

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PDK-CMSi CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT AUDIT TEAM FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Based on the three streams of data derived from interviews, documents, and site visits, the PDK-CMSi Curriculum Management Audit Team has developed a set of recommendations to address its findings shown under each of the standards of the audit.

In the case of the findings, they have been triangulated, i.e., corroborated with one another. In the case of the recommendations, those put forth in this section are representative of the auditors' best professional judgments regarding how to address the problems that surfaced in the audit.

The recommendations are presented in the order of their criticality for initiating system-wide improvements. The recommendations also recognize and differentiate between the policy and monitoring responsibilities of the Board of Education, and the operational and administrative duties of the Superintendent of Schools.

Where the PDK-CMSi audit team views a problem as wholly or partly a policy and monitoring matter, the recommendations are formulated for the Board of Education. Where the problem is distinctly an operational or administrative matter, the recommendations are directed to the superintendent of schools as the chief executive officer of the school system. In many cases, the PDK-CMSi audit team directs recommendations to both the Board and the Superintendent, because it is clear that policy and operations are related, and both entities are involved in a proposed change. In some cases, there are no recommendations to the superintendent when only policy is involved or none to the board when the recommendations deal only with administration.

Audit recommendations are presented as follows: The overarching goals for the Board and/or the Superintendent, followed by the specific objectives to carry out the overarching goals. The latter are designated "Governance Functions" and "Administrative Functions."

The recommendations have been grouped into three *macro-levels*: 1) system-wide issues such as board policies and system planning; 2) system-wide organizational relationships primarily centered in curriculum staff development and assessment issues and the reconfiguration of these areas along with teacher and administrative appraisal; and, 3) improving the planning functions of curriculum, assessment program evaluation and staff development. Sub-recommendations further delineate suggested School Board and administrative actions.

Recommendation 1: Develop New and Revised School Board Policies to Establish the Institutional Framework to Guide the Conduct of the Superintendent and Administrative Staff in Improving System Accountability for Student Learning via the Creation of a Six-year Educational Plan; Confronting the Inequalities Among Ethnic and Racial Groups Which Currently Exist in the Schools; and Positioning the District to Link its Budgeting Practices with Improvements in System Operations Over Time, Including the Design and Delivery of Its Curriculum.

A comprehensive set of school board policies is a prerequisite for the sound management of a school district. Policies articulate the intentions of the School Board regarding procedures and operations and provide clear direction for administrators, teachers, and other staff members. Such policies promote constancy of purpose in district operations by furnishing reference points for recurring decisions. The current set of policies for the Anchorage Public Schools is inadequate and ineffective on a variety of counts (see Findings 1.1, 1.4, 2.1, 3.1, and 4.2). Without definitive policies, the School Board cannot ensure program focus, effectiveness, consistency, productivity, or accountability. Many Anchorage school board members interviewed expressed great frustration at the lack of definitive data regarding

program effectiveness, especially around budget development time. Some described their various forays into operations as largely futile in an effort to control costs and provide a sharper focus to budget discussions without good information upon which to make decisions. The auditors concur that there has been too little reliable evaluative data for the Anchorage School Board to conduct its business and to remain responsive and accountable to the various sub-publics which it represents. The recommendations developed here by the auditors are aimed at improving the basic accountability of the elected Anchorage School Board to exercise policy control of the operations of the Anchorage School District.

This recommendation is now parsed into the major policy initiatives upon which it is comprised. The auditors see the implementation of them as occurring simultaneously, first within the framework of new and revised policies, and secondly going on in parallel fashion within the administrative structure as the system leadership team refocuses its work to accomplish the tasks to ensure policy compliance.

Sub-Recommendation 1.1: Develop a six-year educational plan which corresponds to the state and city’s plans, and which becomes the basis for connecting all central functions to the goals and objectives of the school system. Such a plan will provide the focus and synergy now absent within the upper tiers of the Anchorage School District by preparing district personnel to improve the achievement of all students with special emphasis on erasing the current achievement gaps of minority children. Link assessment data to the creation of site-level objectives, planning, staff development, budget priorities, staffing, and administrative evaluation.

A variety of plans currently exist in the Anchorage School District (see [Findings 1.2](#), [2.1](#), and [4.5](#)). However, there is no long-range system plan connecting these separate plans together. The budget and facilities plans are not connected to an educational plan. And the curriculum and textbook adoption cycles are separate and distinct initiatives. The lack of a central planning focus is deleterious to not only improved operations, but also to any attempt to control administrative costs. Separate plans encourage duplication and separatism, as well as the lack of coordination within the administrative structure.

Many years ago the district leadership attempted to develop a strategic plan. For a variety of reasons the effort was not successful and left a bad “taste” in the mouths of those who remember the project (see [Finding 1.2](#)). At least in part, strategic planning assumes a stable revenue stream which is not guaranteed for the Anchorage School District by the fact that the system is fiscally dependent and may have its budget vetoed or cut back by other supra-political bodies. This fact has created, in the opinions of the auditors, an anti-planning bias among some school administrators. This condition must change for the simple reason that without a good central plan, system focus, connectivity, and productivity are impaired.

Despite the fact that the schools are fiscally dependent, planning must occur to link all central functions into a cohesive whole. This will enable administrative leaders to understand how their functions and activities relate to and support the overall goals and objectives adopted by the Anchorage School Board.

The first and foremost objective of the six-year educational plan must be the erasure of the achievement gaps of minority school children in the Anchorage School District (see [Findings 3.1](#) and [3.2](#)). These children will become the majority in the student population within the next decade. Given this eventuality, it is of paramount importance that educators engage in a systematic effort to improve their academic success *now*.

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District School Board:

G.1.1: Adopt a policy requiring the creation and annual review of a six-year educational plan that focuses on erasing the current achievement gaps of minority children in the Anchorage School District.

This plan should include bold, yet achievable performance targets for each school to raise achievement for all student groups. Use the “years to parity” concept in the audit as a benchmark to determine how long it will take to erase the existing gaps (see [Finding 4.1](#)). Revise *Policy #349* to require that the evaluation results be disaggregated by student sub-populations to be explicitly delineated in written administrative processes for district-wide and site-level analysis. The student populations must meet Alaska and federal requirements, but may go beyond those requirements to provide data needed by the Anchorage School District in determining the progress and success of all of the students it is obligated to serve.

G.1.2: Include in the policy the following factors:

- The Board’s overall expectation for equity and fairness in all district practices.
- Increased access to academic programs and related opportunities for all students.
- Allocation of human, learning, and financial resources based on the differential needs of students. Provide extra, targeted support for schools who are not making adequate progress, and require school administrators to meet directly with the superintendent individually to explain what they will do to meet the next targets.
- Assignment of the responsibility and authority of the Superintendent of Schools to eliminate any practice not covered by policy that inhibits the district’s effort to eliminate inequities and inequalities.

G.1.3: Direct the Superintendent to assist the School Board to identify roles and responsibilities of staff members and school-community leaders for contributing and monitoring the achievement of equality and equity goals with the school system.

G.1.4: Direct the Superintendent to provide staff development related to the newly-developed district policy initiative that is centered on research-based strategies to reduce the achievement gaps.

G.1.5: Require from the Superintendent annual public reports on the progress towards eliminating the achievement gaps and any other inequality or inequity found to be impeding the progress of the district towards eliminating the achievement gaps. Such reports should be by building site, grade level, and subject content area where applicable.

G.1.6: Require the Superintendent to review retention, suspension, and drop-out data by school and program with disaggregated ethnic and racial data to determine if discipline plans and student codes of conduct need to be revised and if schools are administering disciplinary practices consistently and fairly. Require this review to be publicly released semi-annually.

G.1.7: Direct the Superintendent to establish an assessment team that includes central office staff and representative principals to examine the categories of data needed for decision-making and the formatting of data so that it is easily understood by the end users.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District Superintendent of Schools:

A.1.1: Assist the School Board in drafting the recommended policy to ensure completeness and regulatory compliance.

A.1.2: Create regulatory guidelines to eliminate the equality/equity gap in all district operations. Include the following elements:

- Directing each principal to allocate resources, including teachers, time for learning, and assignment of aides to increasing the learning of students who are not achieving or in danger of being retained or dropped.
- Incorporate the use of disaggregated data by race and ethnicity to determine the effectiveness of district and school programs and practices.
- Budget and provide for staff development for school principals and assistant principals to become skilled in the disaggregation and use of data in creating program plans and related interventions to erase the achievement gaps which may exist at their buildings.
- Require regular and uniform reports on disciplinary procedures and student codes of conduct at all school sites to ensure fairness for all students.

A.1.3: Create and provide oversight for a central monitoring structure that will provide building administrators, program administrators, and the School Board with timely reports on eradicating inequalities and inequities.

A.1.4: Establish an assessment team that creates usable and understandable data indices for staff and public consumption in order to determine progress made towards district goals and objectives. Among the decisions to be rendered by this team are:

- The defined sub-populations for which current and historical data will be collected and reported, that include compliance with new board policy and Alaska requirements. As a minimum, current and historical data should be collected and reported in the following categories at the district and school levels:
 - Low socio-economic/non low socio-economic, Title 1/Non Title 1, ethnicity, disability/non-disability, limited English speaking, gender, and migrant status.
 - The list of ethnicities that will be used for consistent reporting, ensuring that the list includes all requirements for Alaska State reporting.
 - The smallest number of members of a sub-population for which a school will be accountable for achievement gaps using disaggregated data.
 - How data reports will be available to teachers and administrators by individual students, classrooms, grade levels, school level, district-level, similar cities, and Alaska state-level performance.
 - Develop a clear model for how data will flow through the school system and which staff functions have access to specific data.
 - Determine useful formats for presentation of data to school administrators, teachers, parents, and community agencies.
 - Wherever item analysis data are available, train key staff to provide item-analysis information to school principals and teachers so that they will know how to determine areas of weakness and strength of each student.

Sub-Recommendation 1.2: Revise the current budgeting development process to incorporate formal procedures that include a clinical needs assessment based on assessment data, cost-benefit analyses, and district-wide curriculum priorities.

A clear, tight, and substantive linkage between curricular priorities and the district’s budget is critical to successful efforts in attaining and sustaining increased levels of student achievement, particularly in closing critical achievement gaps. Intended results are lost or delayed when there is no conscious or formal process in place to link the financial plan to the district’s learning priorities. To simply “roll over” a majority of the prior year’s budget line items or allocate resources unilaterally on a strict formula basis ignores the annual opportunity to pursue intended results in a strategic fashion. The

auditors found that the district’s budgeting process lacks critical steps and elements that will provide connection from data to decisions and from allocations to results (see [Finding 5.2](#)). Further, the auditors found that clinical projections of revenue and expenditures for the two years subsequent to the 2002-2003 fiscal year reveals an estimated \$20 million fiscal gap (see [Finding 5.1](#)). Affecting the revenue side of this equation will involve a change in the state funding formula for school districts, removal of the current locally imposed “tax cap,” and/or some other equally formidable measure(s). Reducing expenditures is the most expeditious approach to this dilemma.

Converting to a curriculum-driven budgeting process will address concerns related to [Finding 5.1](#) and [Finding 5.2](#). Institutionalizing structures that formally support data-driven financial decisions will allow the district to reduce expenditures without sacrificing desired outcomes and thus maintain a financially sound system under future conditions of “no new money.”

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District School Board:

G.1.8: Direct the Superintendent to submit proposed text for revision of *Board Policy 722.3 [Budget] Planning and Compilation* to include adequate direction for curriculum-driven budgeting using the criteria noted in [Exhibit 5.2.1](#).

G.1.9: Determine in collaboration with the superintendent a reasonable time frame in which the district can successfully complete the transition into a curriculum-driven budgeting process. The timeline will likely be multi-year.

G.1.10: Direct the Superintendent to develop and disseminate administrative regulations or operating procedures that communicate the revised budgeting process and the expected timeline for full implementation to all stakeholders.

G.1.11: Direct the Superintendent to revise the budget development timeline to incorporate the changes recommended to enable the budget to incorporate feedback data and curricular priorities.

G.1.12: Require, as a part of the School Board and Anchorage Assembly budget approval process, a presentation from the administration to communicate how the proposed budget addresses the district’s goals and priorities and responds to student and program evaluation data. The presentation should include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the previous year’s budget in achieving district priorities.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District Superintendent of Schools:

A.1.5: Draft and submit text for revised *Board Policy 722* to the Board as addressed in [Action G.1.8](#).

A.1.6: Assist the School Board in establishing a reasonable timeline for transitioning to a curriculum-driven budget process. The timeline will likely be multi-year.

A.1.7: Develop and communicate the administrative procedures addressed in [Action G.1.10](#).

A.1.8: Revise the budget development process and timeline addressed in [Actions A.1.5](#) and [A.1.6](#), ensuring that the budget planning process moves beyond a spreadsheet accounting function so that leaders and budget managers are focused on goals and program results as they develop their financial plans. Clear connections must be established between student performance information and the basic instructional and support areas of the budget. Undertake steps similar to the following to increase the connection of programs and priorities with budgeting decisions:

- Using the current construction of the budget, identify various education activities or programs and group them into broad areas of need or purpose served.
- Assign a budget manager to each program and direct the managers to prepare a concise and meaningful budget packages for their respective areas.

- Attach a goal statement to each program area or budget request which states the program's linkage to established goals and priorities, its purpose, the criteria for identifying success, and how these will be evaluated. Each budget request should be described so as to permit evaluation of the consequences of funding or non-funding in terms of performance results.
- Compile the goal/linkage statements and budget packages and submit to appropriate staff to gather data that best describe needed service levels, program outcomes, and cost-benefits.
- Define program performance expectations with the involvement of staff. Current results should be compared to desired expectations and related service requirements. For example, to be successful a specific program may need to be established at 110 percent of previous spending levels. This will necessitate a comparable reduction from some other program/budget judged to be of lesser value have a lesser effect. Prepare guidelines and recommendations and submit them to budget managers who will then compile all recommendations into a single budget proposal.
- Compile past cost information, especially expenditure percentages of budget, with performance data and recommendations to guide preliminary budget estimates.
- Appoint a budget planning team representing the various stakeholders that will eventually bring the draft budget document to the Superintendent's cabinet or top-level staff. This team studies the goals, priorities, and parameters inherent in the decisions being made and receives technical support from the directors and managers who developed the program budgets. Discussions of cost-benefit information are critical at this stage. In general, budget plans should be extended over a minimum of three years to assure consistency of effort and focus and sufficient time for evaluation.
- The Superintendent's cabinet evaluates and ranks the budget packages. Budget requests need to compete with each other for funding based upon data derived from evaluation of the priority of need and level of program effectiveness.
- Compile results of the evaluation and ranking and publish them in a preliminary budget with programs listed in priority order. Use this draft with administrators for input before a draft is prepared for presentation to the Board.
- Build the capital outlay and improvement budget from a zero base each year with multi-year planning for improvements, including life-cycle, replacement and preventative maintenance. Prioritize decisions based on health and safety factors, the impact on the learning environment, and protection of investment. Identify and communicate documented parameters for decisions on needs that are not considered health and safety matters. Many capital needs change annually and do not reoccur once met and paid for, such as durable goods and construction costs. The budget planning process should reflect these changes while projecting life-cycle replacement costs of buildings and systems over five to fifteen years.
- Finalize budget allocations based on available revenues, the appropriate levels to be authorized, and program funding priorities and rankings.
- Prepare the preliminary budget to be taken to public hearings.
- Use the public hearing process to communicate broadly the financial planning link with student needs, program priorities, and results sought through the actions taken.
- Prepare the proposed budget after considering public and Board comments and present to the board for adoption and then to the Anchorage Assembly for approval.
- Load the approved budget into the financial data management system and implement controls.

A.1.9: Provide training and assistance as needed to all budget managers and other affected staff members during the transition to a curriculum-driven budgeting process and format.

A.1.10: As required by policy, law, or contractual provisions, involve principals, teachers, other staff, and parents in the new budget building process as key stakeholders. Without their involvement, education priorities may not be accepted and appropriately focused.

Sub-Recommendation 1.3: Focus specifically on upgrading and expanding board policies regarding the scope of curriculum design and delivery to more sharply define system needs and responses to an increased system of educational accountability requirements expected from state and federal initiatives.

The Anchorage School District instructional staff is currently not ready to be fully responsive to new state and federal accountability initiatives (see [Findings 1.1](#) and [4.1](#)). The first response is for the School Board to revise its policy framework to require an upgraded form of educational accountability. Establishing clear direction for curriculum development and delivery will require the Board to revise some policies and to create some additional policies. Policies are missing that provide for:

- An aligned written, taught, and tested curriculum for all subject/learning areas;
- Articulation and coordination of curriculum;
- Predictability of the written curriculum from one level to another; and
- Resource allocation tied to curriculum priorities.

Specific policy areas that require revision and improvement include:

- A clear philosophical statement regarding the curriculum approach to be maintained, K-12, throughout all curriculum areas;
- A requirement that written curriculum be developed for all subject areas;
- Allocation of specific amounts of time for learning for subject areas;
- Delivery of the written curriculum;
- Training of staff in the delivery of the curriculum;
- Monitoring of the delivery of the curriculum;
- Development of a comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation plan;
- Resource allocation tied to curriculum priorities; and
- Data-driven decisions for the purpose of increasing student learning.

Sound policies:

- Establish clear direction for the system;
- Provide for consistency of actions over time as members of the Board and administration change;
- Guide professional staff in their efforts to improve the curriculum;
- Establish a framework for monitoring progress in the attainment of district learning goals; and
- Provide a framework for the systematic evaluation of all district staff, including the Superintendent.

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District School Board:

G.1.13: Establish as a priority the completion or the review of curriculum policies within a 12- to 18-month time frame.

G.1.14: Direct the development and adopt a policy that requires an aligned written, taught, and tested curriculum for all subject/learning areas.

G.1.15: Direct the development and adopt a policy that requires the articulation and coordination of the curriculum.

G.1.16: Direct the development and adopt a policy that requires resource allocation tied to curriculum priorities.

G.1.17: Establish procedures for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of all policies. Add a section to each policy entitled, “How Implementation of This Policy Will Be Monitored.” Indicate the necessary data and data format required to monitor implementation, the frequency with which those data will be reported to the Board, and designate the Superintendent as the individual responsible for collecting and presenting those data.

G.1.18: Direct the Superintendent to prepare draft policies on the above-listed topics for consideration by the Board and implement them when approved.

Administration Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District Superintendent of Schools:

A.1.11: Assist the Board in the preparation of the recommended policies by submitting draft policies on the above-indicated topics.

A.1.12: Ensure that all major stakeholders are involved in the policy review and revision process as required by law and contractual provisions.

A.1.14: Adhere to board policies when making decisions. Ensure that major decisions are based on policies that have been approved by the Board of Education.

A.1.15: Make the responsibility for the implementation of policies part of the administrative evaluation system.

A.1.16: Define and implement an effective instructional staffing and support structure in order to carry out the policies effectively and in a timely manner.

Recommendation 2: Define and Implement a Focused, Sound, and Integrated Administrative Support Structure Designed to Carry Out the School Board’s Revised and New Policies to Erase the Achievement Gaps of Minority Children. Take Steps to Adequately Staff the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation Which Is Crucial to Providing the Linkages from Assessments to System-wide Improvements in Student Learning. Create a Teacher and Administrator Evaluation System that Provides for Setting Goals and Feedback on Growth Targets.

In order to implement an effective curriculum management system, the district must have in place a focused, sound, and integrated administrative support structure. Roles and responsibility must be clearly defined in accurate job descriptions that specify accountability for the design and delivery of procedures that lead to eliminating the present achievement gap evident among sub-groups in the system (see [Findings 1.3, 2.1, and 4.1](#)), enabling the administrators and teachers to fulfill the student achievement goals of the School Board. This type of system requires procedures for designing quality curriculum documents that teachers can use as the basis for instructional planning (see [Finding 2.3](#)), developing a structure to systematically review and evaluate all instructional programs (see [Findings 2.1 and 4.4](#)) creating a support staff who can serve as content experts for teachers and school administrators, and assist in the monitoring of the implementation of the School Board approved curriculum, assist in the development of program evaluation designs that provide classroom teachers, administrators and the School Board with data necessary for determining how well present programs are functioning and giving direction to the Board for making informed decisions about the modification, expansion, or termination of existing programs. This system should enable teachers and administrators to engage in activities that ensure the deep alignment of curriculum within the system.

Sub-Recommendation 2.1: Reconfigure and staff the present Department of Curriculum and Evaluation to provide focused, integrated support for both design and delivery of the district curriculum that is deeply aligned with state content and performance standards. This will require coordinators to hold Type B Alaska Certification and become actively involved in assisting building level staff in monitoring the delivery of curriculum and require the coordination of support programs such as Title I, Indian Education, Literacy Education, Special Education, and Bilingual/Multicultural.

Currently, no long- or short-range planning is underway within this department (see [Finding 2.1](#)). There are no School Board-approved job descriptions for this department (see [Finding 1.3](#)). The present table of organization structure, planning procedures, and daily operations have led to coordinators and supervisors to work independently with little accountability for closing the achievement gap or meeting School Board approved goals. Coordinators have not been formally evaluated for some time. Not all coordinators report to the same administrator; i.e., Title I and the Reading Initiative (see [Finding 1.3](#)). There is little evidence that the activities of the curriculum support programs such as Indian Education, Multi-cultural and Bilingual Education and other support programs are actually leading to closing the gap in student achievement.

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District School Board:

G.2.1: Adopt a policy that requires a yearly approval and update of the district tables of organization and all areas of responsibility depicted on the district table of organization and that meets the audit criteria.

G.2.2: Adopt a policy that establishes a periodic review of all job descriptions.

- As a minimum these job descriptions should include the following:
 - Qualifications;
 - Links to chain of command;
 - Major duties and/or functions of the job; and
 - Relationship to curriculum/design, alignment or other delivery responsibilities where appropriate.

G.2.3: Direct the Superintendent to create new job descriptions for the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation and submit these to the Board for approval during the fall of 2002.

G.2.4: Direct the Superintendent to establish a procedure for the annual review of all personnel in the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation.

G.2.5: Direct the Superintendent to establish a procedure for the development of a long- and short-range plan for the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation

G.2.6: Direct the Superintendent to prepare a summary report for the Board detailing how the activities of the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation have been effective in meeting the annual goals established by that department.

G.2.7: Direct the Superintendent to submit a new table of organization for the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation (see [Appendix C](#)) for a suggested model.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District Superintendent of Schools:

A.2.1: Assist the Board in developing policies for the creation of accurate and complete tables of organization and job descriptions that meet audit criteria.

A.2.2: Develop a revised table of organization for the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation (see [Appendix C](#) for suggested model). This suggested organizational chart places content, program, and assessment coordinators under the direction of three supervisors eliminating a possible span of control problem and providing greater supervision to coordinators. These supervisors could be coordinators who are paid an extra stipend to assume this leadership role. They would have the responsibility of coordinating the work of the content, program, and assessment specialists assigned to them and ensuring that the work of the specialists is integrated across these areas. It is recommended that the Grants Coordinator report directly to the Executive Director for Curriculum and Evaluation. This should ensure that grant-writing efforts are coordinated with the overall long- and short-range plans of this department. A new position, Director of Staff Development would also report directly to the Executive Director. Two new assessment coordinator positions are also recommended to provide teachers, district administrators, and the School Board with the data necessary to ensure that the achievement gap is being eliminated (see [Recommendation 3](#) for a further discussion of responsibilities for these positions).

A.2.3: Improve the clarity of job descriptions for all members of the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation and ensure that all staff who deal with the educational program are connected to curricular quality control. These job descriptions should focus not only on the design of curriculum that is aligned with state content and performance standards but also delineate the role of coordinators in assisting in the implementation of curriculum. These job descriptions should enable principals to clearly understand how coordinators will help and support the monitoring responsibilities of building principals. In implementing these new job descriptions, the School Board and central administration could choose between one of two strategies: create new jobs and titles which go into effect in January 2003 and to which current persons may apply; or, perform a needs assessment based on past performance and evaluations, engage in job training and enhancement or counseling out, and have some new hires in new positions.

A.2.4: Place coordination of all content areas under the direction of a supervisor who reports to the executive director of curriculum and evaluation including reading.

A.2.5: Place all specialized programs designed to supply additional support for students under the direction of a supervisor who reports to the executive director of curriculum and evaluation including Title I, and special education.

A.2.6: Hold the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction responsible for the effective functioning of the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation.

A.2.7: Direct the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction to develop quarterly reports to the Superintendent for the next two years, outlining the progress of the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation as they make the transition to an integrated, focused, goal-oriented department delivering services to schools and teachers that include: modeling exemplary teaching practices, showing teachers how to utilize data to differentiate instruction, and assisting principals in monitoring the delivery of instruction.

A.2.8: Increase staffing in assessment by two additional roles to provide for a formalized, comprehensive program and student assessment cycle that will enable school administrators and teachers to be adequately trained in data disaggregation to support instructional planning for improving student achievement and enable district personnel and the Board to make informed decisions regarding the continuation, modification, or elimination of programs.

A.2.9: Shift all soft money data analysis roles to assessment to ensure quality control of data sets.

A.2.10: Institute internal procedures to curb conflict of interests or inequitable proximity to resources regarding extra pay and opportunities and travel.

Sub-Recommendation 2.2: Establish administrative regulations that detail how the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation should function.

The Curriculum and Evaluation Department should provide the necessary support for the development, implementation and evaluation of curriculum. This function is an essential component of the organizational structure of a school district. This department is currently not fulfilling this critical function (see Findings 1.3 and 2.1). There is a disconnect between the work completed by the department and the perceptions of school administrators regarding the effectiveness of the unit. This disconnect led the Board to consider whether the unit should continue to exist or be abolished. Coordinators within the unit are considered content experts, and each one is currently involved in activities that have led to a perception that the department lacks focus, places multiple demands on staff development time, utilizes a majority of the coordinator's time in design issues rather than focusing on assisting school administrators and teachers in the delivery of curriculum. Questions have been raised regarding extra pay, professional leave time, and coordination among members in the unit. The curriculum guides currently in place are of poor quality and do not lend themselves to enabling teachers to engage in deep alignment (see Findings 2.2 and 2.3).

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District School Board:

G.2.8: Direct the Superintendent to develop administrative regulations that outline in detail the expectations for how the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation should function.

G.2.9: Require the Superintendent to establish procedures for closely monitoring the implementation of these regulations.

G.2.10: Direct the Superintendent to staff the department with personnel who demonstrate the skills necessary to work collaboratively with each other and with building administrators.

G.2.10: Direct the Superintendent to develop/revise and enforce regulations regarding professional leave, conference attendance, and addendum to pay.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District Superintendent of Schools:

A.2.11: Develop administrative regulations that outline in detail the expectations for how the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation should function.

A.2.12: Establish a curriculum design/delivery advisory committee that reports directly to the Director of Curriculum and Evaluation. The purpose of this committee is to review all phases of the curriculum development, implementation, and program evaluation process and make recommendations to the Executive Director of Curriculum and Assessment and the Assistant Superintendent for instruction for approval. The Executive Director for Curriculum and Evaluation should chair this advisory committee. Membership on the committee should be for three years and initially terms should be staggered so that the majority of the team membership is continued from year to year.

A.2.13: Design the membership of the committee to include supervisors, coordinators, building administrators, program administrators, central office finance administrators, department chairs, and selected teachers. The Director of Staff Development and the Grant Coordinator should be permanent members of this advisory committee. The purpose of this advisory committee is to provide direction to the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation for the development of plans and work activities. The work of this committee should include:

- Develop a revised, six-year curriculum review cycle that focuses on two or three content area/programs per year. When a content area/program is being reviewed, the review should encompass K-12. This cycle should have three distinct Phases. Phase I would focus on gathering information necessary to complete a written curriculum or program guide revision and

normally lasts about a year. During Phase II, the actual guide is developed and piloted. This also takes about a year. Phase III includes implementation, formative assessment, modification, and program evaluation. This phase can extend over a multi-year period. Phase I of the review cycle would include preparation work necessary for the development/revision of K-12 content area curriculum or program design. This committee should direct the assembly of curriculum/program materials and development of executive summaries for use by the Curriculum Writing Design Team. This team works during Phase II of this process. The steps undertaken at Phase I include the following:

- Assembling Resource Materials: this includes assembling all resource documents to be used by the committee that will actually develop the new curriculum/program. These could include the latest national standards development by learned associations, international standards from countries noted for high academic achievement, a variety of state frameworks, other exemplary curriculum documents, publicly released state and national accountability assessment items in a variety of modes such as multiple choice, short response and extended response. These test items should include examples from the National Assessment of Educational Progress and other international tests such as those used to meet graduation requirements in Scotland, France, Japan, and Germany. These materials should serve to provide the Curriculum/Program Design Team with an understanding of what knowledge, skills and dispositions being required by other states and countries. The advisory team does not actually do the work, rather it oversees that the work is completed.
- Review Student Achievement Data: the committee should review all students' achievement data for the past five years. If the area under development is part of the state or district accountability system, these data should be disaggregated by ethnicity, gender, and SES. The format, content, and use of assessment data within the system should be summarized and made available in Phase II to the Curriculum/Program Design Team.
- Conduct Literature Review: conduct a literature review of the content/program area to determine "best practices" regarding pedagogy in content/program area.
- Identify Future Trends: future trends occurring within the content/program area must be identified and projection of these trends on the development of new curricular materials must so stated.
- Review Current Board Policy: revisit current board policy regarding curriculum philosophy and goals to ensure that direction can be given to the Curriculum/Program Design Team that reflects the board's intent. For example, if the Board has policy that directs curriculum to enable students to think critically to solve problems, the committee developing the curriculum documents must know that.
- Review Current Instructional Materials: prepare a status report dealing with current instructional materials. The curriculum review cycle is often connected to the materials acquisition cycle but rarely enables district to replace all instructional materials in the content/program area. This inventory is helpful to the Curriculum/Program Design Team in determining what new materials will need to be purchased to support the implementation of the revised curriculum guides and how current and new materials must be modified to ensure deep curriculum alignment.
- Develop Work and Guide Specifications: These specifications should include time parameters, guide format, team representation, what support the team may expect, a mechanism for communicating the work of the team to the rest of the faculty affected by the revision/development of the curriculum guide and the resources available to the team.
- Phase II – Curriculum Writing Design Team:

- Team Configuration: this team should be configured depending on what content/program area is under review. The member of this team may include representation from the advisory committee but the expertise needed for this phase includes a comprehensive knowledge of the content/program area under review, knowledge in how to write curriculum documents with enough specificity so that teachers can use them to plan differentiated instruction. As a minimum these guides should meet the criteria necessary to be rated at a 12 or higher level using the audit criteria explained in Finding 2.3.
- Team Chair: this team should be chaired by the appropriate curriculum coordinator for the content/program area.
- Materials Review: the design team should review all materials prepared during Phase I of this process. The chair should provide the team with an overview of the task, review the design specification for the guide, and make the team aware of the time frame in which they will work.
- Student Mastery: it is important for the team to understand that the guide should be written so that students are expected to reach mastery of the objectives listed at each grade level.
- Determining Student Mastery: the guide should identify when and how mastery will be determined at benchmark grade levels and the design team is responsible for developing assessment measures to determine mastery if these are not already available.
- Teacher Use for Instructional Planning: teachers using the guide should be able to determine the content, context and cognitive level of knowledge, skills, and processes identified in the guide and know the level of performance required to be demonstrated to determine mastery.
- Faculty Validation: the team should design a procedure for faculty validation of the guide that would include an opportunity for faculty input to the committee and a sign-off by teachers that they have read the guide and will be accountable for the implementation of the guide.
- Phase III – This phase should be under the direction of the advisory committee:
 - Piloting the Guide: a procedure is developed which will enable the guide to be piloted by teachers who will be held accountable for its implementation.
 - Providing for Faculty Input: procedures must be developed to ensure that teachers implementing the guide have an opportunity to provide feedback to the advisory committee about the implementation. These procedures may include focus groups, questionnaires, or chat rooms.
 - Program Evaluation Design: a program evaluation design that includes both formative and summative information must be developed. The advisory committee should review the results of these periodic reviews.
 - Staff Development Plan: staff development plans for the content/program area addressed by the guide must be based on teacher/administrator needs related to the implementation of the guide. Determination of staff development needs could be the result of needs assessments, focus group discussions, or the results of recommendations of building administrators and coordinators based on their observations of curriculum implementation.
 - Documenting Exemplary Practice: a system should be developed to identify and capture teacher exemplary practices in implementing the guide and achieving student mastery.

Sub-Recommendation: 2.3: Revise the teacher, coordinator, and administrator evaluation instrument to provide feedback for professional growth which promotes student achievement gains.

The purpose of an effective evaluation system is to provide quality assurance in order to improve teaching and learning so that student achievement is increased. In this way, the district's overall educational program is affected. To achieve this, the district's evaluation system must be specific about its feedback for constructive improvement. Effective appraisal systems include training evaluators to ensure consistency. An effective system also provides data to inform staff development for professional growth. Feedback from evaluations should be analyzed to assess the areas of strength and weakness of the district's certificated staff (see [Findings 1.3](#) and [1.5](#)).

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District School Board.

G.2.11: Direct the Superintendent to revise policies dealing with supervision and evaluation to require constructive feedback as part of an effective appraisal process to support professional growth and to enable coaching/mentoring.

G.2.12: Direct the Superintendent to develop a written plan for the ongoing training of administrators and supervisors in training components of effective appraisals. Train evaluators so that judgments are accurate, consistent, and based on evidence. Establish the allocation of resources to support this ongoing training.

G.2.13: Direct the Superintendent to provide regular reports on progress regarding the training for and use of appraisal instruments.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District Superintendent of Schools:

A.2.14: Assist the Board in the revision of the relevant policies.

A.2.15: Revise the Teachers,' Coordinators,' and Administrators' instruments to require feedback for constructive improvement as part of an effective appraisal process to support professional growth and to enable coaching/mentoring.

A.2.16: Provide for ongoing and specific training for effective appraisals. Train evaluators so that judgments are accurate, consistent, and based on evidence. Establish the allocation of resources to support this ongoing training.

A.2.17: Direct Human Resources to provide an annual report. The report should comment on the ongoing training for evaluators. The report should also include recommendations for staff development to align evaluator training with targeted system goals.

A.2.18: Direct all evaluators to undertake consistent, effective evaluations and to provide constructive feedback to staff undergoing evaluation.

Recommendation 3: Require Top-level Administrators in Curriculum, Assessment, Program Evaluation, and Staff Development to Create Multi-year Administrative Plans Which Are Tightly Linked to Erasing the Achievement Gaps and Which Are Supportive of Site-level Plans to Do the Same. Revise the Technology Plan So That It Is Congruent.

The auditors did not find plans for curriculum design/delivery, program evaluation or assessment which were linked to the district's educational plan (such an educational plan did not exist, see [Finding 1.2](#)). While staff development and training had some aspects of planning present, there was little evidence that it was directly linked with the means to improve district-level performance goals. The ultimate method for evaluating the effectiveness of these four functions would be evidence of consistent student learning gains. From this perspective, curriculum, staff development, program evaluation, and

assessment are means towards the ends of improving student achievement. What the auditors found was the performance of functions and tasks which could not be related as means towards these ends (see [Findings 1.3](#), [1.4](#), and [2.1](#)). The following recommendations are put forth to remedy this problem in the Anchorage School District.

Sub-Recommendation 3.1: Create a comprehensive curriculum management plan to provide for system direction for the design, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation of the curriculum. Design and implement aligned curriculum guides that promote effective delivery of the required curriculum via deep alignment which improves learning for all students.

A curriculum management plan is centered on the function of the design and delivery of curriculum within the Anchorage School District. The plan links the support function of curriculum development to the overall goals and objectives of the school system. It should not be a stand alone effort created in isolation from being a means to the desired ends of improving student learning and reducing the achievement gaps which have been identified in this audit, and which, hopefully, will be adopted by the Anchorage School Board as its number one educational priority.

Critical features of a comprehensive curriculum management plan include:

1. Policies that provide a framework for curriculum management;
2. Curriculum management plans requiring periodic review and revision of curriculum and support programs using student performance data and educational program formative and summative evaluation results;
3. Provisions for coordination and articulation of the curriculum;
4. Curriculum guides that provide sufficient statements of work for teachers;
5. Professional development to support curriculum and program design and delivery, and
6. Supervision for evaluation and improvement of instruction.

The auditors determined that the Anchorage School District lacked a comprehensive curriculum management plan. Such a plan establishes a framework for the design and delivery of board-approved curriculum that provides clear direction for the teachers and students of the Anchorage School District (see [Finding 2.1](#)).

The scope of the written curriculum was found to be adequate for the elementary grades, kindergarten through six. However, the scope of the written curriculum was found to be inadequate for the secondary grades; middle school, grades 7 and 8, and high school grades 9-12. Clear linkages between the written, taught, and tested curriculum across grade levels, classrooms, and schools are essential to produce consistent student learning outcomes throughout the district (see [Finding 2.2](#)).

The quality of the guides varied across grade levels and content areas. The quality of the curriculum guides was determined to be insufficient to direct instruction (see [Finding 2.3](#)). Staff development in the Anchorage school district was found to be fragmented and unfocused on system priorities (see [Finding 1.4](#)).

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District School Board:

G.3.1: Create and adopt the following policies to provide the framework for a comprehensive curriculum development system (see [Finding 1.1](#)):

- A policy that provides a clear philosophical framework for the development of curriculum.
- A policy that requires the alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum across all grade levels and content areas and which promotes deep alignment.

- A policy that specifies the procedures for the design and implementation of curriculum, including a curriculum development cycle and the development and revision of curriculum guides which is coordinated with textbook and instructional materials adoption and acquisition.
- A policy that articulates the components of a quality, consistent, and coordinated uniformed curriculum that meets the needs of all students across all grade levels.
- A policy that provides that local, state, national, and international content and performance standards are important criteria in the adoption of all instructional materials and resources to support classroom teaching.

G.3.2: Direct the Superintendent to draft a policy for Board adoption that mandates a comprehensive curriculum management plan (see [Finding 2.1](#)).

G.3.3: Create a policy framework that requires the development of a comprehensive set of curriculum guides linked to state and local assessments for all content areas K-12 and the use of those guides by teachers to direct teaching in the classroom (see [Findings 1.5, 2.3, 4.1, and 5.4](#)).

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District Superintendent of Schools:

A.3.1: Assist the School Board in creating and revising required policies to ensure a comprehensive curriculum management plan is developed. The plan should provide for consistency for all curriculum areas as well as horizontal and vertical articulation/coordination. It should include the following components:

- Philosophical framework and educational goals;
- Delineation of responsibilities by role/job for implementing the management plan;
- Curriculum development and review calendar, processes and format for the development of quality written curriculum;
- Process for the inclusion of adopted state, national, and international content and performance standards;
- Plans for monitoring instruction, procedures for formative and summative evaluations and the selection of instructional resources;
- Description of how assessment data will be used to improve curriculum and instruction; and
- A comprehensive communication and staff development plan to ensure quality implementation for the adopted curriculum (see [Finding 1.4](#)).

A.3.2: Direct the district curriculum department staff to develop and submit for School Board approval curriculum guides for those courses or academic areas for which no written curriculum guides exist (see [Finding 2.2](#).)

A.3.3: Direct the curriculum department staff to focus curriculum redevelopment efforts on a single, consistent curriculum guide format for all subject areas and courses (see [Finding 2.3](#)) to include all of the elements of a deeply aligned quality curriculum guide via front and backloading processes. That format should include:

- A clear statement of what skills/concepts should be learned, when and how it should be performed, and the amount of time or emphasis given to each objective;
- Linkages between each objective and district and state performance assessments;
- Specific delineations of prerequisite skills/concepts (i.e., scope and sequence grade levels);
- Linkages to adopted texts and/or instructional materials, and specific instructional activities or examples of how to approach key skills and or concepts.

A.3.4: By using publicly released test items consistent with state guidelines for ethical test preparation practices, engage in the creation of *pedagogical parallel* activities within curriculum guides that include the following steps:

- Secure random, publicly-released test items regarding tests in use. These can usually be secured from the DOE Website or from samples available from the State Department of Education.
- Deconstruct the public, randomly released test items to illustrate the dimensions of complexity and depth required of students to be responsive to likely testing scenarios.
- Develop alternative test items at similar depth and complexity to demonstrate understanding of the dimensions involved. These can also be used as benchmarks.
- Check for extant textbook/test alignment at identified depth and complexity levels.
- Develop *parallel activities* and then move towards enhanced depth and complexity, creating classroom activities which include, but are clearly beyond, what is immediately required. This is the idea of *no surprises for children* on tests of accountability.
- Remain vigilant for examples of cultural bias being included on *parallel activities* that work towards disadvantaging culturally different children. Achievement gaps cannot be eliminated if minority children are subjected to insensitive applications.
- Develop staff development modules for administrators and teachers regarding the need and practice of deep curriculum alignment.

Sub-Recommendation 3.2: Develop an assessment plan which is linked to the district’s educational plan and which provides policy makers, administrators, and teachers with data connected to district and site- level strategies to improve achievement for all students.

Anchorage School District has no assessment plan linked to its educational plan. Its policy makers, administrators, and teachers do not have formative and summative assessments that can be connected to site-level strategies designed to improve achievement for all students (see [Findings 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.5](#)).

A comprehensive program and student assessment plan provides the primary basis for making decisions about the effectiveness of curriculum design and delivery. A school district’s plan for assessment and evaluations is the means for determining how well the curriculum and the strategies used to deliver it are actually producing the desired impact on students. Such information is critical for individual teachers as well as for site-level, program, and district-level decision-makers to assess areas in need of improvement. Informed curriculum decisions become possible when data from student assessment tools can be reviewed and considered in identifying areas of strength and weakness in the curriculum. Without extensive information, curriculum decisions are left to opinion or speculation of the personnel involved in decision-making. An effective assessment program requires that the means of measurement be directly related to the major learning objectives in every course of study.

Student achievement is learning that is measured. Students may be successfully learning many things, but unless they are taught what is being measured, their learning may not be demonstrated as student achievement. To make consistent or rapid gains over time, every teacher and administrator must have an in-depth understanding of the inter-relationships of the written curriculum, what is taught in classrooms, and what is tested for accountability by the state, the requirements for federal programs, and the school district. Teachers and administrators must have in-depth knowledge of curriculum content and the strategies and practices that produce student achievement. When tests are not aligned to the written and taught curricula, there will be strong correlation with socio-economic and other factors outside of school control (see [Finding 4.1](#)). When students are deeply taught the concepts, knowledges, and skills that are to be tested, school staff do positively impact performance for all students.

In order to ensure that students are effectively and efficiently taught the concepts, knowledges, and skills they need, all district and school efforts need to align with common, clearly understood goals prioritized by data results. To do so requires focused, rather than random strategies for data use. While there are pockets of staff working towards construction of procedures to use data to drive decisions, the district currently lacks shared, district-wide direction with focused strategies to effectively use data (see [Findings 4.2](#) and [4.3](#)). As a first step, the Anchorage School District should concentrate on developing strategies to inform decisions in four areas: curriculum development and support; staff development; budget development; and site-level instructional decisions with the explicit purpose of improving achievement *for all students* (see [Findings 1.3](#), [2.2](#), [2.4](#), [3.1](#), [3.2](#), [4.3](#), and [5.1](#)).

The Board must require the use of disaggregated data so that no student groups are left behind (see [Findings 4.1](#) and [4.2](#)). All district central office and school-level instructional staff need to pool expertise and resources to support data-driven decisions. Instructional staff development priorities must be determined by analysis of student achievement data (see [Findings 2.4](#), [4.2](#), and [4.3](#)). Budget decisions that support the aligned efforts, training, resources, and programs must have priority over “nice to do” activities and purchases (see [Findings 4.2](#), [5.1](#), and [5.2](#)). Site-level instructional decisions must be prioritized and implemented based on disaggregated test results (see [Findings 4.2](#) and [4.3](#)). The district currently lacks assessments to determine how well major objectives are being met as both formative and summative assessments (see [Finding 4.1](#)).

To accomplish this effectively, all administrators and teachers must have a deep understanding of the achievement tests that are currently required of students. They must know which concepts, knowledge, and skills are tested and exactly how they are tested and items credited. They must understand how to deconstruct test items to analyze the implications for classroom instruction. This does not mean that classroom work is “drill and kill,” but it does mean that students have a deep mastery of the designated concepts, knowledge, and skills and multiple ways they may be asked to demonstrate mastery (deep alignment). All staff involved with instruction must understand how to analyze data results and use those results in making instructional decisions. All teachers in all grade levels must understand their role in helping all students achieve that mastery because there are explicit documents, staff development, and site-level support in place.

A school district should communicate clearly to its staff and students what its expectations are in terms of the concepts, knowledge, and skills students are to master in each grade level or course. A district with focused strategies on the use of data is clearly focused on results, not just activities. There are procedures to ensure that the curriculum is clearly delineated and explicitly linked to the assessments that measure student achievement. The curriculum may certainly go beyond the objectives that are assessed, but to be fair to every child, the curriculum must contain and emphasize all concepts, knowledge, and skills the assessments will require of them. It must anticipate how these concepts, knowledge, and skills could possibly be assessed and teach children in such a way as to ensure that they can handle assessment in those areas no matter how questions are posed. Disaggregated data from student assessment must be used to judge the adequacy of the continuum of the written and taught curriculum.

A district should have assessments for all major objectives in order to know how their students are progressing (see [Findings 4.1](#) and [4.5](#)). Assessments then become a tool for all layers of the organization and public to know when instruction is successful and when students need to be re-taught or accelerated. Anchorage School District concentrates assessment in the areas of state testing (see [Finding 4.1](#)), and lacks a clear process to provide all teachers and administrators with an understanding of the tests and how learning is being assessed on those tests (see [Finding 4.2](#)).

School districts that are successful in raising student achievement have a clear direction and focused strategies that provide all staff with the knowledge and skills they need to use data.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* will require states to disaggregate data based on economically disadvantaged, race and ethnicity, disability, limited English proficiency, gender, and migrant status. Adequate Yearly Progress to bring the subgroups to 100 percent passing by 2014 will be required for all of those groups with the exception of gender and migrant status. Anchorage can meet this challenge with careful planning and implementation strategies that make the most effective, efficient use of resources.

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District School Board:

G.3.4: Expand *Board Policy 349* to require the Superintendent to develop a formative and summative assessment system with a clear rationale of providing the Anchorage School District with a means to evaluate student progress in mastering major curricular objectives. Specify the roles and responsibilities of the Board, central office staff, and school-based staff regarding the use of student assessment data. The responsibilities should include that the use of data is an integral component for prioritizing staff development and instructional decisions.

G.3.5: Direct the Superintendent to establish administrative processes to collect the test data necessary for data-driven decision-making. While this recommendation is directed at the use of student test data, it should not be construed to limit data collection to only test data.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District Superintendent of Schools:

A.3.5: Develop assessment processes that are ongoing with reliable and valid measures. Direct the Assessment and Evaluation unit in collaboration with Content and Support Program units in the Curriculum and Assessment Department to develop the measures over a three-year period, beginning with writing, mathematics, and reading so that formative and summative assessments are aligned with major objectives and aligned with required testing with results that are put into a form that allows them to be used for modifying instruction to prepare students for success. The process should encompass the following characteristics:

- Be based on a philosophical framework that requires formative and summative assessment aligned to curriculum and classroom instruction for all subjects and grade levels, linked to the mission of the school district.
- Encompasses the responsibilities for staff in regard to use of data.
- Provides ongoing needs assessment to establish goals of student assessment and program assessment.
- Provides for assessment at all levels of the system (organization, program, and student).
- Provides a matrix of assessment tools, purpose, subjects, type of student tested, timelines, etc.
- Controls for bias, culture, etc.
- Directs the relationship between district, state, national, and international assessments.
- Specifies overall assessment procedures to determine curriculum effectiveness and specifications for analysis.
- Directs the feedback process; assures proper use of data.
- Specifies how assessment tools will be placed in curriculum guides.
- Specifies equality/equity issues and data sources.
- Identifies the parameters of a program assessment.
- Provides ongoing training plan for various audiences on assessment.
- Presents procedures for monitoring assessment design and use.

- Establishes a communication plan for the process of student and program assessment.
- Provides ongoing evaluation of the assessment plan.
- Describes budget ramifications, connections to resource allocations.

A.3.6: Assist the Board in revisions of existing policies and the creation of a new one that specifies the roles and responsibilities of the Board, central office staff, and school-based staff regarding the use of student assessment data. The responsibilities should include that the use of data is an integral component for prioritizing staff development and instructional decisions and as an integral component in budget planning, as well as a tool for examining the district’s curriculum. District-level responsibilities must include the use of data to develop and revise curriculum, determine district-wide staff development needs, allocate budget and staffing resources, and to analyze district and school performance based on state, national, and other urban area performances and the district’s own set of goals. Principals’ responsibilities should include using data to determine areas for improvement at grade levels, strengths and weaknesses of teachers regarding instructional alignment, gaps between student sub-populations, professional development priorities, resources needed to assist students, and outreach to the community. Teacher responsibilities in the use of data should include analyzing the data to learn which objectives require greater emphasis and time for all students and which specific students need additional resources and interventions. Teacher responsibilities should include demonstrating understanding of content and performance standards as well as local curriculum objectives and demonstrating the use of aligned instruction so that students have the opportunity to master the concepts, skills, and knowledge they will encounter on required tests. Students and parents should use data to identify the student’s strengths and opportunities for growth.

A.3.7: Address principals and teachers with a message that builds pride in accomplishments of the district staff. Establish a district-wide attitude that change is needed to move to the next level by using the new Benchmark tests, performance standards, *No Child Left Behind* legislation, this audit report, current research on schools where demographics do not determine student achievement, and emphasize the need for all students to demonstrate achievement. Employ change management techniques to reach all constituents and stakeholders. Plan for logical dates and events where awareness can be introduced, followed throughout the year with additional emphasis on the capability of the district staff to be leaders in making this change.

- Hold regular discussions with principals and central office instructionally-focused staff on research that indicates how schools with high poverty and high minority enrollments have achieved outstanding performance, and how those same techniques can enhance performance for all students.
- Direct Staff Development to develop and implement a plan to build awareness and implications of the latest research on curriculum alignment and deep alignment concepts for central office, school administrators, and teachers. Direct Staff Development to work with Assessment and Evaluation to provide training so that all principals and teachers to build their awareness of the need to use disaggregated data so that *No Child is Left Behind*.
- Build a spirit of collaboration where all staff pool expertise and resources to help the district’s students achieve the bold performance goals established for them.
- Develop a three-year plan to move towards a climate of “no excuses.” Require central departments to work to meet as a team to ensure that there is a focused approach to using staff, resources, and budget.

A.3.8: Direct the Director of Staff Development to ensure that there are explicit bridges for the use of student assessment data in staff development by building a shared knowledge base and including a component on the use and implication of assessment data in all instructional staff development sessions. To accomplish this goal:

- Staff development should concentrate on selected priorities and within priorities on selected research-based strategies to improve student achievement (see [Findings 2.4](#) and [3.2](#)). The prioritization must also recognize that problems in student performance may begin in earlier grade levels.
- Require that all instructional staff development include a component that references use of student performance and disaggregated student assessment data.
- Develop and implement a written process that assures that central office staff, school administrators, and teachers have a common vocabulary and understanding of the concepts, knowledge, and skills that are tested and exactly how they are tested and judged.
- Help staff understand student performance standards and content standards in terms of student product expectations at each grade level. Assures that all staff at all levels can articulate the priority student achievement goals for the district.
- Provide processes and training for central office staff, school administrators, and teachers to assure the proper understanding and use of disaggregated data and implications for classroom practice.
- Delineate a professional development plan for various audiences on deep curriculum alignment concepts, student assessment, and use of data to improve classroom instruction and interventions.
- Take steps to develop a phased capacity-building implementation process so that at least one person at each school will have great expertise in each of the four core content areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies to meet a planned, prioritized timeline.
- Provide training for principals in what to look for in classrooms that are implementing the strategies that are being worked on by teachers in long-term staff development.
- Provide extra on-site assistance to specific schools, as needed.

A.3.9: Develop procedures to use disaggregated data to drive site-level instructional decisions. The procedures should:

- Explicitly identify the principal as the instructional leader of the school.
- Explicitly delineate the feedback process so that the organization is clear on who receives data reports.
- Establish a two-way communication process between central office and schools regarding the use of data.
- Provide for ongoing evaluations of the processes in place for the dissemination and use of data.
- Provide a template for data analysis. While it may be based on the template on the state website, it needs to go beyond it by requiring the use of disaggregated data by ethnicity and other subpopulations defined by the Data Assessment Team.
- Provide for evaluation of how data analysis is being translated into classroom and school strategies, practices, and implementation.
- Require all schools to provide time for data analysis, and horizontal and vertical planning to identify problem areas through use of disaggregated data to identify specific needs, successes, and opportunities for improvement for all students and sub-populations.
- Encourage teachers to meet in teams by grade level or course to use disaggregated data by sub-population to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Encourage teachers to meet vertically to ensure that the foundation for more complex concepts, knowledge, and skills is developed across the grade levels as called for in the curriculum.

- Require schools to identify root causes for areas of weakness and how school staff can overcome those causes. For example, students may come to school with a lack of academic vocabulary; however, schools can specifically develop multiple ways to help students learn that vocabulary.
- Analyze how successful current practices have been in raising student achievement.
- Examine the alignment of each practice to the performance and content standards assessment instruments. Take steps to show how each teacher is demonstrating the use of instructional strategies that will lead all students to meet the expectations set by the district.
- Require principals to use data to determine particular areas of strength and weakness in each classroom and grade level by student group and teacher to determine how strengths can be shared and if particular staff development is a priority. Encourage teachers to take time to observe best practices.
- Develop a process to show that there is balance in the instructional program and that all of the content areas are being taught even if greater emphasis is placed on targeted areas.
- Have teachers involve parents as appropriate.
- Within school plans:
 - Ensure alignment with district goals.
 - Have schools include strategies for closing the gap among student sub-populations while raising the performance of its top achieving sub-population.
 - Develop adequate staff development so that all members of the school staff can articulate the school's instructional focus.
 - Develop a process so that all objectives that will be tested are taught prior to the test and that formative assessments have been used to ensure students were adequately progressing in those objectives.
 - Create a procedure so that time is allotted for horizontal and vertical planning based on the data analysis.

Sub-Recommendation 3.3: Create a procedure which requires that at least every three years all programs undergo systematic, external or internal program review linked to student achievement data. Develop RFPs and implement this policy for key programs in the next academic year.

While Anchorage School District board policy requires the evaluation of pilot programs, it does not explicitly require that all programs be evaluated (see [Finding 4.4](#)). This leaves the School Board with anecdotal data or testimonials for determining whether a program should be expanded, modified, or terminated. Board policy needs to be strengthened to provide direction for conducting both internal and external evaluation and research activity. Assessment and monitoring expectations need to be established to clarify how the Board will use evaluation data for monitoring program success and whether the program will continue to be supported.

The use of program evaluation in the Anchorage School District is driven by federal and grant requirements with little evidence that the data is fed back into the system to continue, modify, or terminate a program or practice. Staff development is largely evaluated by participation and not by student achievement results (see [Finding 4.4](#)).

The Assessment and Evaluation unit is understaffed for the work that must be done in the future. The audit has recommended increased staffing in these areas (see [Recommendation 2.1](#)). When data-driven models are instituted and used for budget development, the initial costs of the evaluation will be offset by savings in terminating ineffective programs and using resources in ways that produce replicable improvements in student achievement.

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District School Board:

G.3.6: Adopt board policy which requires that at least every three years all programs undergo systematic internal or external review linked to student achievement data. Require schools to monitor student achievement results as a component of establishing or continuing programs and interventions.

G.3.7: Direct the Superintendent to determine a prioritized list of key programs and provide budget support for implementing the external or internal review of these programs.

G.3.8: Direct the Superintendent to develop job descriptions for two positions in Assessment and Evaluation for the purpose of program evaluation. Open and approve funding for these positions.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District Superintendent of Schools:

A.3.10: Assist the Board in the development of policy which requires that at least every three years all programs undergo systematic internal or external review linked to student achievement data, and requires schools to monitor student achievement results as a component of establishing or continuing programs and interventions.

A.3.11: Determine a prioritized list of key programs for a three-year period for external review. Direct the development of RFPs for external evaluation, and prepare appropriate budget support. Utilize federal funds where possible, and ensure that all grant programs allocate sufficient funding for evaluation that includes impact on student achievement data, disaggregated by student subpopulations where appropriate.

A.3.12: Develop job descriptions for two program evaluator positions for the Assessment and Evaluation Department. Pool funding sources from departments whose programs require evaluation to fund these positions.

A.3.13: Place Title I evaluation under the supervision of the Assessment and Evaluation unit, and maintain all databases under a single source to avoid potential complications with data reporting.

Sub-Recommendation 3.4: Establish a policy framework and procedures to improve the coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and resourcing of site-based and district-level staff development programs that are aligned to the Anchorage School District's priorities and which will provide the coherence and the long-range direction necessary to support instructional practices designed to improve student achievement.

Staff development and training are the means by which all staff working within the district acquire and/or expand the knowledge, skills, and values needed to create quality systems of education for all learners. A district that maintains a focused approach to improving student achievement requires a strong staff development program. Effective staff development programs rely on an ability to assess the needs of all staff in order to determine what skills and supports are necessary to align and to integrate with the district's policy, and/or strategic or long-range plan. High-quality programs provide for systemic, coordinated, and varied activities to organize all staff into learning communities.

Effective schools and effective districts are places where teams meet regularly to focus on data obtained from student work and alter the instructional design and delivery of programs to obtain better results. Too often, staff development is generic, and not aligned with improving student achievement. A suggestion for staff development is that it is delivered to site-based teams consisting of an administrator and teachers. This will support the district's direction that site-based administrators are the instructional leaders of the schools.

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District School Board:

G.3.9: Revise *Policy 341.4* to provide for a Comprehensive Staff Development plan that is aligned to the district's long-range goals. The revised policy should contain direction for the coordination, monitoring, evaluation and resourcing of both site-based and district-level staff development programs. The policy should contain a statement that staff development is critical to the establishment of a learning community, essential for improving student achievement, and is an integral component of the Anchorage School District's strategic direction.

G.3.10: Develop a policy that affirms that staff development is aligned to the district's long-range goals; is for all employee groups; and is the responsibility of all supervisors to be involved in the professional development of their staff.

G.3.11: Direct the Superintendent to create a position for a Director of Staff Development, reporting to the Executive Director Curriculum and Evaluation, to provide for the integration of staff development with curriculum development, implementation, monitoring and student and program assessment, both site-based and system-level, in the Anchorage School District.

G.3.12: Develop a policy to provide for a Staff Development Coordinating Committee to assist the Director of Staff Development with the coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of staff development in the district. This committee will ensure system-wide management of staff development and will ensure that input is received regarding all levels of staff development necessary to sustain the district's and the schools' goals. Representation on the committee should consist of stakeholders that are the major providers of staff development within the Anchorage School District. This will assist with the alignment of instruction, curriculum, assessment, and resources.

G.3.13: Direct the Superintendent to develop a comprehensive, long-range staff development plan that is focused and is linked to the district's own long-range goals. The plan should cover at least a three-year period, with the understanding that annual updating/revisions will ensure tight linkages to emerging priorities and the needs of the Anchorage School District.

G.3.14: Direct the Superintendent to annually report on the long-range staff development plan. This will ensure that the staff development program continues to meet board policy direction, state and federal requirements, and district and site goals. The report should include:

- An overview of programs offered, both site-based and district-level.
- A categorization of the programs offered as they align to the district's long-range goals, emerging priorities, and the assessed needs of students and staff.
- A breakdown of the staff development offered to each employee group.
- A breakdown of the financial/resource support for staff development that is district-generated and the support that is externally obtained through grants and other mechanisms.
- The number of programs that operate during the contract day and their impact on teacher time.
- Evaluation of the programs based on multiple data sources. It should include the impact of the staff development programs on student achievement and staff behavior.
- Allocate funds within the budget to provide for adequate resourcing of site-based and district-level staff development.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District Superintendent of Schools:

A.3.14: Assist the Board in revisions of existing policies and the creation of new ones.

A.3.15: Develop a job description, post, and hire a Director of Staff Development reporting to the Executive Director Curriculum and Evaluation. The Director of Staff Development would be responsible for coordinating and overseeing the development of a comprehensive long-range staff development plan that is clearly aligned to the district's long-range goals and assessed needs of

students and staff. The Director of Staff Development will be responsible for coordinating the annual revisions/updates to the plan to ensure tight linkages to emerging priorities and needs of the Anchorage School District and reporting annually to the Board. The Director of Staff Development will be responsible for ensuring the constant training of all staff, including non-certificated personnel.

A.3.16: Establish a Staff Development Coordinating Committee to assist the Director of Staff Development with the coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of staff development in the district. In collaboration with the Director of Staff Development, the committee will provide system-wide management of staff development at both site-based levels as well as at a district-level. Representation on the committee should consist of stakeholders that are the major providers of staff development within the Anchorage School District. This will assist with the alignment of instruction, curriculum, assessment, and resources. The committee, with the assistance of the Director of Staff Development will be responsible for compiling an annual report to the Board.

A.3.17: Assign the Director of Staff Development and the Staff Development Coordinating Committee to create a comprehensive, long-range staff development plan. In order to ensure the development of qualified and skilled staff, input for the creation of a systemic plan should come from a variety of sources:

- The priorities established by the Board of the Anchorage School District.
- An analysis of current state and federal directions;
- An analysis of the student assessment data;
- A needs assessment of all employee groups;
- Feedback from the existing community and parent surveys, school profiles, report cards, and other instruments; and
- Feedback from the members of the committee.

The plan should:

- Be aligned with system priorities;
- Reflect established standards for effective staff development (One reference may be *The National Staff's Development Council's Standards for Staff Development, 2001*);
- Provide for initiation, implementation, institutionalization, and renewal;
- Be based on analysis of system data. Utilize disaggregated student achievement data to determine priorities;
- Provide opportunities for all Anchorage School District staff;
- List expected outcomes and/or results including specific reference to student achievement and staff behaviors;
- Report on the funding and resources needed to deliver the plan, include specific time lines; and
- Provide for evaluation of the specific staff development programs.

A.3.18: Take steps to monitor progress on the comprehensive long-range, staff development plan by reporting annually to the Board. Components used in the annual report should include:

- An overview of programs offered both site-based and district-level;
- A categorization of the programs offered as they align to the district's long goals, emerging priorities, and the assessed needs of students and staff;
- A breakdown of the staff development offered to each employee group;
- A breakdown of the financial/resource support for staff development that is district-generated and the support that is externally obtained through grants and other mechanisms;

- The number of programs that operate during the contract day and their impact on teacher time; and
- Evaluation of the programs based on multiple data sources. It should include the impact of the staff development programs on student achievement and staff behavior.

A.3.19: Direct the Director of Staff Development to develop a common template to record all system-directed staff development. This will enable the monitoring and coordination of district-level, staff development programs across the various departments.

A.3.20: Direct the Director of Staff Development to expand the Leadership Series to provide relevant professional training to experienced site administrators.

A.3.21: Direct the Executive Director Curriculum and Evaluation to ensure that staff development is an integral part of school improvement plans. Revise the existing template for school improvement plans to include the School-based Staff Development Plans. This will enable the monitoring and coordination of staff development programs across schools. The site-based staff development should:

- Align with school or district priorities;
- Target improvements in student learning;
- Include plans for identifying outcomes;
- Involve collaborative work involving all staff;
- Be sustained with available resources;
- Be sensitive of teacher time; and
- Be measurable in terms of student achievement and staff behavior.

Sub-Recommendation 3.5: Revise the instructional technology program to be more inclusive of audit criteria.

Technology is an emerging effort within the Anchorage School District. Although an Instructional Technology Plan has been developed and approved by the Anchorage School District School Board, the plan is inadequate to bring about the effective implementation of a technology program that will enhance instruction and improve student achievement (see [Finding 2.4](#)).

The plan includes descriptions of activities and sets parameters for the technology program but lacks the specificity required to adequately measure the effectiveness of the overall effort. A needs assessment is called for in the plan but lacks details which describe methodology and criteria. The student and program assessment components lack specific criteria on which to measure success. The staff development component includes evaluation criteria that focus on participation rather than skills developed. The absence of board policy regarding technology creates a void in terms of direction and control over the use and application of technology within the schools. The lack of school plans linked to the district plan perpetuates the current status where school personnel have the freedom to implement technology without parameters. In order for technology to be used as an effective tool in the Anchorage School District, the technology program will require revision to bring the various components in line with the audit criteria.

Governance Functions: The following actions are recommended to the Anchorage School District School Board:

G.3.15: Adopt policy that requires comprehensive system-wide use of instructional technology according to the district Instructional Technology Plan which meets all audit criteria.

G.3.16: Continue to support and fund articulated district and school level instructional technology plans to promote increased student achievement.

G.3.17: Direct the Superintendent to provide periodic comprehensive evaluation reports regarding implementation of the instructional technology program.

Administrative Functions: The following actions are recommended to Anchorage School District Superintendent of Schools:

A.3.22: Develop policy draft for Board review and adoption.

A.3.23: Direct the Chief Information Officer to work with the Instructional Technology Plan Committee to revise the Instructional Technology Plan to meet all audit criteria with focused attention on the specificity of evaluative measures for effectiveness and success of the various components especially measures of student achievement, program effectiveness and staff development.

A.3.24: Direct all building principals to develop a school site Instructional Technology Plan that is coordinated with the district plan.

A.3.25: Prepare and present to the Board of Education periodic evaluation reports of the instructional technology program.