collaborative PD opportunities including supports for job-embedded professional learning within inclusive settings.

Cluster 3: Leveraged focus

Recommendation: Early literacy

Focus attention and commitment on students with disabilities within the context of early literacy initiatives and the new third-grade reading guarantee. Implement evidence-based practices and use data for continuous improvement. Draw from the most current early intervention research and incorporate findings.

Recommendation: Postsecondary readiness

Focus attention and commitment on students with disabilities within the context of college and career readiness initiatives and new graduation requirements. Implement evidence-based practices and use data for continuous improvement. Draw from the most current research and incorporate findings.

Recommendation: Parent partnerships

Focus attention and commitment on partnerships that strengthen parental capacity to support student learning and make informed decisions for and with their children with disabilities.

Cluster 1: Leadership for implementation of evidence-based practices

The importance of leadership at the district, school, and classroom levels emerged as the most powerful driver of significant changes to practice. This has been verified in the research literature and by the findings in this study that highlight particularly the importance of consistency and sustained focus. A shared leadership structure is critical to address the following three challenges: adoption of evidence-based practices that improve student outcomes, implementation of collaborative structures to create cross-district/school planning and teaching teams, and a focus on and commitment by everyone to a path of professional learning and accountability (Ohio Leadership Advisory Council, 2013).

1. Adoption of evidence-based practices

Research literature highlights the challenges for many school districts to maintain fidelity in the implementation of its initiatives (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Morrison & Magliocca, 2012). In successful school districts, implementation happens from two perspectives. First, learning standards provide the targeted instructional goals. This allows a focus of effort on effective teaching practices and multitiered intervention, and a basis for identification of the individual needs of students with disabilities. Second, differentiation and accommodations for the students with disabilities is enabled around these targeted goals.

Student performance data are current and readily available in an actionable format. Focused efforts are made to assess student performance on specific curricular tasks. Pacing of the learning tasks and adjustments become the essential activities of instructional planning.

Implementation occurs as a process. Clear, well-focused instructional objectives guide instruction. Planning time is provided to adapt and adjust how instruction proceeds. Finally, embedded PD allows practitioners to develop and share which evidence-based practices work for particular students (Coggshal, Rasmussen, Colton, Milton, & Jacques, 2012).

The present study suggests that instructional leadership transcends all professional roles in the more successful school districts. Focused instruction is the highest priority. There is a noticeable pride in the craft of teaching. Students with disabilities are accepted as shared professional challenges to be met. High expectations for achievement are communicated in many positive ways to everyone. More importantly, clear plans are developed to document what must be done to achieve the proposed expectations.

2. Implementation of collaborative structures to create cross-district/school planning and co-teaching teams

In successful school districts, collaborative structures are created throughout the organization. Collaborative teams provide coordinated planning between the central administration and the work within each school. In the best circumstances, this collaborative structure allows the flow of strategic information and promotes better planning and commitment.

Implementation of collaborative structures does not come easily. Leadership must create opportunities for these efforts. The need for closer coordination of efforts for students with disabilities, as well as tighter personnel resources, has created a driver for collaborative work. Success requires careful planning and attention to the ways collaboration may be possible. There seems to be focus on co-teaching and multitiered interventions as the basic vehicles. However, the effort extends to collaborative teaming across grade levels or departments. This requires special scheduling efforts to ensure joint planning and problem-solving are possible. As the current study identifies, however, planning time is a scarce commodity in many schools. The more successful LEAs have found creative ways to structure schedules to provide this valuable common time.

Findings from this study indicate that, in the majority of LEAs, teachers are involved in discussing and tracking student progress on common curriculum objectives. The levels of implementation of structures that support these discussions vary considerably between successful LEAs and their less successful counterparts. In several programs, it was apparent that differentiation and accommodations for students with disabilities was occurring frequently. Special education teachers benefited from a clearer understanding of the resources needed to provide students with disabilities with access to the core curriculum, and general education teachers benefited not only from discovering strategies that improve learning for students with disabilities but also for any student who is struggling academically. The study revealed general agreement that such an approach enhances the performance of these students in the common curriculum core and the performance testing that follows.

Accountability may be one of the most difficult barriers to overcome. Fundamentally, accountability begins with an attitude of attending to what is needed and changing one's approach when necessary. If a shared responsibility for students with disabilities emerges, there is greatly enhanced opportunity for teachers to more closely examine student performance data

and reflect on what works and what needs to be modified. However, without support and encouragement from key leadership personnel, implementation of collaborative structures is unlikely. In successful school districts, there is a great deal of attention paid to development of such structures and maintenance of continuity.

3. Focus and commitment of everyone to a path of professional learning and accountability

Collaborative teaming and co-teaching require important new capabilities (Holdheide & Reschly, 2008; Holdheide, 2013). Teachers from the more successful schools reported perceptions of their being better prepared for these strategies. Successful school districts address teachers' needs and ongoing changes in the educational landscape using PD. Leadership focuses the limited time and resources available for PD among many competing initiatives.

Findings from this study reinforce findings from the literature review that students with disabilities, to be successful, must be exposed to the core curriculum. To be successful in teaching all students, teachers must clearly understand the structure of the core curriculum standards as the basis of their work. Special education teachers must be proficient in accessing and teaching a broad array of general curricula. Their understanding and skill allow the necessary accommodations for students with disabilities to be made. General educators must be able to differentiate their instructional approach to create a successful experience for the students with disabilities. Teachers voiced concern about their roles and skills to implement these new demands.

If teachers were already prepared to assume their roles in a modern classroom, the focus could be concentrated more on implementation and accountability. With staff turnover and changing priorities from year to year, implementation of new and essential instructional strategies tends to suffer. Successful school districts work very hard to make these skills an accepted way to work with all students. Current research and policy recommendations provide guidance for practice. For example,

- Implementation science provides a basis in research for the critical importance of implementation and guidance grounded in what is known about relevant components and conditions of implementation (Fixsen et al., 2005).
- The Institute of Education Sciences provides a central, independent, and trusted source of scientific evidence of what works in education (see www.whatworks.ed.gov).

- Consensus connects research to results on the attributes of school leadership that work (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).
- Consensus connects research to results on the art and science of effective instruction (Johnson, Perez, & Uline, 2013; Marzano, 2007).

Recommendation: Implementation

Develop leadership capacity for implementation of evidence-based practices at the district and school levels, with an emphasis on consistency and sustained focus.

Cluster 2: Special Education and General Education Alignment

1. Multitiered systems of intervention and supports

Most if not all of the LEAs studied were implementing multitiered systems of interventions and supports. Many of the less successful LEAs were moving toward the same path although these efforts were either at their very beginning or the LEAs were not sure how to proceed. Few called their systems RtI. A lesson from this study is that LEAs may not need a formal RtI process but may benefit from careful implementation and monitoring of multitiered systems of intervention that involve all faculty (general and special educators) with a focus on the student rather than the process. Current research and policy recommendations provide guidance for practice. For example,

- Response to Intervention, or Response to Instruction (RtI), is seen as a viable strategy for closing the achievement gap (Martinez, Nellis, & Prendergast, 2006).
- RtI establishes a unique role for special education and special educators within the larger education system (Council for Exceptional Children, 2007).
- The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDE) provides a comprehensive review of research related to both traditional and more recent approaches to RtI to inform local decision-making. Companion blueprints for implementation at the school and district levels also are provided (Elliott & Morrison, 2008; Griffiths, Parson, Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Tilly, 2007; Kurns & Tilly, 2007).
- Research-based reading interventions in grades K-3 have been synthesized for practice (Scammacca, Vaughn, Roberts, Wanzek, & Targesen, 2007).
- Research-based mathematics instruction for students that have difficulty learning mathematics have been synthesized for practice (Gersten, Chard, Jayanthi, Baker,

Morphy, & Flojo, 2008).

- Research-based interventions for struggling adolescent readers have been synthesized for practice (Scammacca, Vaughn et al., 2007).

Recommendation: Multitiered Systems of Interventions and Supports

Fully implement multitiered systems of intervention and supports and use data to inform continuous improvement and redesign.

2. Co-teaching

The presence of co-teaching and, in particular, the more experienced co-teaching partnerships was observed in higher performing districts that participated in this study. The most effective models integrate general education competencies related to content and high quality instruction with special education competences related to individualized instruction. This interface will become increasingly important as Ohio implements new learning standards incorporating instructional shifts and new online assessments with implications for accommodations.

Research shows that collaboration between general and special educators benefits the quality of instruction and supports for students with disabilities as well as students without disabilities. Teachers involved in collaborative partnerships often report increased feelings of worth, renewal, partnership, and creativity. These are among the findings of a metasynthesis of co-teaching research conducted by Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007) and summarized by the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHY).

The most common co-teaching variations outlined in the research are

- One teaches, one assists: One teacher leads the lesson for the whole class, while the other teacher provides support and behavioral management to individual students or small groups.
- Station teaching: The co-teachers provide individual support to students at learning stations set up around the classroom.
- Parallel teaching: Co-teachers present the same or similar material to different groups of students in the same classroom.
- Alternative teaching: For a limited period of time, one teacher provides specialized instruction to a small group of students in a different location.
- Team teaching (or interactive teaching): Both co-teachers share curriculum planning,

teaching, and other classroom responsibilities equally.

Recommendation: Co-teaching

Fully implement co-teaching models that enable access to the general education curriculum and intentional collaboration between special education and general education teachers. Use data to inform continuous improvement and redesign.

3. Teacher preparation and professional development

The role of special education teachers has shifted, and it is clear that the challenge cannot be addressed by PD alone. There is a need to rethink the scope and depth of teacher preparation and PD for intervention specialists as well as general education teachers.

Three key findings from this study highlight the need to re-examine teacher preparation programs. First, LEAs feel the need to invest heavily in PD, despite the fact that many teachers arrive with Masters' degrees. Additionally, there is a perception, particularly at the administrative leadership level, that teachers are focused on the "students in the middle" and feel uneasy dealing with special needs students, be they gifted and talented or students with learning disabilities. Further, the extent of inclusion of students with disabilities in general education, and their exposure to the general curriculum, was a factor that distinguished high- and lower performing sites.

Current recommendations in this area, based on research and policy priorities, provide guidance for practice. For example,

- Construct a new model for preparation of special education teachers in which special education is recognized as a legitimate contributor to RtI implementation, providing Tier 3 instruction as well as collaboratively planning Tier 2 instruction with their general education colleagues (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, & Danielson, 2010).
- Construct innovation configurations around new essential components such as inclusive services models; collaborative teaming/planning; collaborative skills; access to the general education curriculum/universal design for learning; access to the general curriculum/differentiated instruction; learning strategies, classroom organization and behavior management, scientifically based reading instruction; family involvement; and student self-determination and collaboration (Holdheide & Reschly, 2008).
- Generate teaching effectiveness with job-embedded professional learning in teacher evaluation (Coggschal, Rasmussen, Colton, Milton, & Jacques, 2012).

- Design inclusive building educator evaluation systems that support students with disabilities (Holdheide, 2013).
- Recognize the unique and complex role of special education teachers in new teacher evaluation systems (Council for Exceptional Children, 2012; Holdheide, Browder, Warren, Buzick, & Jones, 2012).

Recommendation: Teacher Preparation

Redesign teacher preparation programs to prepare students more completely for competencies needed to work collaboratively within inclusive settings, including new roles and responsibilities for intervention specialists and differentiated instruction for general education teachers.

Recommendation: Professional Development

Provide collaborative PD opportunities including supports for job-embedded professional learning in inclusive settings.

Cluster 3: Leveraged Focus

1. Early literacy

Findings from this study confirm the critical role of early intervention and early identification of students’ needs and abilities. Early literacy proficiency is a known predictor of later school success, and an essential component of early intervention strategies. Recent legislation strengthens the longstanding third-grade guarantee to give greater emphasis to reading instruction in early grades. The significance of early identification and intervention for students with disabilities is highlighted in this study, both in the synthesis of successful practices noted in similar large-scale studies as well as findings from the current study of Ohio schools. Well-established instructional practices in the pre-K through grade three were noted in the higher performing districts as a strategy by which to meet the individual needs of diverse learners.

Current research and policy recommendations provide guidance for practice. For example,

- The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) provides a synthesis of what has been learned from research grants on early intervention and childhood education funded by the IES National Center for Education Research and National Center for Special Education Research and published in peer-reviewed outlets through June 2010 (Diamond, Justice, Siegler, & Snyder, 2013).

- The Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation and Campaign for Grade-Level Reading presents a comprehensive report and action plan to help children with dyslexia/learning disabilities reach grade-level reading proficiency (Fiester, 2013a).
- The NAESP Foundation Task Force on Learning provides a vision and action steps for transforming education across the pre-K–grade three (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2010).
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation provides updated research that underscores the urgency of ensuring that children develop proficient reading skills by the end of third grade, especially those living in poverty or in impoverished communities (Fiester, 2013b).

Recommendation: Early Literacy

Focus attention and commitment on students with disabilities within the context of early literacy initiatives and the new third-grade reading guarantee. Implement evidence-based practices and use data for continuous improvement. Draw from the most current early intervention research and incorporate findings.

2. Postsecondary readiness

Preparation of students for postsecondary options is central to work of schools. This readiness is the outcome indicator that predicts later success in life. For students with disabilities, the pathway may be toward career readiness, college readiness, or both. Choices are often complicated. In the current study, when asked questions about programs available for lower functioning students as well as transition practices, partnerships with career-technical education programs were frequently reported by interviewees. These are often operated in collaborative arrangements and require increased coordination to ensure high-quality pathways to success for students with disabilities.

The College and Career Readiness and Success Center (CCRS) at American Institutes for Research provides guidance for practice on a number of related topics. For example,

- Strategies to prepare students with disabilities and special needs for college and career, including examples of current programs and policies that help students with disabilities to transition successfully to college and career (Brand, Valent, & Danielson, 2013).
- How social and emotional learning (SEL) can help students to be college- and career-ready, including examples of initiatives and programs and outcomes and measures that can be used to assess SEL programming (Dymnicki, Sambolt, & Kidron, 2013).

- How career and technical education (CTE) can help students be college- and career-ready (Brand, Valent, & Browning, 2013).
- How to synthesize, organize, and evaluate an increasingly complicated and crowded field of college and career readiness initiatives (Lebow, Harris, & Smerdon, 2012).

Recommendation: Postsecondary Readiness

Focus attention and commitment on students with disabilities within the context of college and career readiness initiatives and new graduation requirements. Implement evidence-based practices and use data for continuous improvement. Draw from the most current research and incorporate findings.

3. Parent partnerships

The current study found that the more successful districts were located in communities that prized education and were engaged. The key was not so much what the schools did to engage parents but how the community reacted to the schools. Indeed, the schools that appeared to be doing more for parent engagement were those that described their parents as disengaged. This is often a multilayered challenge that overlaps issues of poverty and distressed families and communities. Solutions are not easy.

A body of evidence on parent engagement and innovative student-centered strategies can be drawn from the research. For example,

- Henderson and Mapp (2002) provide a synthesis of 51 studies about the impact of family and community involvement on student achievement and effective strategies to connect schools, families, and community.
- WestEd's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT) put a new and effective twist on parent-teacher interaction that gives parents new ways to understand their children's progress, prepares teachers to coach parents on key concepts each child is expected to master at each grade level, helps parents to understand that they are a key part of the process, sets specific short-term academic goals and shows how to work on them at home (WestEd, 2013).
- Woodruff and Jennings (2012) provide a construct for development of strategies of intentional family engagement when implementing RtI as a means to connect family and communities to school and district academic goals for students.

Recommendation: Parent Partnerships

Focus attention and commitment on partnerships that strengthen parental capacity to support student learning and make informed decisions for and with their children with disabilities.

Recommendations for Further Research

This comparative case study approach has served well to uncover and confirm several findings about school resources and processes that differentiate school districts in their ability to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The challenge and benefit of research is that when it answers one question, it may raise three or four new ones. Therefore, this report concludes with some suggestions for further research that would continue on the path of learning more about what works for students with disabilities in Ohio. The recommendations support OCECD plans for a subsequent study that incorporates special education growth analysis for high-, middle-, and low-achieving schools. Further study also could inform new special education requirements for results driven accountability (RDA) outlined by the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Special Education Programs (OSEP).

The following suggested focus areas are based on what has been learned from the current study and the need to respond to the evolving system of educational reform initiatives. The suggestions are framed in the form of research questions for subsequent studies using rigorous methods.

Teacher Perceptions: The perception scales used in this initial case study (i.e., in the areas of vision, teacher support, technology, behavior management, curriculum/interventions, inclusion, use of data, and community/family involvement) revealed marked contrasts between groups of teachers in the high and low LEAs. Research can explore the question: What is the best way to improve these scales while considering their use as self-assessment tools for districts seeking improvements in their readiness to serve students with disabilities?

Value-Added Consequences: As Ohio embarks on value-added approaches for assessment and accountability for schools and school personnel, research is needed to address the question, what can be learned that gives us the best picture about how students with disabilities fare on these metrics, how do schools accommodate these growth measures into their process and achievement reporting, and how are the results attributed to the qualities of general and special education teachers? What are the unfolding and likely future consequences?

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) Process: How can the IEP process for students with disabilities become more focused and accountable for each child’s learning and take less time and resources to prepare, monitor, and update? Challenges for evolution of the IEP process include incorporation of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) and student growth measures for value-added assessment and accountability; implementation of standards that incorporate new elements of the Ohio Learning Standards and shifts in practice for ELA/literacy and math; more limited guidelines for use of accommodations with new online assessments; transition planning; and forging stronger parent partnerships.

Pre-K–3 Literacy Development: As Ohio embarks on its statewide Third-Grade Reading Guarantee initiative, how the initiative will impact students with disabilities’ retention and performance, and the match of school resources to the needs of each of these students? Also, what are the prior learning conditions that most clearly differentiate those students with disabilities who require retention and additional interventions from those who do not?

Postsecondary Readiness: In light of Ohio’s new report card and graduation requirements, coupled with an increased focus on college or career readiness, what are the challenges faced by LEAs in ensuring—and documenting—that their students with disabilities are well prepared to move on from high school into the world of work or further education and training? Also, how are LEAs working with CTE schools (and others) to align the skills acquired by the students in CTE settings with Ohio’s New Learning Standards?

Promising Technologies: What kinds of educational technology and e-Learning strategies (including blended learning) are yielding the most promising results for students with disabilities?

Finding Efficiencies: In what ways do LEAs—as well as ODE and others—ensure compliance with the myriad statutory and regulatory provisions for special education in ways that are most efficient and improve productivity?

Open Enrollment: What are the reasons for student movement and what are the consequences? Open enrollment was not a topic in the present study, but interviewees volunteered comments about this policy. Statements may reflect the unintended consequences of open enrollment. Some receiving (successful) LEAs were concerned that they were receiving increased numbers of needy students who will eventually exceed the teachers’ ability to provide them with quality education. This process also could weaken community engagement, as the

community may become dispersed. Alternatively, the parting (less successful) LEA perceives that the best students are leaving while the neediest students are staying (or being refused by the receiving LEAs). A longitudinal analysis that tracks students' movement across districts could document selectivity trends, especially for students with disabilities. Case studies of districts with open enrollment agreements and large demographic shifts in student populations could shed light on the reasons for student movement and its consequences.

Parent Choice: How does the school system support parents to be full partners in making Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) decisions in the best interests of their children? As parents are afforded more and more choices in terms of how and where their child with a disability will be best served (scholarships, vouchers, open-enrollments, community schools, home-schooling, etc.), what are the most salient considerations and values they use in making such choices? How do parents acquire and filter the information available to them to consider the array of possible choices of services for their children?

In summary

ODE and OCECD planned the OCECD Research Project with the purpose of enhancing understanding of the practices that are aligned with positive educational outcomes for students with disabilities. The research team conducted a rigorous, albeit exploratory, study that compares and contrasts practices used in successful and less successful school districts across the state. Findings were analyzed within and across typologies to highlight those practices that are unique to school districts where students with disabilities are attaining high performance levels on state assessments. Study findings, conclusions, and recommendations can be used as foundations for policies and practices that further successful education for students with disabilities in Ohio.

REFERENCES

- Brand, B., Valent, A., & Danielson, L. (2013, March). *Improving college and career readiness for students with disabilities*. Washington, DC: College & Career Readiness & Success Center at American Institutes for Research.
- Brownell, M. T., Sindelar, P. T., Kiely, M. T., & Danielson, L. C. (2010). Special education teacher quality and preparation: Exposing foundations, constructing a new model. *Exceptional Children, 76*(3), 357-377.
- Christensen, C. M., Horn, M. B., & Johnson, C. W. (2008). *Disrupting class: How disruptive innovation will change the way the world learns*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Cogshall, J., Rasmussen, C., Colton, A., Milton, J., & Jacques, C. (2012, May). *Generating teaching effectiveness: The role of job-embedded professional learning in teacher evaluation: A research and policy brief*. Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality.
- College & Career Readiness & Success Center at American Institutes for Research. (2013, March). *Improving college and career readiness by incorporating social and emotional learning*. Washington, DC: Author.
- College & Career Readiness & Success Center at American Institutes for Research. (2013, March). *Improving college and career readiness for students with disabilities*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Council for Exceptional Children. (2007, October). *CEC position on response to intervention (RTI): The unique role of special education and special educators*. Arlington, VA: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED499403.pdf>
- Council for Exceptional Children. (2012). *CEC position on special education teacher evaluation*. Arlington, VA: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.cec.sped.org/~media/Files/Policy/CEC%20Professional%20Policies%20and%20Positions/just%20TE%20position.pdf>
- Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M., & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida.

- Gersten, R., Chard, D. J., Jayanthi, M., Baker, S. K., Morphy, P., & Flojo, J. (2008). *Mathematics instruction for students with disabilities or difficulty learning mathematics: A synthesis of the intervention research*. Portsmouth, NH: Center on Instruction at RMC Research Corporation.
- Griffiths, A. J., Parson, L. B., Burns, M. K., VanDerHeyden, A., & Tilly, W. D. (2007). *Response to intervention: Research for practice*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.
- Henderson, A., & Mapp, K. (2002). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement. Retrieved from www.seidl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf
- Holdheide, L. (2013). Inclusive design: Building educator evaluation systems that support students with disabilities. *Special Issues Brief*. Washington, DC: Center on Great Teachers & Leaders at American Institutes for Research.
- Holdheide, L. R., Browder, D., Warren, S., Buzick, H., & Jones, N. (2012). *Summary of using student growth to evaluate educators of students with disabilities: Issues, challenges, and next steps*. Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, Council of Chief State School Officers, Education Testing Services (ETS). Retrieved from http://www.isbe.state.il.us/peac/pdf/using_student_growth_summary0112.pdf
- Holdheide, L. R., & Reschly, D. J. (2008, June). *Teacher preparation to deliver inclusive services to students with disabilities*. Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality.
- Johnson, J. F., Perez, L., & Uline, C. L. (2013). *Teaching practices from America's best urban schools: A guide for school and classroom leaders*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.
- Martinez, R. S., Nellis, L. M., & Prendergast, K.A. (2006). Closing the achievement gap series: Part II, response to intervention: Basic elements, practical applications, and policy recommendations. *Center for Evaluation and Education Policy: Education Policy Brief*, 4(8).
- Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Marzano, R. J. (2007). *The art and science of teaching: A comprehensive framework for effective instruction*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Morrison, J., & Magliocca, L. (2012). *Evaluation of Ohio's state personnel development grant (SPDG): Final report*. Columbus, OH: Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children.
- Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (2012, December). *OCECD FY 2014-2015 special education system improvement recommendations*. Marion, OH: Author.
- Ohio Department of Education. (2012). *Ohio community schools annual report for 2011-12*. Retrieved from <ftp://ftp.ode.state.oh.us/community%20schools/Sponsor%20Annual%20Reports%20FY2012/Educational%20Service%20Center%20of%20Central%20Ohio.pdf>
- Ohio Department of Education. (2013). *Ohio's part B: Annual performance report for 2011-2012*. Retrieved from <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Special-Education/State-Performance-Plan/Ohio-2010-2011-APR-Revised-April-2012.pdf.aspx>
- Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children. (2012). *Narrative description of grant activity: Special education evaluation proposal*. Columbus, OH: Author.
- Ohio Longitudinal Transition Study. (2012, Spring). *Annual state report: Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children*. Columbus, OH. Retrieved from <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Special-Education/Students-with-Disabilities/Operational-Standards-and-Guidance/Ohio-Longitudinal-Transition-Study-%28OLTS%29/2012-OLTS-Annual-State-Report.pdf.aspx>
- Patton, M. Q. (2008). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (4th ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Proposed Straight A Program Overview & Update, July 2, 2013, FY 2014-2015 Biennial budget bill, Am. Sub. House Bill 59.
- Sanders, K., Jurich, S., Mittapalli, K., & Taylor, L. (2013). *Evidence-based practices in special education: A review of the literature*. Marion, OH: Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities.

- Scammacca, N., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Edmonds, M., Wexler, J., Reutebuch, C. K., & Targesen, J. K. (2007). *Interventions for adolescent struggling readers: A meta-analysis with implications for practice*. Portsmouth, NH: Center on Instruction at RMC Research Corporation.
- Scammacca, N., Vaughn, S., Roberts, G., Wanzek, J., & Targesen, J. (2007). *Extensive reading interventions in grades K-3: From research to practice*. Portsmouth, NH: Center on Instruction at RMC Research Corporation.
- Scruggs, T. A., Mastropieri, M. A., & McDuffie, K. A. (2007). Co-teaching in inclusive classrooms: A metasynthesis of qualitative research. *Exceptional Children*, 73(4), 392-416.
- Woodruff, D., & Jennings, D. A. (2012). *RtI & family engagement: A construct for intentionality*. Washington, D.C.: National Center on Response to Intervention at American Institutes for Research. Retrieved from <http://www.rti4success.org/webinar/rti-family-engagement-construct-intentionality-4651>
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (Applied Social Research Methods). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

This appendix provides readers with short definitions of terms frequently used throughout the report. These terms indicate initiatives or processes that are familiar to people involved with Ohio's educational system and/or special education but may be new to readers from other states or areas of expertise.

Term	Definition	For further information
Career Technical Education (CTE)	In Ohio, every high school student has the opportunity to enroll in a career and technical education course of study. This means that in addition to rigorous academic requirements, students take specific classes in their chosen field. Engineering, healthcare, computer graphics, auto technology, and culinary arts are just a few of the 16 career fields in which Ohio high school students can enroll. This specialized education is delivered in career centers or in the local high school, depending on where the student lives in Ohio. Many career-technical programs also offer adult workforce education.	http://www.ohioacte.org
Co-teaching	An instructional strategy whereby special education and general education teachers work together in the same classroom and share the planning and delivery of instruction.	http://nichcy.org/schoolage/effective-practices/co-teaching
Educational Service Centers (ESCs)	Established by an act of the Ohio General Assembly in 1914, the ESCs are county-wide agencies that offer training and services to the LEAs and schools within boundaries. Many ESCs operate programs that are too specialized for the small LEAs they serve.	http://www.oesca.org/
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	For each child with a disability, a written statement that is developed, reviewed, and revised in an annual meeting with school personnel, parents, and sometimes the student. Ohio’s “standards-based IEP” includes (but is not limited to) documentation of measurable goals and objectives, special instructional factors, specially designed services, extent of participation in general education (least restrictive environment), test accommodations, and postsecondary transition.	http://www.EdResourcesOhio.org
Intervention Specialists (IS)	This term is applied to special education teachers who are licensed in Ohio as intervention specialists for Mild/Moderate Educational Needs, Moderate/Intensive Educational Needs, Hearing Impaired, or Visually Impaired.	http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Licensure
Local Report Card	Local school and district report cards have been based primarily to report how well students performed on state tests (OAA and OGT) with performance labels of Excellent with Distinction, Excellent, Effective, Continuous Improvement, Academic Watch and Academic Emergency. The 2013-14 school and district report cards will grade schools and districts using an A-F letter grade system in six broad categories: achievement of students, measured against national standards of success; gap-closing, indicating whether students in all racial and demographic groups are making gains in reading and math;	http://newreportcard.education.ohio.gov

Term	Definition	For further information
	<p>graduation rate, which tells communities whether all students are graduating on time; progress, which indicates whether students of all abilities are growing academically; K-3 literacy, which indicates the extent to which kindergarten through grade 3 students are reading at or above grade level; and preparation for success, which signifies whether students are ready for college and careers. There will be a grade for each measure within a category, and those combined grades will result in an overall grade for the category. A school or district's overall grade will be assigned by combining its grades in all six categories. Although grading in most categories begins in August 2013, an overall grade for each category will not be issued until August 2015.</p>	
Ohio Achievement Assessment (OAA)	<p>Statewide assessments for grades 3-8 measure students on what they know and are able to do in English language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. OAA English and mathematics are conducted with students in grades 3-8, and OAA science and social studies are conducted with students in grade 5 and 8.</p>	<p>http://ohio3-8.success.ode.state.oh.us</p>
Ohio Graduation Test (OGT)	<p>To pass the OGT is a requirement for students to graduate from high school. The tests include English reading, English writing, mathematics, science, and social studies.</p>	<p>http://ogt.success-ode-sstate-oh-us</p>
Ohio Improvement Process (OIP)	<p>The OIP is based on Ohio's Leadership Development Framework and proposes a structure of district leadership teams (DLTs), building leadership teams (BLTs), and teacher-based teams (TBTs). These teams have clear purpose and roles and have been adopted (with different degrees of success) by the majority, if not all of the visited sites</p>	<p>http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/School-Improvement/Ohio-Improvement-Process http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/School-Improvement/State-Support-Teams</p>
Ohio's New Learning Standards	<p>In June 2010, the State Board of Education adopted the new standards in English language arts and mathematics, the results of a multistate effort. The board also adopted more rigorous versions of Ohio's academic content standards in science and social studies. All four sets of standards will underpin teaching in Ohio classrooms by 2014-15, but schools are encouraged to begin using the standards now to prepare students for corresponding assessments that will begin in 2014-15. Development of the new online assessments is underway in partnership with a 22-state consortium (http://www.parcconline.org/) for next-generation K-12 assessments in English and mathematics.</p>	<p>http://www.corestandards.org/</p>

Term	Definition	For further information
Ohio State Support Teams (SST)	Ohio's state support system includes state support teams that use a connected set of tools to improve instructional practice and student performance. The SSTs combine the regional services provided by the former Special Education Regional Resource Centers (SERRC) in accordance with Sub. H.B. 115 passed in 2005 by the 126 th General Assembly. A total of 16 SSTs are funded to provide services to LEAs, community schools, early childhood centers, and families. Services include PD and technical assistance on issues related to school improvement, special education compliance, and school readiness.	http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/School-Improvement/State-Support-Teams
Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) and Ohio Principal Evaluation System (OPES)	Ohio's new teacher and principal evaluation systems are intended to provide educators with a richer and more detailed view of their performance, with a focus on specific strengths and opportunities. Evaluations have two components, each weighted at 50%: Performance rating as determined by a professional growth plan, observations, and walkthroughs; and student academic growth rating based on data from Value-Added.	http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Evaluation-System/Educator-Evaluation-Overview http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Evaluation-System/Ohio-Principal-Evaluation-System-OPES
Open enrollment	An Ohio initiative that allows a student to attend school tuition-free in a district other than the district where the student's parents reside. Open enrollment policy is determined at the district level.	http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/School-Choice/Open-Enrollment
Professional Learning Communities (PLC)	PLC is strategy in which colleagues within a same workplace or field (e.g. teachers and administrators in a school) continuously seek and share learning and then act on what they learn.	http://www.sedl.org/pubs/change34/2.html
Public Charter/Community Schools	Since the Ohio General Assembly passed the first law establishing such schools in 1997, Ohio has seen the continuing development of public charter schools (called community schools) as a way to offer choice to families that seek a different educational environment for their children. Community schools are public, nonprofit, nonsectarian schools that operate independently of any school district but under a contract with a sponsoring entity whose authority is established in statute or approved by ODE. Although community schools receive state and federal funds, they are purposefully designed by statute to have greater operational autonomy and provide greater flexibility in programs.	ODE 2011-2012 Annual Report on Ohio Community Schools

Term	Definition	For further information
Response to Intervention (RtI)	Integrates assessment and intervention within a multilevel prevention system to maximize student achievement and reduce behavioral problems. Teachers analyze data to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes; monitor student progress; provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student’s responsiveness; and identify student with learning disabilities or other disabilities.	http://www.rti4success.org
Schlechty Center	The Schlechty Center is a private, nonprofit organization that partners with school and district leadership to create learning communities that provide students with engaging opportunities for learning.	http://www.slechtycenter.org/
Third Grade Reading Guarantee	Recent legislation, House Bill 555, strengthens the longstanding third grade guarantee (once called the fourth grade guarantee) to give greater emphasis to reading instruction and intervention in early grades. As a result of this initiative, school districts and community schools will diagnose reading deficiencies in students at grades kindergarten through three, create individualized reading improvement and monitoring plans, and provide intensive reading interventions. New credentials are required for any teacher who provides all or part of the daily reading instructions for students affected by the third grade guarantee.	http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Early-Learning/Third-Grade-Reading-Guarantee
Value-Added	At the teacher level, Value-Added is a required element of the new evaluation system. At the building and district level, it represents the fourth component of Ohio’s accountability system. The system uses statistical methods to measure teachers’, schools’, and districts’ impact on the rate of student progress from year to year. This growth measurement enables schools and districts to determine more accurately the impact of their curriculum and instructional practices on student achievement.	http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Evaluation-System/Ohio-s-Teacher-Evaluation-System/Student-Growth-Measures/Value-Added-Student-Growth-Measuresite

APPENDIX B: LIST OF PROGRAMS

This appendix includes a list of programs used by the LEAs that participated in this study. Programs include portals, supplemental programs, and behavioral programs published by for-profit or nonprofit organizations. Descriptions of programs are taken from the publishers' Web site directly or from other online sources (when a direct description was not found). The list may not be complete, as some programs used by the studied LEAs may have been inadvertently omitted.

It is important to note that most programs are used at both successful and less successful LEAs. **The study has *not* connected any of those programs with successful student outcomes and is *not* endorsing their use.** The list is provided solely for information purposes. For an in-depth analysis of programs that have been proved successful with the use of randomized, controlled trials, please visit the Department of Education's Web site on What Works Clearinghouse (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>).

Name of Program	Brief Description	Finding Information	LEAs Using the Program (Code)
Accelerated Reader	<p>Publisher description: A software assessment tool developed by Renaissance Learning, Inc., to assess students' reading levels, suggest titles of books at that level, and then assess whether students have completed reading the books by asking a series of quiz questions. The software provides information to students regarding their reading rates, amount of reading, and other components related to reading.</p>	<p>www.renlearn.com</p>	<p>CH 3H 3L</p>
AIMSweb	<p>Publisher's (assessments) Web site: An assessment system that provides the framework for RtI implementations and instruction. AIMSweb offers multiple assessments for universal screening and progress monitoring, Web-based data management, charting, and reporting, screening tools and interventions for behavior and social skills. Core of the AIMSweb system is curriculum-based measurement (CBM), the method is monitoring of student progress using direct and continuous assessment of basic skills.</p>	<p>www.aimsweb.com</p>	<p>CH 4H 6H 6L</p>
<p>ALEKS <u>A</u>ssessment and <u>L</u>earning in <u>K</u>nowledge <u>S</u>paces</p>	<p>Publisher description: A Web-based assessment and learning system. ALEKS uses adaptive questioning to determine quickly and accurately exactly what students know and do not know in a course, then instructs students on the topics they are most ready to learn. As a student works through a course, ALEKS periodically reassesses the student to ensure that topics learned also are retained. ALEKS courses are complete in their topic coverage and avoid multiple-choice questions.</p>	<p>www.aleks.com</p>	<p>3L 7L</p>
Analytical Reading Inventory (ARI)	<p>Publisher description: A comprehensive K-12 informal reading inventory that includes narrative and expository passages. The compendium includes assessments, an audio tape with a case study, and other reading passages for practice in administering inventory.</p>	<p>www.prenhall.com</p>	<p>6L</p>
Alpha Smart	<p>Other online source: A brand of portable, battery-powered, word-processing keyboards manufactured by NEO Direct, Inc. (or AlphaSmart, Inc.), currently owned by Renaissance Learning, Inc. The device, much like a laptop computer, enables a person to work on the go but is strictly for word processing, as it functions essentially like a simple digital typewriter.</p>	<p>www.neo-direct.com/ or www.renlearn.com/neo2/default.aspx</p>	<p>7H</p>

Name of Program	Brief Description	Finding Information	LEAs Using the Program (Code)
Better Test Scores	<p>Publisher description: The program prepares students for two types of tests: standardized tests and state tests with open-ended items. Using a series of model lessons, pre/post-tests, and practice sessions, the program aims to help students who are at or below grade level to improve in their tests scores.</p>	www.perfectionlearning.com	3H
Brain Genie	<p>Publisher description: An online learning program for math and science students. The program allows students to learn and practice skills based on the common core standards. With more than 5,000 skills, the program allows teachers to differentiate instruction. This free site allows teachers to create classes and assign students skills based on their test scores and skills.</p>	www.braingenie.ck12.org	6H
Buckle Down	<p>Other online sources: An English language arts (ELA) series of reading books, Buckle Down is a product of Triumph Learning with reading-level-appropriate passages, tips, practice questions, and practice tests.</p>	www.triumphlearning.com	CH
Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) Math	<p>Publisher description: A standardized assessment that is administered to whole groups. Students are given 2 to 5 minutes to solve basic mathematics problems. Digits in the answer that appear in the correct place are scored as correct digits and the total added to become the student's raw score. This raw score is entered on a chart, Pocket CBM, or online program such as Dibels or AIMSweb.</p>	http://www.cbmnow.com/math.htm	3H 7H
Compass Learning	<p>Publisher description: Compass Learning uses a personalized learning approach in a blended format to teach students core content and various content areas.</p>	www.compasslearning.com	2L
Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP) Assessment	<p>Publisher description: Assesses student achievement of essential standards and learning domains for grades 1-11 in English language arts and mathematics. Verbal and quantitative reasoning tests are included for grades 3-11. The product is available in paper-pencil version (CTP 4) and in an online format (CTP).</p>	www.erblearn.org	6H
Daily 5	<p>Publisher description: A curriculum management system that helps students develop the daily habits of reading, writing, and working independently.</p>	www.thedailycafe.com	7H

Name of Program	Brief Description	Finding Information	LEAs Using the Program (Code)
Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) or DRA 2+	Publisher description: A formative reading assessment program that assists teachers to observe, record, and evaluate changes in student reading performance. The program has two platforms: online/applications and reading kits (hard copies).		
The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)	Publisher description: A set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills. The program comprises seven measures that function as indicators of phonemic awareness; alphabetic principle; accuracy; and fluency with connected text, reading comprehension, and vocabulary. DIBELS is based on procedures for CBM.	www.dibels.uoregon.edu or www.dibels.org	7H
Dragon Speech	Publisher description: Voice recognition software that types text as the speaker speaks. It has an array of features for easy usage.	www.nuance.com	7H
Ed Helper	Publisher description: A private Web site/portal that has information on core content with practice and worksheets.	www.edhelper.com	6LSWD
Edmark	Other online sources: A publisher of educational print and online materials and an educational software developer in the state of Washington. Using graphics, interactives, and manipulatives, the program focuses on skill development and critical thinking in all grades including SWD.	www.donjohnston.com	4HSWD
enVision Math	Publisher description: Developed in 2012, EnVision Math is designed for students in grades K-6 to develop an understanding of math concepts using problem-based instruction, small-group interaction, and visual learning with a focus on reasoning and modeling.	www.pearsonschool.com	3LSWD
Everyday Math	Publisher description: An elementary mathematics curriculum that assists students to develop mastery over the common core standards for mathematical practice.	www.everydaymath.com	7LSWD
Google Docs (documents)	Publisher description: A freeware, Web-based office suite offered by Google within its Google Drive service. Good Docs also was a storage service that has since been replaced by Google Drive. Good Docs allows users to create and edit documents online while collaborating in real time with other users.	www.docs.google.com	7HSWD

Name of Program	Brief Description	Finding Information	LEAs Using the Program (Code)
Fountas and Pinnell books	Publisher description: Fountas and Pinnell books use the F&P text-level gradient based on the works of Marie Clay. The authors use the 10 steps of the guided reading approach to teach comprehension to students, including: genre/form, text structure, content, themes and ideas, language and literacy features, sentence complexity, vocabulary, words, illustrations, and book and print features.	http://www.fountasandpinnell.com	6HSWD
Gallup's TeacherInsight	Publisher description: An automated online interview used by school districts to help them identify potential teachers. The questions have construct- and criterion-related validity as well as fairness across Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) classifications of race, gender, and age.	www.gx.gallup.com	6HSWD
Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (Gear Up)	From Department of Education Web site: This discretionary grant program is designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. The program provides six-year grants to states and partnerships to provide services at high-poverty middle and high schools. GEAR UP grantees serve an entire cohort of students beginning no later than the seventh grade and follow the cohort through high school. The funds also are used to provide college scholarships to low-income students.	www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html	4LSWD
IXL Math (I Excel)	Publisher description: A math practice Web site for elementary and middle school children (subscription-based). It has unlimited questions on several math topics and a comprehensive reporting system. Teachers can monitor students' progress and students can pace themselves through various exercises.	www.ixl.com	3HSWD 3LSWD 6HSWD
Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Literacy (KRA-L)	From ODE's Web site: An ODE-developed assessment tool that helps teachers identify early reading skills. The KRA-L is required of all children entering kindergarten in public schools for the first time. It is not required for children being retained in kindergarten. The assessment measures skill areas important to one's becoming a successful reader. KRA-L also helps teachers plan experiences and lessons that encourage reading.	http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Early-Learning/Guidance-About-Kindergarten/KRAL	4HSWD

Name of Program	Brief Description	Finding Information	LEAs Using the Program (Code)
Linda Mood Bell	Publisher description: Learning process to help students and adults improve their language-processing skills and become more independent. The process is used for students with a wide range of learning challenges, including dyslexia, hyperlexia, ADHD, and autism spectrum disorders.	www.lindamoodbell.com	6HSWD
LEAD 21	Publisher description: A K-5 core literacy program (paper and digital) from McGraw Hill that has student age-appropriate connected text sets. LEAD 21 uses various instructional approaches such as whole group, small group, mixed group, and differentiation, is research-based and centered on oral language development, vocabulary skills, text structures, and writing techniques.	www.mheonline.com	CLSWD
Lexia Reading	Publisher description: A technology-based reading program that increases reading proficiency for all pre-K through grade 4 students and at-risk students in grades 4-12. Lexia Reading provides explicit, systematic, personalized learning on foundational reading skills and delivers norm-referenced performance data and analysis without interrupting the flow of instruction to administer a test.	http://www.lexialearning.com/	3LSWD 3HSWD
Love and Logic	Publisher description: A program that focuses on raising responsible children using shared control, shared thinking/decision-making, equal shares of consequences with empathy, and self-concept. The program provides resources (articles), workshops, videos, podcasts, and audios on parenting tips.	www.loveandlogic.com	6HSWD
Math Solutions	Publisher description: Founded by Marilyn Burns, an author and a math educator, Math Solutions provides professional development, books, and resources to help improve math instruction in grades K-8. Resting on the school-based coaching model, the program provides instruction using on-site demonstration lessons, pre- and postlesson reflections, and conversations among teachers and between teachers and administrators.	www.mathsolutions.com	4LSWD

Name of Program	Brief Description	Finding Information	LEAs Using the Program (Code)
Measures of Academic Performance (MAP)	<p>Publisher description and other online sources: MAP is a computerized adaptive assessment in reading and mathematics that provides educators with the information they need to build curriculum and meet their students' needs. It was developed by Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). MAP is a norm-referenced measure of student growth over time. MAP assessments provide actionable data about the location of children on their unique learning path.</p>	<p>www.nwea.org</p>	<p>7LSWD</p>
Moby Math	<p>Publisher description: A Web-based program used for grades K-8. The curriculum/program provides students with additional practice on math concepts being taught in the classroom and opportunities for students to explore and learn at their own pace. The program collects and analyzes student performance data to inform teachers' instruction and help staff identify gaps in student learning.</p>	<p>www.mobymax.com</p>	<p>6LSWD</p>
(My) Skills Tutor	<p>Publisher description: SkillsTutor, a Houghton Mifflin Harcourt company for cloud-based, digital, personalized assessment and instruction, aims to increase student achievement using differentiated instruction and tools for educators to make data-driven decisions that meet state and federal accountability requirements.</p>	<p>www.skillstutor.com</p>	<p>6HSWD</p>
Open Court	<p>Publisher description and online sources: A reading and writing program for K-6 students. OC is known for instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness and phonics. The books are published by SRA/McGraw Hill. Part 1 of each unit, "Preparing to Read," focuses on phonemic awareness, sounds and letters, phonics, fluency, and word knowledge. Part 2, "Reading and Responding," emphasizes reading literature for understanding, comprehension, inquiry, and practical reading applications. Part 3, "Language Arts," focuses on writing, spelling, grammar, usage, mechanics, and basic computer skills. SRA/McGraw Hill revised Open Court Reading and changed the name to <i>Imagine It!</i> in 2007.</p>	<p>www.opencourtbooks.com</p>	<p>CHSWD</p>

Name of Program	Brief Description	Finding Information	LEAs Using the Program (Code)
Orton Gillingham (materials)	Publisher description and other online sources: An approach to/method of reading instruction developed in the early 20 th century. The approach uses a language-based, multisensory, structured, sequential, cumulative strategy.	www.orton-gillingham.us	7HSWD
Passport Reading Journeys	Publisher description: The program combines high-interest reading expeditions with research-based instruction to capture interest and accelerate learning. Using text and online resources, the program targets at- and below-grade students in grades 6-12.	www.voyagerlearning.com/	6LSWD
Pearson Scott Foreman	Publisher description: A publisher of instructional programs for grades pre-K through 6. The company produces instructional programs that are research-based and aligned with state standards for all disciplines.	www.k12pearson.com	6HSWD
Phonics Dance!	Publisher description: A program for primary grade educators to teach phonics and increase the reading and writing skills of students. The program is a multilevel learning process that provides success for all students, regardless of their developmental level. Using a six-step program that is built on phonemic awareness, Phonics Dance offers learning using cost-free strategies that incorporate rhyme, movement, and chant. <i>Phonics Dance!</i> helps to develop strong decoding skills using “hunking and chunking” to build poise and fluency in reading.	www.phonicsdance.com	7HSWD
Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS)	Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Web site: PBIS provides a school-wide operational decision-making framework that guides selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based academic and behavioral practices for improving important academic and behavior outcomes for all students.	www.pbis.org	CHSWD 6LSWD 6HSWD
ProgressBook	Other online sources: A classroom management Web system/solution suite that integrates grade book, lesson plan/development, student attendance, and parent communication into one comprehensive, Web-based system or portal. The system enables teachers, administrators, parents, and students to track and maintain their information. Parent and student logins are provided for data privacy.	http://www.noeca.net/student-services/progressbook	2HSWD 3LSWD 3HSWD 7HSWD

Name of Program	Brief Description	Finding Information	LEAs Using the Program (Code)
Pro-Ohio	<p>Publisher description: A benchmark/indicator-driven online tool to help teachers prepare students in grades 2-10 for success on the OAA and OGT. The Pro-Ohio uses various assessment modes such as: long-cycle paper diagnostics, short-cycle Web assessments, constructed-response assessments, and classroom clicker assessments. Rubrics and weekly progress reports are provided.</p>	<p>www.pro-ohio.com</p>	4HSWD
Raz-Kids	<p>Publisher description: The Raz-Kids animated, leveled books and interactive quizzes give educators choices to use resources for students to help them in reading comprehension. Students listen to books, read aloud, read with vocabulary and pronunciation support, and read without support. Teachers can limit students to appropriate reading levels and specific books and track student reading progress. Students can practice reading to improve reading comprehension and reading fluency anywhere that has Internet access.</p>	<p>www.raz-kids.com</p>	4HSWD
Read 180	<p>Publisher description: A reading intervention program that includes curriculum, instruction, assessment, and PD for students who are at least two years below grade level in grades 4-12. READ 180 is based on a blended instructional model that includes whole-group instruction and three small-group rotations, adaptive software, differentiated instruction, and independent reading. The program has three different versions: upper elementary (grades 4-6), middle school (grades 6-8), and high school (grades 9–12). Read 180 was created by Scholastic Corporation.</p>	<p>www.read180.scholastic.com</p>	4LSWD
Reading A-Z	<p>Publisher description: An online medium that delivers learning materials and curriculum to K-6 students. The materials have been found to be useful to SWD, ELLs, and students in need of remediation.</p>	<p>www.readinga-z.com</p>	2LSWD 4HSWD
Reading Recovery	<p>Publisher description: A short-term intervention for first graders who have high levels of difficulty with early reading and writing. RR-trained teachers work individually with students in daily 30-minute lessons for 12 to 20 weeks.</p>	<p>www.readingrecovery.org</p>	7HSWD 7LSWD

Name of Program	Brief Description	Finding Information	LEAs Using the Program (Code)
Reading Street	<p>Publisher description: (Scott Foresman) An elementary reading comprehension program for grades Pre-K through 6. The program is designed to help teachers build readers with motivating and engaging literature, scientifically research-based instruction, and teaching tools. The reading program focuses on differentiating instruction with an emphasis on ongoing progress-monitoring and a plan to help manage small groups of students. The program prioritizes skill instruction at each grade level so teachers can focus on the right reading skill for their students.</p>	<p>www.readingstreet.com/ or www.pearsonschool.com</p>	3LSWD
Renaissance Reading	<p>Publisher description: A Web-based reading program that is based on the principles of <i>Foundations of Growth</i>: targeted instruction and practice, grade-level instruction, formative and summative feedback, appropriate use of technology, and personalized goal-setting.</p>	<p>www.renlearn.com</p>	3LSWD
Rocket Math	<p>Publisher description: A structured curriculum for the sequential practice and mastery of math facts. In 10-minute daily practices, students learn two facts and their reverses on each worksheet in a controlled sequence that enables mastery at an individualized pace. Students practice orally with a partner.</p>	<p>www.rocketmath.com</p>	2HSWD
Saxon Math	<p>Publisher description: A mathematics programs for grades K-12. The program uses a pedagogical approach based on instruction, practice, and assessment distributed across grade levels. Saxon was founded in 1981 and is affiliated with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) Supplemental Publishers, Inc.</p>	<p>www.saxonpublishers.hmhco.com</p>	CHSWD
Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens	<p>Other online sources: A 1998 bestselling self-help book written by Sean Covey. The book discusses how teenagers can become more independent and effective by following seven basic habits. The habits range from being proactive in every aspect of their life to planning and prioritizing their daily life and responsibilities.</p>	<p>http://www.seancovey.com/books_7habits.html</p>	7LSWD

Name of Program	Brief Description	Finding Information	LEAs Using the Program (Code)
Simple Solutions	<p>Publisher description: A teaching strategy designed by and for classroom teachers that uses a three-pronged strategy that combines instruction, daily distributed practice, and assessment. Material for use with the Simple Solutions Approach is available for mathematics, English grammar and writing mechanics, phonics, study skills, science, and social studies.</p>	<p>www.simplesolutions.org</p>	6LSWD
Skills Bridge	<p>Other online sources: Also known as Ohio’s Skill Bridge Mathematics, this compendium of mathematics books provides supplemental help to students who are struggling in core content areas by providing guided practice tests and learning content.</p>	<p>http://www.triumphlearning.com/common-core/strategy-skills-fluency/ohio-skillbridge-mathematics.html</p>	CHSWD
Soar to Success	<p>Publisher description: A research-based reading intervention program for students in grades 3-8 who are reading significantly below grade level. This small-group model uses literature, reciprocal teaching, and graphic organizers in fast-paced lessons to help students in grades 3-8 accelerate their reading growth.</p>	<p>www.hmhschool.com</p>	6HSWD
STAR Curriculum for Autism	<p>Publisher description: The STAR Autism Program teaches children with autism the critical skills identified by the 2001 NRC. The ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) instructional methods of discrete trial training, pivotal response training, and use of functional routines form the instructional base of this comprehensive program for children with autism. The program includes detailed lesson plans, teaching materials, data systems, and a curriculum-based assessment for teaching in the six curricular areas of receptive language, expressive language, spontaneous language, functional routines, academics, and play and social skills.</p>	<p>www.starautismsupport.com</p>	6LSWD
Study Island	<p>Publisher description: An Edmentum product, the program provides standards-based instruction, practice, assessment, and productivity tools to improve the performance of students via Web-based platforms. Study Island combines content with specific state standards in math, reading, writing, science, and social studies with interactive features and games to engage students and reward their</p>	<p>www.studyisland.com</p>	CHSWD 2LSWD 2HSWD 6HSWD

Name of Program	Brief Description	Finding Information	LEAs Using the Program (Code)
	learning achievement. Student performance in real time is tracked to address individual learning gaps and allow administrators to monitor students' progress over time		
Success by Six	Other online resources: Success by Six, based in research by Dr. Craig Ramey, focuses on community-based initiatives to ensure that children under the age of six years enter school prepared to be successful throughout the years that follow. The initiative is spearheaded by the United Way as a neutral convener in the community.	http://sb6uwgc.org/	4HSWD
System 44 Next Generation	Publisher description: A foundational reading program for most challenged readers in grades 3-12+. System 44 uses explicit instruction in comprehension and writing and a personalized learning progression driven by technology. The program can be used during a regular class period, in a resource room, or in after- and summer-school programs. The program also can be integrated seamlessly in READ 180 classrooms.	www.system44.scholastic.com	4HSWD
Taskstream	Publisher description and other online sources: A platform that provides cloud-based software for assessment, accreditation, and e-portfolios to universities, colleges, and K-12 schools throughout the United States. Taskstream includes a centralized information and communication hub for assessment, accreditation, and planning activities across an institution; academic and nonacademic outcomes assessment; planning; and program review. Taskstream offers specialized tools that enable users to document learning outcomes, align outcomes to institutional goals and standards, develop assessment plans, create curriculum maps, manage faculty credentials, and improve education based on findings.	www1.taskstream.com	7LSWD
Terra Nova	Publisher description: A series of standardized achievement tests used to assess K-12 student achievement in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, vocabulary, spelling, and other areas. The test series is published by CTB/McGraw-Hill. TerraNova was created with an update in 1996 CTB to the California Achievement Tests and the California Tests of Basic Skills.	www.ctb.com/terrano3	7HSWD

Name of Program	Brief Description	Finding Information	LEAs Using the Program (Code)
Terra Nova InView	<p>Publisher description: An assessment of cognitive abilities that includes verbal reasoning, sequences, analogies, and quantitative reasoning. Teachers can use InView results to measure skills and abilities important in academic success, help plan effective programs for their students, diagnose possible learning disabilities, and screen students for placement into special programs.</p>	<p>www.ctb.com (under products)</p>	<p>7HSWD</p>
Wilson Reading	<p>Publisher description: Wilson Reading System (WRS) is a program of Wilson Language Training. It is based on Orton-Gillingham principles. WRS follows a structured, remedial format that teaches the structure of the language to students and adults who have been unable to learn with other teaching strategies, or who may require multisensory language instruction.</p>	<p>www.wilsonlanguage.com</p>	<p>2HSWD 3HSWD 6LSWD 7HSWD</p>

APPENDIX C: RESOURCES

This Appendix includes resources aligned with the Recommendations for Practice outlined in the final chapter Conclusions and Recommendations. These resources are intended as a support for implementation of the study's recommendations.

Leadership for Implementation of Evidence-based Practices

Citation	Description
<p><u>Implementation</u> Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M., & Wallace, F. (2005). <i>Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature</i>. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute. The National Implementation Research Network (FMHI Publication #231) http://nirn.fmhi.usf.edu</p>	<p>The goal of this literature review was to synthesize research in the area of implementation and to determine what was known about relevant components and conditions of implementation. The study includes practical guidance such as a conceptual framework for implementation of defined practices and programs, core implementation components, summary of a meta-analysis of the effects of training and coaching on teachers' implementation in the classroom, and examples of different types of fidelity measures across programs.</p>
<p><u>Evidence-Based Practices</u> Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy. (2003). <i>Identifying and implementing educational practices supported by rigorous evidence: A user friendly guide</i>. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance</p>	<p>This guide assists educational practitioners in evaluating whether an educational intervention is backed by rigorous evidence of effectiveness and in implementing evidence-based interventions in their schools or classrooms. The term <i>intervention</i> is defined as an educational practice, strategy, curriculum, or program. The guide is organized in four parts: A description of the randomized, controlled trial and why it is a critical factor in the establishment of "strong" evidence of an intervention's effectiveness; How to evaluate whether an intervention is backed by "strong" evidence of effectiveness; How to evaluate whether an intervention is backed by "possible" evidence of effectiveness; and Important factors to consider when implementing an evidence-based intervention in schools or classrooms.</p>
<p><u>What Works in Education</u> The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) www.whatworks.ed.gov</p>	<p>The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) was established in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to provide educators, policymakers, and the public with a central, independent, and trusted source of scientific evidence of what works in education. To WWC reviews and reports on studies of interventions (education programs, products, practices, and policies) in selected topic areas. WWC reviews of evidence apply a set of standards that follow scientifically valid criteria for determining the effectiveness of these interventions. The WWC provides its findings in accessible, online reports, and include evaluation studies that pass the WWC standards for each identified intervention.</p>
<p><u>What Works in Education</u> Doing What Works (DWW)</p>	<p>Doing What Works (DWW) is a Web site dedicated to assisting teachers in the implementation of effective educational practices. It contains practice guides developed by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES)</p>

Leadership for Implementation of Evidence-based Practices

Citation	Description
http://dww.ed.gov/	<p>that evaluate research on the effectiveness of teaching practices described in the guides and examples of possible ways this research may be used. Content for each practice is organized into four areas: Practice Summary (to gain an overview of a practice and see the issues it addresses), Learn What Works (understand the research base behind the practice), See How it Works (access examples of schools engaged in these practices), and Do What Works (use examples of tools to improve practice). Content areas include data-driven improvement, quality teaching, literacy, math and science, comprehensive support, and early childhood.</p>
<p><u>What Works in Schools</u> Marzano, R. J. (2003). <i>What works in schools: Translating research into action</i>. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/102271.aspx</p>	<p>This resource synthesizes 35 years of research to provide clear and unequalled insight into the nature of schooling. Factors that affect student achievement are defined and answers are offered to once-elusive questions such as how schools can set academic goals that do not underestimate student potential and how do all students have equal opportunity to learn given current curriculum requirements.</p>
<p><u>Leadership Practices</u> Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. (2005). <i>School leadership that works: From research to results</i>. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/105125.aspx</p>	<p>Drawing from 35 years of studies, the authors explain critical leadership principles that every administrator needs to know: (a) 21 leadership responsibilities that have a significant effect on student learning and the correlation of each responsibility to academic achievement gains; (b) The difference between first- and second-order change and the leadership responsibilities—in rank order—that are most important for each; (c) How to choose the right work to focus on to improve student achievement; (d) The advantages and disadvantages of comprehensive school reform models for improving student achievement; (e) 11 factors and 39 actions that help in taking a site-specific approach to improvement of student achievement; and (f) A five-step plan for effective school leadership that includes a strong team, distributed responsibilities, and 31 team action steps.</p>
<p><u>Leadership Practices</u> Keller-Allen, C. (2009). <i>Superintendent leadership: Promoting general and special education collaboration</i>. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED529803</p>	<p>The spotlight on local education agencies (LEAs) in their efforts to improve the performance of all students, including historically underperforming subgroups, has increased scrutiny of LEA leadership. Superintendents' responsibilities have become more complex, stressful, and challenging as they are required to navigate new federal and state requirements and meet accountability expectations, all while answering to multiple, sometimes competing, constituencies. These changes came at a time when more superintendents were retiring, job turnover was increasing, and the candidate</p>

Leadership for Implementation of Evidence-based Practices

Citation	Description
	pool for experienced district administrators was shrinking. This study examined the role of the superintendent in promoting, developing, and sustaining a culture of collaboration between general and special educators throughout the LEA. Selected superintendents described their rationale for advancing a culture of collaboration, the strategies they implemented, the challenges they faced in doing so, and their recommendations to other superintendents.
<p><u>Leadership Practices</u></p> <p>Ohio’s Leadership Development Framework. (2013). <i>A Report on the work of the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council from 2007-2013</i> (2nd ed.). Columbus, Ohio: Buckeye Association of School Administrators and the Ohio Department of Education.</p> <p>http://www.ohioleadership.org/</p>	Ohio’s Leadership Development Framework is based on the concept of shared leadership. This framework promotes the use of collaborative structures—district leadership teams (DLTs), building leadership teams (BLTs), and teacher-based teams (TBTs)—to lead schools and share the responsibility for improving student achievement. The framework identifies six essential leadership practice areas that outline what the superintendent, DLT, BLT, and TBTs need to do to improve instructional practices and student performance: (a) Data and the decision-making process, (b) Focused goal-setting process, (c) Instruction and the learning process, (d) Community engagement process, (e) resource management process, and (f) governance process. The Ohio Leadership Advisory Council (OLAC) has created online learning modules to support implementation; these are any-time, any-place learning opportunities available free to Ohio educators. The modules include research and content from national experts, streaming video, Ohio exemplars of best practices, and more.
<p><u>Leadership Practices</u></p> <p>Morrison, J., & Magliocca, L. (2012). <i>Evaluation of Ohio’s state personnel development grant (SPDG): Final report</i>. Columbus, OH: Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children.</p> <p>(Available from Ohio’s regional State Support Teams)</p>	Ohio Improvement Process: Level of Implementation Rubric A survey/self-reflection tool that includes (a) Use of collaborative structures and processes; (b) Setting expectations for the effective use of data; (c) Shared accountability across and within every level of the organization; and (d) Intentional use of resources to support achievement and instruction.
<p><u>Leadership Practices</u></p> <p>Telfer, D. M. (2012). <i>A synthesis of lessons learned: How districts used assessment and accountability to increase performance for students with disabilities as part of district-wide improvement</i>. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota. National Center on Educational Outcomes.</p>	This resource examines how school districts with vastly different demographics increase the performance of students with disabilities and other at-risk learners as part of whole-district reform efforts. Case studies of featured districts provide evidence that students with disabilities, like all other students, can learn at higher levels when adults focus their collective efforts on improving instructional practice, consistently implement core work across the district, and use assessment and accountability as a

Leadership for Implementation of Evidence-based Practices

Citation	Description
www.MovingYourNumbers.org	lever for ongoing system and student learning improvement. A tool is available for district self-assessment of implementation and scalability of six key practices: use data well; focus your goals; shared instructional practices; implement deeply; monitor and provide feedback and support; inquire and learn.
<p><i>Instructional Practices</i> City, E. A., Elmore, R. F., Flarman, S. E., & Teitel, L. (2009). <i>Instructional rounds in education</i>. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press: http://hepg.org/hep/book/99</p>	<p><i>Instructional Rounds in Education</i> is intended to help education leaders and practitioners develop a shared understanding of what high-quality instruction looks like and what schools and districts need to do to support it. Inspired by the medical-rounds model used by physicians, the authors have pioneered a new form of professional learning known as <i>instructional rounds networks</i>. From this process, educators develop a shared practice of observing, discussion, and analyzing learning and teaching.</p>
<p><i>Instructional Practices</i> Marzano, R. J. (2007). <i>The art and science of teaching: A comprehensive framework for effective instruction</i>. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/107001.aspx</p>	<p>Though classroom instructional strategies should clearly be based on sound science and research, knowing when to use them and with whom is more than an art. This resource presents a model for ensuring quality teaching that balances the need for research-based data with the equally vital need to understand the strengths and weaknesses of individual students.</p>
<p><i>Instructional Practices</i> Johnson, J. F., Perez, L., & Uline, C. L. (2013). <i>Teaching practices from America's best urban schools: A guide for school and classroom leaders</i>. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED538917</p>	<p>Lessons learned from recipients of the National Excellence in Urban Education Award sponsored by the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST). Criteria for selection include evidence that a high percentage of SWDs are achieving greater proficiency in at least two academic subjects; percentage of SWDs demonstrating proficiency on state assessments, and SWDs demonstrating year-to-year achievement gains on state assessments or other indicators of success. Lead author Joe Johnson currently serves as Executive Director of NCUST and formerly served with ODE where he began Ohio's Schools of Promise Initiative.</p>

Multitiered Systems of Intervention and Supports

Citation	Description
<p><i>RtI and Closing the Achievement Gap</i> Martinez, R. S., Nellis, L. M., & Prendergast, K. A. (2006). Closing the achievement gap series: Part II, response to intervention: Basic elements, practical applications, and policy recommendations. <i>Center for Evaluation and Education Policy: Education Policy Brief</i>, 4(8). http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED495749</p>	<p>This policy brief provides readers with a broad overview of Response to Intervention (RtI). RtI refers to an integrated, school-wide method of service delivery across general and special education that promotes successful school outcomes for all students. This brief discusses the impetus behind RtI, which stems from flaws in the current special education system, describes the principal components of RtI, and highlights several model RtI programs around the country. Finally, the paper makes policy recommendations for the implementation of RtI in a sample state.</p>
<p><i>RtI and Role of Special Education and Special Educators</i> Council for Exceptional Children. (2007). <i>CEC position on response to intervention (RTI): The unique role of special education and special educators</i>. Arlington, VA: Author. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED499403.pdf</p>	<p>The CEC recognizes the potential impact of RtI on the education of all children, roles of special educators, and the special education system. The RtI process is designed to identify struggling learners early, to provide access to needed interventions, and to help identify children with disabilities. It is a process intended to assist in identifying children with disabilities by providing data about how a child responds to scientifically based intervention as part of the comprehensive evaluation required for identification of any disability. Special educators play an integral role and have a strong and clear identity in the RtI process. To that end, CEC believes that any RtI process must include nonnegotiable guarantees related to special education and the key role of special educators.</p>
<p><i>RtI and Early Childhood</i> The Division for Early childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), & National Head Start Association (NHSA). 2013. <i>Frameworks for response to intervention and early childhood: Description and implications</i>. http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/RTI%20in%20Early%20Childhood.pdf</p>	<p>The purpose of this jointly developed paper was to define early childhood RtI frameworks and to promote a broader understanding and discussion of the topic.</p>

Multitiered Systems of Intervention and Supports

Citation	Description
<p><u>RtI and High School</u> Duffy, H. (2007). <i>Meeting the needs of significantly struggling learners in high school: A look at approaches to tiered intervention</i>. Washington, D.C.: National High School Center at American Institutes for Research. http://www.rti4success.org/pdf/high_school.pdf</p>	<p>This brief describes issues related to the implementation of RtI at the high school level and explains the supports needed to implement the RtI system. The resource provides an overview of RtI and describes specific components including a comparison of the standard treatment and problem solving approaches. The paper describes current research on RtI and secondary education and also provides a case study of a high school that implemented RtI.</p>
<p><u>Reading Interventions K-3</u> Scammacca, N., Vaughn, S., Roberts, G., Wanzek, J., & Targesen, J. (2007). <i>Extensive reading interventions in grades K-3: From research to practice</i>. Portsmouth, NH: Center on Instruction at RMC Research Corporation. http://www.centeroninstruction.org/extensive-reading-interventions-in-grades-k-3-from-research-to-practice</p>	<p>This report summarizes 12 peer-reviewed, quality research studies and synthesizes findings on the effectiveness of extensive reading interventions (comparing at least 100 instructional sessions) for struggling K-3 readers. It explains the related implications for practice for students with reading problems or learning disabilities in an RtI setting.</p>
<p><u>Reading Interventions/Adolescent Struggling Readers</u> Scammacca, N., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Edmonds, M., Wexler, J., Reutebuch, C. K., & Targesen, J. K. (2007). <i>Interventions for adolescent struggling readers: A meta-analysis with implications for practice</i>. Portsmouth, NH: Center on Instruction at RMC Research Corporation. http://www.centeroninstruction.org/interventions-for-adolescent-struggling-readers-a-meta-analysis-with-implications-for-practice</p>	<p>Results of this meta-analysis provide guidance for interventions for struggling adolescent readers and outlines major implications for practice. The report focuses on interventions designed to improve students' use of reading comprehension strategies. It also considers the impact of interventions that target improved reading vocabulary, accurate decoding of unfamiliar words in text, and increased reading fluency.</p>
<p><u>Math Interventions</u> Jayanthi, M., Gersten, R., & Baker, S. (2008). <i>Mathematics instruction for students with disabilities or difficulty learning mathematics: A guide for teachers</i>. Portsmouth, NH: Center on Instruction at RMC Research Corporation. http://www.centeroninstruction.org/mathematics-instruction-for-students-with-learning-disabilities-or-difficulty-learning-mathematics-a-guide-for-teachers</p>	<p>This guide for teachers is a companion piece to the meta-analysis <i>Mathematics Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities or Difficulty Learning Mathematics: A Synthesis of the Intervention Research</i>. Based on the findings of this report, seven effective instructional practices were identified for teaching mathematics to K-12 students with learning disabilities. It describes these practices including recommendations from <i>The Final Report of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel</i>, specifies research-based recommendations for students with learning disabilities and for students who are experiencing difficulties in learning mathematics but are not identified as having a math learning disability.</p>

Multitiered Systems of Intervention and Supports

Citation	Description
<p><u>RtI Research and Implementation</u> Griffiths, A. J., Parson, L. B., Burns, M. K., VanDerHeyden, A., & Tilly, W. D. (2007). <i>Response to intervention: Research for practice</i>. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). http://www.nasdse.org/portals/0/documents/rti_bibliography2.pdf</p>	<p>NASDSE provided a comprehensive review of research related to both traditional (special education eligibility determination) and more recent (general education inclusionary practices) approaches to RtI to inform local decision-making. Chapters include “Improving Core Instruction for All Students” (Tier 1 application), “Intensive Instruction” (Tier II application), “Intensive Instruction” (Tier 3 application), and approaches to RtI for “Social-Emotional Behavior Purposes” (Tiers 1, 2, and 3 application).</p>
<p><u>RtI Implementation (District Level)</u> Elliott, J., & Morrison, D. (2008) <i>Response to intervention: Blueprints for implementation (district-level edition)</i>. Alexandria, VA: NASDSE. http://www.nasdse.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=H7i7vsEPEck%3D&tabid=36</p>	<p>RtI is defined as the practice of providing high quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying student response data to important education decisions. RtI should be applied to decisions in general, remedial and special education, creation of a well-integrated system of instruction/intervention guided by student outcome data. This district-level guide is organized around the following components: (a) Consensus-Building, (b) District Infrastructure-Building, and (c) District-Level Implementation.</p>
<p><u>RtI Implementation (School Level)</u> Kurns, S., & Tilly, W. D. (2008). <i>Response to intervention: Blueprints for implementation (school building-level edition)</i>. Alexandria, VA: NASDSE. http://www.nasdse.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=0XXmIiiQOG0%3D&tabid=36</p>	<p>This school building-level guide (a companion to the district-level guide) is addresses the following topics: Consensus Building, Infrastructure Building, and Implementation.</p>

Co-Teaching	
Citation	Description
<p><u>Co-Teaching</u> Scruggs, T. A., Mastropieri, M. A., & McDuffie, K. A. (2007). Co-teaching in inclusive classrooms: A metasynthesis of qualitative research. <i>Exceptional Children</i>, 73(4), 392-416 http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ817512</p>	<p>Thirty-two qualitative investigations of co-teaching in inclusive classrooms were included in this metasynthesis that employed qualitative research integration techniques. The study concluded that co-teachers generally support co-teaching, although a number of important needs were identified, including planning time, student skill level, and training; many of these needs were linked to administrative support.</p>
<p><u>Co-Teaching</u> Hanover Research. (2012). <i>The effectiveness of the co-teaching model: Literature review</i>. Washington, D.C.: Author. http://www.hanoverresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Effectiveness-of-Co-Teaching-Membership.pdf</p>	<p>The report provides an overview of the literature on co-teaching as a mode of instruction for children with and without disabilities. Co-teaching is described as method that draws on the strengths of both the general educator, who understands the structure, content, and pacing of the general education curriculum, and the special educator, who can identify unique learning needs of individual students and enhance curriculum and instruction to match these needs. This resource includes discussion of best practices in the implementation of co-teaching, as well as rubrics for measuring cooperative efficacy among co-teachers.</p>
<p><u>Co-Teaching</u> Gately, S. E., & Gately, F. J. (2001) Understanding co-teaching components. <i>Teaching Exceptional Children</i>, 33(4), 40-47. https://inclusived.wikispaces.com/file/view/Understanding+CoTeaching+Components.pdf</p>	<p>In this article, the authors describe the components of co-teaching and give examples of what the teacher interactions of that component may resemble at each of the developmental stages of co-teaching: beginning, compromise, and collaborative. Also included is the Co-teaching Rating Scale (CTRS) along with descriptions of how teachers and administrators can use it to develop appropriate objectives and directions for co-teachers.</p>
<p><u>Co-Teaching</u> National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHEY). (2011). <i>Co-teaching: General and special educators working together</i>. Washington, D.C.: Author. http://nichey.org/schoolage/effective-practices/coteaching</p>	<p>This practice-oriented Web page provides information about the following topics: various approaches to co-teaching; setting up shop together: tips, strategies, and checklists; PD modules on co-teaching, co-teaching blogs; and resources from state departments of education.</p>

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Citation	Description
<p><u>Special Education Teacher Preparation</u> Brownell, M. T., Sindelar, P. T., Kiely, M. T., & Danielson, L. C. (2010). Special education teacher quality and preparation: Exposing foundations, constructing a new model. <i>Exceptional Children</i>, 76(3), 357-377. http://cec.metapress.com/content/j18319315615h157/</p>	<p>This general article discusses changes in special education teacher preparation over time. The study presents historical development of special education, with discussion of political context, case law, and assumptions about teacher quality during the different eras. The article proposes changes to special education teacher preparation based in the RTI framework.</p>
<p><u>Teacher Preparation for Inclusive Services</u> Holdheide, L. R., & Reschly, D. J. (2008). <i>Teacher preparation to deliver inclusive services to students with disabilities</i>. Washington, D.C.: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. http://www.isbe.state.il.us/peac/pdf/using_student_growth_summary_0112.pdf</p>	<p>An innovation configuration for best practices organized around new essential components such as inclusive service models; collaborative teaming/planning; collaborative skills; access to the general education curriculum/universal design for learning; access to the general curriculum/differentiated instruction; learning strategies, classroom organization, and behavior management; scientifically based reading instruction; family involvement; and student self-determination and collaboration.</p>
<p><u>Teacher Evaluation Systems</u> Holdheide, L. (2013). <i>Inclusive design: Building educator evaluation systems that support students with disabilities: Special issues brief</i>. Washington, D.C.: Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at American Institutes for Research. http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/GTL_Inclusive_Design.pdf</p>	<p>This <i>Special Issues Brief</i> addresses how challenges in teacher evaluation implementation fidelity, in many cases, can be reduced when a singular evaluation system for all teachers is in place. In particular, the study describes several advantages to employment of the same evaluation system for teachers of students with disabilities, including advantages related to inclusion, integration, collaboration, and shared understanding. Key design considerations and potential action steps are identified. In addition, each design consideration discussion includes links to case studies that illustrate implementation.</p>
<p><u>Teacher Evaluation Systems</u> Council for Exceptional Children. (2012). <i>The Council for Exceptional Children's position on special education teacher evaluation</i>. Arlington, VA: Author. http://cecblog.typepad.com/files/position_on_special_education_teacher_evaluation_background.pdf</p>	<p>The complex role of the special education teacher is recognized as evaluations must take into account the population of children and youth and their range of exceptionalities taught and supported by special education teachers during a given school year. Evaluations also must be conducted by evaluators with expertise related to evidence-based service delivery models and individualized teaching practices and interventions in special education. Evaluators must understand how, when, and why these practices are implemented and the specific roles and responsibilities of special education teachers. Multiple indicators of special education teacher</p>

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Citation	Description
	effectiveness may include: IEP development and implementation, development of lesson plans, skill in providing access to the general education curriculum, classroom environment and management, identification and implementation of appropriate instructional strategies, measures of student growth that are fair and accurate representations of both student growth and special education teacher's contribution to that growth, progress monitoring and assessment, collaboration with colleagues and families, contributions to the school community, and participation in ongoing PD. Attention also is directed to issues of reasonable case loads and paperwork responsibilities, competitive salaries and benefits, access to resources, and positive working conditions including collegial and administrative supports.
<p><u>Teacher Evaluation Systems</u></p> <p>Holdheide, L., Browder, D., Warren, S., Buzick, H., & Jones, N. (2012). <i>Summary of "Using Student Growth to Evaluate Educators of Students with Disabilities: Issues, Challenges, and Next Steps."</i> Washington, D.C.: State Special Education and Teacher Effectiveness Experts and Researchers, National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center), Council of Chief State School Officers, Education Testing Services (ETS). http://www.isbe.state.il.us/peac/pdf/using_student_growth_summary_0112.pdf</p>	<p>Holdheide et al. (2012) provide a summary of issues related to the use of student growth to evaluate educators of students with disabilities. Issues were generated by a national expert stakeholder group convened by the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, Council of Chief State Schools Officers, and Education Testing Services. Participants in the two-day forum concluded that little is known about the use of student growth as a component in teacher evaluation. This is the case for all students, but it is even more so for students with disabilities. Among other topics, implications for the use of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) as a measure of teacher evaluation are explored. The similarity of the goal establishment and monitoring process to the development of IEPs is highlighted as a potential benefit. Other potential benefits cited include the fact that SLOs can be aligned to district and school improvement goals and that team-based SLOs can foster increased collaboration among general education and special education teachers.</p>
<p><u>Teacher Evaluation Systems</u></p> <p>Holdheide, L. R., Goe, L., Croft, A., & Reschly, D. J. (2010). <i>Challenges in evaluating special education teachers and English language learner specialists.</i> Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality.</p>	<p>This research and policy brief addresses the challenges associated with evaluation of special education (SPED) and English language learner (ELL) specialists. The study presents results of a survey of more than 1,100 state and district directors of special education and interviews with administrators across the United States. The study found that most evaluation systems cannot differentiate among teachers based on</p>

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Citation	Description
<p>http://www.tqsource.org/publications/July2010Brief.pdf</p>	<p>specialized roles or consider the challenges of working with at-risk students and specific contexts. Further, it notes that little to no research exists that directly links education and training of SPED teachers to student outcomes. The paper discusses typical measures used to evaluate teacher performance (e.g., observations, value-added models, portfolios, self-assessments) and outlines issues/challenges related their use with SPED and ELL teachers. Problems related to assessment of the performance of teachers in co-teaching contexts also are discussed. The paper presents numerous recommendations to make evaluation of SPED and ELL teachers more effective and valid. Practical examples of various approaches to SPED and ELL teacher evaluation are presented throughout.</p>
<p><u>Professional Development</u> Coggshal, J., Rasmussen, C., Colton, A., Milton, J., & Jacques, C. (2012). <i>Generating teaching effectiveness: The role of job-embedded professional learning in teacher evaluation: A research and policy brief</i>. Washington, D.C.: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. http://education.ky.gov/teachers/hieffteach/documents/generatingteaching%20effectiveness.pdf</p>	<p>This research and policy brief outlines the research on how teachers learn best and essential conditions for professional learning: A culture of trust, continuous learning, and collaborative inquiry; well-supported and effective coaches, teacher leaders, and principals; teacher teams such as content or grade-level teams, vertical cross-content teams, and data teams; facilitators to ensure that collaborative team time is purposeful and productive; common collaborative learning time; prioritization and allocation of resources; alignment with school and district goals and priorities, and instructional resources such as curriculum and assessments.</p>

Early Literacy	
Citation	Description
<p><u>Early Literacy Research</u></p> <p>Diamond, K. E., Justice, L. M., Siegler, R. S., & Snyder, P. A. (2013). <i>Synthesis of IES research on early intervention and early childhood education</i>. Washington, D.C.: IES National Center for Special Education Research, U.S. Department of Education.</p> <p>http://ues.ed.gov/ncser/pubs/20133001/</p>	<p>This synthesis describe what has been learned from research grants on early intervention and childhood education funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) National Center for Education Research and National Center for Special Education Research and published in peer-reviewed outlets through June 2010. This synthesis describes contributions to the knowledge base produced by IES-funded research for four focal areas: (a) Early childhood classroom environments and general instructional practices, (b) Educational practices designed to impact children’s academic and social outcomes, (c) Measurement of young children’s skills and learning, and (d) Professional development for early educators. The authors also raise important questions for education research in the future, including: (a) What are the crucial features of high-quality early childhood education? (b) Which instruction is most effective for which children and under what circumstances? and (c) How do we effectively and efficiently support teachers in improving their instruction?</p>
<p><u>Early Literacy Research and Dyslexia</u></p> <p>Fiester, L. (2013). <i>Don’t “DYS” our kids: Dyslexia and the quest for grade-level reading proficiency</i>. New Haven, CT: Emily Hall Tremain Foundation and Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.</p> <p>www.tremainefoundation.org/content/dys</p>	<p>The Emily Hall Tremain Foundation and Campaign for Grade-Level Reading present a comprehensive report and action plan for helping children with learning disabilities reach grade-level reading proficiency. About 2.4 million children across the nation have been diagnosed with learning disabilities but the question remains, how successful is the U.S. education system in teaching these students to read? This report provides an overview of the history and progress in understanding and meeting the needs of children with dyslexia, as well as the persisting challenges that must be overcome to ensure that all students can read proficiently by the third grade. The document also highlights best practices and examples of solutions that are already working in communities. Based on interviews with nearly 30 experts, the report includes a collection of recommended actions for advancing this movement.</p>
<p><u>Early Literacy Research and Communities</u></p> <p>Fiester, L. (2013). <i>Early warning confirmed: A research update on third-grade reading</i>. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.</p> <p>http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pub</p>	<p>Updated research in this report underscores the urgency of ensuring that children develop proficient reading skills by the end of third grade, especially those living in poverty or in impoverished communities. A follow-up to 2010’s “Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of third Grade Matters,” this report supports the link between reading deficiencies and broader social consequences, including</p>

Early Literacy	
Citation	Description
guid=%7B58440238-1626-476F-AFDA-1...	how living in poor households and high-poverty neighborhoods contributes to racial disparities in literacy skills in America and how low achievement in reading impacts an individual's future potential. Factors that contribute to third-grade reading proficiency include school readiness, chronic absence, summer learning, family stressors, and high-quality teaching.
<p><u>Early Literacy and Pre-K through Grade 3 Alignment</u></p> <p>The Pre-K Coalition. (2011). <i>Ensuring America's Future: Policy statements and recommendations from national education organizations.</i> http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/prekcoalitionreport2011.pdf</p> <p>The Pre-K Coalition. (2011). <i>Policy brief: The importance of aligning pre-K through 3rd grade.</i> http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Pre-kindergarten/Pre-K-Coalition/Policy-Documents/Issue-brief-Dec-2011.pdf</p>	The Pre-K Coalition is a collaboration among the nation's most influential education groups [the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), National Association of Elementary School Administrators (NAESP), National Association of State Boards of Education (BASBE), National Education Association (NEA), and the National School Boards Association (NSBA)] to develop common principles for pre-K policy in federal legislation and build national awareness about the importance of pre-K education.
<p><u>Early Literacy and Pre-K through Grade 3 Alignment</u></p> <p>NAESP Foundation Task Force on Early Learning. (2010). <i>Building and supporting an aligned system: A vision for transforming education across the pre-K–grade three years.</i> Alexandria, VA: Author. http://www.naesp.org/transforming-early-childhood-education-pre-k-grade-3</p>	This report describes a standards-based pre-K–3 system in which: (a) All children and families have access to high-quality learning and care; (b) Programs are based upon evidence and data; (c) Teachers and leaders are well-trained, suitably compensated, and supported in the classroom; and (d) Children's learning and development are assessed and fostered in a truly comprehensive fashion to capture all the ingredients that contribute to their success in school and in life. To achieve this vision, the report recommends 10 action steps that address funding, federal and state policy integration, workforce development, and standards and assessments for young children to guide the hard work involved in aligning early childhood and elementary education.
<p><u>Early Literacy and College and Career Readiness</u></p> <p>ACT, Inc. (2013). <i>College and career readiness: The importance of early learning. ACT Policy Report.</i> Iowa City, IA: Author. http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/ImportanceofEarlyLearning.pdf</p>	This report reaffirms the importance of early learning and addresses the growing need for a system to support early learning in schools, as well as the obligation of educators and policymakers to promote public awareness of the advantages of early learning.

Postsecondary Readiness	
Citation	Description
<p><u><i>College/Career Readiness and Students with Disabilities</i></u> Brand, B., Valent, A., & Danielson, L. (2013). <i>Improving college and career readiness for students with disabilities</i>. Washington, D.C.: College and Career Readiness and Success Center at American Institutes for Research. http://www.ccrscenter.org/products-resources/improving-college-and-career-readiness-students-disabilities</p>	<p>This issue brief is intended to assist educators to develop a better understanding of strategies by which prepare students with disabilities and special needs for college and career. The brief provides context and background on the numbers of students with disabilities who are college- and career-ready, examines issues and strategies related to preparation and readiness for postsecondary education and careers, and includes examples of current programs and policies that help students with disabilities to successfully transition to college and career.</p>
<p><u><i>College/Career Readiness and Social/Emotional Learning</i></u> Dyminicki, A., Sambolt, M., & Kidron, Y. (2013). <i>Improving college and career readiness by incorporating social and emotional learning</i>. Washington, D.C.: College and Career Readiness and Success Center at American Institutes for Research. http://www.ccrscenter.org/products-resources/improving-college-and-career-readiness-incorporating-social-and-emotional</p>	<p>This issue brief is intended to assist educators in developing a better understanding of how social and emotional learning (SEL) can help students to be college- and career-ready. The brief provides a short description of SEL, why it is needed, and what it looks like in practice. In addition, examples of standards that support SEL at the federal and state levels, current SEL initiatives and programs, and outcomes and measures that can be used to assess SEL programming are described. A list of resources is included at the end of this brief for policymakers who are interested in learning more.</p>
<p><u><i>College/Career Readiness and Career Technical Education</i></u> Brand, B., Valent, A., & Browning, A. (2013). <i>How career and technical education can help students be college and career ready: A primer</i>. Washington, D.C.: College and Career Readiness and Success Center at American Institutes for Research. http://www.ccrscenter.org/products-resources/how-career-and-technical-education-can-help-students-be-college-and-career-ready</p>	<p>This brief provides an overview of the evolution of CTE in the United States, reviews what CTE looks like in practice, and highlights issues that face CTE in the field that must be overcome for it to become an impactful and wide-reaching strategy by which to prepare students for postsecondary success. The paper also discusses the importance of these programs in allowing students opportunities to acquire the competencies required in today's workplace and to learn about various careers by experiencing work and workplaces.</p>
<p><u><i>College/Career Readiness Initiatives</i></u> AIR (2012). <i>College and career development organizer</i>. Washington, D.C.: College and Career Readiness and Success Center at American Institutes for Research.</p>	<p>This college and career development organizer was created to synthesize and organize an increasingly complicated and crowded field of college and career readiness initiatives. The organizer, composed of three strands, can be used to map the efforts of SEAs and LEAs as well as the many organizations developed to research</p>

Postsecondary Readiness	
Citation	Description
<p>www.ccrscenter.org/ccrs-landscape</p>	<p>and provide support for college and career readiness. The organizer also can be used as a set of building blocks to help SEA, LEAs, schools, and other organizations to develop college and career readiness strategies and initiatives to address student needs. Stakeholders can use the components of the organizer to ensure they are designing comprehensive college and career readiness definitions and strategies that address all aspects of the field that are essential to their context. The paper includes three strands, each broken down into four increasingly specific segments organized by strands, threads, components, and examples.</p>
<p><i>College/Career Readiness and District Role</i> Author. (2013). <i>The district role in supporting college and career readiness for students: Perspectives from Long Beach, Albuquerque, and Philadelphia</i>. Washington, D.C.: College and Career Readiness and Success Center at American Institutes for Research. http://www.ccrscenter.org/products-resources/district-role-supporting-college-and-career-readiness-students</p>	<p>This brief builds upon recommendations from a 2009 Institute of Education Sciences (IES) <i>Practice Guide</i> that describes evidence-based practices that promote postsecondary access for high school students.</p>

Parent Partnerships

Citation	Description
<p><u>Parent Partnerships Research</u> Henderson, A., & Mapp, K. (2002). <i>A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement</i>. Austin, TX: National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools. www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf</p>	<p>This research synthesis examines key issues in the field of family and community connections with schools. The paper is a synthesis of 51 studies about the impact of family and community involvement on student achievement and effective strategies to connect schools, families, and community. The synthesis shows that for parent involvement to have an impact on achievement, schools must link parent activities to student learning goals and be respectful of differences among families.</p>
<p><u>Parent Partnerships and RtI</u> Woodruff, D., & Jennings, D. A. (2012). <i>RtI and family engagement: A construct for intentionality</i>. Washington, D.C.: National Center on Response to Intervention at American Institutes for Research. http://www.rti4success.org/webinar/rti-family-engagement-construct-intentionality-4651</p>	<p>In this webinar, authors Woodruff (co-director of the National Center on Response to Intervention) and Jennings (co-director of the Region 1 Parent Technical Assistance Center) provide an overview of research related to parent involvement in the RTI process. They provide a general overview of research related to family engagement, describe a construct for development of strategies for intentional family engagement in implementation of RtI, and discuss the importance of collaboration with OSEP-funded parent centers to address family engagement.</p>
<p><u>Parent Partnerships and Student Achievement</u> WestEd. (2013). Parents as partners in student achievement. <i>R&D Alert</i>, 14(1).. http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/rd-13-01.pdf</p>	<p>This Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT) project puts a new twist on parent-teacher interaction. According to the article, 40 years of research confirm that parents' engagement in their children's education is one of the best ways to boost achievement. The article helps teachers to introduce parents to academic standards, share student performance data, and model field-tested activities for home practice. Parents are provided materials and asked to practice with their child a minimum of 30 minutes four times a week on specific academic skills.</p>

APPENDIX D: PROTOCOLS

This appendix includes the instruments used for data collection and communication with school districts.

Letter of Invitation to Participate in the Study



John R. Kasich, Governor

Michael L. Sawyers, Acting Superintendent of Public Instruction

January 2, 2013

Dear (superintendent or principal for community schools),

We are requesting your participation in an important Special Education Research Project. The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) is conducting a state-wide study to learn about special education best practices and successful outcomes for students with disabilities. The study is funded by the Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children, and will be conducted during the 2012-2013 school year. Select findings and examples of best practices will be shared during State sponsored conferences and other venues. District/school representatives may be invited to provide presentations on best practices.

Your district/school has been chosen as one of several meeting our criteria for site visit by the Research Team. Our site visits will be completed over the course of one-three days. During the visit, we will conduct school-wide walkthroughs and interviews/focus groups with a small sample of district personnel and representatives from elementary, middle and high schools, including administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers and other personnel deemed relevant. We will also collect relevant documents for analysis. In addition, we will provide online surveys for special education and general education teachers. Please note that all information collected will be kept in strictest confidence. All data will be aggregated and no personal identifying information will be shared with anyone at OCECD/ODE.

You will be contacted in the near future by a representative of the Research Team (Karen Sanders, Sonia Jurich, Kavita Mittapalli, or Laura Taylor). At that time we will schedule the site visit and will ask you/your staff to designate a contact person to assist with logistics.

We would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation in this project. If you have any questions, please contact Margaret Burley at margaretb@ocecd.org or (800-374-2806).

Sincerely,

Margaret Burley, Executive Director
Ohio Coalition for the Education of
Children with Disabilities

Susan Zake, Ph.D., Director
Ohio Department of Education
Office for Exceptional Children

cc: State Support Team (SST) Single Point of Contact,
Special Education Director
Sponsor Organization/Contact Person for Community Schools

Site Visit Activities Summary

OHIO SPECIAL EDUCATION RESEARCH PROJECT

A STUDY INTO BEST PRACTICES

SITE VISIT ACTIVITIES

The purpose of this study is to enhance our understanding of the educational achievement of students with disabilities (SWD) with a particular focus on the reasons (best practices) that help shape various levels of achievement. Sample sites were selected based on a stratified sample of districts/schools that share similar demographic characteristics, and for comparison of different levels of performance related to SWD. Both public school districts and public charter schools comprise the sample. We appreciate your participation in the project. Our aim is to conduct the site visit with minimal disruption to your normal routines.

Site visit activities will be completed over the course of two (2) or three (3) consecutive days. Charter public school visits will be completed in one (1) day. The Research Team will comprise two experienced researchers. During site visits, the Research Team will conduct interviews with district personnel and representatives from elementary, middle/junior high, and high schools. (For charter public schools, interviews will be conducted with the school staff and sponsor organization.) Guided school walkthroughs will be led by the principal. An online survey will be completed by special education teachers and general education teachers. Please note that all information collected will be kept in strictest confidence. All data will be aggregated and no personal identifying information will be shared.

Data collection protocols are organized to learn more about the following topics: vision, funding, leadership, accountability, identification and placement, IEP, transition, parent involvement, professional development, collaboration, curriculum alignment, school climate, inclusion, response to intervention (RtI), technology, behavior management, and assessment practices. There are no right or wrong answers. Our purpose is to learn more about how services are provided. This is NOT an evaluation of the district or schools.

The remainder of this document summarizes site visit activities for interviews, Online Faculty Survey, and guided school walkthrough observations. The schedule for each site visit will vary, but generally it is suggested that the first day start with district-level activities and then move to building-level activities that begin with the principal interview. (For charter public schools, the visit will begin at the school level.) The Research Team will work with the site visit contact person to develop a schedule based on the unique characteristics and preferences of the districts and schools.

ROLE OF THE SITE VISIT CONTACT PERSON

A contact person has been identified by each district and charter school to coordinate site visit activities. This person will serve as the single point of contact for the Research Team. Preparations include scheduling dates for the site visit, creating the schedule of activities, and informing staff of the purpose of the site visit and respective roles. Teachers (and students) should be informed that walkthrough observations will be taking place and that instructional activities should proceed as usual. Private space should be made available for interviews.

INTERVIEWS

The goals for the district-level interviews are to

- Identify the district’s vision for special education,
- Understand the framework within which the schools function, and
- Assess district support to schools related to special education.

Note: In the case of charter public schools, these functions may be assigned to the sponsor organization. In-person interviews may or may not be possible; phone interviews may be substituted.

DISTRICT-LEVEL INTERVIEWS	FOCUS	APPROXIMATE TIME NEEDED
Superintendent	Orientation and questions about Vision	20-30 minutes
Special Education Director	Questions will focus on vision, leadership, funding, policies/procedures (general, IEP, transition, parental involvement, professional development, curriculum alignment, collaboration, inclusion), and programs/initiatives (programs, technology, behavior management, assessments)	90 minutes
Education Services/Pupil Personnel Director	Questions will focus on vision, policies/procedures (general, accountability, identification, transition, IEP, collaboration, inclusion), and programs and services (programs, RTI, behavior management)	60 minutes
Curriculum Director	Questions will focus on vision, alignment of district/state curriculum and assessments, collaboration with special education, professional development, inclusion, and assessments.	60 minutes

DOCUMENTS

The Research Team will not collect district-level documents for review. However, please feel free to bring documents to the interview that you think may be helpful in explaining how students with disabilities are served in your district.

The goal for the school-level interviews is to identify practices related to topics that have been highlighted as common to high achieving schools.

Note: The Research Team will visit one elementary, one middle/junior high, and one high school. In the case of charter public schools the Research Team will visit the identified school.

SCHOOL-LEVEL INTERVIEWS	FOCUS	APPROXIMATE TIME NEEDED
Principal/Assistant Principal	Questions will focus on vision, funding, leadership, policies/procedures (accountability, identification and placement, IEPs, transition, professional development, collaboration, parental involvement, curriculum alignment, inclusion, school climate), and programs/initiatives (general, behavior management, assessments)	90 minutes
Ancillary Services (Psychologist/Counselor)	Questions will focus on vision, leadership, and policies/procedures (accountability, identification and placement, IEPs, transition, professional development, parental involvement, school climate, behavior management, assessments)	30 minutes
<p>DOCUMENTS The Research Team will not collect school-level documents for review. However, please feel free to bring documents to the interview that you think may be helpful in explaining how students with disabilities are served in your school.</p>		

ONLINE FACULTY SURVEY
<p>All special education teachers and general education teachers will be asked to complete an online survey. The survey should take about 20 minutes to complete. Survey questions will help the Research Team understand how the schools are serving SWDs. Survey results will remain anonymous. No personal identification will be shared with district or state personnel and only aggregated results will be made public.</p> <p>The link to the survey will be available prior to the site visit and may be completed in advance. Alternatively, teachers may be asked to complete the survey during the site visit while the Research Team is available for questions. The deadline for completion will be one week following the site visit.</p>

GUIDED SCHOOL WALKTHROUGH
<p>The principal (or designee) will be asked to provide a guided school walkthrough for the Research Team. Priorities for the walkthrough include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General orientation to the building and organization of space; • Common areas including library and media center; • General education classrooms where students with disabilities receive instruction; • Special education classrooms/resource rooms/intervention areas where students with disabilities receive instruction; and

- Space designed for other academic intervention activities.

The guide will be asked to identify SWDs as they are engaged in various instructional activities during the tour. This request is made so that the Research Team can note observations related to the SWDs in particular. If teachers have a moment, the Research Team may ask a question or two about what can be observed with respect to how SWDs are served in this setting.

The goal of the guided school walkthrough is to observe as many settings as possible where SWDs are receiving instruction, including representative sample of grade levels, content areas, and intervention settings.

DOCUMENTS

- Map of building
- School/class master schedule (showing instructional and planning time)
- Special education teacher schedules
- Number of students with disabilities, disability category, intervention services provided, and extent of participation in general education

Letter to Participants for Site Visit Scheduling

Good Afternoon Site Visit Coordinator,

I would like to introduce myself as a research team member of the *Ohio Special Education Research Project: A Study into Best Practices*. This correspondence is for the purpose of scheduling our upcoming site visits. Because you are the identified site visit contact person, we are requesting that you serve as our single point of contact for site visit logistics.

As we prepare for our visit to your schools the week of XXXX, I request your assistance with preparation for our visit. Attached you will find an in-depth summary of the requested activities during our 2-to-3-day visit to your district. The timeline is flexible as we hope to cause minimal disruptions and inconveniences during our visits. Please review the attached document to find the requested interviews and the guided observations. During our visits, we would like to conduct a series of interviews and participate in a guided walkthrough. The attachment offers a clear understanding of our focus and requested involved stakeholders.

We must emphasize that our intentions for the site visits are not an evaluation of the district, school, or teachers. We are there to understand a snapshot into the workings of your schools. No names will be identifiable, and we would appreciate your assistance with reassuring the schools about our visit.

We ask that you act in the role of facilitator in arranging our visit with the interviews and school visits.

As we progress with scheduling the site visits, I will be the point of contact for the research team and will be happy to provide any further information or clarification. Please feel free to call or email with any questions or concerns; my contact information is below. We understand the timeframe must be adjusted so as not to interfere with standardized tests in the spring.

We will make every effort to accommodate your first choices. Please respond at your earliest convenience to facilitate completion of our schedule.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Warm regards,

The Research Team

Interview Questions

DISTRICT LEVEL

Goals: identify the district's vision for special education, understand the framework within which the schools function, and assess district support to schools related to special education

Superintendent

Vision

1. How would you describe the district's vision related to special education?
2. What would you identify as the greatest challenge(s) to attain this vision?
3. What factors would you highlight as offering the greatest contributions to attain this vision?

Leadership

4. How long have you been in this position?
5. To what extent are you involved in decisions regarding schools' improvement?
6. To what extent do school administrators have a say in decisions made at the district level that have impact on schools' functioning, including hiring teachers and choice of programs?
7. What systems do you have in place to ensure that schools are providing high quality education to students with disabilities?

Funding

8. How does the district prioritize the use of federal/IDEA discretionary funds? Are there strategies to align special and general education funding? How does the district prioritize resources to leverage school improvement?

Director of Special Education

Vision

1. What is your vision regarding the education of students with disabilities?
2. What do you identify as the greatest challenges to attain this vision?
3. What factors do you highlight as offering the greatest contributions?

Leadership

4. How long have you been in this position?
5. To what extent do you collaborate with your colleagues at the district level to plan and implement policies and programs that affect students in general, not only students with disabilities?

6. How much influence do you have in choosing leaders and teachers at the school level (special education and general education)?
7. What do you think are essential characteristics of a special education teacher?
8. How would you describe the working climate in your district related to the integration of students with disabilities into regular classroom?

Funding

9. What sources of funds are used to pay for special education services in your district?
10. As funds for general education decline (such as in times of recession or slow growth, like now), what happens with special education funding?
11. What are the major challenges you see in funding services for students with disabilities in this district?

Policies and Procedures

12. What challenges do you identify for the delivery of special education services at your schools?
13. What successes would you identify?

Placement/Identification

14. What services are available in the district (in general) regarding students with disabilities that are cognitively high(er) functioning?
15. And services for students with severe disabilities?
16. How does the district ensure that students with disabilities are receiving high quality education?

IEP

17. How much oversight does the district have on the implementation and monitoring of IEPs?
18. To what extent does the IEP focus on access to core curriculum?

Transitions

19. What incentives and supports do you offer the schools to move students out of special to general education as they show improvements/changes in abilities?
20. What supports does the district offer, if any, for serving students with disabilities using distance learning, including blended programs or virtual only schools?
21. What supports does the district offer, if any, for collaboration between high schools and career/technical schools with a focus on students with disabilities?

22. What supports does the district offer, if any, for collaboration between schools and institutions of higher education with a focus on students with disabilities?

Parental involvement

23. What initiatives does the district recommend (or require) related to parental and community involvement at the school level?

Professional development

24. What policies or programs does the district have in place related to supporting new teachers, such as mentorship or other supports?
25. What policies does the district have in place to support retention of school personnel?
26. What process does the district have to maintain continuity of leadership in schools that excel?
27. Does the district provide or support professional development to its personnel? What is provided for special education teachers?

Curriculum Alignment

28. What programs are being used in this district for students with disabilities who are struggling academically in English language arts (ELA)? In mathematics?
29. What types of support does the district offer the schools for successful implementation of these programs?

Collaboration

30. What challenges do you see (if any) in the collaboration between general and special education regarding curriculum and instruction?

Inclusion

31. If inclusion is a district policy, what incentives does the district offer to schools (if any) to maintain students with disabilities within regular classrooms?
32. What are the directives for the education of students with severe disabilities, particularly cognitive and behavioral?
33. If the district uses a multitiered system of intervention, what supports do school leaders and teachers receive to implement the intervention?

Behavior Management

34. Are there behavior management programs that the district recommends/requires for schools?
35. What roles do special education and ancillary services departments have regarding

behavior management interventions for students with disabilities?

Assessments

36. How are decisions made regarding participation of students with disabilities in statewide general (not alternative) assessment programs?
37. How are decisions made regarding accommodations for students with disabilities who participate in the general assessment program (not alternative assessment)?

Education Services Director/Director Ancillary Services

Vision

1. What is your vision regarding the education of students with disabilities?
2. What are the main challenges you see to the achievement of this vision?
3. What are the main factors that most contribute to the achievement of this vision at the district?

Policies/Procedures

4. Does the district emphasize early identification of students with disabilities?
5. To what extent do you/your staff have a say in district-level initiatives related to students with disabilities?
6. What challenges would you identify in the way the schools within the district are providing special education services?
7. What successes would you identify?

Identification and Placement

8. How much leverage do you or your staff (psychologists, counselors) have regarding identification and placement of students with disabilities in terms of policies at the district level?
9. In terms of decision-making at the school level?

IEP

10. How much input does your staff have on the implementation and monitoring of IEPs?
11. To what extent is access to core curriculum part of an IEP?
12. How would you describe relationships between parents and schools related to the IEP?

Transition

13. How much support does your staff receive from the community related to placement and services for students with disabilities—children, youth, and as they graduate from schools?

22. Collaboration

14. How would you describe the relationship between you/your staff and the education staff related to the education of students with disabilities?
15. Are there specific areas in which tension or collaboration is particularly strong?

Inclusion

16. Is inclusion a focus of placement for students with disabilities in this district? If not, what is the focus for students with disabilities who have high(er) levels of cognitive function?
17. If so, to what extent is your staff involved in the implementation of inclusion practices in the schools? (interviewer: possibilities include providing professional development, supports, defining policies and practices, supervising)
18. How would you describe the practices of inclusion in schools in this district?

Programs and services

19. To what extent are you or your staff involved in decisions regarding academic programs for students with disabilities?
20. Is your district using multitiered systems of interventions? If so, how much is your staff involved in the implementation of these systems?

Behavior management

21. What behavior-management programs does your district adopt?
22. To what extent are you/your staff involved in the choice of these programs?
23. To what extent are you/your staff involved in program implementation?

Curriculum Director

Vision

1. What is your vision regarding the education of students with disabilities?
2. What are the main challenges you see to the achievement of this vision?
3. What factors contribute most to the achievement of this vision at the district?

Alignment of district/state curriculum and assessments

4. How are decisions made regarding curriculum at the district level?
5. How do you ensure that the curriculum is aligned with Ohio Academic Content Standards?
6. As the Common Core Standards are implemented, how much support are you and your staff receiving from the state to understand the Common Core and new Assessments?
7. How are you and your staff supporting the schools to implement the Common Core and

new Assessments?

8. How are decisions made regarding supplemental programs that support curriculum for students with special learning needs? (e.g., Reading Recovery)
9. Are teachers trained to use formative assessments to monitor student learning? If not, what strategies do your teachers use to monitor student learning?
10. What types of support or monitoring processes are in place to ensure that teachers implement curriculum appropriately? (Particularly now, use the introduction of the Common Core)

Collaboration with special education

11. How would you describe the collaboration between general and special education regarding curriculum and instruction?

Professional development

12. How much support does the district offer to teachers for ongoing professional development?

SCHOOL LEVEL

Goal: Identify practices related to topics that have been highlighted as common to high-achieving schools.

Principal or Representative

Defining principles

1. What expectations do you have related to teaching and learning at this school?
2. What processes/strategies do you have in place to ensure that these expectations are met?
3. What are the main challenges you see to the achievement of these expectations?
4. What are the main factors that help you achieve these expectations?

Infrastructure

5. What is the process for funding-related decisions at your school?
6. What other funding sources are pooled, if any, to provide services for students with disabilities?

Identification

7. How is the decision made to refer a child for identification?
8. What are the expectations regarding the placement of the child in special education (forever, as needed)?

IEP

9. How frequently do you conduct or participate in IEP meetings at your school?
10. How much support do you receive from community partners?
11. As general educators are pulled into IEP meetings, how does the school ensure that students will not lose instructional time or continuity?

Least Restrictive Environment

12. Does this school include students with disabilities in general education classrooms for all or part of the school day?
13. How is the decision made to include the child into general education classrooms?
14. Are all students with disabilities included or only those who have higher cognitive functioning?
15. How many students with special needs can be placed in one general education classroom (is there a limit)?
16. How much support does your staff receive in terms of professional development to provide education to students with disabilities within regular classrooms?
17. Are special educators expected to teach together with general educators or they are mostly seen as providing extra support?
18. Do the general and special education teachers have common planning time? If not, how do they collaborate?

School without inclusion (if the school uses inclusion, skip these questions)

- a. What types of services do you have for the education of students with disabilities?
- b. If the students are taught separately from general education students, do they still have access to the core curriculum?
- c. If in high school, do they have access to academically challenging electives (e.g., foreign languages)? To college preparatory coursework?

Transition

19. What programs are in place to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from preschool to elementary school and from elementary school to middle school, middle school to high school, and junior high school to high school?
20. If high school, what programs are in place to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from high school to college or career?
21. How much support does your school receive from business/institutions of higher

education in the transition process?

22. How much support do you receive from the adult services (e.g., mental health, MR/DD, vocational rehabilitation)?

Leadership

23. How long have you been in this position at this school? In this similar leadership position overall?
24. How much involvement do you have with curriculum and instruction?
25. To what extent are teachers involved in decisions regarding school improvement?
26. What types of information (or data) do you use to make decisions regarding school improvement?
27. If a specific goal or objective is not being attained, what happens?

Teacher Organization

28. What do you look for most when hiring a new teacher (e.g., background, ideas, previous experience)?
29. How does the hiring process occur?
30. What initiatives do you have to support teachers (new and veteran)?

Parental/community involvement

31. What initiatives do you have in this school to encourage family participation?
32. What types of support do you receive from the community?

Curriculum Alignment

33. What process is in place to ensure that the curriculum is aligned with Ohio Academic Content Standards?
34. To what extent do teachers use assessments to monitor student learning?
35. How frequently are these assessments conducted?
36. What other indicators do you use to monitor student learning?
37. To what extent are you involved in decisions regarding modifications to lesson plans and accommodations, including test accommodations, to address needs of different students, including students with disabilities?

Programs/Initiatives

38. How much flexibility do the schools have related to choice of specific programs (e.g., Read 180, Connected Math, PBIS, etc.)?
39. Do you use any specific programs to supplement instruction in English language arts

(ELA) or mathematics?

- a. If yes, are these programs used for all students who need supplemental instruction, including students with disabilities?
40. Does this school use multitiered systems of intervention? If yes, ask the next two questions:
- a. What types of support does the district offer the schools for successful implementation of these systems?
 - b. How are they monitored?
41. How do you and/or your leadership team monitor student progress? To what extent are students with disabilities considered as part of this monitoring process?

Ancillary Services

Defining principles

1. What expectations do you have related to teaching and learning at this school?
2. What processes/strategies do you have in place to ensure that these expectations are met?
3. What are the main challenges you see to achieve these expectations?
4. What are the main factors that help to achieve these expectations?

Identification and placement

5. How is the decision made to refer a child for identification?
6. What are the expectations regarding the insertion of the child in special education (forever, as needed)?
7. To what extent are you involved in these decisions?
8. How are decisions regarding placement of students with disabilities made?
9. What types of services or programs available for students with more severe disabilities?
10. What types of services or programs available for students with disabilities who are cognitively higher functioning?
11. If the school uses inclusion, how much support do you and your staff provide to general education teachers who are teaching students with disabilities?

IEP

12. What challenges do you identify in the IEP process at this school?

Transition

13. Does this school have special programs for students with disabilities who are in transition in/out of the school?

Professional development

14. What is in place to support counselors/psychologists, as they start working in this school?
15. What is the main role of counselors in this school? (e.g., supporting teachers, individual intervention with students? Discipline focus? Guidance counselor? IEP development?)
16. What is the main role of psychologists in this school? (e.g., testing, supporting teachers, individual interventions with students, IEP development?)
17. How much collaboration exists among teachers and your ancillary staff related to services for students with disabilities?

Behavior management

18. What programs do you have to promote a safe environment conducive to learning?
19. To what extent are you/your staff involved in supporting teachers regarding behavior management programs and initiatives?
20. What behavior management strategies do you use for students with more severe disorders (or emotional/behavioral disorders)?
21. Does this school use multitiered systems of intervention? If so, ask the following questions.
 - a. Are you/your staff involved in decisions regarding the levels at which students should be placed and services received?
 - b. Are you/your staff involved in monitoring how students are doing and whether they should move to a different level?

Teachers

Researchers will approach teachers as they visit the classroom (as appropriate) and ask the following questions (no focus group will be conducted).

1. How do you make instructional decisions for the students with disabilities whom you teach?
2. What are the students with disabilities working on now?
3. How do you address special needs for students with disabilities whom you teach?

School Walkthrough Rubric

OCECD Study: Identifying Best Practices for Students with Disabilities at Ohio Schools

Guided School Walkthrough Rubric

Instruction:

1. Use one set of rubrics per school.
2. Use the back of the document to add your notes.
3. Try to stay between 5 and 10 minutes in each classroom (no more).
4. This document will quantify observations; simply check that the statements are seen.
5. Use the back of the page to add notes about specific observations that, in your perspective, should be emphasized (e.g., the way a teacher addressed a student with disability; how the teacher asked questions of a student with a disability to engage the student; how students interacted among themselves and with teacher).
6. Use N/A to indicate that a specific statement was not expected to be observed (e.g., a classroom has no student with disability); statements related to students with disabilities should come with N/A.
7. Keep in mind Guided School Walkthrough instructions from the Site Visit Activities document.

SCHOOL

District name:	Observer initials:		
School name:			
Date of visit:	Time of visit:		
Elements to Observe	Yes	No	Somewhat
School has a warm environment (bright, colorful)			
School is in a new or renovated building			
Computers and other technology are available throughout the building			
Student work is seen in halls and other common areas			
School vision or performance expectations are displayed			
Behavior expectations are displayed			
Office staff is courteous			
During class time, school is quiet			
Teachers are seen greeting or talking to students respectfully			
Teacher are seen talking collegially with colleagues			
Common areas (gym, cafeteria) bright and welcoming			
Brief comments:			

CLASSROOM

Identification	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Grade(s):										
Subject being taught at the moment										
Number of students in class										
Setting										
General classroom										
Resource room/learning center										
Media Center										
Other (explain)										
Environment										
Learning targets/lesson objectives visible										
Student work displayed										
Room is bright and colorful										
Students sit in rows										
Students sit in circles/share common tables										
Students being served individually										
Students with disabilities integrated with others										
Students with disabilities sit at the back of the room or other isolated arrangement										
The class has no students with disabilities										

Note. If the class has no students with disabilities, skip the next section (Inclusion).

Inclusion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Special and general education teachers share responsibility for the lesson (coteaching)										
Special education teacher is present but limits his/her role to assisting a few students										
Special education teacher not present										
Paraprofessional helps individual students										
Paraprofessional supports instruction										
Volunteer helps individual students										
All students exposed to core curriculum										
All students exposed to supplemental program(s)										
Students with disabilities are not involved in the lesson (doing independent work)										
Teacher role										
Teacher/teachers are mostly facilitators										
Teacher is explaining a project										
Teacher controls the learning (lecturing)										
Technology										
Technology not present/not seen										
Technology present but not used										
Teacher uses technology to demonstrate a lesson										
Students use technology										
Student engagement										
Students work individually most of the time										
Students work collaboratively most of the time										

Students involved in discussions regarding a theme										
Students conduct research/investigative work										
Students with disabilities present but not engaged in activities										
Students with disabilities work with teacher (tutor or aide) individually										
Teacher attempts to engage all students										
Teacher mostly addresses students who are engaged										
Teacher acknowledges student work and participation										
Adult(s) in room treat all students with respect										
The majority of students (if not all) treat each other with respect										
<i>Comments (if needed, use the backs of the pages to write your comments)</i>										

Letter to Participants with Directions for Online Teacher Survey

Email to Site Visit Coordinator

Good Morning XXXX,

As explained in the Site Visit Activities document, we are asking teachers to participate in a survey. The survey should be completed by all teachers in the school, including general education teachers, special education teachers, content area teachers, and teachers from elective courses. Substitute teachers and school personnel with no teaching responsibility should not participate in the survey. The survey takes about 20 minutes to complete and should be completed in one sitting (there is no save capability).

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ocecd2013>

Please encourage your teachers to participate. Responses are essential to obtain teachers' perspectives and complement the information obtained from the interviews and site visit. We will also need a total count of teachers in your district to calculate response rate. Please send the survey out to the requested teachers as soon as possible; you may also include us in the email. We request that the survey be completed to meet the deadline of two weeks after our visit.

In order to facilitate the email, we have drafted an example letter that you may use as you send the link and information to your teachers.

We thank you for your continued support in our study, and we look forward to meeting you during our upcoming visit scheduled on XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Best,
The Research Team

Teacher Survey

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) has contracted with the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) to conduct a study on the practices adopted by school districts regarding the education of students with disabilities. The study includes site visits, interviews, and a survey of school faculty within school districts selected by ODE. Findings from the study will be used to help school districts across the state to implement practices that are helpful to improve the academic performance of all students, and in particular, students with disabilities.

Your participation in this survey is very important. We need to hear your voice to understand how your school is educating students with disabilities. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Please, be open and honest with your reflections, as this survey will remain anonymous. No personal identification will be shared with district or state personnel and only aggregated results will be made public.

OCECD appreciates your collaboration with this study. If you have any questions regarding the survey or the study, please contact Dr. Karen Sanders at XXXXXX.

Note for Charter Schools: Some questions ask about support received from the district. If you teach in a charter school, please respond based on support received from your sponsor.

1. Please check the option on the right that best represents your opinion regarding the statements on the left related to district or school support for teachers.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our school has high expectations regarding student academic performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
These expectations apply to all students, including students with disabilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Administrators clearly share these expectations with teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
These expectations are shared with students and families.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our school develops plans to help all students attain high academic performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The plans address the needs of students with disabilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Does your school have a process for ongoing monitoring of its progress toward the plans' goals and objectives?

- Yes (logic: go to item 3)
 No (logic: go to item 6)

3. As part of the process of ongoing monitoring of the school progress toward goals (strategies, action steps), does your school have a team dedicated to examine data and propose solutions for school improvement?

- Yes (logic: go to item 4)
 No, this is an informal process with no specific team (logic: go to item 6)

4. Are special education teachers represented on the team?

- Yes
 No

5. How frequently does the team meets to review the school plan and propose solutions?

- Weekly
- Biweekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- As needed
- Other (please specify) _____

6. Please check the option on the right that best represents your opinion regarding the statements on the left related to district or school support for teachers.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The district or the school has a process to support newly hired teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The school leadership (principal and/or assistant principal) provides support to general education teachers as needed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The school leadership provides supports to special education teachers as needed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The school leadership is supportive of collaboration among general education and special education teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The district provides opportunities to involve teachers in decisions regarding curriculum and instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special education teachers are involved in decisions regarding curriculum and instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The district offers support to school leadership and teachers regarding curriculum implementation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Regarding teacher collaboration, please check the option on the right that best represents your opinion related to the statements on the left.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers are provided planning time to collaborate with colleagues from the same grade level or same content area.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers are provided planning time to collaborate with colleagues from different grade levels or content areas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General education teachers are provided planning time for collaboration with special education teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special education and general education teachers are seen as equal partners in the education of students with disabilities who are in general education classrooms.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General education teachers understand that they have the responsibility for the learning of students with disabilities who are in their classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The school offers ways for teachers to share and discuss their classroom experiences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General and special education teachers are involved in evaluating the effectiveness of instructional units and lessons.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Does the district support teachers’ participation in professional development opportunities?

- No (logic: go to item 12)
- It used to but not this year (logic: go to item 9)
- Yes (logic: go to item 9)

9. How does your district support professional development opportunities? (Check all that apply)

- Pay for conference fees and expenses
- Pay for substitute teachers
- Pay registration fees for workshops and online courses
- Pay tuition (college credits)
- Offer ongoing inservice opportunities
- Other (please specify) _____

10. During the past three years, did you have opportunities to attend professional development related to any of the following topics?

	No	Yes	Not Sure
Curriculum alignment with Ohio's Academic Content Standards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Differentiated instruction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behavioral management strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accommodations and adaptations for students with disabilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Development of individualized instructional plans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of assessments to monitor student progress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using of technology to improve instruction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of data to improve instruction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Best practices in education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Even when the professional development focuses on topics relevant to education of all students, an emphasis is placed on how what is learned can be applied to students with disabilities.

- No
- Sometimes
- Most of the time
- Not sure

12. Please check the option on the right that best represents your opinion regarding the statements on the left related to resources and technology.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school leadership makes an effort to focus school resources to support instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers have access to technology to support instruction (e.g., computers, Smart Board, Document Camera, others).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers have access to technology for adapting instruction to students with disabilities when needed (e.g., visual aids, manipulatives).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The majority, if not all students, have easy access to technology in the classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. If in your school students have access to technology, do special education students have access to the same technology as general education students?					
<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Not sure					
14. During school year 2012-2013, is your school using a multitiered intervention?					
<input type="radio"/> Yes, for all students (school-wide) <input type="radio"/> Yes, for students with disabilities only <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Not sure					
15. During school year 2012-2013, is your school using a behavior management program or strategy?					
<input type="radio"/> Yes, for all students (school-wide)					

- Yes, for students with disabilities only
- No
- Not sure

16. What is the name of the behavior-management program or strategy used in your school?
(If you don't know, just answer "don't know")

17. What supplemental program does your school use for reading?

18. How is this program or strategy used?

- For all students who require supplemental or targeted intervention
- For students with disabilities only
- Other (please specify) _____

19. What supplemental program does your school use for mathematics?

20. How is this program or strategy used?

- For all students who require supplemental or targeted intervention
- For students with disabilities only
- Other (please specify) _____

21. Please check the option on the right that best represents your opinion regarding the statements on the left related to new instructional programs.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Before the school starts a new instructional program or strategy, teachers receive professional development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After the school starts a new instructional program or strategy, support is available to teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After the school starts a new instructional program or strategy, school administrators and/or teachers use data to measure how it is impacting student achievement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Core instructional programs are selected on the basis of their alignment with Ohio Academic Content Standards.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Core instructional programs are selected on the basis of their alignment with adopted curriculum.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. Are you a special education teacher?					
	<input type="radio"/> Yes (logic: go to item 28)				
	<input type="radio"/> No (logic: go to item 23)				
23. If you are not a special education teacher, are you teaching (or have you taught) students with disabilities in during school year 2012-2013?					
	<input type="radio"/> Yes (logic: go to item 24)				
	<input type="radio"/> No (logic: go to item 30)				

24. If you are teaching students with disabilities this school year, what is approximately the percentage of students with disabilities in your classroom?

- Fewer than 10%
- Between 10% and 20%
- More than 20%

25. On average, how long do these students remain in your classroom?

- The majority remain for more than 80% of the time
- The majority remain between 40% and 80% of the time
- The majority remain below 40% of the time

26. How much input do you have in the decision to place a student with disability in your classroom?

- None; I receive a list of students in the beginning of the school year
- None, but the school leadership informs me about the decision and offers support
- I am consulted and offer suggestions
- Other (please specify) _____

27. What types of support do you receive related to the students with disabilities in your classroom? (Check all that apply)

- A special education teacher is assigned to my classroom
- Paraprofessionals are assigned for a one-on-one with some of the students
- I have weekly time to collaborate with the special educator for planning of lessons
- I am given time to collaborate with the special educator but it is not enough
- I am given time for consultation with the special educator as needed
- I have no time for planning with the special educator
- I receive resources and suggestions from the special education teacher
- I receive no special supports

28. As a special education teacher, what is your role in this school? (Check all that apply)

- I coteach with general education teachers
- I am a consultant to general education teachers
- I work with students with disabilities as a resource teacher (using a pull-out approach)

- I work full time with students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms
- Other (please specify) _____

29. Regarding the students you are serving (or have served) during school year 2012-2013, what types of disabilities were represented?(Check all that apply)

- Learning disabilities
- Emotional and behavioral disabilities
- Hard of hearing/deaf
- Blind/visually impaired
- Physical disabilities
- Developmental disabilities
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Other (please specify) _____

30. Please check the option on the right that best represents your opinion regarding the statements on the left related to interventions for struggling students

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students who are struggling academically are provided with additional targeted intervention.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An academic intervention team meets regularly to review students' progress (or lack of) during supplemental intervention.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students are grouped according to their learning needs regardless of having an IEP or not.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lessons are carefully aligned with Ohio Academic Content Standards.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Lessons are carefully aligned with the district/school curriculum.

Lessons are differentiated to individual student needs using flexible grouping and other means.

31. How frequently are students assessed to monitor progress? (Check all that apply)

- Daily
- Weekly
- At the end of each instructional unit
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Yearly
- Other (please specify) _____

32. What types of assessments are used to monitor student progress? (Check all that apply)

- Teacher-developed assessments
- Program-specific assessments
- District-developed assessments
- Standardized assessments
- State assessment program
- Other (please specify) _____

33. How are data from assessments used? (Check all that apply)

- To identify students who need targeted intervention
- To move students in and out of targeted intervention
- To move students within intervention groups
- To group students according to their learning needs
- For course completion
- For grade completion
- Other (please specify) _____

34. Please check the column on the right that best represents your opinion regarding the

statements on the left related to family and/or community involvement at your school.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
In this school, families are always welcomed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In this school, there are specific programs that focus on increasing family involvement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In this school, there is a concerted effort to involve families of students with disabilities throughout the year (not only IEP time).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The school has partnerships with business and community organizations to support learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The school has partnerships with community colleges or 4-year colleges to facilitate the transition from high school to college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
42. The school has partnerships with businesses to facilitate the transition from high school to careers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Demographics

35. How long have you been teaching in this school?

- 0-1 year
- 2-5 years
- 6-10 years
- More than 10 years

36. How long have you been teaching overall?

- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-10 years
- 11-15 years
- More than 15 years

37. What level do you currently teach?

- Elementary School
- Middle School
- Junior High School
- High School
- Other (please specify) _____

38. What is the highest degree you obtained?

- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Other (please specify) _____

39. Please, check the district your school is in.

[Menu of participant districts and charter schools]

40. If you have anything regarding the education of students with disabilities that you want to share with us, please use the box below.

Thank you for your time and feedback!