Compass Edvantage Sample Audit Report

Cover Page

We co-create every audit and improvement plan with our school partners. Understanding the local context allows us to identify specific barriers and leverage points that are critical for an effective audit. This includes both costumizing data sources (i.e., surveys, observations), identifying specific stakeholder groups, and including specific research-based factors. The example below from a recent district focuses on the achievement gap between multilingual learners and native English-speaking students. An overall school improvement audit follows a similar process/format.

6-12 Multilingual Learner Needs Assessment
Final Report

Example School District

Compass
Edvantage
Mapping Your Success

June 17th, 2023

Introduction

The purpose of this needs assessment is to determine the causes and potential solutions for the existing achievement gap between Latino and Anglo students. This document outlines the process for that analysis, summarizes the findings, and presents potential solutions based on those with the highest likelihood to address the existing gap. Please note that this report does not present a comprehensive plan for improvement, as that requires co-creation with the district based on other district initiatives, priorities, and other factors. That service can be completed this summer, should it be something in which the district has interest.

The needs assessment process utilizes multiple methods to conduct a root cause analysis for the gap in achievement. Primarily, these methods can be grouped into two categories: (1) Student Data Review and (2) Effective Programming Review.   The Student Data Review seeks to analyze the achievement gap using multiple indicators to determine potential areas of relative importance. The Effective Programming Review seeks to answer the question: How well does current programming align with the research on effective programming? Ultimately, this final report combines the Student Data Review and Effective Programming Review to identify root causes and outline specific solutions.

Data were collected through multiple measures to provide a 360-degree perspective and seek to correlate findings across participant groups and objective measures. Data sources included existing documents (i.e., handbooks, curriculum maps), student achievement and enrollment data, student and teacher surveys, student and teacher focus group interviews, administrator interviews, and classroom observations. The analysis process was both iterative and recursive. As data was collected, it was analyzed to inform collection from future data sources. For example, results from the student and teacher surveys were used to inform the questions used with the student and teacher focus groups. Ultimately, data was cross-referenced to analyze the effective programming components.

District Context

Existing data indicates a lack of achievement for the Latino sub-group (primarily comprised of EL, Monitor, and former EL students), which currently accounts for 30-40% of the district's students. While there have been some significant past gains, there is still a wide and persistent gap. The district has begun to diagnose this need through various needs assessments, but much of the previous work has been done at the K-5 level. Thus, this needs assessment was focused solely on the 6-12 level.

Definitions

The terms English as a Second Language (ESL), English Language Learner (ELL), Limited English Proficient (LEP), English Learner (EL), Multilingual Learner (ML) and others are often used interchangeably to refer to students who are not yet proficient in English even though they often have varying definitions. For the purpose of this needs assessment, the term: Multilingual Learner (ML) is used for all students who are EL, former EL, or have a heritage language at home. Generally, the programming used to meet the needs of EL students is referred to in the document as the EL program and teachers certified to teach EL students are referred to as EL teachers. However, a distinction is made when referring to the specific time/structure when EL students receive direct language instruction from an EL teacher. This is referred to as English Language Development (ELD). As almost all of the Latino students in the district are ML, that is used as a proxy variable with existing data.

Executive Summary

This summary contains a brief overview of the findings collected through the needs assessment process, as well as the four recommendations. Please see the Student Data Review, Effective Programming Components, and Recommendations sections for a complete discussion of the findings.

Findings Summary

1. Coherent and Aligned Services
   - *Finding #1 – EL services generally function siloed from mainstream classrooms. Improvement initiatives often do not consider ML student needs.*
   - *Finding #2 – There is little guidance regarding EL student services outside of their ELD classes (i.e., core content class enrollment, access to additional support services). Programming is not consistent from year to year or comprehensive. There is no guidance regarding Monitor or former EL student supports.*
2. Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Classroom Instruction
   - *Finding #3 – ML students are less likely to participate than their native English-speaking peers, even while overall student engagement levels are high.*
   - *Finding #4 – Mainstream classroom instruction provides limited access to content for ML students, even though many teachers could articulate effective practices.*
   - *Finding #5 – There is limited academic language or literacy development across content areas, even though many teachers believe there is.*
   - *Finding #6 – The majority of students and teachers believe that all students' cultures are respected.*
3. Student and Teacher Beliefs'
   - *Finding #7 – There is a significant difference in teachers' beliefs about their own ability to help ML and native English-speaking students be successful in their classrooms. This difference is even more pronounced when considering their colleagues' abilities.*
   - *Finding #8 – There is not yet a shared ownership regarding the responsibility for improving ML student outcomes. Additionally, most staff think of newcomers or lower language ML students when considering the achievement gap, even though the majority are former ELs.*
   - *Finding #9 – Teachers' belief about their practices is inaccurate. This misperception is a significant driver of the lower levels of teacher efficacy.*
4. Leadership Capacity
   - *Finding #10 – There is limited leadership capacity across the system to engage in comprehensive improvement efforts with ML students, especially at the secondary level.*

Recommendations Summary

Considering the various needs identified in this analysis, their relative potential for closing the achievement gap, and the current district context leads to a prioritized list of recommendations. These are presented in the order of greatest potential impact.

1. Create a district-wide plan for addressing the needs of ML students that is always used when planning district and building improvement and to support leadership decision-making processes. Build a culture where ML needs are addressed by all teachers, systems, and initiatives, rather than focusing on ELD classes.
2. Build leadership capacity (district, building leaders, teacher leaders, and instructional coaches) to support ML student needs. This is an essential component of supporting PLCs with their work.

3. Ensure the implementation of evidence-based instructional practices for ML students in mainstream classrooms through high-quality professional development and ongoing implementation monitoring.
4. Integrate literacy and language development across the curriculum.

Urgency of the Findings
When considering the overall needs within the district, current initiatives (i.e., PLCs, essential standards), and the size of the ML population, it is apparent that addressing the findings within this report should be a primary focus for the district.
- The achievement gap between ML and native English-speaking students is wide and persistent.
- The ML population represents a very large proportion of the overall student population, and the increase has not yet peaked at the secondary level. Should the achievement gap persist, the overall rate of proficiency across secondary schools will be further impacted.

Limitations
It is important to note that these findings are limited to the 6-12 level. Additionally, the district asked that the primary focus of the needs assessment be core instructional programming (i.e., mainstream classrooms, overall school factors). This is critical for the success of ML students, as even those who qualify for ELD spend the majority of their school day outside of that program. However, there is some indication from the data that was collected regarding the ELD program, that this is also an area of need.

# Student Data Review

Achievement Gap

As mentioned previously, almost all Latino students in the district are also MLs, so that variable is used as a proxy in the data presented in this section. Additionally, some data is included from K-5 in order to show overall trends as cohorts of students progress through the school system. Also, much of the data provided by the district was compiled by grade level, rather than differentiating between the alternative and primary high school. As the number of students at the alternative school is small, it is possible that a valid analysis of that subset could not be conducted regardless.

<u>Standardized Measures</u>

The following charts show the achievement gap for matched cohorts of students. This methodology better illustrates the work done by school districts to close the gap as it compares the change in achievement over time for the same group of students. The first four charts show the achievement gap in Math and ELA from 3rd through the current 8th grade. The second four charts show the achievement gap in Math and ELA from 5th to the current 10th grade class. For both sets, the top two show the overall gap in math and reading, while the bottom charts show the gap after excluding students with IEPs and newcomers. The gap remains consistent and thus cannot be explained by increased newcomers or IEP status. Additionally, attendance reports were analyzed to determine if the gap could be explained by attendance. White and Hispanic/Latino students had almost identical absence rates, so the gap is also not due to that factor. Data from the 2019-2020 was not available due to the pandemic. It is also important to note that other cohorts (i.e., current 7th or 9th graders) exhibit similar academic trends, so all cohort graphs were not included in this report.
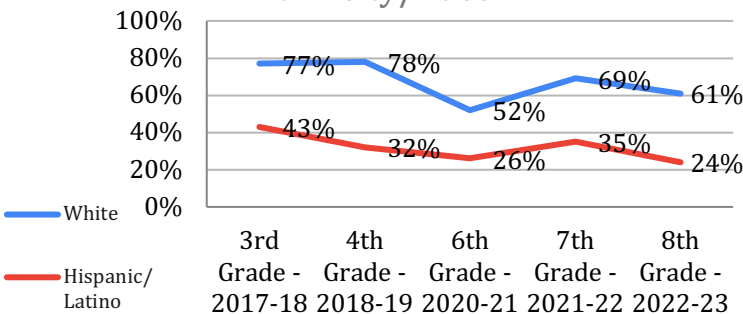
Current 8th Grade Cohort

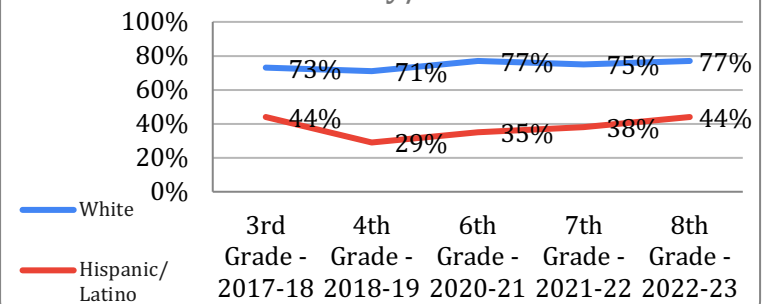8th Grade Math Cohort - Achievement by Ethnicity/Race
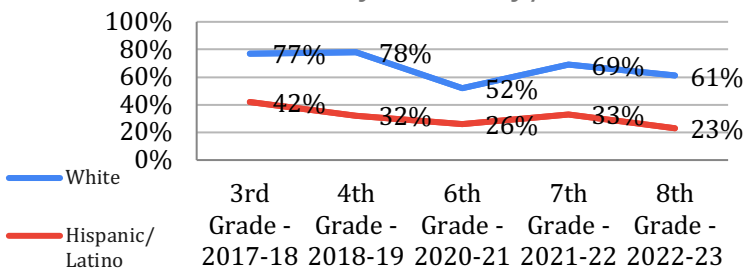
8th Grade ELA Cohort - Achievement by Ethnicity/Race
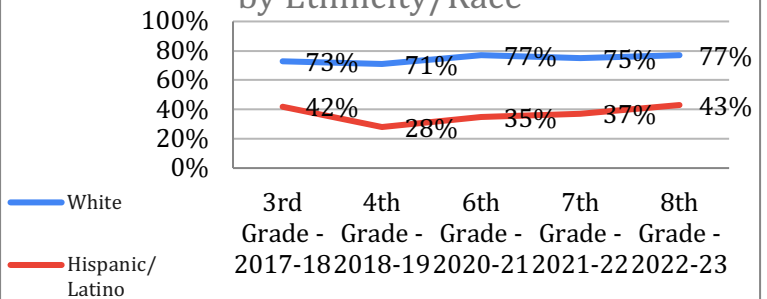
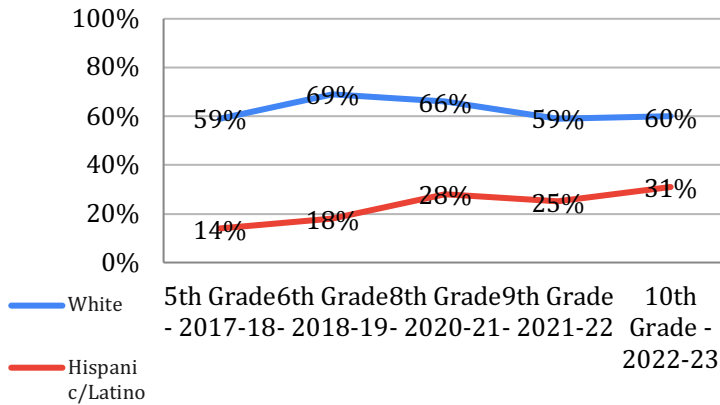8th Grade Math Cohort (w/out SPED or Newcomers) - Achievement by Ethnicity/Race

8th Grade ELA Cohort (w/out SPED or Newcomers) - Achievement by Ethnicity/Race
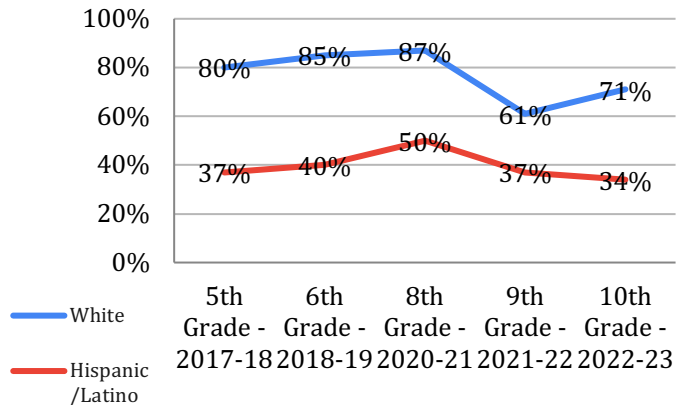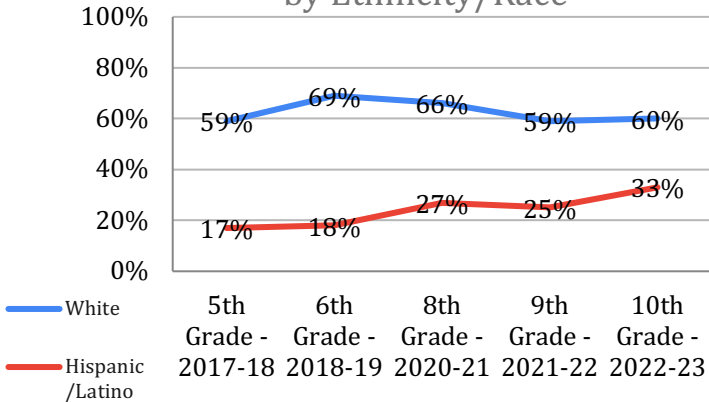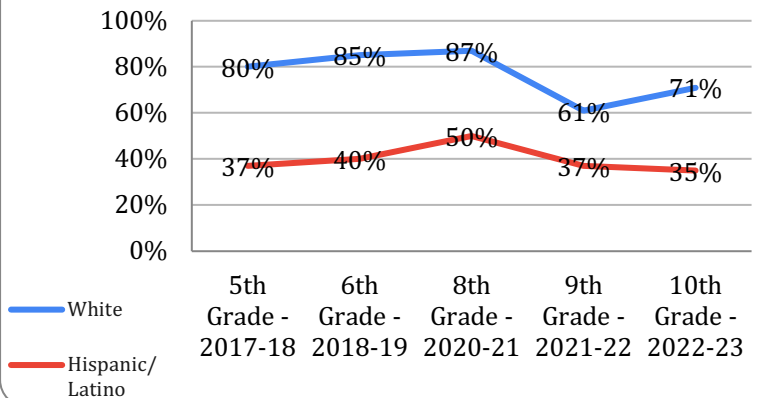
Current 10th Grade Cohort

10th Grade Math Cohort - Achievement by Ethnicity/Race

White: 59%, 69%, 66%, 59%, 60%
Hispanic/Latino: 14%, 18%, 28%, 25%, 31%

5th Grade - 2017-18, 6th Grade - 2018-19, 8th Grade - 2020-21, 9th Grade - 2021-22, 10th Grade - 2022-23

10th Grade ELA Cohort - Achievement by Ethnicity/Race

White: 80%, 85%, 87%, 61%, 71%
Hispanic/Latino: 37%, 40%, 50%, 37%, 34%

5th Grade - 2017-18, 6th Grade - 2018-19, 8th Grade - 2020-21, 9th Grade - 2021-22, 10th Grade - 2022-23

10th Grade Math Cohort (w/out SPED or newcomers) - Achievement by Ethnicity/Race

White: 59%, 69%, 66%, 59%, 60%
Hispanic/Latino: 17%, 18%, 27%, 25%, 33%

5th Grade - 2017-18, 6th Grade - 2018-19, 8th Grade - 2020-21, 9th Grade - 2021-22, 10th Grade - 2022-23

10th Grade ELA Cohort (w/out SPED or newcomers) - Achievement by Ethnicity/Race

White: 80%, 85%, 87%, 61%, 71%
Hispanic/Latino: 37%, 40%, 50%, 37%, 35%

5th Grade - 2017-18, 6th Grade - 2018-19, 8th Grade - 2020-21, 9th Grade - 2021-22, 10th Grade - 2022-23

Discussion

There are a few limited conclusions that can be drawn from this data set. First, and most importantly, the gap is not due to differences in absence rates, increases in newcomer students, or any disproportionality in students who have an identified disability. These are common justifications to explain existing gaps. Second, while there has been limited closing of the gap for all student cohorts, there are a few specific considerations.

1. All groups of students score higher in ELA than math. This indicates some need in addressing the math at a programmatic level 6-12 (i.e., scope and sequence of courses, curriculum).
2. The current 10th grade cohort has shown some narrowing of the gap, while the current 8th grade cohort has not. Additionally, the data potentially indicates an overall improvement of the achievement for the Latino subgroup at the elementary level in recent years. Combining those two factors may indicate that as improvement at the elementary level has occurred, it has not been matched at the secondary level in recent years.
3. There is a potential opportunity to address transition years (6th and 9th grade) as points of need within the system. The data indicates some improvement over the course of middle school and high school for some groups, but regresses or flatlines during the transition from elementary to

middle and then middle to high school. This may be due to poor rigor and expectations alignment across buildings.

Course Grades

The following graph compares course grades to ACT scores for ELA. As is true in almost all contexts, there is little correlation between grades and standardized achievement scores. (If there were, one would see lower ACT scores in the bottom left correlate to lower grades and they would gradually rise to higher ACT scores in the upper right.) The important note here is the difference between Caucasian and Hispanic students in the "A" and "B" course grade categories. This indicates that ML students in those categories are much more likely to perform lower on standardized measures than their native English-speaking peers.

Clustered Boxplot of ACT2022Reading by English11_Numeric by Ethnicity_Numeric
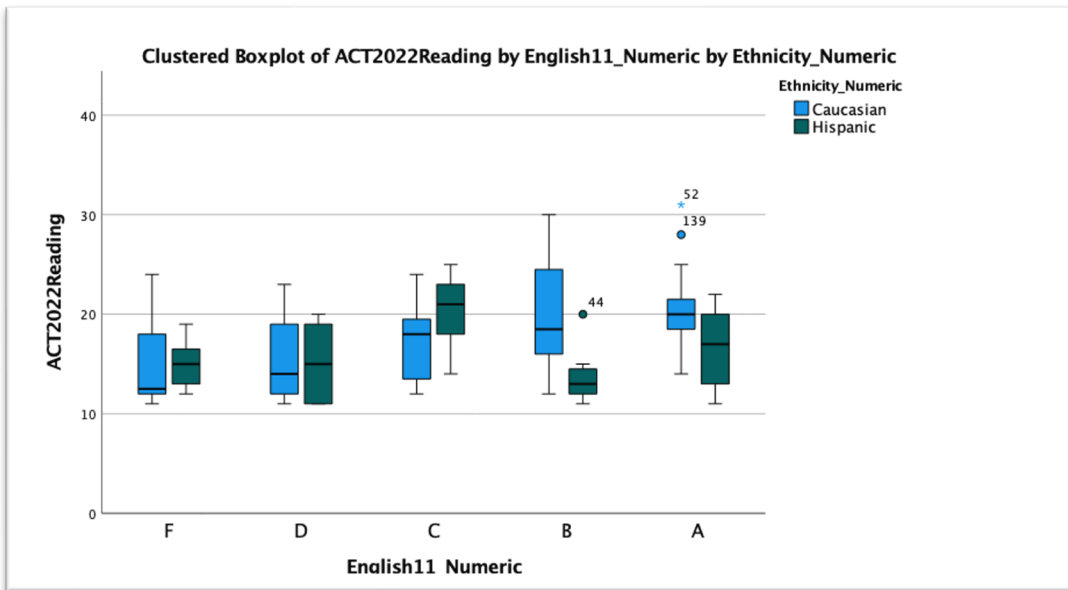
Failure Rates

While ML students are more likely to have an inverse correlation between course grades and ACT scores (higher grades with lower ACT scores), they are also much more likely to have experienced course failure. The chart below shows the distribution of course failures for all students from the classes of 2021-2028. While representing about 1/3 of the total students, MLs account for 71% of the course failures.


Course Failures 6th-12th Grade
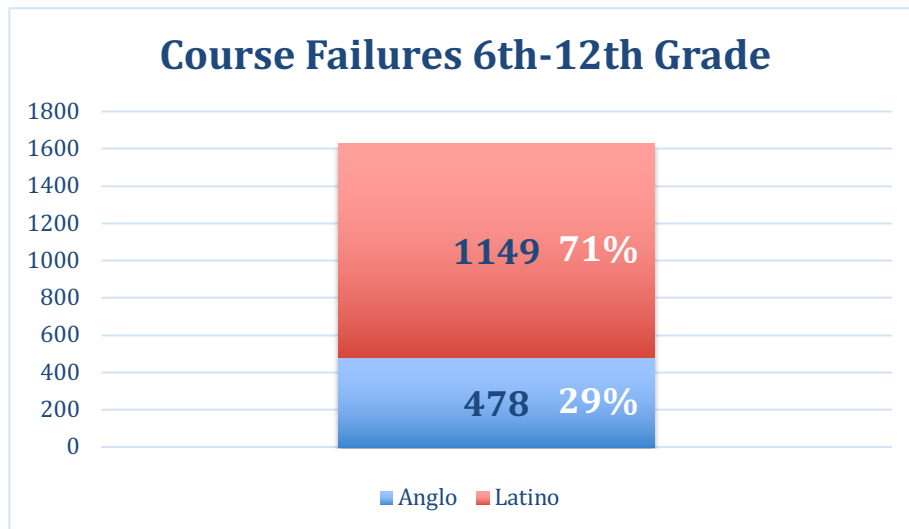
<u>Language Acquisition Rates</u>
The charts below show the percentage of EL students making adequate progress on the WIDA ACCESS assessment each year and the corresponding exit rates. The results indicate some improvement over the last five years at the middle school level but decreasing scores at the high school level. While ELD programming is not the only factor that contributes to these rates, it may be the primary factor. Overall, rates across 6-12 are very low and indicate a need to re-examine current ELD programming.
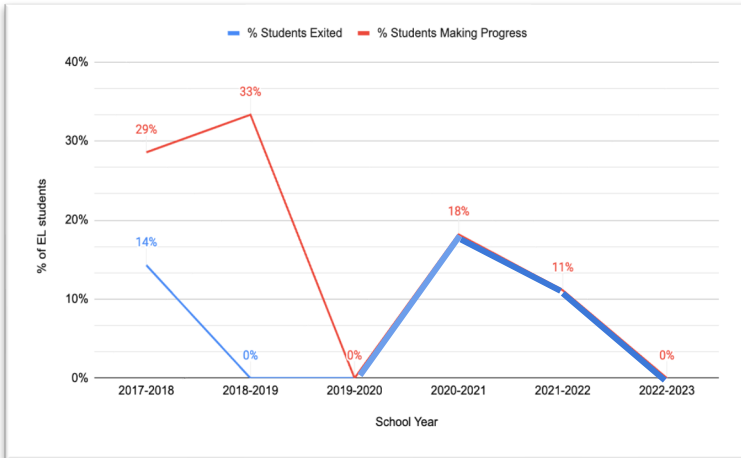
Middle School
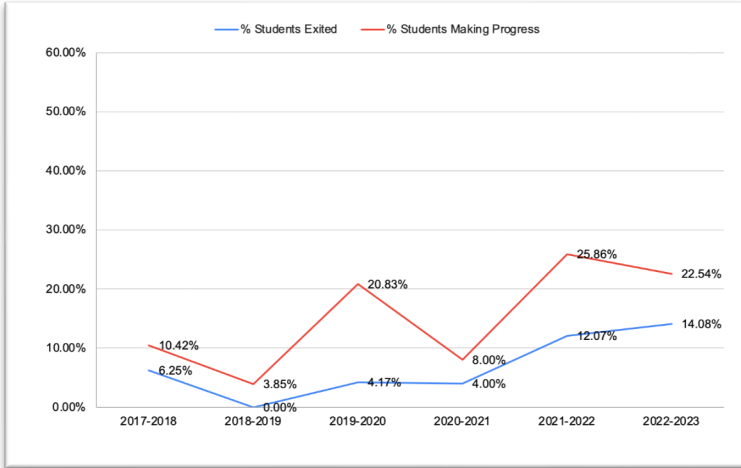
High School
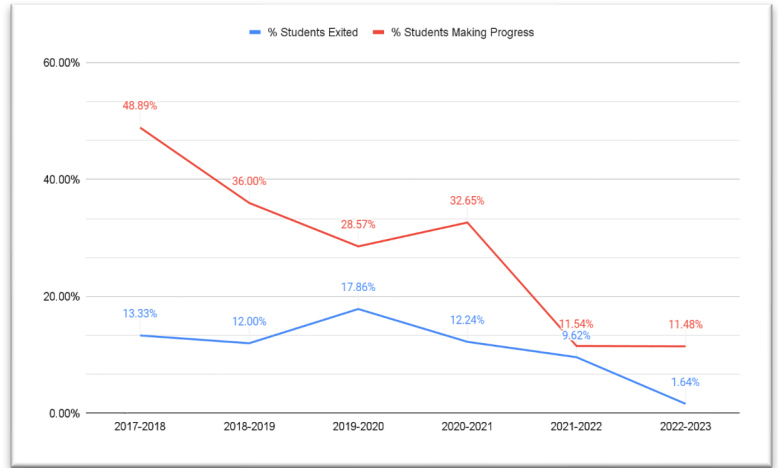
Alternative School

Effective Programming Components

Analysis Overview

Data sources were analyzed to evaluate effective programming factors. These factors are drawn from research on effective programming for ML students, highest impact levers from research on overall student achievement, and effective change management practices. They include the following:

1. Coherent and Aligned Services
2. Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Classroom Instruction
3. Student and Teacher Beliefs'
4. Leadership Capacity

Findings

1. Coherent and Aligned Services

As with any persistent achievement gap, closing the gap between ML and native English-speaking students requires coherent and aligned support systems that magnify their individual impact. Increasing the achievement of ML students requires the combined efforts of EL, mainstream, and other support staff. This requires both structural connections (i.e., academic language instruction embedded in curriculum maps) and ongoing teacher collaboration (i.e., connections between EL and mainstream teachers). Additionally, improvement efforts must be comprehensive in nature, rather than specific to ELD programming.

Finding #1 – EL services generally function siloed from mainstream classrooms. Improvement initiatives often do not consider ML student needs.

- Teacher interviews indicate limited opportunities for mainstream teachers to collaborate with EL teachers.
- Curriculum documents indicate some inclusion of Tier III vocabulary specific to the content area, but little or no inclusion of Tier II vocabulary or broader academic language development.
- There is limited coordination when ML students struggle academically between EL, mainstream, and other support services. Some comments indicate the primary pathway for student support when ML students struggle at the high school is to refer them to the alternative school.
- While school improvement plans include specific goals for EL student achievement, interviews and classroom observations indicated limited implementation or focus in this area.

Finding #2 – There is little guidance regarding EL student services outside of their ELD classes (i.e., core content class enrollment, access to additional support services). Programming is not consistent from year to year or comprehensive. There is no guidance regarding Monitor or former EL student supports.

2. Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Classroom Instruction

The classroom teacher has the largest influence on student achievement. While this includes beliefs about student capabilities (see Student and Teacher Beliefs below), it also includes evidence-based instructional practices. For ML students, they spend all or the majority of their school day in mainstream classrooms and any additional support (i.e., ELD classes) is minimal. Ensuring ML students receive mainstream instruction that meets their needs should be one of the top priorities of the district.

Finding #3 – ML students are less likely to participate than their native English-speaking peers, even while overall student engagement levels are high.
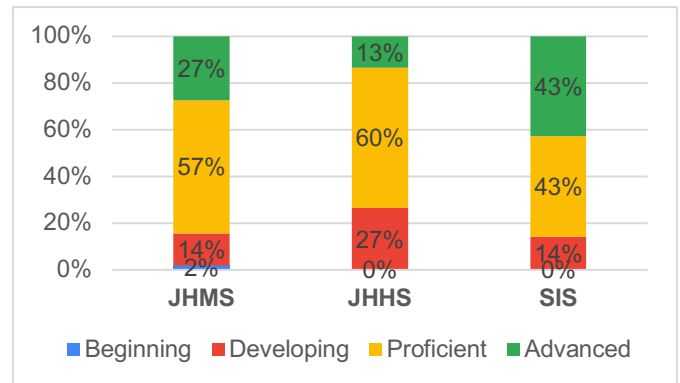
- 76.6% of classrooms observed scored proficient or advanced on creating a positive classroom environment and overall student engagement.
- ML students were significantly less likely to participate than their English-speaking peers.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT #1: The teacher creates a classroom environment that promotes both content and language learning (low affective filter, positive teacher to student and student to student interactions, etc.)

All Schools

- Beginning - Students are overly hesitant to participate. There are negative teac…
- Developing - Some students are hesitant to participate, but there are n…
- Proficient - Students are rarely hesitant to try participate. The classroom has…
- Advanced - Students frequently take risks in their participation. They receiv…
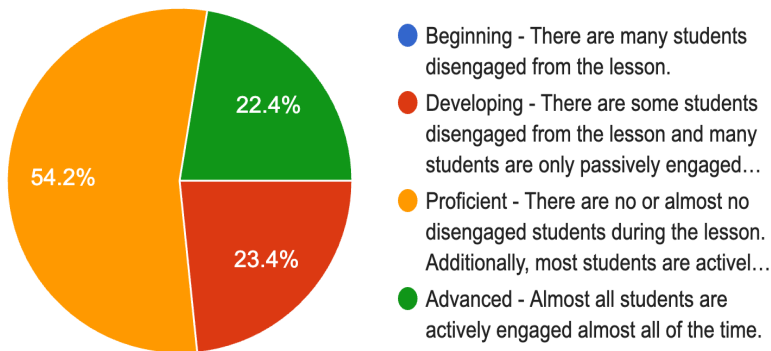- N/A - No opportunity for student participation.
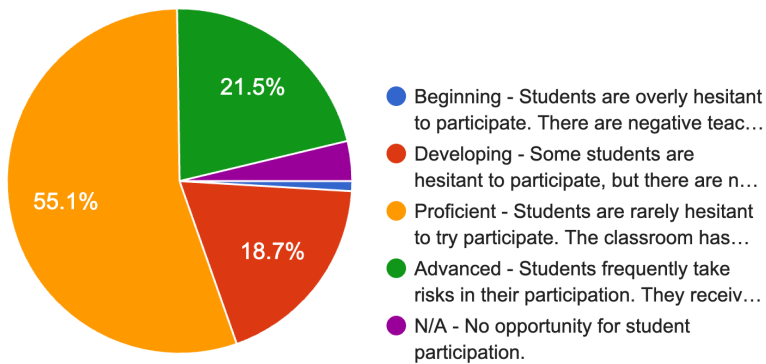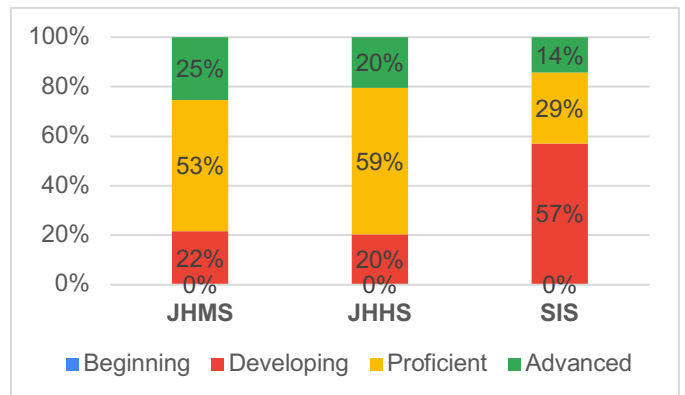
Individual Schools

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT #2: The teacher engages as many students as much of the time as possible. That engagement is active rather than passive.

All Schools

- Beginning - There are many students disengaged from the lesson.
- Developing - There are some students disengaged from the lesson and many students are only passively engaged…
- Proficient - There are no or almost no disengaged students during the lesson. Additionally, most students are activel…
- Advanced - Almost all students are actively engaged almost all of the time.

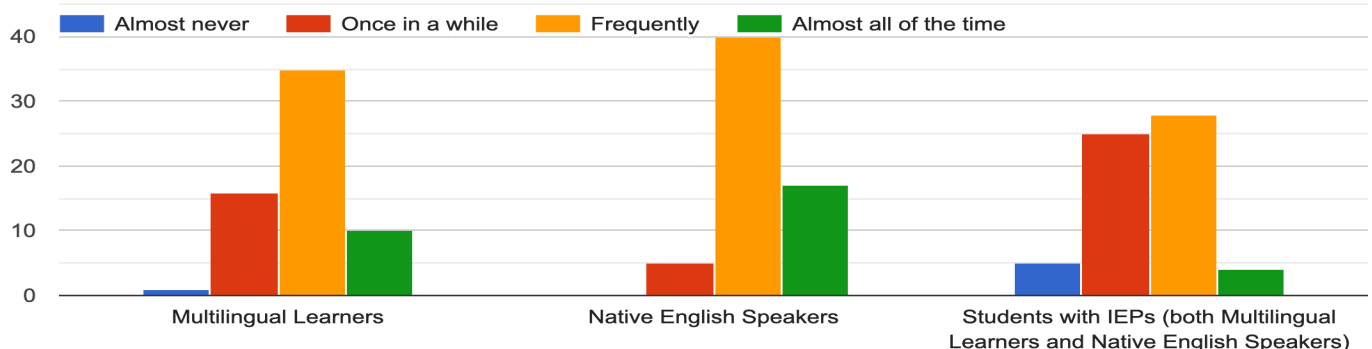**Individual Schools**

Based on your experience, how often do students participate in your classroom?
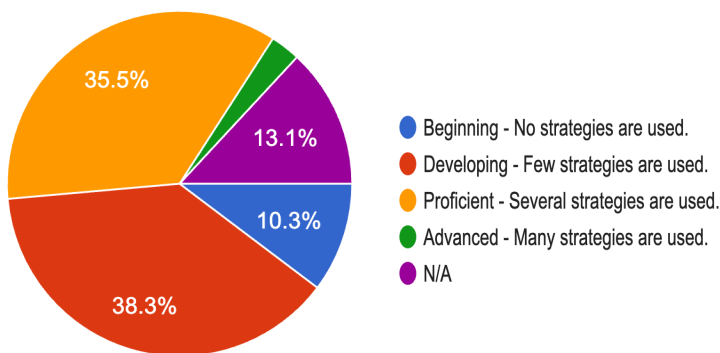
Finding #4 – Mainstream classroom instruction provides limited access to content for ML students, even though many teachers could articulate effective practices.
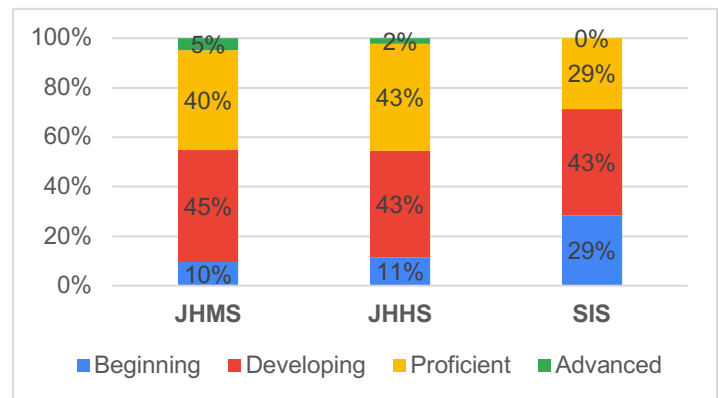
- Only 38% of classrooms were rated as proficient or advanced in providing linguistically accessible instruction across all three schools.
- 90% of teachers report that there is no school-wide system or expectations for specific instructional practices related to ML students. (Proportions were almost identical across all three schools.)
- 79% of teachers could list strategies they use to support their ML students, but only 38% of classrooms were rated as proficient or advanced in this category.

COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT #1: The teacher uses a variety of age and language level appropriate strategies to ensure student comprehension of content and instructions (ie: visuals, gestures, frequent turn and talks, graphic organizers, previewing text, etc.)
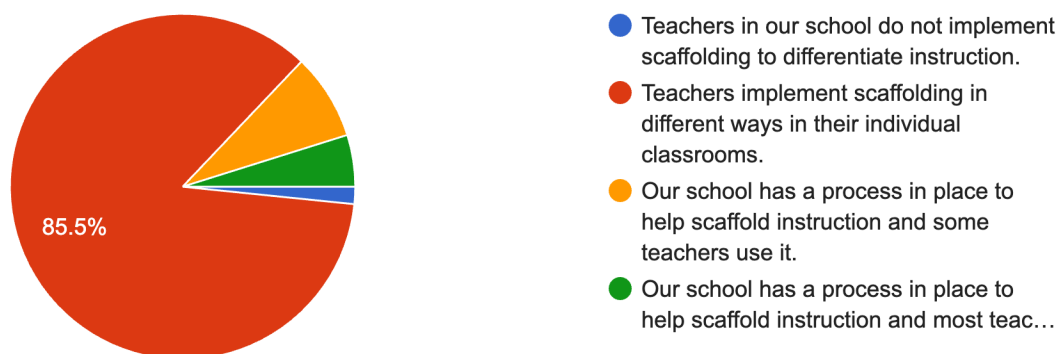
All Schools

Individual Schools

Pie chart (All Schools):
- 35.5%
- 13.1%
- 10.3%
- 38.3%

Legend:
- Beginning - No strategies are used.
- Developing - Few strategies are used.
- Proficient - Several strategies are used.
- Advanced - Many strategies are used.
- N/A

Bar chart (Individual Schools):

	JHMS	JHHS	SIS
Advanced	5%	2%	0%
Proficient	40%	43%	29%
Developing	45%	43%	43%
Beginning	10%	11%	29%

Legend: Beginning, Developing, Proficient, Advanced

Which of the following best describes the school's approach to differentiating instruction for Multilingual Learners?

Pie chart:
- 85.5%

Legend:
- Teachers in our school do not implement scaffolding to differentiate instruction.
- Teachers implement scaffolding in different ways in their individual classrooms.
- Our school has a process in place to help scaffold instruction and some teachers use it.
- Our school has a process in place to help scaffold instruction and most teac…

Finding #5 – There is limited academic language or literacy development across content areas, even though many teachers believe there is.

- Almost 50% of teachers report being unaware of their ML students' language levels or how to use them to guide instruction. Administrators estimate even less.
- 42% of teachers report they spend 21% or more of their instructional time on academic language. However, 78.5% of observations found little or no evidence. Students report about half of their classes teach academic language. *NOTE – there is a difference between the MS/HS*

and alternative school in this category. Classroom observations indicate a higher percentage of teachers with at least some evidence of explicit language instruction.

- Only 6.5% of classroom observation indicate proficient or advanced for reading and writing instruction integrated across the curriculum.

How well would you say you know your student's WIDA language levels, what they can do at that level, and what scaffolds you need to put in place to move them to the next level? (not enough responses from the alternative school for desegregated results)

All Schools   **MS**   **HS**

- Extremely well
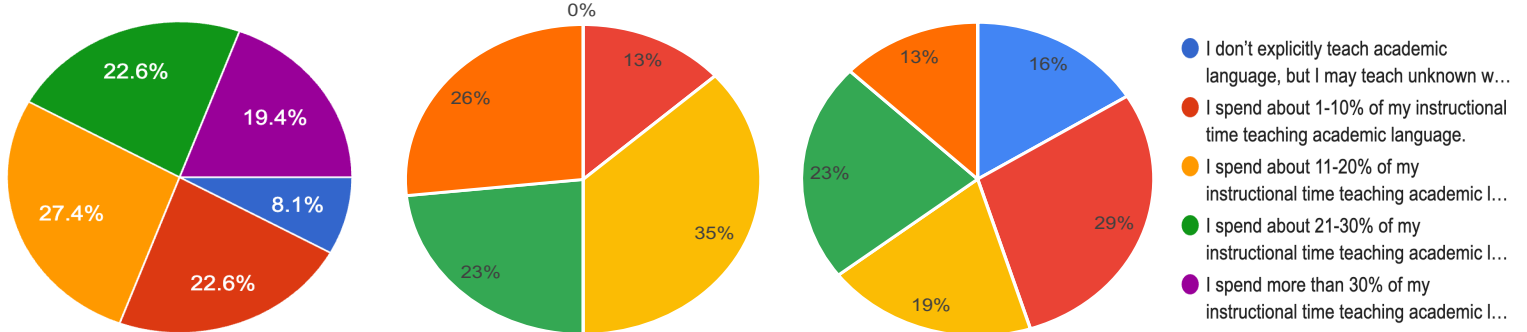- Somewhat well
- Limited
- Not at all
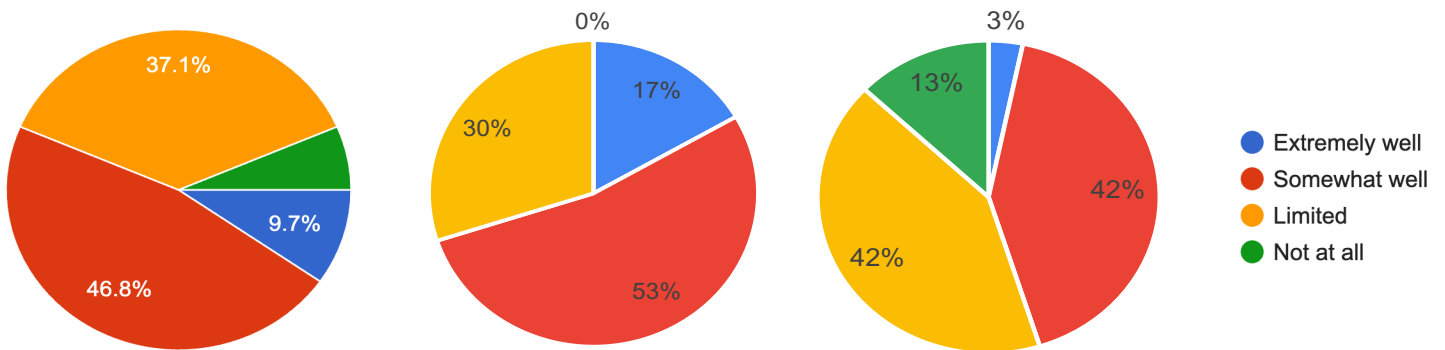
What percentage of your instructional time is dedicated to teaching or developing academic language? (not enough responses from the alternative school for desegregated results)

All Schools   **MS**   **HS**

- I don't explicitly teach academic language, but I may teach unknown w…
- I spend about 1-10% of my instructional time teaching academic language.
- I spend about 11-20% of my instructional time teaching academic l…
- I spend about 21-30% of my instructional time teaching academic l…
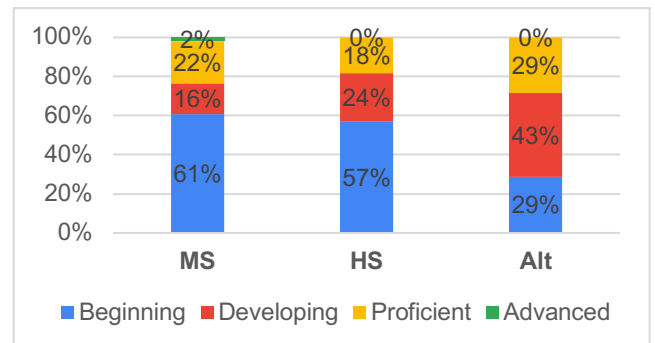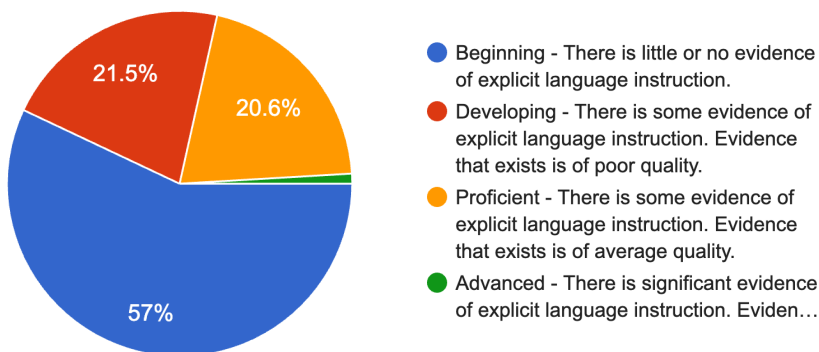- I spend more than 30% of my instructional time teaching academic l…

LANGUAGE OUTPUT #1: Explicit language instruction happens frequently. Potential evidence: direct instruction, sentence stems/frames, language objectives, vocabulary charts, student dictionaries, etc.

All Schools   **Individual Schools**

- Beginning - There is little or no evidence of explicit language instruction.
- Developing - There is some evidence of explicit language instruction. Evidence that exists is of poor quality.
- Proficient - There is some evidence of explicit language instruction. Evidence that exists is of average quality.
- Advanced - There is significant evidence of explicit language instruction. Eviden…

LITERACY: Reading and writing instruction are integrated across other curriculum areas. Evidence may include: essential questions with literacy connections, literacy support charts (i.e., essay frames, reading strategies, etc.), student notebooks, quick writes, referencing reading strategies, etc.
N/A if observation is in an English Language Arts classroom.
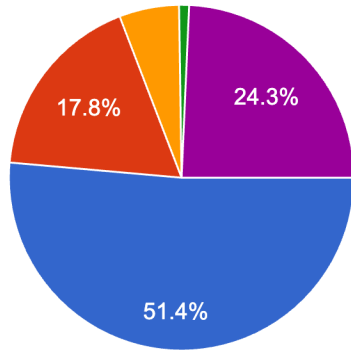
- ● Beginning - There is no evidence of literacy instruction in other content areas.
- ● Developing - There is little evidence of literacy instruction in other content are…
- ● Proficient - There is some evidence of literacy instruction in other content are…
- ● Advanced - There is much evidence of literacy instruction in other content are…
- ● N/A

Finding #6 – The majority of students and teachers believe that all students' cultures are respected.
- ~90% of 6-12 students believe that all students' heritage and culture is appreciated in school. 79% of teachers believe the same. (Insufficient data to desegregate for the alternative school.)
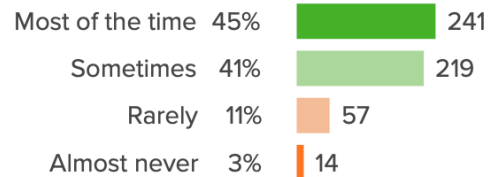
MS Teachers

JHMS Based on your experience, are the heritage and cultures of all students appreciated in the school district?

- ■ Most of the time
- ■ Sometimes
- ■ Rarely
- ■ Almost never

3%
20%
23%
53%

MS Students

Q.2: Based on your experience, are the heritage and cultures of all students appreciated in the school district?

Most of the time	45%	241
Sometimes	41%	219
Rarely	11%	57
Almost never	3%	14
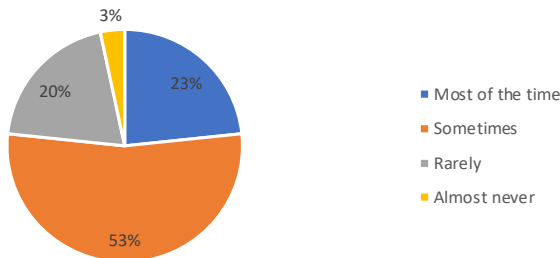
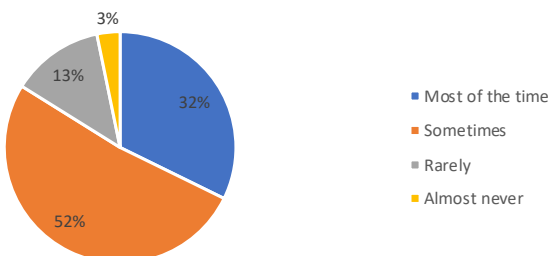Favorable: **87%**

HS Teachers

JHHS Based on your experience, are the heritage and cultures of all students appreciated in the school district?

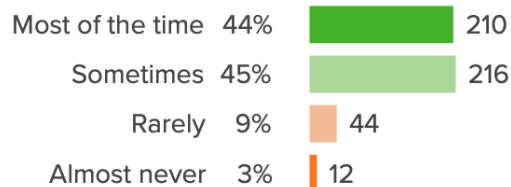- ■ Most of the time
- ■ Sometimes
- ■ Rarely
- ■ Almost never

3%
13%
32%
52%

HS Students

Q.2: Based on your experience, are the heritage and cultures of all students appreciated in the school district?

|		
Most of the time	44%	210
Sometimes	45%	216
Rarely	9%	44
Almost never	3%	12

Favorable: **88%**

3. Student and Teacher Beliefs

Teacher beliefs about their ability to impact student outcomes is one of the most influential factors on student achievement (Collective Teacher Efficacy). This is followed closely by teachers' beliefs about student capabilities and students' own beliefs about their capability.

Finding #7 – There is a significant difference in teachers' beliefs about their own ability to help ML and native English-speaking students be successful in their classrooms. This difference is even more pronounced when considering their colleagues' abilities.

- When asked how confident teachers were in their own skill to help students master content, 87% indicated frequently or all the time for native English-speakers, but on 58% indicated the same for ML students.
- When asked about their peers, 82% reported frequently or all the time for native English-speakers, but 40% for ML students.
- Only 50% of teachers interviewed believe they have the collective capacity to close the achievement gap.

How often are you confident that you personally have all the resources, skills, and strategies necessary to get all students to be successful mastering grade-level content?
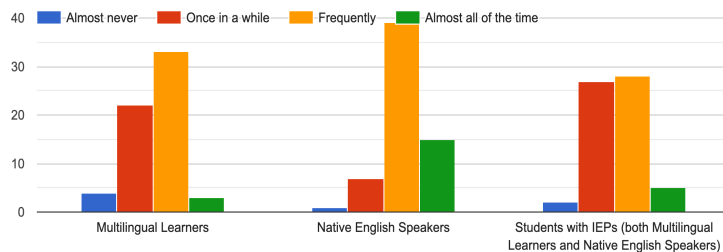
How often are you confident that the teachers you work with have all the resources, skills, and strategies necessary to get all students to be successful mastering grade-level content?
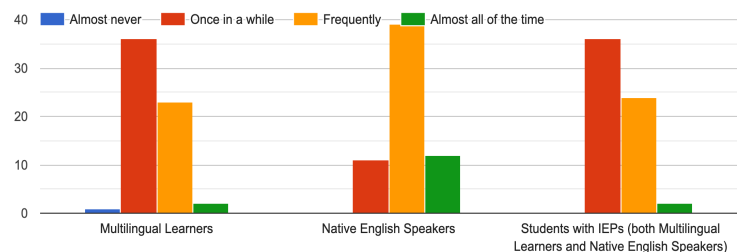
Finding #8 – There is not yet a shared ownership regarding the responsibility for improving ML student outcomes. Additionally, most staff think of newcomers or lower language ML students when considering the achievement gap, even though the majority are former ELs.

- When asked how their school could help MLs be more successful, 35% responded with ideas within the control of the classroom teacher, 49% responded with external solutions (i.e., having night classes), and 16% provided other comments (i.e., "I teach PE.")
- When asked about ways to close the achievement gap, administrators responded with external solutions. For example, one said "we probably can't until we look at the gap differently" meaning not using standardized tests. Another said, "it's too much for schools to tackle alone."

Finding #9 – Teachers' belief about their practices is inaccurate. This misperception is a significant driver of the lower levels of teacher efficacy.

- 79% of teachers could list strategies they use to support their ML students, but only 38% of classrooms were rated as proficient or advanced in this category.
- 42% of teachers report they spend 21% or more of their instructional time on academic language. However, 78.5% of observations found little or no evidence. Students report about half of their classes teach academic language.
- Only 6.5% of classroom observation indicate proficient or advanced for reading and writing instruction integrated across the curriculum.

4. Leadership Capacity

Effective leadership is the second most impactful factor on student achievement after the influence of the classroom teacher. Leaders influence everything from classroom instruction to building culture. Lack of leadership knowledge regarding effective programming and best practices for ML students prevents the implementation of those factors. Additionally, leadership capacity includes the ability to strategically plan for and then manage change initiatives, which is essential for improving the outcomes of ML students.

Finding #10 – There is limited leadership capacity across the system to engage in comprehensive improvement efforts with ML students, especially at the secondary level.
- When asked about why the achievement gap persists in the district, only one secondary leader shared an idea connected with classroom teaching practice.
- Only 20% of teachers interviewed believe that building or district leadership has an understanding of best practices for MLs.

Discussion

The district has several contextual affordances and demands that should be considered when prioritizing the findings from the previous section and when identifying potential leverage points to address them.

1. Current PLC and Curriculum Initiatives
   The current focus on these two initiatives provides an excellent context for embedding the needs of ML students. However, the lack of purposefully embedding these needs in the design of the work has prevented this inclusion. Additionally, the scope of this work prevents the addition of work focused on the needs of ML students.

2. Leadership Capacity
   Survey and interview data clearly indicate the need for increased leadership capacity for ML students. The district has historically been limited in staffing for ML specific leadership and secondary school leaders have limited background in this area. Given the failure to hire an instructional coach for the high school last year and the shift away from a district EL director position this year, addressing this need continues to be an extremely high priority.

3. Staff Turnover Since Previous Professional Development
   Several leaders and staff discussed the lack of recent professional development regarding the needs of ML students and that many staff who had received training previously have now left the district. This aligns with observations of classroom teaching practice and reinforces the need to provide teacher training in this area.

Recommendations

Considering the various needs identified in this analysis, their relative potential for closing the achievement gap, and the current district context leads to a prioritized list of recommendations. These are presented in the order of greatest potential impact or as necessary pre-requisites for subsequent recommendations.

1. Create a district-wide plan for addressing the needs of ML students that is consistently used when planning district and building improvement and to support leadership decision-making processes. Build a culture where ML needs are addressed by all teachers, systems, and initiatives, rather than focusing on ELD classes.
   a. Create a system of supports for ML students based on language proficiency that includes graduation pathways, course placement, support services, and clustering, but is built on the foundation of culturally and linguistically appropriate instruction in mainstream classrooms. Leverage the dual immersion program and focus on supports for Monitor and former ELs. Ensure systems (i.e., PLCs, RtI) include the needs of ML students and provide coherent and coordinated supports.
   b. Embed ML needs within existing district initiatives, especially the development of academic language within the current standards work and evidence-based practices for language learners within the PLC initiative.
   c. Further examine the ELD program 6-12 to identify necessary improvements. While this was not a focus of this needs assessment, WIDA data indicates a strong need to improve the ELD programming at the 6-12 level.

Discussion

While this step is a necessary antecedent to future work, the district should not wait for a comprehensive plan before moving into recommendations three and four. At the district level, closing the achievement gap should be an explicit goal in the district's improvement plan. This should guide the development of building improvement plans, so that there is a consistent focus on this identified need. This should be completed as soon as possible so that buildings can develop their plans before the start of the 2023-2024 school year. This should be revisited and revised annually.

Success Measures
- There is clear alignment between the district and building improvement plans regarding a focus on closing the achievement gap for ML students.
- Staff are able to articulate ongoing professional learning targeted at supporting the needs for ML students, especially integrated in the core district and building improvement initiatives (i.e., PLCs).

Over time, the district should develop clear programmatic expectations for the various services that support ML students. These include ELD course sequences, student placement based on linguistic needs, dual immersion programming, tiered interventions, special education, etc. These expectations should be codified where missing and actualized through ongoing professional development and accountability measures.

Success Measures
- Counselors and other staff should be able to articulate the process/criteria for placing a new student based on their language and academic background. Pathways towards graduation have been articulated based on these various needs.

- Classroom teachers should be able to articulate a process of supporting ML students who are struggling that includes classroom level supports, building supports based on a combination of students' linguistic and academic needs, and the process for accessing additional supports.
- Staff should be able to identify ML students who still qualify for ELD services, as well as those who have exited and the types of supports appropriate to each level.
- WIDA data indicates a significant improvement in rates of students exiting EL classification and those making adequate yearly progress at the secondary level.

2. Build leadership capacity (district, building leaders, teacher leaders, and instructional coaches) to support ML student needs.
   a. Build a greater understanding of ML student needs and the implications of those needs on broader school improvement initiatives and classroom instruction.
   b. Build a greater capacity to strategically plan for change and effectively manage implementation, especially regarding culturally and linguistically appropriate instructional practices in all classrooms.

Discussion

Developing leadership capacity in this area is essential to improving the outcomes for ML students. While building and district leaders cannot be experts in all areas that they oversee (i.e., special education, every content area), they must increase their capacity in the areas that have the most need. If the district has identified closing the achievement gap as one of its top priorities, then leaders must build their expertise in this area. This is critical because much of leadership decision-making happens on a reactive or semi-reactive basis. This limits the time available to consult with other "experts" or even to recognize the need for that consultation.

Of critical importance is the infusion of expertise within the improvement planning process and the PLC initiative. While identifying the need to better support ML students is clear for anyone analyzing building or classroom data, the expertise to identify potential solutions is currently not readily available throughout the system. Grade level teams need support in identifying potential solutions to the gap they see in their data. The solution at each school may be different (i.e., training instructional coaches, supporting department chairs), but is essential for recommendations three and four.

It is recommended that the district consider a leadership PLC structure to build leadership capacity across the system. Ideally this would involve teacher leaders (similar to the current PLC initiative) but can be started with district and building administrators. This ongoing learning should be coupled with job-embedded support for building leaders to have a thought partnership in how to apply the learning for the specific context of their building. Additional support should be provided for the new district leadership staff, especially the new EL director.

Success Measures
- Building and district leadership are able to articulate evidence-based practices for ML students and how those are being developed with teachers and incorporated into other district and building initiatives.
- A majority of staff respond that they believe building and district leaders have the capacity to successfully lead the work to close the achievement gap.

3. Ensure the implementation of evidence-based instructional practices for ML students in mainstream classrooms through high-quality professional development and ongoing implementation monitoring.
    a. The professional development must address limiting teacher beliefs through short-cycle improvement efforts.

Discussion

Research is abundantly clear that the classroom teachers is the most impactful within school factor regarding student achievement. This includes their actual instructional practice, as well as their underlying belief system about their and their students' abilities. It is especially critical that core instruction is a focus of this work, as that is where ML students spend the majority of their time while in school. Supporting improvement in this area should be a primary focus of the PLC work, with the potential of additional professional development being needed. It is important to note that the research on evidence-based practices for ML students is not based on individual practices, but on the totality of a number of practices being present. This can be challenging in the PLC process, where teams of teachers may focus on one practice individually within a given assessment cycle. They may not see expected improvement until they have incorporated a number of practices. It is also essential to recognize the importance of leadership accountability and support in this area. While many teachers could articulate effective practices, most did not consistently apply them in their classroom. This indicates a need for implementation support (i.e., job embedded coaching) and/or more administrator accountability.

Success Measures
- Teachers are able to articulate a set of evidence-based practices that are consistent across the school.
- Classroom observations indicate high levels of evidence-based practice implementation.

4. Integrate literacy and language development across the curriculum.
    a. Create horizontal and vertical maps that include a progression of development across content areas.
    b. Ensure structures exist to support the ongoing collaboration of teachers across content areas to align this work.

Discussion

There is an opportunity to incorporate this need within the existing PLC/curricular initiative. As teachers are unpacking standards and creating learning progressions, it is a simple additional step to identify the academic language needed to master those standards. Content ladders should then include the sequence of language teaching needed for each standard. Additional work to align academic language development across content areas can also be explored. Students' rates of language acquisition increase significantly when similar language is used across content areas (i.e., compare and contrast). There is also an opportunity to more explicitly connect language arts instruction, scaffolding, and reinforcement across content areas. For example, students can use similar paragraph frames when completing extended response questions in mathematics.

Success Measures
- Curriculum documents articulate a vertical progression of academic language development, as well as provide guidance on horizontal integration across content areas.
- PLCs consistently examine academic language needs as part of their discussions to unpack standards and create lesson progressions.

- Classroom observations indicate an increase in explicit academic language instruction and ongoing opportunities for students to practice the language.