

# Beverly Hills Unified School District



## Academic Audit Report

March 2018



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## Background

Generation Ready was pleased to have the opportunity to support the Beverly Hills Unified School District in carrying out an Academic Audit of their five schools. The District has been recognized nationally as a leader in education and students have consistently scored above national averages on standardized achievement tests. The 2017 graduation rate of 98% is well above the State and national average. Although the graduation rate increased by 3.9% in the 2016-2017 year, this same growth was not evident in student achievement on the State Tests. The challenge facing the District is how to move from a good district where most students succeed to a great school district where all students experience academic success.

The Beverly Hills Unified School District's Academic Audit provided an opportunity for the District to reflect on its improvement planning processes and self-evaluate how well - and systematically - its educators make instructional decisions in the service of student learning. It took the most useful aspects from external data and a school's self-review, together with information about the school's context, to build an overall picture of the school. During the two-day site visits, information was gathered from meetings with District and school leadership teams, as well as observations and meetings with students, teachers, and community members of the district. The Audit examined how the work in each school impacts the quality of the instructional core across classrooms.

The new California Curriculum Frameworks represent qualitatively different expectations and their success will require significant shifts in educational practice. Changes this significant are unlikely to occur without equally significant investments in the knowledge and skills of educators combined with necessary resources. Many teachers will need to teach in profoundly different ways as they make the instructional shifts necessary to ensure their students meet the more rigorous standards.

This report is designed to serve several purposes for Beverly Hills Unified School District. At one level, the data provides a record of the "current status" of instructional practices across the district. The findings and recommendations are intended to be used in conjunction with the findings of the Technology Review. Together these reports offer insight into a comprehensive set of issues that will help the District make the decisions necessary to meet their mission *"to inspire and enable each student to achieve academic excellence and meet the goals of college and career readiness"*. Each Principal received an individual school report.

Great Districts do two things well: they explore new strategies, welcome mistakes as learning opportunities; and they integrate new approaches within the ongoing work of their schools, honoring and building on prior work.

# Beverly Hills Unified School District Academic Audit

## Context

The Beverly Hills Unified School District serves approximately 4,000 students in four K-8 elementary schools, and one 9-12 high school. Each elementary school consists of a primary school (K-3), an intermediate school (4-5), and a middle school (6-8). The school population comprises of 11.4% Asian, 2.8% African American, 1.2% Pacific Islander, 7.9% Hispanic, and 72.7% White students. The student body includes 6.3% English Language Learners, and 8.7% who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

The District is undergoing a period of significant change, particularly in terms of recent turnover of leaders at both the District and school levels. In the five schools, two have newly appointed principals in their first school in the position and two schools have acting principals.

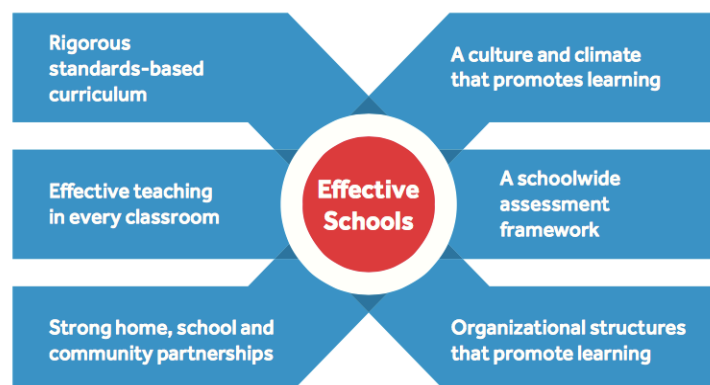
The district has been recognized nationally as a leader in education. Students have consistently scored far above national averages on standardized achievement tests. The graduation rate of 98% is well above the State and national average. Although the graduation rate has grown by 3.9% in the 2016-2017 year, this same growth was not evident in the students' achievement on the State Tests.

## Introduction

The Audit focused on the quality of education provided by the Beverly Hills Unified School District's five schools. This involved evaluating the impact of management, professional leadership and teaching on the students' learning and achievement. It used the most relevant aspects from external data, together with information gathered within the school context, to build an overall picture of the school. This helped answer the overarching evaluation question for the Audit:

How effectively does this school promote student learning and ensure high expectations and academic success for every student?

### Six Essential Practices of Effective Schools



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While information was gathered on all six of the domains, the major focus was on three domains. Emphasizing the indicators of quality for curriculum, teaching and assessment is grounded in the theory of action that student learning improves when the relationship between student, teacher, and content – the instructional core – is improved.

In relation to the major evaluation question, Generation Ready's Academic Audit is designed to make it easier for the school to identify:

- What they are doing well
- Where they need to develop and review
- Implications for future action

The conclusions about school performance were informed by evidence gathered through the Audit process. We define evidence as the material or information that is used to support a finding, fact or judgment. Throughout the Audit process, the Leadership Team and identified constituents were engaged in conversations to ensure that the Audit captured the most accurate picture of the constituents and that the Audit captured the most accurate picture of the school's practices. The Audit aimed to build on the schools' strengths and self-review capacity and ensure that Generation Ready's review findings are useful and applied.

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## Academic Audit Criteria

The complete Six Essential Practices of Effective Schools Rubric can be found in Appendix 1

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### Domain 1: A Culture and Climate that Promotes Learning

The school has a shared vision and an established culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, providing support to achieve those expectations. The vision includes a stated commitment to diversity.

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### Domain 2: A Rigorous Standards-Aligned Curriculum

There is engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners through multiple entry points and aligned to Common Core State Standards and/or content standards. The curriculum is culturally responsive to the diversity of the students and community.

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### Domain 3: A School-Wide Assessment Framework

Teachers collaboratively develop and align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions. Assessment data is disaggregated by race/ethnicity, language, and IEP status.

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### Domain 4: Effective Teaching in Every Classroom

The school develops teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts, aligned to the curricula, and meets the needs of all learners. The teaching incorporates knowledge of students' ethnic and cultural background and practices into lesson content.

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### Domain 5: Organizational Structures that Promote Learning

There are structures in place that allow professional collaborations in teacher teams using an inquiry approach that focuses on improved student learning.

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### Domain 6: Home School and Community Partnerships

The school works closely with parents to achieve a high level of complementary educational expectations between home and school.

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## Information Sources

Information for this report was gathered from multiple sources between Monday, January 29, 2018 and Thursday, February 01, 2018. Accountability and demographic data were downloaded from the state website and this was used alongside both qualitative and quantitative data gathered during the school visit. Students, teachers, and administrators were interviewed to assure multiple perspectives.

Data was gathered from:

1. Classroom Observations

127 classrooms were visited over four days. The teachers observed were a representative sample of the school's teachers with respect to grade level, teaching experience, and years at the school. Each class was observed for at least twenty minutes to gain a clear impression of the nature of the instruction.

The instructional continuum used to analyze instruction in classrooms was developed by Generation Ready, and informed by Charlotte Danielson's Framework of Teaching Evaluation (Danielson C. 2014). Six key criteria that describe aspects of instruction were used as lenses:

- Lesson structure and implementation
- Collaboration and student discourse
- Questioning
- Language structure and vocabulary
- Differentiation, formative assessment, feedback and
- Concept development and understanding.

The criteria are described at four levels and range from didactic (teacher-centered) to dialogic (student-centered) teaching. The rubric is included in the Appendices.

2. Online Surveys

Parents, teachers and students (Grade 4 and up) were invited to take part in an Online Survey:

- 171 teachers responded
- 421 parents responded
- 1791 students responded

3. Interviews

- a. Principal and Assistant Principal
- b. TOSA - Teacher on Special Assignment in Technology

4. School Self-Review completed by the Principal

5. Focus Groups

Time was scheduled for the Generation Team to meet with small focus groups for 30-45 minutes. The participants in each of the following groups were selected by the Principal:

- a. Parents

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- b. Teachers
    - c. Students
    - d. Technology team
  - 6. Text and Technology Trackers
  - 7. Performance and Accountability Data from the State



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## Domain 1: School Culture and Climate

### Findings

- ✓ The schools' vision and values are clearly articulated by the Principals, teachers, parents and students.
- ✓ The schools' beliefs in how they handle discipline and social-emotional support produces a safe and inclusive learning environment.
- ✓ The schools have created a safe, welcoming environment for students. This begins with supportive and friendly front office staff and fostered by all the school staff.
- ✓ In some schools, teachers routinely engage in collaborative inquiry to establish goals for on-going professional development.
- ✓ Teachers, students, and parents articulated high expectations for student learning.
- ✓ Most students felt safe at school.

### Impact

- For students to learn, they must feel safe, engaged, connected, and supported in their classrooms and schools. These conditions for learning are the elements of a school's climate that students experience personally. Beverly Hills schools provide environments where students feel accepted, valued, respected and included. In each of the schools the teachers, students, and school leaders seemed happy to be there and they treated each other with respect. The administrators, teachers, students and parents expressed pride in their school.
- There is a coherent belief about the importance of high expectations for student learning. Students, teachers and parents believed the schools had high expectations; however, what this meant in terms of student outcomes was less clear.
- The positive culture and climate of the schools create a solid foundation for school improvement. The acceptance of all students, recognition of diversity, and a sense of safety add strength to that foundation.
- While the parents and majority of students felt the school was a safe place, a number of students expressed concerns. The open campus at the high school was an area of concern for some students.

### Supporting Evidence

The Generation Ready team found the schools very pleasant places to be with friendly and helpful students and staff. The climate of the schools was welcoming. The evidence of a highly effective school culture and climate came from the following:

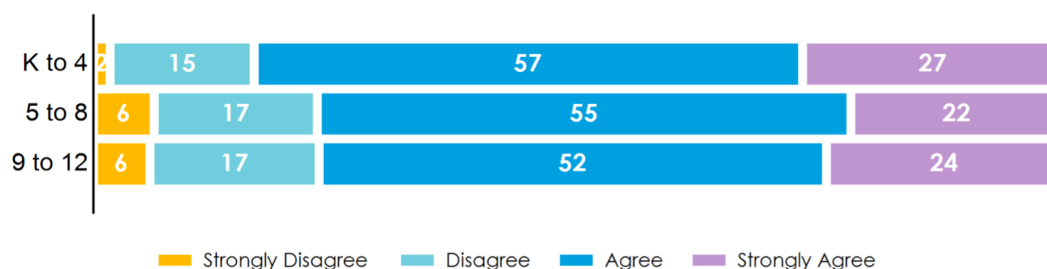
- The District is undergoing a period of significant change, particularly in terms of recent turnover of leaders at both the District and school levels. In the five schools, two have

newly appointed principals in their first school in the position and two schools have interim acting principals. Two schools are undergoing major construction. At the time of the Audit the schools were waiting to hear the Board's decision on the restructuring of the schools. This was a stressful time for the schools to have an Audit yet administrators, teachers, parents and students were positive and welcoming.

- Teachers (94%), parents (80%) and students (92%) believed the schools had high expectations for student learning. While there is strong agreement from the school community about high expectations, over 70% of the parents reported they sought outside help for their children.

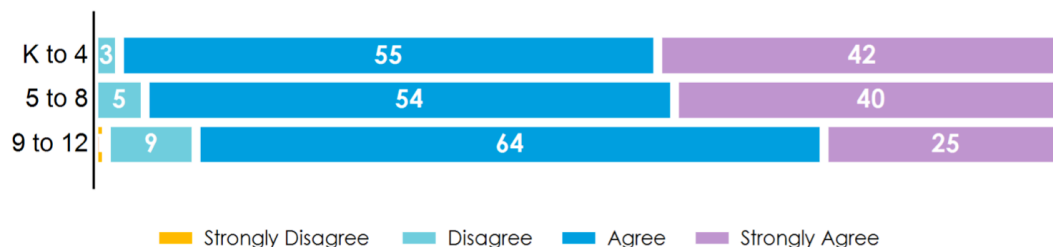
### Teacher Responses

I believe that the principal and teachers set high expectations for learning. (%)



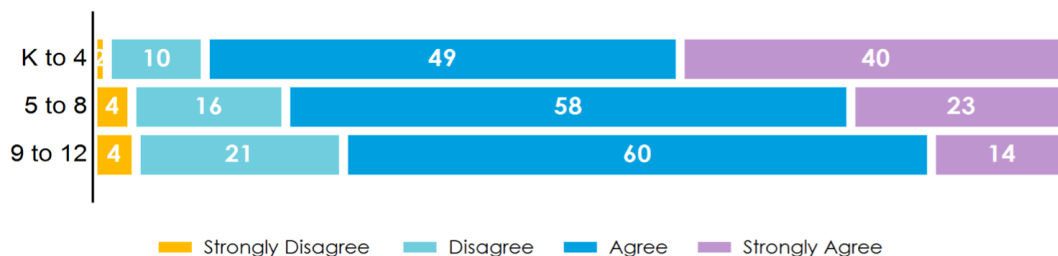
### Student Responses

My school has high expectations for the students as learners and the teachers as professionals clearly communicate these expectations. (%)



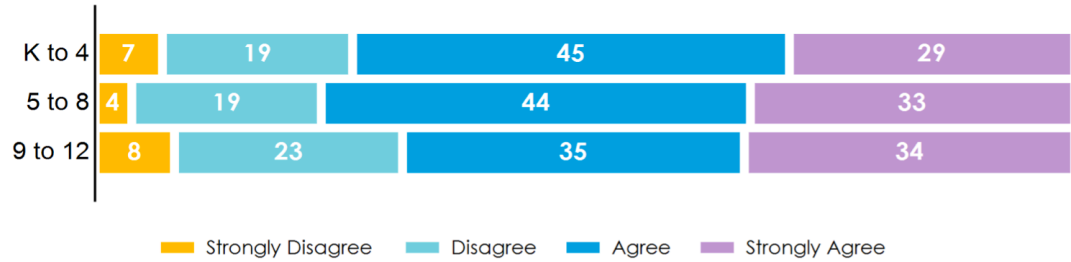
### Parent Responses

Teachers set high expectations for all learners at this school. (%)



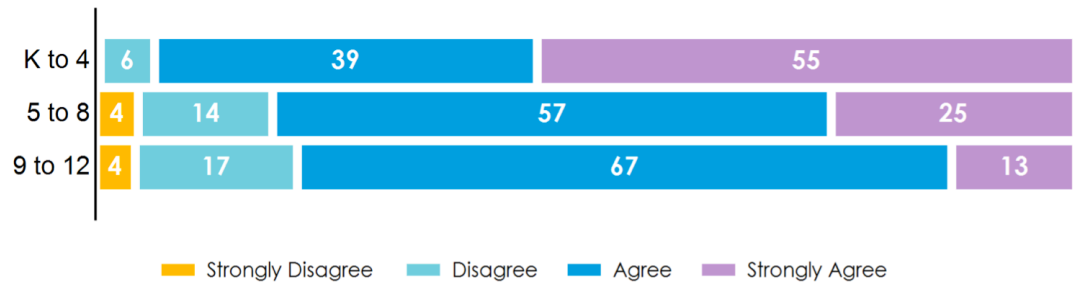
- The following data shows responses from parents when asked about seeking outside help for students.

I sometimes seek resources outside school to support my child's learning. (%)



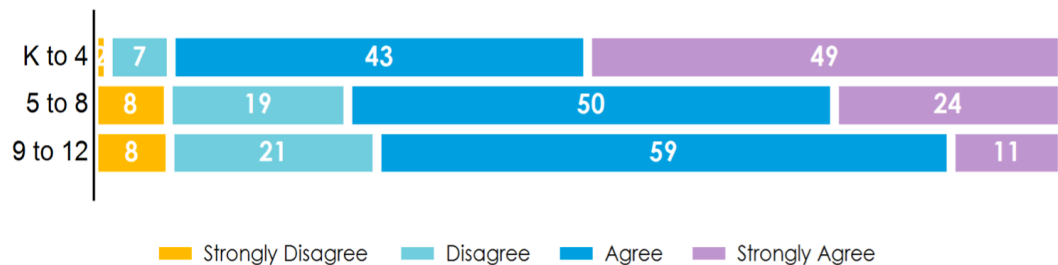
- 85% of the students who completed the survey stated that teachers are willing and committed to providing extra help to students who need it.

Teachers are willing and committed to providing extra help to students as needed (%)



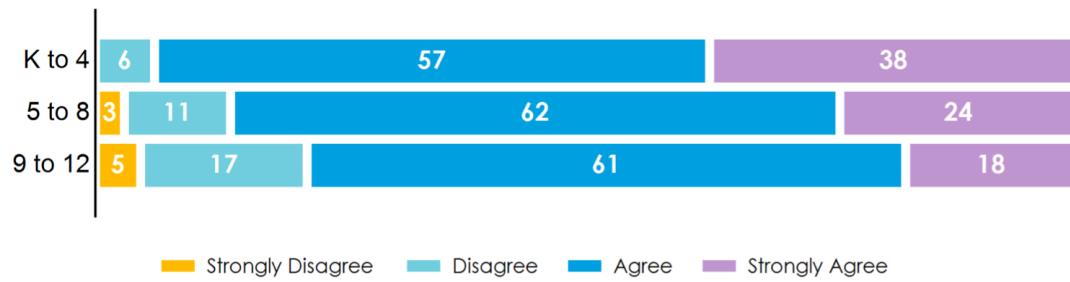
- 88% of the students who completed the survey felt that the principal and other school staff try to make the school a place that students enjoy.

The principal and the other school staff try to make my school a place that students enjoy. (%)



- 78% of the students who completed the survey felt that the principal and other school leaders are visible in classrooms and on the campus.

My principal and other school leaders are visible in classrooms and on campus. (%)



- Members of the teacher focus groups expressed frustration at the number of changes in administration at the District and school levels. They were careful to stress they supported their new principals. Teachers said that while they had suggestions for change they were happy in their current positions and there is no other District they would rather work in.

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## Domain 6: Strong Home, School, and Community Partnerships

### Findings

- ✓ The school's strong partnerships with the community enriches the learning environment for students.
- ✓ The school welcomes and embraces its cultural and social diversity and parents are encouraged to participate in their children's learning.
- ✓ Parents are a valued and integral part of their children's learning. All stakeholders including parents, students, teachers, and administration consistently communicated that parents were involved and this is reflected in the level of investment from the Parent Teacher Association (PTA).
- ✓ The dissemination of school and student information to parents is communicated in multiple formats, from the PTA newsletter to tech tools like Jupiter. Some parents wanted to strengthen communication between school and wanted to see further improvements made in the communication between different stakeholders.

### Impact

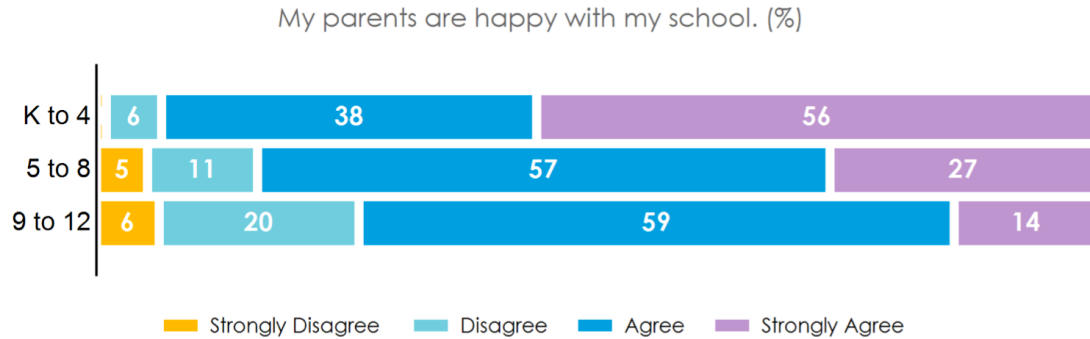
- Strong home, school, and community partnerships were consistent themes throughout the District. A strong sense of community was communicated by all stakeholders including parents, students, teachers, and administrators. Parents were a valued and integral part of their children's learning. There was a family atmosphere of support for students observed during the site visits.
- The community has made it a priority to offer and fund a range of classes and Specials in order to provide a well-balanced education. This combined effort was recognized by the administration, student and teacher focus groups. These programs are supported through fundraising efforts and volunteer hours of the school, headed by the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Examples of these curricular classes include an award-winning Orchestra and Band program, Art, STEM, Yearbook, Integrated Media, Foreign Language, Adaptive PE, Honors Classes, and an encouragement in integration of technology within all classrooms.

### Supporting Evidence

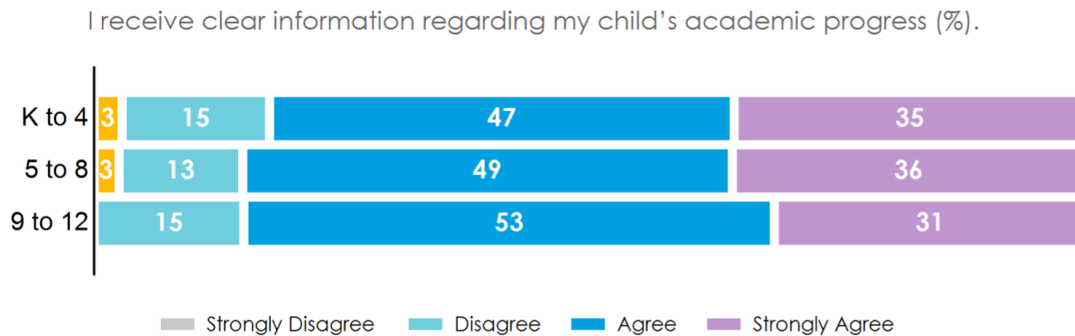
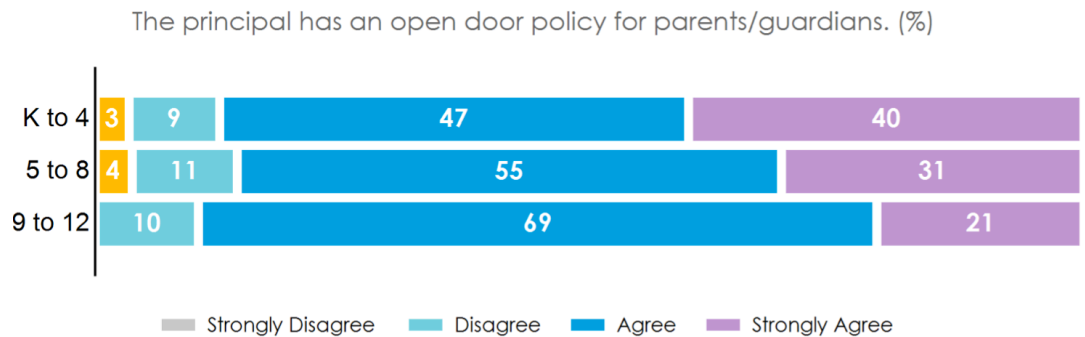
- The PTA at the schools set robust goals for fundraising every year. These funds are given back to the school community by supporting programs. Other projects that are funded through this collaboration between the school and community are individual classroom projects and teacher professional development. During the teacher focus groups, a few of the teachers expressed appreciation of the efforts by the PTA to fund classroom projects

and professional development opportunities. One teacher talked about a conference that she was able to attend due to the PTA efforts. Another teacher spoke about a classroom project that required extra materials to make the project functional. She spoke of how the PTA was receptive to her request and willing to provide the materials that were requested in order to make the project available to the class.

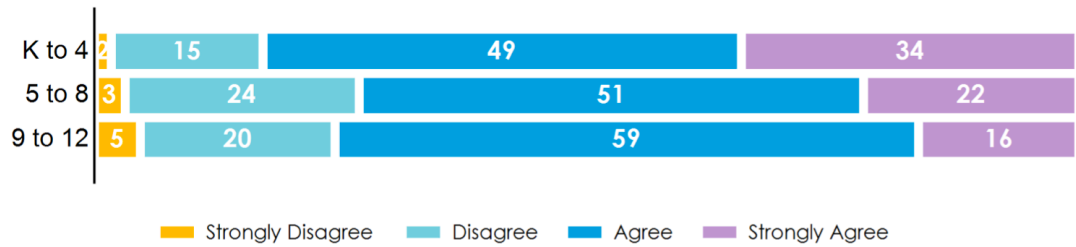
- The following data helps confirm the findings on the strength of home, school, and community relationships during the visit from the Audit team.
- Students 1,791 Responses



- Parents 421 responses

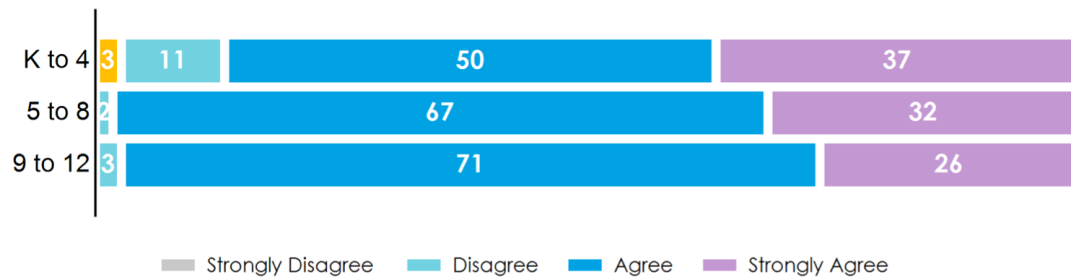


Parents and volunteers have opportunities to become involved in activities that support the instructional program. (%)

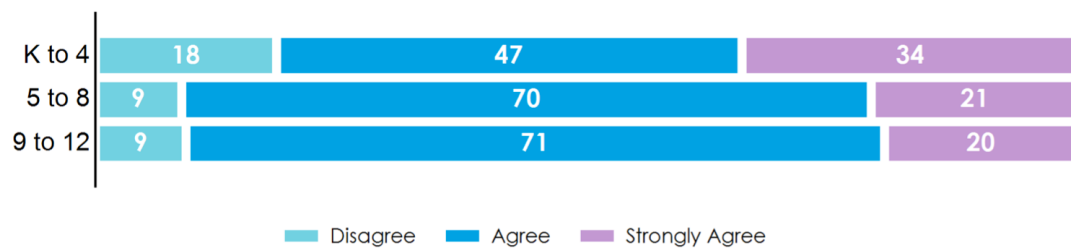


– Teacher Survey responses 179 responses

The school staff values the family's role in students' education. (%)



The school uses culturally appropriate practices to ensure that families are welcome and can contribute to the classroom, school, and community's effectiveness. (%)



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## Domain 4: Effective Teaching in Every Classroom

### Findings

- ✓ Principals acknowledged the need to develop a consistent understanding of an effective instructional model.
- ✓ Teaching approaches vary across the school with many classes being whole class and teacher focused.
- ✓ In most classes visited, teachers were teaching and students were engaged. The rigor of the teaching and the nature of the student engagement varied greatly from class to class.
- ✓ Students had very little opportunity to engage in academic conversation.
- ✓ While the majority of teachers were engaged in whole class instruction, there were some teachers using their knowledge of the students as learners to inform aspects of instruction, e.g. grouping of students.
- ✓ In many classrooms instructional outcomes required only minimal thinking by students, allowing most students to be passive.
- ✓ There is evidence of the beginning of student initiation of inquiry.

### Impact

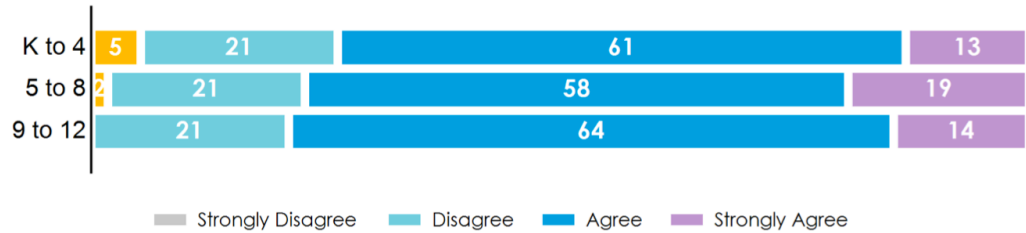
- A consistent school-wide belief around high expectations for student academic performance was clearly communicated by stakeholders. However, effective instruction that reflected a consistent and coherent approach, while seen in some classes, was not observed District-wide. Many of the instructional activities observed did not include opportunities for students to engage deeply, student to student, around content and concepts. Most student talk was limited to addressing the questions asked by the teacher, thereby preventing opportunities for all students to explore ideas and concepts. When instruction is whole-class and teacher focused most students in the class remain passive and only a few students engage with the content.
- In every school there were examples of highly effective, student-centered teaching; however, the variation within and across schools means students have unequal access to quality teaching.

### Supporting Evidence

- During the student focus groups, many students expressed that there was an inconsistency in the way the same content area was taught among many teachers. They stated that some teachers had higher expectations and that the work was more rigorous in those classes.
- 77% of teachers agreed that there was a consistent belief about effective instruction in their school. Principals during their interviews acknowledged there was not a consistent approach to, or belief about effective teaching. In El Rodeo Elementary School the principal is addressing the issue while in the other schools the principals are all newly appointed.

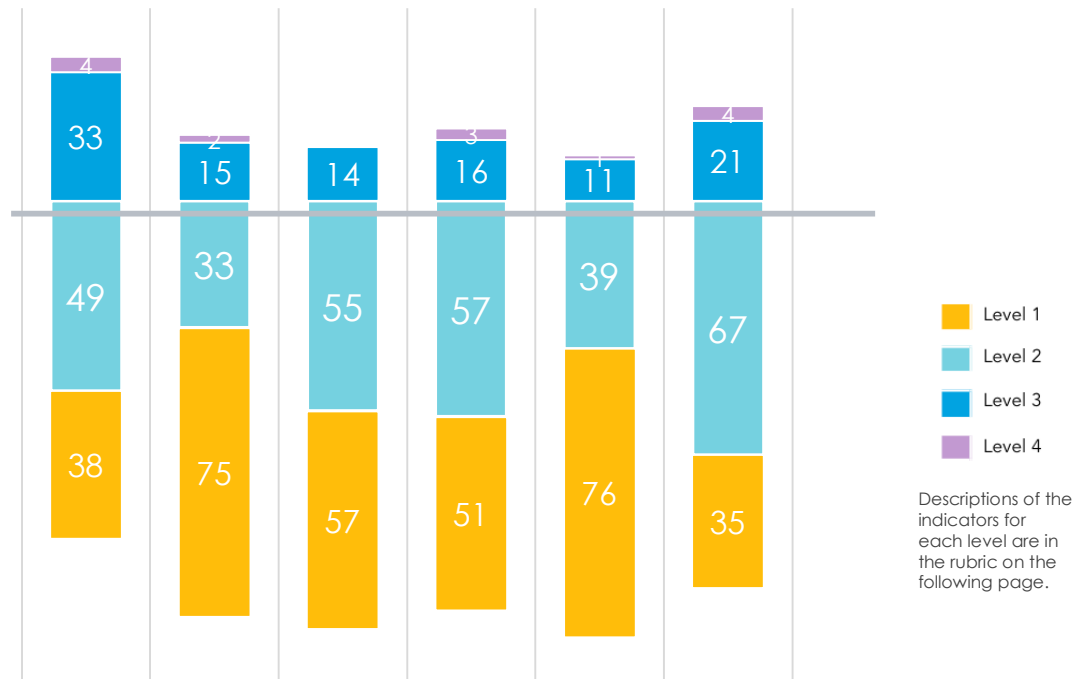


There is school-wide belief about what constitutes effective instruction is reflected in a consistent approach to teaching and learning. (%)



- 83% of the teachers surveyed believed they made the instructional shifts necessary to meet the more rigorous standards. This was not reflected in most classrooms observed.
- Evidence of instructional practice came from observations in 127 classrooms by the Audit team, as well as additional observations by the team member focusing on technology. A rubric was used for the classroom observations with indicators for: lesson structure; student discourse; teacher questioning; use of academic language; differentiation; and development of concepts.
- Findings from the 127 classrooms observed are shown in the graph below.

Number of Teachers at Each Level of the Teaching Continuum



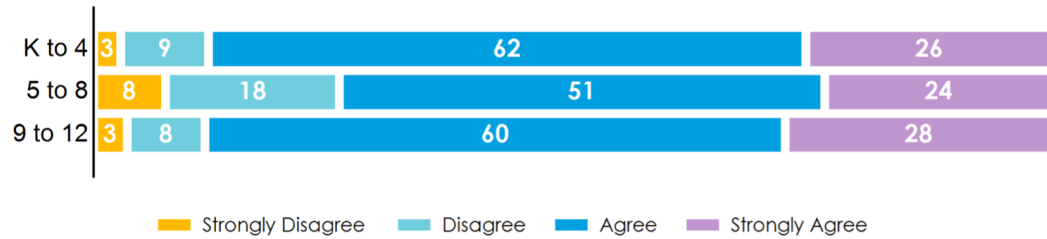
- The following Teaching Continuum was used in classroom observations.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Lesson Structure	<p>Some elements of a lesson structure are present and indicate planning.</p> <p>Some goals reflect important learning in the discipline as defined by the standards.</p> <p>There is disconnect between the learning activities and the instructional goal.</p>	<p>All elements of a lesson structure are present.</p> <p>Some goals reflect rigor in the discipline as defined by the standards and consist of outcomes and activities.</p> <p>There is not a clear connection between the learning activities and the instructional goal.</p>	<p>All students experience a well-planned and thoughtfully implemented lesson.</p> <p>All goals reflect the rigor of the discipline and are clearly written in terms of student learning targets.</p> <p>The connection between the learning activities and the instructional goal is transparent.</p>	<p>Clearly written outcomes represent high-level learning in the discipline. Every student can explain a clear connection between the learning activities and the instructional goal.</p>
Student Discourse	<p>Discourse takes place between the teacher and individual students.</p> <p>A small number of students participate.</p>	<p>Teacher attempts to promote student discussion through protocols/scaffolds.</p> <p>Unstructured discourse about the content between students takes place.</p>	<p>Teacher uses protocols/scaffolds that enable students to collaborate and contribute to discussion.</p> <p>Teacher steps aside when students demonstrate the ability to control the discussion.</p>	<p>Students hypothesize, argue about and justify points of view during small group or whole-class discourse.</p> <p>Students have a culture of collaboration and ensure all voices are heard.</p>
Questioning	<p>Teacher asks closed questions.</p> <p>Students respond to questions on a voluntary basis only.</p>	<p>Questions predominately lead students through a single path of inquiry with some generative questions to elicit understanding.</p> <p>Teacher uses wait time to allow students to think and respond and calls on a range of students.</p>	<p>Teacher uses a range of questions appropriately for students' needs (e.g. both to scaffold and support and to challenge and extend).</p> <p>Teacher uses strategies (e.g. turn and talk, rotation) to encourage all students to respond to questions.</p>	<p>Teacher and students initiate higher order questions, extending and enriching the discussions.</p> <p>Students invite comments from peers and challenge one another's thinking.</p>
Academic Language	<p>Teacher uses everyday language consistently in place of academic language of the discipline.</p> <p>Little evidence of the students using academic language of the discipline.</p>	<p>Teacher uses accurate academic language of the discipline and specific examples are displayed.</p> <p>Students are beginning to use the academic language of the discipline in their discussion and writing.</p>	<p>Teacher uses accurate academic language and provides students with differentiated language frames and scaffolds.</p> <p>Students' use of the academic language of the discipline (written and verbal) is accurate and frequent.</p>	<p>Teacher uses the academic language of the discipline and provides students with a variety of differentiated and sophisticated language scaffolds.</p> <p>Students use appropriate academic language to argue and analyse concepts.</p>
Differentiation/ Assess/ Feedback	<p>Instruction is whole class and teacher focused.</p> <p>General feedback provided.</p>	<p>Teacher uses some differentiation (e.g. use of scaffolds, graphic organizers, questioning that meets the needs of individual students).</p> <p>Some formative assessments are evident (e.g. teacher looks at student work and listens to contributions) with some specific verbal feedback provided.</p>	<p>Teacher uses a range of strategies to differentiate student learning (e.g. planned grouping that includes both heterogeneous and homogeneous).</p> <p>Teacher uses a range of formative assessments and feedback strategies at different points throughout the lesson (e.g. diagnostics used to establish prior knowledge, exit slips as post lesson assessment, and conferring).</p>	<p>Teacher uses open-ended tasks with multiple entry points. Students' misconceptions are explicitly valued and used to promote learning.</p> <p>Both teacher and students demonstrate flexibility by regularly adjusting their teaching/learning strategies based on a structured feedback cycle.</p>
Concept Development	<p>Learning focuses on rote skills and worksheets.</p>	<p>Subject/discipline concepts are given to students.</p>	<p>Teacher develops subject/discipline concepts with the students using a variety of scaffolded activities that allow them to explore and generate deep understanding.</p>	<p>Students use their existing conceptual understanding to explore and develop understanding of new concepts.</p>

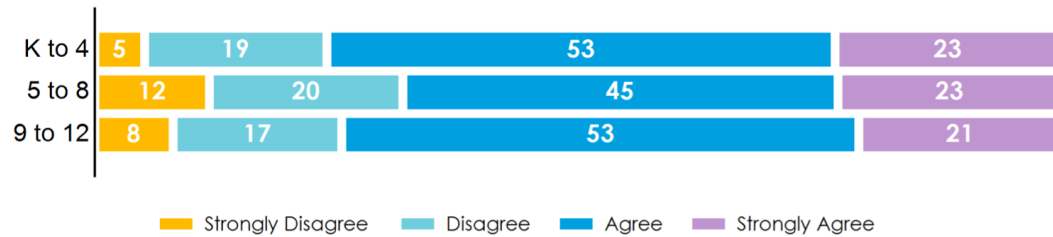
- Classes observed were predominantly whole class and teacher centered. According to the Teaching Continuum, Differentiation, Assessment, and Feedback, 76 teachers (59%) were observed at Level 1 where instruction is whole class and teacher focused. Level 2 was demonstrated by 39 teachers (31%) where teachers use some formative assessment to gauge student understanding and provide some differentiation of instruction. Level 3 was demonstrated by 11 teachers (1%). At Level 3, teachers use a range of strategies to assess and differentiate instruction.

20-30% of the parents responded that they did not believe the school was preparing the students for their next steps. The pattern of responses show the concern was greater in Mathematics and STEM.

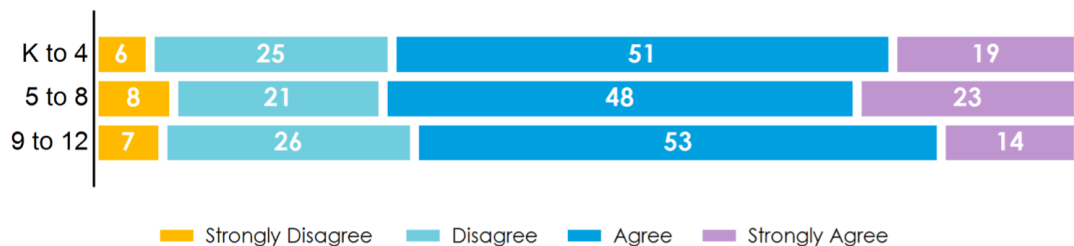
.. I believe the overall educational program at the school prepares my child for next steps in Literacy/English language Arts (%)



I believe the overall educational program at the school prepares my child for next steps in Mathematics (%)



I believe that the overall educational program of this school prepares my child for their next steps in STEM. (%)



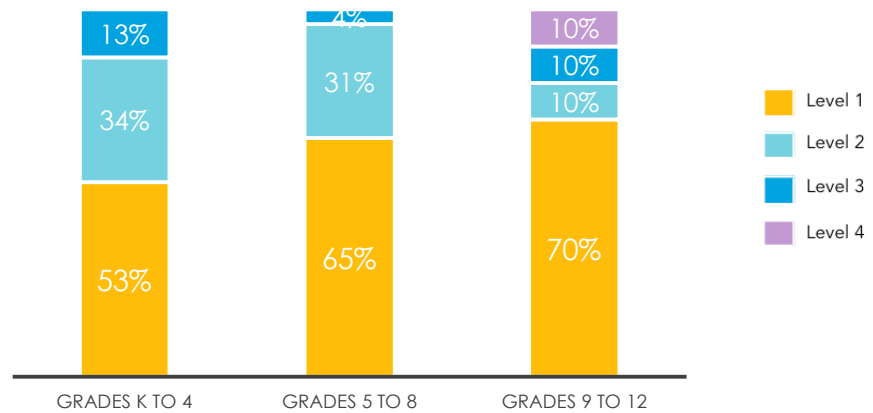
## Differentiation

- Many teachers claimed they differentiated instruction through use of differing strategies and group work. In most of the classrooms where there were groups the group were doing the same activity.
- When instruction is “one size fits all,” there is an impact on student engagement. This was observed in a number of classrooms where the physical environment was primarily rows, with little opportunity for small group work. Middle school students shared the following statements pointing to the topic of differentiation and small group instruction:

"I don't like the school, I'm being honest. I learn at a faster pace than other students, but I get bored. Some classes are extremely easy, but other kids are struggling."

"The teachers place us in groups, but don't expect us to work together."

Percentage of teachers at each level in Differentiation on the continuum at each grade span



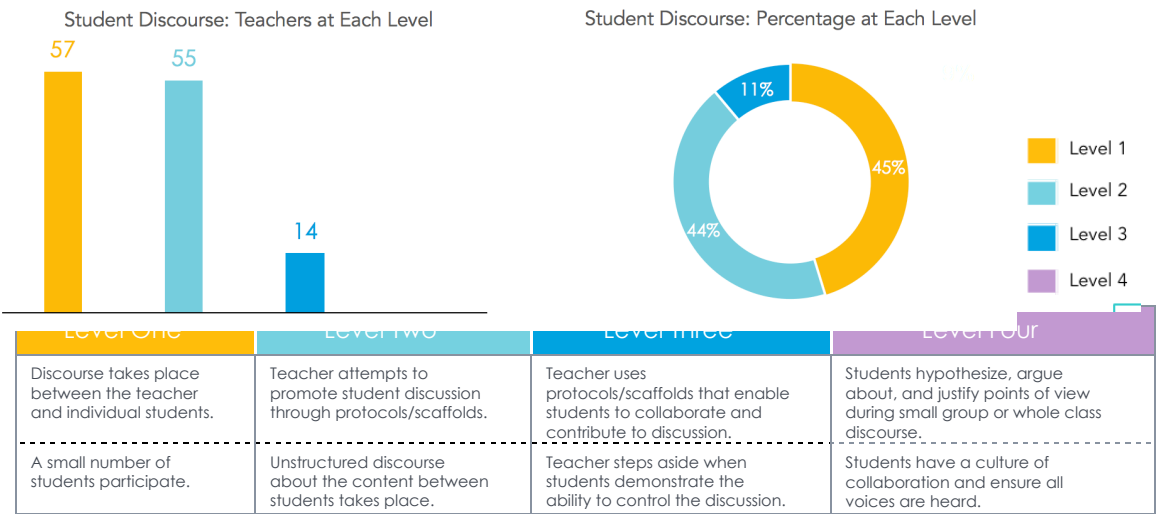
Indicators for each level of the continuum for; Differentiation and Assessment

Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four
Some elements of a lesson structure are present and indicate planning.	All elements of a lesson structure are present.	All students experience a well-planned and thoughtfully implemented lesson.	Clearly written outcomes represent high-level learning in the discipline. Every student can explain a clear connection between the learning activities and the instructional goal.
Some goals reflect important learning in the discipline as defined by the standards.	Some goals reflect rigor in the discipline as defined by the standards and consist of outcomes and activities.	All goals reflect the rigor of the discipline and are clearly written in terms of student learning targets.	
There is a disconnect between the learning activities and the instructional goal.	There is not a clear connection between the learning activities and the instructional goal.	The connection between the learning activities and the instructional goal is transparent.	

## Student Discourse

- When instruction is teacher directed, students have few opportunities to discuss or engage with the content and concepts being covered. This was evident in the classes observed with 85.7% of observations falling into Level 1 and Level 2.
- It was observed that most classes were predominantly teacher talk with little or low levels of student discourse. Most classes were observed at Level 1 (89%) where discourse takes place between the teacher and individual students with only a small number of students participating. 55 classes (44%) were observed at Level 2 with teachers promoting student discussion with uneven results in the class with some discourse taking place between students. 14 classes were observed at Level 3 (11%), where the teacher established an environment where students controlled the discussion. To make the shifts to standards-based instruction students need to engage in discussions around processes and concepts. Students speaking to each other about

the content allows for deeper understanding and is critically important in moving students to higher levels of achievement.



Indicators for each level of the continuum for Student Discourse

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## Domain 2: A Rigorous, Standards-Aligned Curriculum

### Findings

- ✓ Many teachers are making efforts to implement recently adopted curriculum Benchmark for ELA and Envisionmath for Math for grades K-5.
- ✓ Teachers are using a mix of instructional materials for planning lessons. These materials consist of a commercial-based program(s) and lessons from online platforms. Teachers are using collaboration time to find lessons/activities or compare lesson/activities that have been found.
- ✓ Across grades and subjects and schools, curricula and academic tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills, or reflect planning to provide access for all students.
- ✓ Some teachers are beginning to reflect on the curriculum they teach in a way that addresses the various needs of their students. In other classes lessons are directed to the whole class. Multiple entry points for students were not observed.
- ✓ The AP courses follow a pathway from grade 7. If students are not on that specific pathway they miss an opportunity to take AP courses in the later grades.
- ✓ The opportunities to take elective courses varies across the District.
- ✓ There is a lack of professional learning opportunities for teachers around implementing the District curriculum.

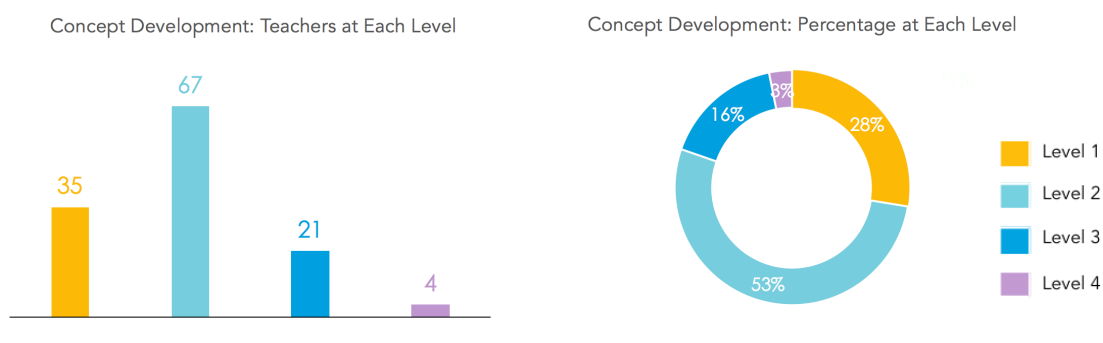
### Impact

- The lack of multiple entry points in the curriculum impacts both students who may need extra support and also students' entry into honors and AP courses at a later stage.
- Teachers received minimal job-embedded support outside of district workshops. Teachers have received nominal guidance in developing collaboratively designed, standards-aligned curricula. This resulted in a broad range of interpretations, from rote delivery of content with minimal feedback to students, to the infusion of commercial worksheets, to the dynamic integration of Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) to scaffold students' conceptual understanding.

### Supporting Evidence

- While there is an unquestionable culture of comradery amongst teachers, the quality of grade-level collaboration and the unpacking and co-planning of units varies across the school. With a few exemplary exceptions, content is primarily delivered to students by teachers, as opposed to developed with students using a variety of scaffolded activities that allow students to explore and generate deep understanding.

- Parents in a focus group reported some disinterest and boredom by students with the curriculum, leading to behavior problems, citing the school's lack of variety in electives, especially among the older students. These same parents indicated that other schools in the district offer electives not found at their school and they would expect more alignment across the district.
- In the teacher surveys, teachers indicated they feel they are doing rigorous work across the grades. However, this belief was not aligned with parent and student groups.
- The desire for rigorous lessons and curriculum was articulated by both the parent focus group and the student focus group. Both of these stakeholders expressed the desire for more cognitively demanding tasks and opportunities to learn/collaborate in order to be prepared for college and careers. These stakeholders also expressed the importance of differentiation that is appropriate for students' learning needs. While observing in classrooms, the team noted that there was little or no evidence of these types of lessons used. The impact of a mismatch in this area is notable.
- In the domain of Concept Development, classroom observations indicated that 28% of classes were at Level 1, which focuses on procedural skills and worksheets. In Level 2 (53%) much of the learning focused on concepts given to students rather than students exploring understanding at a deep level that meets the rigor of the Standards. 21 teachers were observed at Level 3, where concepts were developed with the students that allowed them to explore and generate deep understanding, evidenced by the co-construction of anchor charts that explored strategies such as problem solving (math) or unpacking a specific reading strategy (ELA).



#### Indicators for Each Level on the Continuum: Concept development

Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four
Learning focuses on rote skills and worksheets.	Subject/discipline concepts are given to students.	Teacher develops subject/discipline concepts with the students using a variety of scaffolded activities that allow them to explore and generate deep understanding.	Students use their existing conceptual understanding to explore and develop understanding of new concepts. Teacher asks questions that encourage students to generalize conceptual understanding.

## Domain 3: A School-Wide Assessment Framework

### Findings

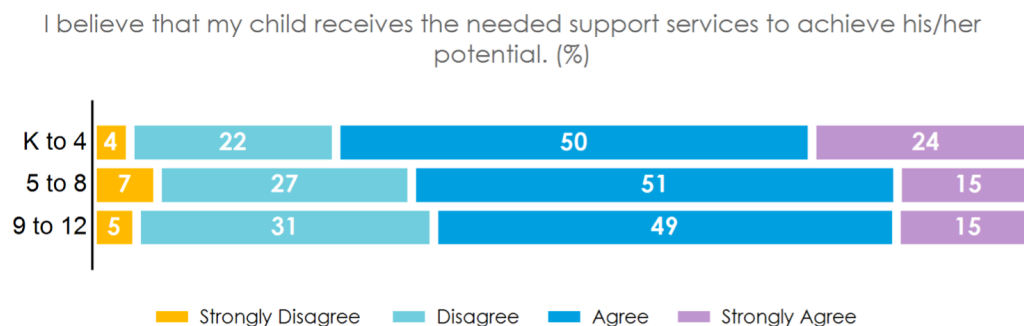
- ✓ Assessment practices vary across the District.
- ✓ Some teachers are collaboratively developing assessments aligned to the standards. Some teachers are looking at student work, e.g. the English Department at the High School.
- ✓ There is the beginning of common assessments to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas and the results of the assessment are used to adjust curriculum and instruction.
- ✓ Across the District some teachers are using ongoing monitoring and are beginning to differentiate their instruction.
- ✓ Performance assessments are developed in some content areas so that students and teachers can evaluate their work using standards-based rubrics.
- ✓ There is no consistent District-wide approach to Tier 1 and Tier 2 Interventions.
- ✓ There is an online school-wide system (Jupiter) for communicating student progress through grade reporting.

### Impact

- The rigor and varied nature of assessments across the District and within schools mean there are uneven opportunities for students to receive useful feedback on their progress and next steps.

### Supporting Evidence

- In one parent focus group, it was stated that the grades or student issues are not always uploaded on Jupiter in a timely fashion; therefore, some students have taken mid-term exams and not received their grades from previous tests. They have also indicated the students often get a check mark for completed work and when the students asked, “What do I need to do to improve?” the response was, “Do better” there was little constructive feedback provided.



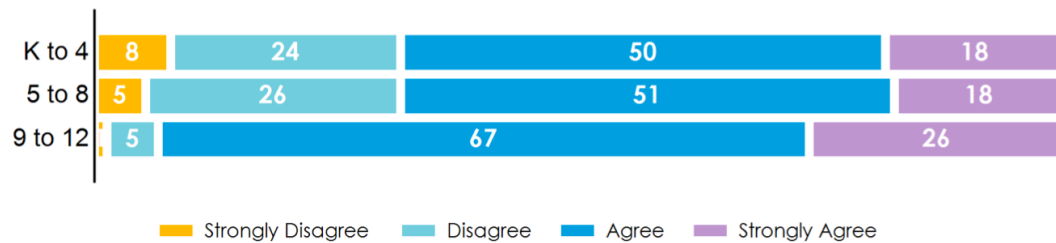


- This was also noted in the parent survey by 32% of parents who completed the survey believe their child does not get the necessary support to reach his/her potential.
- At Hawthorne improving the assessment framework is an area of focus for the school. The Principal stated:

"This is an area of growth for our school and we have begun professional development to address this challenge. Part of the discussion has been centered on asking teachers what assessments they give and why they are giving them. In teaching teachers how to read data, we are asking them how they are using the data and what is the next step in their teaching."

- While many teachers felt there was collaboration around development of common grade-level assessments, some teachers disagreed this collaboration was taking place. This supported what was communicated during the teacher focus groups that some grade levels collaborated on assessments and student work while others did not. This was communicated by teachers to be especially challenging at the middle school grade levels due to the small number of teachers teaching subjects at a grade level.

Teachers collaboratively develop common grade-wide assessments aligned to the standards and meet regularly to learn from student work. (%)



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## Summary

Beverly Hills School District has a long tradition of providing quality education for the students in Beverly Hills. Teachers, students and parents are proud of the schools and the term “family feel” came up repeatedly during the Audit. The community and school partnerships are firmly established and the parents are highly supportive of their children’s school.

The district is undergoing a period of significant changes. The leadership at the District level and in four of the five schools are all new or interim acting in their positions. Two of the schools are undergoing major reconstruction and a third, Horace Mann, was in the process of moving back into their buildings after renovations. At the time of the Audit, schools were waiting for the Board’s decision on the restructuring of the elementary schools. Despite these changes and the stress this causes the adults within the schools, the students enter into a calm, welcoming learning environment.

While the District out performs the State average in the State Tests, in the three years since the move to more rigorous standards the English Language Arts test scores have remained static while the Math scores have dropped. 73% of the parent respondents to the survey said they sought help for their children outside of the school. Teacher survey results showed that the majority of teachers believed that they had made the instructional shifts necessary for students to succeed, however this was not evident in the classroom observations. There were similarities across schools and at each school there were pockets of excellence, there was, however a lack of coherence within schools and across the District in terms of the teaching, assessment and curriculum.

The recent changes in administration offers a new opportunity for improving teaching and learning across the District. The fact that the District is using this Audit to identify coherence across schools, to identify gaps and variability across these schools, and to strategize around teaching and learning, opens the door to multiple possibilities in professional learning and instructional growth across all schools in the Beverly Hills School District.

1. Level of coherence among the District resources available to achieve a system-wide improvement.

There was coherence with respect to:

- The understanding of the role of the principal in a school as the instructional leader.
- Recognition of the need for regular monitoring of classroom practice.
- The recognition that teachers need strong knowledge of content and pedagogy.
- The professionalism evidenced by teachers in their commitment working hard on behalf of their students.
- The understanding that a school’s instructional program should be cognizant of the needs of its students and developed and adjusted accordingly, and that no one instructional program could fulfill this purpose.
- An acknowledgement that there are multiple models of good instructional practice.

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- The belief among school leaders and teachers that instruction should build on what learners already know and can do.
  - An acknowledgement by the principals of the importance of student discourse, the need for culture of collaboration among students, the need to challenge students and encourage productive struggle. Though there was little evidence observed during the Audit.
  - The importance of formative assessment to continually inform instruction.
  - Strong community support.

## 2. Gaps and sources of variability in outcomes/performance among schools.

- Observations of lessons in each school, highlighted the significant variation in instructional practice between schools, and, within schools. The most significant degrees of variability within instructional practice were around student collaboration and discourse, teacher questioning, and effectiveness of differentiation to meet student needs.
- The adoption of new, more rigorous standards has provided an opportunity for schools to reflect on the quality of their curriculum. Students are more likely to succeed when the curriculum is challenging, engaging and rigorous. The implementation of the District adopted curriculum in ELA and math varied greatly. Even when grades were following a scope and sequence the rigor varied from class to class. How the teacher engaged the students in the learning varied from worksheets to open ended performance tasks.
- The lack of multiple entry points into the Honors and Advanced Placement courses means that students are locked into pathways at middle school.
- Assessment practices varied across schools and between teachers on the same grade and subject. The volume of assessments seemed excessive and in some cases the purpose was to provide a grade rather than improve learning outcomes for students. The greatest variation was in the use of formative assessment and feedback, and the use of performance tasks, student self-assessment and teacher collaboration around student work. There were examples of teachers collaborating to create assessments aligned to the curriculum and using analysis of student work to make instructional decisions e.g. the English Department at the High School and the use of Running Records in some K- 2 classes.
- There were structures in place that supported collaboration among leaders and teachers in all schools. However, there is significant variability with respect to their effectiveness. In some cases, grades groups of teachers met in planning periods on an informal basis.
- All schools saw great value in professional learning. However, there was significant variability from school to school in the nature and amount undertaken by teachers and leaders. Professional learning undertaken by teachers, ranged from where the emphasis was on off-site “training” focusing almost entirely on curriculum or operational procedures, to professional learning that was initiated by individual teachers. The TOSAs have introduced classroom-based instructional coaching and guidance. Survey results from the participant schools indicate that for many teachers, “teacher practice is highly

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influenced by their peers and less so on 'research' and 'professional learning'. The positive is that this reflects high levels of collaboration among teachers. However, it also suggests opportunities for useful research based professional learning would aid the professional growth of teachers and often new strategies were not introduced.

3. A concrete strategy around leading to close the gaps in teacher practice and student outcomes

- In almost all schools visited there was a high degree of teacher belief about the capacity of their school to develop and improve instructional practice: a 'can do' attitude prevailed, but teachers were unsure of what needs to be done, how to do it, and what resources are needed. This belief was particularly evident in mathematics and was also reflected in the survey to teachers.
- In all schools, significant numbers of teachers were both youthful and experienced. This combination of knowing and being receptive will be an important ingredient in making positive change in schools. These qualities were reflected in the teachers' energy, commitment and optimism about education and the future of their schools.
- Even though the instructional practice observed did not necessarily align with the beliefs about instructional practice expressed by some teachers, the fact that there was agreement around the need for coherence and a vision of quality practice, will be a critical factor in enabling change in Beverly Hills Unified School District schools.
- One of the greatest challenges in bringing about district-wide change is in locating models of highly effective practice. In every school there are models of effective practice. This provides multiple opportunities for professional learning within the District. Because of the multiple centers of good practice, quality leadership, along with a disposition at the school level to improve, schools in the District have the capacity for growth with respect to the instructional core.

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## Recommendations

Information gathered through this Audit demonstrates that schools have the capacity for growth and improvement. The following recommendations are organized in three sections, Instructional Practice, Professional Learning and Structural Supports. They are designed to serve as a useful guide to the District leadership in their planning of next steps to ensure every student is engaged daily in meaningful, relevant learning that addresses his or her interests, needs and learning styles.

### Recommendations for instructional practice:

It is recommended that Beverly Hills Unified School District support schools in:

1. Developing a District-wide vision for effective teaching and learning. This vision needs to tie into the District's vision for student outcomes and that of each of the schools and to make credible connections between the thinking and learning (21st century) skills supported and developed by technology use. This shared vision should expand teachers' understanding of student-centered learning. A revised understanding would shift emphasis to the development of a learning environment where students take ownership over the learning process to individually or socially construct knowledge from a wide range of resources and learning interactions. To achieve this, teachers will need support in:
  - a. Creating collaborative cultures that incorporate productive classroom (teacher-student, student-student) discourse, e.g. hypothesizing, arguing about and justifying reasoning, increased student to student questioning, and using protocols such as Turn and Talk or Reciprocal Teaching as temporary scaffolds to promote increased collaboration.
  - b. Adopting effective models of problem-based learning. This model needs to ensure individual student think time, opportunities for students to collaborate with the teacher in the role of monitor, followed by student discussion around their work and ideas as a lead into deepening existing, or developing new understandings.
  - c. Providing opportunities for students to engage in productive struggle through the use of challenging tasks, texts and problems, and less interventionist teacher practice.
2. Developing school-wide assessment framework that includes well-designed, authentic assessments that support instruction that is both rigorous and at the point of student need. In developing an assessment framework, the following need to be taken into consideration:
  - a. In some schools the volume of assessments given should be decreased.
  - b. Formative, ongoing assessments associated with assessment for learning need to be performance-based and should be embedded within the curriculum.
  - c. The assessment should help build students' assessment capabilities to enable them to take increasing control of their own learning. To do this well, the performance-based tasks need to help students (and teachers) understand:

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- i. What high quality work looks like (examining examples and models of quality work).
  - ii. What criteria define quality work (rubrics) and how to compare and evaluate their own work against such criteria.
  - iii. These assessments should allow for collaborative conversations among teachers as they adjust curriculum and instruction to meet student needs.

## Recommendations for Professional Learning:

Suggested professional learning structures:

1. The provision of District led workshops and site-based, job-embedded coaching.
2. Establishment of lab sites as centers of excellence for focused inter-visitations.
3. Creating hubs of learning: small groups of teachers across schools collaborating in the provision of professional learning and shared practice.
4. Development of schoolwide professional learning plans that allows for teachers to engage in structured professional collaborations that focus on improved student learning. The plan should allow for differentiated goals to meet the range of teacher needs.

The planned professional learning needs to provide both District level and in-school support for teachers in:

- Engaging all students in a rigorous, standards-based core academic curriculum.
- Emphasizing project-based learning and other engaging, inquiry-based teaching methods that provide opportunities for students to master academic content, think critically, and develop personal strengths.
- Customizing teaching and learning using new technologies.
- Differentiating instruction and providing supports that meet the varied learning needs of diverse student populations.
- Connecting curriculum to real world contexts that build upon student and community resources
- Using multiple measures to assess student outcomes, including performance-based assessments.
- Developing coherence and consistency in teaching practices.

## Recommendations for Structural Supports:

It is recommended that Beverly Hills Unified School District will support schools in:

1. Revising the Honors and Advanced Placement course offerings and structures with the following points taken into consideration:
  - a. The need for the courses to be consistently rigorous. Students claimed that some Honors and Advanced Placement courses were no more challenging than regular courses. The challenge was in the volume rather than the depth of work.

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- b. Look for ways to widen the options in Advanced Placement courses by:
    - i. Turning some Honors courses into Advanced Placement courses e.g. World History.
    - ii. Look at providing opportunities for cross-credits from Honors to Advanced Placement classes e.g. Geometry and Integrated Algebra
    - iii. Extend STEM/Engineering pathways into Grades 9-12 at the High school.
    - iv. Provide Honor pathways for students in upper elementary grades.

An example for pathways in math is included at the end of this section.

- 2. Increase the use of multiple and relevant resources that move beyond student use of text books. Resources should include:
  - a. Providing a 1-1 technology initiative to the Middle and High schools This will provide access to Open Educational resources and online textbooks.
  - b. Trade books, primary resource articles, and especially focus on the increased use of technology that will support, enhance, and enrich the classroom experience. Many of the texts in schools are extremely dated or damaged.
- 3. Support schools in developing the infrastructure and school based plan for a Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) that includes targeted interventions for students identified as at risk. The District can support schools by:
  - a. Developing and monitoring the process for implementation of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS).
  - b. Guiding schools in aligning interventions to the needs of the students.
  - c. Ensuring equitable allocation of resources.
  - d. Providing professional learning around successful intervention strategies.
  - e. Setting clear expectations that schools actively engage families and the community in the MTSS process.

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## A Closer Look at Mathematics

Effective mathematics teaching makes a positive difference to the life opportunities of students and enhances their participation as citizens in an information- and data-driven age <sup>i</sup>. Precisely because of the “gatekeeping role that mathematics plays in students’ access to educational and economic opportunities”<sup>ii</sup> the Beverly Hills math curriculum should assist students to develop:

- The ability to think creatively, critically, and logically.
- The ability to structure and organize.
- The ability to process information.
- An enjoyment of intellectual challenge.
- The skills to interpret and critically evaluate statistical information in a variety of contexts.
- The skills to solve problems that help them to investigate and understand the world.

## District-Wide Recommendations

The recommendations discussed here are based on the findings of the academic Audit and on points of interest from the school district community. They are listed here in four categories described as:

- Pathways forward for Honors and Advanced Placement courses.
- Strengthening instructional strategies including using technology effectively.
- District-wide vertical alignment of the curriculum.
- College/career readiness opportunities for all students.

### Recommendation 1: Pathways Forward on Honors Courses

Accelerated courses occur later in the school life of a student but success begins in the early grades. Good first teaching leads to the creation of a Math Mindset which will be further developed as they move through the school. The goal is to begin in Kindergarten to make math a more natural part of each day rather than silo the subject matter to a specific period of time in the day.

Grades Kindergarten to 2

- Support teachers so that they understand how to create a math mindset in their classroom. A math mindset at this level would include referencing math ideas and situations throughout each day and within the context of other subjects. There would not be an announcement, “this is math now,” but rather would become a natural addition to the day. Examples can be offered randomly or during the study of other subjects. Soon, students will begin their own add-ons during the day as they develop the math mindset as well as algebraic thinking. (Example: oh, today is March 3<sup>rd</sup>, how many more days are in March?).



### Upper Elementary Grades 3-5

- The same mindset can be added-in to upper grades using more complex ideas. The students should have developed a comfort level with mathematics by these grades and should be ready for content focus. At Grades 3- 5, a math specialist could be introduced to work with students in groups that would allow for acceleration, through early Honors classes. The approach should include an algebraic approach, geometry, coding, and basic statistics for simple data interpretation.

### Middle and High School

- Building on the math mindset and the opportunity for acceleration offered in grades 3-5, middle school students will be ready to move forward with honors level choices in Math, Science, and ELA, at a minimum. These early pathways lead directly into strong experiences with STEM.

Some options with Honors (H) include:

<b>PATHWAYS</b>	<b>GRADE 6</b>	<b>GRADE 7</b>	<b>GRADE 8</b>	<b>GRADE 9</b>
<b>MATH PATH 1</b>	H Pre-Algebra	H Algebra	H Geometry	H Algebra II
<b>MATH PATH 2</b>	Pre-Algebra readiness	H Pre-Algebra	H Algebra	H Geometry
<b>MATH PATH 3</b>	Pre-Algebra readiness	Pre-Algebra	Algebra Part 1	Algebra Part 2
<b>SCIENCE PATH 1</b>	Science	H Science	H Science	AP Biology
<b>SCIENCE PATH 2</b>	Science	Science	Science	Biology

Students should have opportunities for multiple entry points to these honors paths. The majority of students will likely stay on the honors/AP trajectory throughout their school years. However, students should understand what it takes to move into a different path. Semester moves can be made where possible. To move into Honors without skipping content, students could take advantage of strategic catch-up with “Math Burst” options such as:

- Monitored online content practice.
  - Extra after-school tutoring at school.
  - Summer Bridge classes.
- The Honors Course challenge should offer work in depth and critical thinking rather than just more work. The AP challenges speak for themselves as far as content but students should receive strong support to be successful with these courses and should choose carefully from the array of AP options. Students who are in neither of these paths but on a basic path of just meeting the standards should also receive enough rich content to allow for quality and understand post-graduation options.

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## Actions

- Create a taskforce to discuss creating new pathways in math, and science, (at a minimum) and be sure to include all parties in the discussions.
- Observe/obtain data and outcomes from similar school districts that have tried this upgrade to curricular paths.
- Develop and clearly define the Math Burst options to allow for student movement into a different path.
- Allow time for productive articulation between middle school and high school teachers to be sure these paths are well-defined.
- Offer parents, especially of students in Grades Kindergarten to 2, opportunities to understand how to create a math mindset at home and how teachers are approaching this at school. Keep parents in the loop with newsletters, workshops, places on the website to address this.

## Recommendation 2: Instructional Strategies

There is a need to increase the coherence and rigor of mathematics teaching and learning across the District.

Recommendations for instructional practice: The District could support schools in: -

- Creating collaborative cultures that incorporate productive classroom (teacher/student, student-student) discourse, e.g. hypothesizing, arguing about and justifying mathematical reasoning, increased student to student questioning, and using protocols such as Turn and Talk or Reciprocal Teaching as temporary scaffolds to promote increased collaboration.
- Adopting effective models of problem-based learning. This model needs to ensure individual student think time, opportunities for students to collaborate when solving a problem with the teacher in the role of monitor, followed by student discussion around their work and ideas as a lead into deepening existing, or developing new understandings.
- Providing opportunities for students to engage in productive struggle through the use of challenging problems and less interventionist teacher practice .
- Enabling teachers to use multiple representations – both concrete and visual – in order for students to make sense of and/or solve mathematical problems and deepen conceptual understanding.
- Enabling students to construct their understanding of mathematics through student invented strategies, involving the use of instructional tools such as Number Talks Number Strings
- Increasing the use of student writing to articulate and communicate mathematical understandings
- Developing and using checks for understanding consistently, in ways that provide meaningful and accurate information about what a student knows and does not know.

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Recommendations for professional learning:

Suggested professional learning structures could include:

- Establishment of an Institute for school leaders and lead teachers, providing District led workshops and school-based job-embedded coaching.
- Establishment of math lab sites as centers of excellence for focused inter-visitations.
- Creating hubs of math learning: small groups of schools collaborating in the provision of professional learning and shared practice.

Some of the topics recommended as part of teacher and leader professional learning are to:

- Provide teachers with multiple systematic instructional practices for promoting and maintaining collaborative discourse, e.g., Number Talks/Strings; Five Practices Model.
- Develop a mindset among teachers where productive struggle is an essential component of learning mathematics.
- Understand mathematical progressions and the diverse ways students can demonstrate their learning at different grade levels.
- Learn about student-invented strategies and the use of manipulatives and visually based strategies for representing mathematical thinking.
- Increase teachers' knowledge of the use of multiple representations – both concrete and visual – to understand mathematical concepts and interpret mathematical problems.
- Familiarize teachers with diverse ways of presenting representations, e.g., effective use of Smart Boards to demonstrate digital manipulatives.
- Increase the integrated use of manipulatives to encourage students to develop diverse ways of understanding concepts.
- Familiarize teachers with the importance of writing in mathematics and where opportunity for writing exists as part of mathematics learning.
- Develop teachers' capacity to provide formative assessment and provide useful feedback to students.

### Recommendation 3: Articulation TK-12

The vertical alignment of the math curriculum and the related strategies should be planned for with in-person articulation. Sorting out ideas as well as concerns can best be done in-person, in its initial phase, to help both ends of the grade levels understand the challenges of the other end. A follow-up to an initial meeting could include a subject area network on a communication area of choice such as group texts or emails.

#### Actions

- Plan the initial articulation summit at the beginning of the school year.
- Work with teacher leaders to create the follow-up network.

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#### Recommendation 4: College/Career Readiness

There was concern expressed about the limited elective course offerings for Career Exploration in the elementary schools. An elective course that explores options would could address this concern. Students doing research and building charts/spreadsheets showing which occupations require what level of math would also be productive for students. It is important to emphasize to students who are not in honors or AP courses that they still have many options and can still pull out their math knowledge to help them to be successful.

##### Actions:

- Brainstorm the possibility of an elective about careers.
- Create ways to be sure all students, no matter which pathway, understand options for post high school.

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<sup>i</sup> Watson, J. M. (2006). Statistical literacy at the school level: Growth and goals. Mahwah: Erlbaum Associates.

<sup>ii</sup> Cobb, P., & Hodge, L. L. (2002). A relational perspective on issues of cultural diversity and equity as they play out in the mathematics classroom. *Mathematical Thinking and Learning*, 4(2 &3), 249-284.