



Novak Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment

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Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment



Prepared for Seattle Public Schools

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Table of Contents

Purpose	3
Executive Summary	4
Leadership Drivers	6
Commitment to Equity and Inclusion	6
<i>High-Quality Instruction and Learning Experiences</i>	7
<i>Culturally Responsive Workforce</i>	9
<i>Predictable and Consistent Operational Systems</i>	10
<i>Inclusive and Authentic Engagement</i>	10
Tiered Scheduling	13
Competency Drivers	16
Hiring/Onboarding	16
Ongoing Professional Development	19
Professional Learning Communities	22
Feedback Practices	24
Implementation Drivers	26
Tiered Supports	26
High-Quality Instructional Materials	28
Data-Based Decision-Making	33
Assessment Mapping	34
Conclusion	41
References	42
Document Review	44



Purpose

Facilitating meaningful and sustainable systems-level change related to multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) is a complex process. It requires understanding the components associated with the evidence base for MTSS, effective implementation practices, and a system-wide approach (Eagle et al., 2015).

Recent research suggests that the result of full MTSS implementation - with an equity-based definition of inclusion - is that every student engages in the general education curriculum with a flexible master schedule, flexible staffing, and three tiers of intensity of instruction directed to academics, behavior, and social-emotional development (Choi, McCart & Sailor, 2020).

This needs assessment aims to support the district in systems change to realize the net results of full MTSS implementation through the lens of equity. The sections of this report align with the three drivers of effective systems: leadership drivers, competency drivers, and implementation drivers.

- **Leadership Drivers** focus on providing the right leadership strategies for different leadership challenges. Important leadership considerations include scheduling, resource allocation, creating an inclusive culture and climate, and engaging all stakeholders.
- **Competency Drivers** help educators build the skill set necessary to support all learners. Competency drivers revolve around building educator capacity to affect positive student outcomes through thoughtful staffing models, offering high-quality professional development models, research-based coaching strategies, and aligned educator evaluation models.
- **Implementation Drivers** help systems create and sustain environments for effective educational services. These include high-quality instructional materials, a system that supports data-based decision-making, and a robust assessment framework that aligns with the overall tiered system of support.



Executive Summary

This comprehensive needs assessment, prepared for Seattle Public Schools by Dr. Angela Burke of Novak Educational Consulting, evaluates the district's implementation of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) through an equity lens. The assessment aligns with three primary drivers: leadership, competency, and implementation, focusing on facilitating systemic changes to enhance educational outcomes, especially for students furthest from educational justice.

The report examines the district's leadership drivers and their effectiveness in fostering an environment committed to equity, inclusion, and effective MTSS implementation. Key areas include strategic planning, resource allocation, and community engagement. Despite the strategic plan's emphasis on equity and inclusion, it lacks clarity on MTSS and foundational support strategies. The limited understanding of MTSS among staff highlights the need for a shared vision and better communication.

The section on competency drivers assesses the district's efforts in building educator capacity for supporting diverse learners. It examines staffing models, professional development, coaching strategies, and evaluation models. The report finds a disparity between the district's staff demographics and student population, indicating a need for more inclusive hiring practices and professional development focused on culturally responsive practices and implicit bias.

Lastly, the report evaluates the implementation drivers supporting educational services, such as instructional materials, data-based decision-making, and assessment frameworks. This section highlights the lack of consistency in implementing tiered interventions and the need for high-quality instructional materials free from bias and aligned with grade-level standards to ensure all students have opportunities to access grade-level learning in inclusive, restorative learning environments that meet their unique needs.

Key Recommendations:

- Develop and implement a district-wide, comprehensive MTSS fully integrated with the district's commitment to equity and inclusion. This system should address all



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

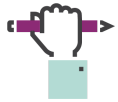
students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs, with a particular focus on students furthest from educational justice.

- Establish a robust and ongoing professional development program for all staff, including educators, administrators, and hiring managers. This program should focus on building a shared understanding of MTSS, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), enhancing culturally responsive practices, identifying and interrupting implicit biases, and understanding the impact of implicit bias on student discipline and classroom dynamics.
- Implement regular, meaningful engagement processes with families and community members, particularly those furthest from educational justice. This should involve more than just information gathering; stakeholders should directly influence decision-making processes.
- Strengthen PLCs by focusing on inquiry, reflection, and collaboration around inclusive practices and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Encourage these communities to operate as supportive spaces where educators can share their experiences and learn from each other, particularly from those demonstrating strong efficacy in inclusive practices. Additionally, a PLC can begin to review the curriculum to ensure that it is aligned with grade-level standards, is universally designed, and celebrates the identity of all learners.
- Establish a documented process for curriculum review to ensure materials are aligned with grade-level standards, universally designed, and free from bias. Additionally, update assessment maps to include diagnostic and formative assessments that are standards-based and authentic and explore a comprehensive data system for tracking interventions, progress monitoring, and outcomes.

In conclusion, the report underscores the importance of aligning systems, resources, and practices to support a robust MTSS framework, focusing on equity and inclusion to enhance the educational experiences and outcomes for all students in Seattle Public Schools.



SECTION 1



Leadership Drivers

Commitment to Equity and Inclusion

- **Is a commitment to equity, inclusion, and a multi-tiered system reflected in the district goals and strategic plans?**
- **Does the strategy and related plans address the foundational supports necessary to make MTSS implementation successful?**
- **How do data outcomes align with and impact strategic work?**

Successful MTSS implementation requires leaders who address adaptive issues paired with technical support. This driver also refers to the structures that foster collaboration and stakeholder input. This section examines shared responsibility, resource allocation, and student, family, and community engagement through the MTSS lens.

To scale inclusive and equitable practices through multi-tiered systems, representative stakeholders collaborate to make decisions, use communication feedback loops, and use purposeful meeting structures to lead implementation efforts at the district, school, and grade levels. When examining shared responsibility and collaboration, the following questions are asked:

- Do all leaders have a firm understanding of the components and value of MTSS?
- Does the leadership team use effective mechanisms to seek input and feedback from key stakeholders regularly?
- Is there a multi-year planning process to thoughtfully examine data, identify priorities, conduct a root cause analysis, develop a logic model for addressing those priorities,



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

and create an action plan to sustainably roll out, implement, and monitor the required systems and strategies?

While the strategic plan speaks very specifically to a commitment to equity and inclusion, there is no mention of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) and the foundational supports necessary to make MTSS implementation successful.

Focus groups with teachers and other staff members revealed that there is only a limited shared understanding of MTSS, and staff were not sure if the district had a clear MTSS structure. Building that shared understanding and vision is a critical component of this work.

The district's strategic plan speaks explicitly of the commitment to equity and inclusion, as it opens with the declaration to "dramatically improve academic and life outcomes for Students of Color by disrupting the legacies of racism in [their] educational system." The plan outlines the various steps the district will take to reach this goal, including, but not limited to, becoming an anti-racist system, adopting the guided belief of 'Targeted Universalism,' establishing the African-American Male Achievement (AAMA) department, and partnering with Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS). There is a lack of clarity around the district's theory of change and how each role, program, approach, and element combine to improve student outcomes and close achievement gaps. Creating a comprehensive theory of action may be a beneficial next step.

The district's four goals are high-quality instructional and learning experiences, a culturally responsive workforce, predictable and consistent operational systems, and inclusive and authentic engagement. Each goal is discussed in the section that follows.

High-Quality Instruction and Learning Experiences

The district's commitment to servicing the whole child is "extending beyond traditional academic instruction and assessment to include recognizing and serving the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral strengths and needs of students."

In focus groups throughout the district with students and teachers, there was a recurring theme of needing more support in addressing students' social-emotional and behavioral needs, as both educators and students reported that these needs disrupt classroom instruction, and students feel they are not getting quality time learning. One educator



said, “...there’s too much behavioral and social-emotional need in this school to touch upon the academic part of it. A lot of time is just managing behavior.”

The most recent state data dashboard reports that 4.6% of Black/African American students are excluded in response to a behavioral violation as compared to 0.8% of white students, a rate of four times higher than that of their white counterparts. This statistic, coupled with the data that the attendance rate of Black/African American students is only 62.9% compared to 84.2% of white students, indicates a significant gap in consistent access to quality instruction and learning experiences.

Teachers largely reported that they do not receive adequate resources or support to meet the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms. There were several reports from both educators and students of the curriculum needing to be culturally responsive. Students feel that their individual identities and cultures are not always acknowledged or represented in the curriculum. Many students shared that diverse populations are only highlighted during their given month, but they do not feel celebrated outside of that. An example shared, “I would say the only time I hear a lot about Black culture would be during February, but it isn’t generally talked about just like as kind of an everyday unit or something like in History...a lot of students don’t feel represented.” True high-quality instructional materials include culturally represented resources that incorporate the cultures of the community and are free from bias.



Recommendations

- Given the lack of a clear MTSS structure and limited shared understanding among staff, the district should prioritize developing and implementing a comprehensive MTSS. This system should be explicitly integrated with the district's commitment to equity and inclusion, ensuring it addresses all students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs.
- Address the feedback from students and teachers about the need for a culturally responsive and representative curriculum year-round, not just during specific months. The curriculum should be revised to incorporate diverse perspectives and cultures



consistently, reflecting the identities of the student population. This includes providing resources and training for teachers to effectively integrate these elements.

- The district should articulate a clear and detailed theory of action that connects its goals, strategies, and programs to the desired outcomes. This should include how each strategic plan element contributes to improving student outcomes and closing achievement gaps. The theory of action should be communicated to all stakeholders to ensure alignment and clarity on how the district plans to disrupt the legacies of racism and achieve its commitment to equity and inclusion.

Culturally Responsive Workforce

The district commits to investing in training that will support staff in improving their culturally responsive professional practice while simultaneously working on recruiting and retaining educators and leaders of color at both schools and the central office. Currently, the district employs 5.4% Black/African American educators, compared to 78.3% White educators, and White students make up 45.5% of the student population. The district should more clearly define how they systemically ensure that all hiring managers have strategies to interrupt bias in hiring. This can not live solely at the central office but must be replicated and held accountable at individual schools. Recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce is an important strategy that should continue to be a focus, but given the district's current staff makeup, it makes sense that the efforts towards improving their culturally responsive professional practice are the priority.

Focus group participants noted a disparity between the demographics of students within classrooms and those sent to hallways as evidence that there is room for growth in culturally responsive practices. For example, one teacher shared, "And we don't have that many students of color to begin with, let alone to have such a stark majority of the kids wandering the hallways or having these huge escalations in the hallways. But I just feel like



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

the numbers don't add up for who's there based on the entire demographic, as far as culturally responsive. That feels like a symptom of this not happening.”

Ongoing professional development on identifying implicit bias and how that impacts outcomes in the workplace will help shift the discrepancies in how Black students are disciplined versus White students. Educators should regularly receive guidance on how to define and interrupt implicit bias and racial microaggressions.



Recommendation

- Implement a robust and ongoing professional development program focused on culturally responsive practices and implicit bias identification and interruption. This program should be mandatory for all staff, including educators, administrators, and hiring managers, at both the school and district levels. The training should encompass strategies to recognize and address implicit biases and racial microaggressions, with a specific focus on understanding the impact of these biases on student discipline and classroom dynamics.

Predictable and Consistent Operational Systems

The district's plan for streamlining operational services in areas such as transportation, nutrition services, and student assignment is a helpful way to remove this burden from individual schools. Several building-level administrators voiced this as an area of concern that creates inequities amongst the schools with varying services and systems in place. Several building leaders commented on the way in which some schools are program-heavy while others have none. This is an operational structure that should be reviewed for equity. One school leader shared, “It's crazy to me that we have the same number of administrators as other schools with fewer students and less need.” Focus on a transition from a model of equality to equity.



Recommendation

- Adopt and implement an equity-focused operational model across all schools in the district. This model should address disparities in resources and services such as transportation, nutrition, and student programs, ensuring that each school receives support based on its specific needs rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Conduct a comprehensive review of the current distribution of resources, including administrative support, programs, and services, to identify and rectify inequities.

Inclusive and Authentic Engagement

The district's strategic plan commits to creating ways for those furthest from educational justice to have a voice and leadership in district initiatives. Focus group participants recall seeing surveys that asked for their input, but no participants in the focus groups were able to recall an instance where they were invited to sit at the table in a leadership advisory capacity. When prompted to discuss their influence in district decisions, a parent shared, "I feel almost completely paralyzed by that. It seems like there is almost no ability to have any influence over the district decisions." Another parent compared communicating with the district to a "black hole." Every parent and student interviewed was unaware of the district's strategic plan and commitment to those furthest from educational justice. Internal and external stakeholders do not experience engagement in ways that meet their needs and center them as valued contributors to solutions.

Research has shown that when teachers are active in reaching out to students' families, academic performance improves. The district must support teachers' ability to meet families face-to-face, send home materials for parents to help their children, and stay in regular touch with families on students' progress.

Families should be aware of the district's strategic plan and initiatives. In a district's improvement journey, it is critical to have a regular feedback cycle that elevates and



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

celebrates the needs of diverse stakeholders. As the district continually reflects on its strategy, it will be critical to engage a wide variety of staff and families by conducting focus groups and listening sessions.

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) (2018) under the U.S. Department of Education published guidance for equitable family engagement. They argue that districts need to offer structures for regular listening sessions with families. Additionally, they note the importance of involving community liaisons that capitalize on the value of community members who speak the language and are of the same culture.

Through policy 4110, the district acknowledges the importance of open and transparent communication and partnership with families and communities. The district policy encourages “participation by members of the community to advise the Superintendent and Board in school district decision-making processes.” It is critical to also create a plan for engaging families in all district strategic planning process components. Schedule listening sessions and distribute surveys to create a baseline of family and community perception of the district’s culture. This data will allow the district to set improvement targets directly related to family voice.

The district has clear partnerships with many community-based organizations and continues to explore ways to collaborate. The most voiced need from educators in the district was for more support in social-emotional, mental health, and behavioral collaborations. The district should explore additional community partnerships that offer SEL and mental health support to ensure it is leveraging resources needed for all students. This is an area where it is important to include family voices.

Knowing that students not attending school regularly is a barrier to success, the district must take a deep dive into attendance rates. Out of 101 schools reviewed, only nine report having 90% or more students attending school regularly. Comparatively, 28% of schools report less than 70% of students attending school regularly. The remaining schools report between 70% to 90% of students attending school regularly. The district should set aggressive goals to improve overall attendance rates. All other efforts to improve student outcomes are hopeless if students are not present to receive the support.



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

There is a clear segregation among the schools. The individual schools do not mirror the demographic composition of the district. The district overall is demographically comprised of

- White- 45.4%
- Black- 15.0%
- Asian- 13%
- Hispanic- 13%

Only 15 out of 101 schools reviewed come close to mirroring this racial balance. The remaining schools are either predominantly White, Black, or Hispanic. Understanding that schools are neighborhood schools and represent the racial makeup of the communities they serve, there is still an opportunity to explore models that would diversify the student body at each campus. The Century Foundation (2019) found evidence that shows that when Black and Hispanic children attend racially integrated schools, they tend to outperform their peers who do not. School integration is a complex problem rooted in history, structural racism, school assignment policies, and parental behaviors. While residential segregation is an obstacle to integrating schools, neighborhood segregation in itself should not dictate current patterns of school segregation. Given the complexity of unpacking this segregation, the district should consider creating a five-year plan to research the feasibility of integrating all schools.



Recommendations

- Prioritize improving student attendance by conducting a comprehensive root cause analysis to understand and address the factors contributing to chronic absenteeism. Based on the findings, the district should develop and implement targeted interventions and support mechanisms to remove identified barriers and create conditions that foster regular attendance.
- Implement structures for regular listening sessions and focus groups with families and community members, particularly those furthest from educational justice. Ensure these sessions are more than just



information-gathering; participants should have a clear and influential role in decision-making processes. Additionally, distribute surveys to gather feedback, but also actively demonstrate how this feedback is used in district decisions. This will help address the perception of a “black hole” in communication and make stakeholders feel valued and heard.

- Develop a long-term strategy to address the racial imbalance in schools. Acknowledge the complexities of residential segregation and historical factors, and aim to create a more inclusive school environment that reflects the district's demographic composition. A systematic approach, potentially over a five-year period, should be taken to study, propose, and implement changes that promote integration and its benefits to student performance and community cohesion.

Tiered Scheduling

- **Do all school schedules have time for tiered intervention and for common planning?**
- **Is sufficient common planning time built into staff schedules across schools, departments, and grade levels?**

Taking into consideration that only a handful of schools' schedules were collected and reviewed, those are taken to be the standard for what is represented in the district. Based on the participating schools, it appears most schools at the elementary level have schedules conducive to common planning time for teachers, although there is still a need to find a way to incorporate support staff into these planning times. Several schools rely on the Wednesday half-day for collaboration, but with competing interests, this time is



often sacrificed for other initiatives. Special education teachers shared that due to the nature of how they support multiple teams, it is impossible for special educators, interventionists, and other support staff to meet with the variety of grade levels they serve. As it stands now, teachers are only collaborating as grade levels or departments, void of having representation from EL staff, special educators, interventionists, and other support staff, who are vital members of the successful wrap-around services of all students. Secondary schools did not make their schedules available to review to determine if they are conducive to common planning time for teachers.

There was no evidence of schools having schedules conducive to implementing tiered intervention. Some schools reported having the capacity to implement academic tiered instruction into their current model, but no participating schools are able to offer tiered support for the social-emotional and behavioral needs of students.

While teachers reported having the time in their schedules for common planning with grade-level teams, there was no clear articulation of how that time is structured. There was no evidence of consistency among schools on how teachers spend their common planning time. There were several schools that reported not having the sacred time carved out into their schedules for common planning.



Recommendations

- Support schools in developing schedules that prioritize evidence-based instruction and interventions across all tiers, with a special emphasis on meeting students' social-emotional and behavioral needs.
- Create effective protocols for collaboration and planning among department-, grade-, and student-level teams, including interventionists, special educators, and support staff. This collaboration should be a consistent, frequent, and integral part of the school schedule, ensuring the inclusion of all support staff.
- Provide professional development for classroom teachers to enhance their ability to deliver tier-two



interventions within the classroom setting. This approach allows interventionists to concentrate on more intensive tier-three interventions.

- Ensure that the district's budgeting, staffing models, and master scheduling processes are undertaken with a strong focus on inclusion and equity, enabling all students to receive the necessary support and resources for success.



SECTION 2



Competency Drivers

Hiring/Onboarding

- **Are the beliefs and principles of inclusion embedded in job descriptions, interview questions, performance tasks, or other hiring criteria?**
- **Does the teacher induction/onboarding program specifically focus on supporting all new hires in implementing inclusive practice in a multi-tiered system of support?**

Competency drivers revolve around building educator capacity to affect positive student outcomes through thoughtful staffing models, offering high-quality professional development, research-based coaching strategies, and aligned systems for feedback and evaluation (NIRN, 2018). To increase educator efficacy, districts need comprehensive plans for staff recruitment, selection and onboarding, professional development and coaching, and robust education evaluation systems that provide mastery-oriented feedback to all staff.

In robust MTSS systems, district hiring and onboarding practices reflect a commitment to inclusive and equitable practices. There should be clear and transparent recruitment strategies, interview questions, performance tasks, or other hiring criteria with specific procedures for recruiting and supporting a diverse workforce. While the district's onboarding program is clearly identified and documented, it does not reflect a commitment to MTSS.

According to the 2021-2022 report card, the district's demographic makeup of teachers is 78.3% White, while over half of the student population falls in the non-White categories.



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

The district's strong focus on diversity hiring has yielded impressive results that surpass the intended goals and should be celebrated. The efforts to attract school and central office leaders should be duplicated for teacher recruitment.

Hiring Category	Goal	Actual
Teachers	29%	36%
School Leaders	43%	54%
Central Office Leaders	44%	55%

New hires are provided with a district mentor who provides ongoing support. The district has the Staff Training, Assessment, and Reflection (STAR) mentor program, where mentors are tasked with “enhancing instruction to students by offering peer assistance and guidance to participants.” The program is described as a two-year onboarding program for new hires, although it is not clear how participants are selected as educators in the focus groups felt this is a missed opportunity, seeing as though not all staff go through the STAR program. If all new hires are matched with a STAR mentor, that should be communicated to all schools, as many focus group participants felt the process is inconsistent.

As the district goals evolve, so should the focus of the STAR program. Mentors should be highly skilled in Universal Design for Learning and Inclusive Practices and have expertise in culturally responsive pedagogy. The job description for this role should be updated to include these expectations as required skill sets. Once hired, there should be embedded professional development for these mentors to continue to grow in their practice.

In the 2021-2022 (last reported) school year, 29.4% of Black/African American students had teachers classified as inexperienced, 3.4% had teachers with limited certificates, and 4.4% had educators teaching out-of-field. Given the district's commitment to those



furthest from educational justice, the staffing model should be prioritized to match those students with highly qualified staff.



Recommendations

- Create a comprehensive manual that aligns with the district's commitment to Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). This manual should include clear, transparent recruitment strategies, specific interview questions, and performance tasks to support a diverse workforce. It should also outline procedures for effectively recruiting and onboarding staff in a manner that promotes equity and inclusion.
- Provide mandatory professional development for all hiring managers focused on identifying and eliminating bias from the hiring process. Ensure that this training aligns with the district recruitment manual guidelines.
- Revise the teacher induction manual to emphasize critical areas essential for meeting the needs of diverse learners in inclusive classrooms. This update should prioritize MTSS and UDL, equipping new teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to support all students effectively.
- Ensure all mentors, especially STAR Mentors, are familiar with the revised induction manual. STAR Mentors should possess expertise in UDL and culturally responsive pedagogy, enabling them to effectively guide new teachers in implementing inclusive practices.
- Define and communicate clearly who is eligible for mentorship and the duration of this support. This clarity will help ensure consistent and equitable mentorship access for all new teachers.



- Prioritize the assignment of teachers categorized as highly qualified to students who are furthest from educational justice.

Ongoing Professional Development

- **What kinds of professional development are offered to teachers? To paraprofessionals? To other staff?**
- **Does the professional development align with district strategy?**

When examining studies that met the What Works Clearinghouse evidence standards, researchers noted that high-quality professional learning is ongoing. Teachers who receive substantial professional development—an average of 49 hours a year— can boost their students’ achievement by about 21 percentile points (Yoon et al., 2007). It should be noted that the quality of PD and its focus has more consequences than the hours or “dosage” (Kraft, Blazer, Hogan, 2018). Additionally, recent research notes that the ongoing training must be collaborative, extended over a prolonged period, and supplemented with instructional coaching (Smith & Robinson, 2020).

The district has committed to half-day Wednesdays for professional learning, which is adequate time to meet the goals outlined in the strategic plan if coupled with embedded coaching. The participating schools reported not having access to instructional coaches and losing PBIS coaches over the last few years. Creating a tiered coaching model will help create a robust MTSS system. The American Institute of Research (AIR) published a report on professional development titled, [Coaching for Ongoing Professional Learning Within Tiered Support Models](#) (2020), which provides guidance on how to structure educator-level and systems-level coaching as a mechanism to ensure ongoing professional learning to support tiered intervention. Ensuring there are tiered coaching supports and cycles in alignment with this research will be an important next step.

While the district-allotted time is adequate for professional development, there is no focus on MTSS or UDL in the professional development offered. The district professional development



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

calendar should include a clear, articulated plan for supporting teachers in understanding Universal Design for Learning, tiered interventions, and inclusive practices.

Focus group participants shared that they do not feel the district culture is conducive to adult learning, where all staff hold themselves jointly responsible for student outcomes and regularly share their strengths and struggles in the spirit of helping each other continually improve practice. Staff expressed a great need to receive advanced training in meeting the social-emotional and behavioral needs of students to support the scaling of inclusive and equitable practices. Many felt the coaching model would best serve this need and spoke highly of having a PBIS coach in previous years.

Additional professional development would help increase teacher efficacy in inclusive practices. Focus group participants reported that they did not receive adequate resources or support to meet the needs of diverse learners using inclusive practices. Ensuring ongoing, evidence-based professional development and resources provided to all educators will be critical to increase efficacy and, ultimately, the outcomes of all learners. District performance data demonstrates a clear need to work on designing instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

During classroom walkthroughs, several areas of opportunities for growth were noted. At the elementary level, one of the common themes observed was the need to focus on clear learning objectives aligned with grade-level standards, as these were not consistently posted or discussed throughout lessons. To fully embrace the principles of Universal Design for Learning, teachers must have clear and specific learning objectives identified throughout the lesson. Some classrooms listed topics instead of clearly defined learning objectives. Some classrooms had essential questions posted without them being connected to the corresponding learning targets. Incorporating firm goals and flexible means aligned with Universal Design for Learning enables students to actively participate in the planning and designing their learning experiences, promoting a sense of ownership and engagement. There were some classrooms that demonstrated proficiency in developing clear learning objectives aligned with grade-level standards, which means there are in-house experts who can provide professional development sessions to their colleagues.

At the secondary level, some common themes noted were the need to foster collaboration and build a sense of community. Teachers need support implementing strategies such as group work, collaborative learning, and structured discussions that encourage students to collaborate, share ideas, and learn from one another. Creating a structured and supportive environment for collaboration can help minimize incidents where students are disengaged or



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

off task. This learning can be offered through formal professional development or by sharing best practices in professional learning communities.

There was an observable need across all levels to increase flexible and formative assessments. Flexible assessments, which allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills through multiple pathways, were not consistently evident during observations. Flexible assessments are crucial in empowering students to showcase their knowledge and skills. However, the observations revealed a tendency towards more traditional and less authentic assessment forms, such as packets and closed-book tests. Providing teachers with opportunities to explore alternative assessment methods that provide students with diverse pathways to demonstrate their understanding and incorporating project-based assessments, presentations, or portfolios would be a valuable use of professional development time.

Professional development workshops and training sessions can be organized to familiarize teachers with new approaches and provide them with the necessary tools and strategies to design and implement flexible assessments. Additionally, teachers can collaborate to share best practices and success stories related to flexible assessments, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. Regular assessment review and reflection sessions can be conducted to gather feedback from students, teachers, and parents to assess the effectiveness of the new assessment methods and make any necessary adjustments.

We do not yet see proficient implementation of Universal Design for Learning, meaning the district should leverage ongoing structures like professional learning communities, instructional coaches, and educator evaluation to scale.



Recommendations

- Revise the professional development calendar to include a clear, articulated plan for supporting teachers in understanding and applying Universal Design for Learning, tiered interventions, and inclusive practices. This should align with the district's strategic objectives and address the identified need for advanced training in meeting social-emotional and behavioral needs. Encourage the sharing of best practices within the district, leveraging in-house experts to facilitate professional development sessions.



- Organize professional development workshops and training sessions focused on flexible and formative assessments and strategies for fostering collaboration and community building in classrooms through restorative practices.
- Regular feedback sessions involving students, teachers, and parents should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of these new methodologies and make necessary adjustments.

Professional Learning Communities

At the heart of effective PLCs are inquiry and reflection focused on standards-based instruction, engaging discussions on lessons that support students as they access grade-level curriculum, and exploring ways to provide students with means for expression as they improve the learning of all students. According to Linda Darling Hammond and colleagues (2017) at the Learning Policy Institute:

One currently popular model [for professional development] is the use of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). While many professional learning community efforts have been poorly implemented and superficial in their design and impact, there is evidence that PLCs can, when implemented with a high degree of quality, support improvements in practice, along with student learning gains. Well-implemented PLCs provide ongoing, job-embedded learning that is active, collaborative, and reflective (p.17).

There are clear opportunities to increase teacher efficacy with inclusive practices. Elevating and celebrating educators with a strong sense of efficacy in inclusive practices is also important. For example, there are teachers who strongly agreed that they felt prepared when asked in focus groups. Therefore, ensuring these teachers have opportunities to share their strengths regularly and learn from each other will help all educators continually improve their practice.



Creating structures in professional learning communities (PLCs) will help to scale inclusive practices as it is an opportunity to provide additional professional development.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) offer a collaborative approach to professional development in which small groups of educators meet regularly to reflect on instructional planning and practice, share expertise and insights from their teaching experiences, and engage in collaborative problem-solving.

When participating in PLCs, educators generally examine four key questions:

- What do we expect our students to learn?
- How will we know they are learning?
- How will we respond when they don't learn?
- How will we respond if they already know it?

“How will we know they are learning?” educators may create standardized assessments that prevent some students from sharing what they know. To prevent more traditional pedagogical thinking, we propose the following revisions to the questions to focus more on universal design.

- What do we expect our students to learn, and why is it important?
- How can we design flexible assessments so there will be multiple options for our students to demonstrate they are learning?
- If students do not learn, what potential barriers exist that can be eliminated through thoughtful design?
- If students do learn, how will we provide options and choices for students to optimize challenges?

Leveraging professional learning communities will be critical, given teachers' perception of support in inclusive practice. Professional learning communities are considered safe spaces where teachers can be vulnerable about what they know or do not know and learn from their colleagues. Additionally, PLC structures can support teaching in learning more about grade-level standards, high-quality curriculum, and the importance of using the curriculum in a way that increases the outcomes of all learners. As schools and districts



continue to make shifts in the instructional materials they use, and amid ongoing challenges, teachers need access to ongoing professional learning with colleagues to support curriculum implementation (Short & Hirsch, 2020).



Recommendations

- Revitalize and strengthen Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within the district by focusing them on inquiry, reflection, and collaboration around inclusive practices and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
- Encourage PLCs to operate as supportive and safe spaces for educators to share their experiences and learn from each other, especially from those who demonstrate strong efficacy in inclusive practices. Provide opportunities for these educators to lead discussions and share their strategies for implementing high-quality instructional materials. This approach will help scale inclusive practices across the district, ensuring that PLCs contribute significantly to improving teaching practices and student learning outcomes.

Feedback Practices

Do all educators receive targeted, constructive feedback through informal and formal evaluations that help them to scale academic inclusive practices through MTSS?

School board policy 5240 states that all staff shall be evaluated on their performance annually based on a system developed by the superintendent in collaboration with the SEA. Based on feedback from school leaders, there appears to be an inconsistency between feedback and evaluations, with school leaders sharing that not everyone receives feedback. One school leader shared that feedback tends to be formal (through the evaluation process), with few opportunities for informal feedback. Providing targeted



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

formal and informal feedback to educators regarding meeting students' needs in inclusive settings is an effective method of improving practice.

Based on a review of sample evaluations, the educator evaluation process is not currently used to provide either formal or informal feedback to educators related to meeting the academic, social, emotional, or behavioral needs of students in inclusive settings. The tool may need to be revised to capture this type of feedback.

Several schools provided samples of completed evaluations for review. In a review of formal evaluations of teachers, one formal observation issued to an educator can yield upwards of twenty pages of feedback, touching on all areas of the rubric. While the feedback is constructive overall, none of it was targeted toward the intended instructional practices the district is focused on. There was no clear alignment to inclusive practices or educational equity. Evaluators offer helpful suggestions to inform practice, but they are not aligned with the UDL framework.

Observation feedback is an ideal place to reinforce the principles of UDL and should be leveraged accordingly. Since the full, formal evaluation is a district requirement and must be completed annually, the district should consider revising the tool to embed [Inclusive Practice Look-Fors](#).



Recommendations

- Provide continuous professional development for principals and evaluators to enhance their skills in giving meaningful, constructive, targeted feedback. This training should focus on both formal and informal feedback techniques that are directly aimed at improving teacher practice and enhancing student outcomes, with an emphasis on inclusivity and equity.
- Dedicate time to work with all individuals responsible for evaluations to ensure that their feedback is consistent and aligned across the district. This includes calibrating the educator evaluation process to support inclusive practices and create accountability for equitable teaching methods that boost learning for all



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

students, especially those furthest from educational justice.

- Establish comprehensive systems for educator evaluation that incorporate accountability measures. These systems should guarantee consistency and high-quality feedback are integral to the evaluation process.



SECTION 3

Implementation Drivers

Tiered Supports

Are tiered supports available to students academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally?

Implementation drivers are the organizational systems that leaders create for tiered instruction and interventions to take place. These systems include a tiered continuum of evidence-based practice, implementation fidelity, data-based decision-making, and high-quality curriculum and instruction.

A tiered continuum of practices provides a foundation for a multi-tiered system of support. Systemic barriers prevent all classrooms from fostering equitable and inclusive practices when drivers are not fully implemented. This needs assessment has outlined drivers that will help the district build a tiered continuum of practice so interventions can supplement and not supplant rich, rigorous, multi-tiered instruction academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally.

For tier one to meet the needs of all learners, schedules, curriculum, and professional learning must be closely aligned so that leadership, competency, and implementation drivers work to eliminate barriers. Recommendations for creating a tiered continuum of services are provided throughout this needs assessment.

Focus group discussions revealed a lack of clarity around the expectations of the three tiers. Many educators shared they felt they were only responsible for tier-one instruction, and when that was not reaching a student, and they needed tier-two support, they should be receiving that outside of the classroom from specialized support staff. When asked,



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

many educators shared that they did not feel prepared to provide tier-two support to their students, academic, behavioral, or social-emotional.

A parent shared that it depends on which school a student attends to determine “whether they are lucky enough to get the support they need and deserve.”

The instructional core describes the essential interaction between teacher, student, and content around instructional tasks. The relationship between these, rather than the quality of any individual element, determines the nature of instructional practice. The three interdependent elements of classroom-based instruction:

- Teacher- knowledge and skill
- Student- engagement in learning
- Content- that is standards-aligned and on grade level

The interplay between these elements determines the quality of teaching and student learning. (City et. al 2009). The district must recognize how the interdependent elements of the school system reinforce one another to support implementing improvement strategies that center the instructional core.



Recommendations

- Develop and implement systems with built-in accountability measures to ensure that evidence-based strategies, instructional methods, and interventions are consistently applied across all learning environments in the district.
- Create fidelity measures to regularly evaluate the implementation of evidence-based strategies, instruction, and interventions. This will involve monitoring how these practices are applied and assessing their adherence to established standards.
- Work with schools to identify specific entry and exit criteria for tier two and tier three interventions,



ensuring that these criteria are based on comprehensive, triangulated data.

- Select appropriate tools for progress monitoring to track whether students are meeting the criteria set for tiered support. These tools should effectively measure student progress and inform necessary adjustments to the interventions.
- Provide professional development to support teachers' capacity to provide tier-two interventions within the classroom, freeing up any designated interventionists to focus on tier-three interventions.

High-Quality Instructional Materials

- **What instructional materials are used in the school? Are they up-to-date and reflect the State's academic content standards?**
- **Is the curriculum aligned with the State's challenging academic content standards?**

Curriculum alignment minimizes the gaps between the intended curriculum, instruction, and assessment, enhancing student's performance and achievement. This gives teachers a better handle on what students know and can do in relation to the learning standards. When teachers have high-quality instructional materials provided to them, they do not have to spend their valuable time searching for resources and creating their own materials. This allows the district to be confident that students are being exposed to materials developed and reviewed by researchers and academic experts. [EdReports](#) defines high-quality instructional materials as closely aligned to rigorous standards and easy to use.

The district shared pacing guides for elementary ELA for review. Each pacing guide only contains the name of the unit and the suggested time frame for teaching the unit. When



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

used with fidelity, a comprehensive scope and sequence will help prevent gaps in student learning and provide a map for all stakeholders to have meaningful conversations about how scope and sequence documents align with the adopted curriculum, common assessments, and data-based decision-making. A scope and sequence is an overview of the skills and content covered in your district's curriculum at each level over some time (scope) and in a particular order (sequence). Scope and sequence are not intended to be fully developed unit plans but just an outline of the units.

Each curriculum map reviewed had valuable information, but the units were not consistent among content areas. According to research, Curriculum Maps/Scope and Sequence documents should include the following information (Jacobs, 2004):

- **Unit Topic:** The unit topic should be a simple phrase that summarizes the entire set of lessons being taught
- **Time Frame:** The time frame estimates the time that students will engage in the unit.
- **Essential questions:** When developing essential questions, we need to step back and consider why we are teaching any given material. Why do students need to learn this? What will be relevant to them and help them remember what they have learned?
- **Standards:** Identifies the essential standards for the unit, aligned to grade level.
- **Resources:** This section identified high-quality instructional materials/resources that will be used in the unit.
- **Assessments:** Assessments note how the standards will be measured in the unit.

The district has a clear process for curriculum alignment and adoption and commits to engaging the “diverse communities in order to ensure the public is aware of an upcoming adoption and to gather feedback about both materials under review and general goals for the adoption.” During staff focus groups, a recurring theme amongst special educators was the lack of alignment of curriculum materials and grade-level standards. Many shared they felt they were responsible for researching and obtaining their own instructional materials to meet the needs of their students.

The district website only addresses curriculum alignment for middle school social studies, math, world languages, and high school science.



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

The district has created a tool to review curricular materials for bias, “Criteria and Relevant Instruments for the Identification of Bias,” and guidance, “Approval of Supplementary Instructional Materials,” but when teachers were asked about reviewing materials, they were unaware of these tools. If this is a resource only district-level administrators utilize, that should be communicated to teachers so they are aware that all district-approved resources have been vetted. If teachers are expected to do their own reviews of individually selected curricular resources, then there should be guidance on how to utilize these tools.

The district has outlined curricular resources for K-8 but lacks a district-created curriculum map. The identified programs should be considered the “vehicle” used to reach the district-identified “destination,” which we want all students to know and be able to do by the end of a given grade. The program should be mapped out to indicate which units align with state standards, with unaligned units being eliminated and supplemented. The district should create a template that outlines the comprehensive curriculum, using the chosen programs as the resource to reach the intended outcomes. Where possible, interdisciplinary connections can be made to make learning more meaningful to students.

Currently, the programs being used to drive curriculum include but are not limited to:

Discipline	K-5	6-8	9-12
Math	Envision (2021)	Envision (2017)	Variety
ELA	Collaborative Literacy (2016)	N/A (not identified)	No Core
Science	Amplify (2019)	Amplify (2019)	Variety
Social Studies	Since Time Immemorial Tribal Sovereignty (2019)	Since Time Immemorial Tribal Sovereignty (2019)	Since Time Immemorial Tribal Sovereignty (2019)



According to [EdReports](#) the district's chosen core program for English Language Arts, Collaborative Literacy created by Center for the Collaborative Classroom is rated as "partially meets" in the category of alignment to grade-level standards for grades K-8. While the Math program, enVisions is rated as "meets" in grade alignment and usability for grades K-8.

In 2018, The New Teacher Project (TNTP) released a study sharing key findings about the gap between academic instruction and student preparation for college and career. Their study, *The Opportunity Myth*, found that students succeeded in 71% of their assignments. However, they met grade-level standards on 17% of those exact same assignments. This is because so few of the assignments gave students a chance to demonstrate mastery, reiterating the importance of the quality of the instructional resources utilized. Their study also found that during a school year, classrooms spent an average of 47 hours on grade-appropriate assignments, compared to 133 hours on assignments that were not grade-level appropriate. This leads to significant wasted time on assignments with weak instruction where students do not learn the grade-level content. Unfortunately, the research found that the problem is worse for students of color, those from low-income families, emergent bilingual students, and students with mild to moderate disabilities. Four out of ten classrooms with most students of color never received a single grade level assignment (TNTP: *The Opportunity Myth*, 2018).

During classroom observations throughout the district, some teachers demonstrated incredible flexibility in providing various options and choices for students, but the absence of clear learning targets raised questions about the relevance and purpose of the options. There was a lack of consistency in aligning the posted learning targets with the grade-level standards. To fully embrace the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), it is essential to have clear and specific learning objectives that are aligned to grade-level standards. Without clear and visible learning objectives based on grade-level standards, it is challenging to universally design instruction and be flexible in meeting the diverse needs of all learners. Clear learning objectives provide a roadmap for both teachers and students, helping to identify potential barriers to learning and determine appropriate pathways to ensure all students are working towards the intended objectives. Without this clarity, it is difficult to establish transparent success criteria and enable students to self-assess their progress.



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

Additionally, the absence of learning objectives can lead to a lack of direction and purpose in the learning environment, hindering students' understanding of the purpose of their learning tasks. To foster effective instruction and promote student achievement, it is crucial to prioritize clear communication and integrate learning objectives into daily lessons throughout the district.

Students need access to:

- Consistent opportunities to work on grade-appropriate assignments
- Strong instruction where students do most of the thinking
- Deep engagement in what they're learning
- Teachers who hold high expectations and believe they can meet grade-level standards (TNTP, The Opportunity Myth, 2018)

Having district provided high-quality instructional materials ensures that all students, regardless of zip code, have access to the same rigorous materials across the district. It also helps with streamlining any data collected. It is important to remember that high-quality instructional materials alone are not sufficient. It is how we implement them that matters most. Traditional instruction was observed in numerous classrooms, where teachers read directly from the overhead slides and/or lectured to students. This is where teachers will need support incorporating more engaging strategies that promote active student engagement and deeper understanding.

The district should be mindful of the rollout of any new instructional materials, as some educators feel there is an abundance of programs being introduced. One participant shared, "There is too much. We add, but we don't subtract."



Recommendations

- Create a documented process for curriculum review to ensure that materials are aligned to grade-level standards, universally designed, and free from bias.
- Ensure teachers are properly trained to utilize the district's "Criteria and Relevant Instruments for the



Identification of Bias” tool for reviewing curricular materials. As well as the “Approval of Supplementary Instructional Materials.”

- Complete scope and sequence documents in every grade/subject that outline the major units of study aligned with standards.
- In places where adopted resources do not align with grade-level standards, create cross-walk documents that outline plans for supplementing.
- Provide teachers with high-quality instructional materials for all subjects and grade levels so they are not left to develop their own materials, which can lead to inconsistencies and gaps in instruction.
- To foster acceptance and ease the burden of frequent changes, limit, and space out significant changes in curriculum and teaching practices. This approach can help gain greater buy-in from educators, who often feel overwhelmed by frequent shifts in educational strategies and resources.

Data-Based Decision-Making

- **Do schools set aside time and have defined protocols to ensure teachers participate in data meetings that run effectively?**
- **What assessment instruments, including diagnostic assessments, are routinely used to measure student achievement?**
- **Are assessment maps consistent across the system within grades?**



In a robust data culture, educators are prepared to use student outcome data to support instructional decision-making. The What Works Clearinghouse has a practice brief, "[Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making](#)," which outlines five recommendations to create a strong data culture:

1. Make data an ongoing cycle of instructional improvement
2. Teach students how to examine their own data and set learning goals
3. Establish a clear vision for districtwide data use
4. Provide support that fosters a data-driven culture within the school
5. Develop and maintain a district-wide data system

The district has annual assessment maps that primarily capture summative assessments. There is no clear evidence of universal screeners, diagnostic assessments, performance tasks, or progress monitoring tools that focus on academic skills development and social-emotional and behavioral development. Teachers report that a culture does not exist to support using data to drive instructional decisions or to identify and address inequities. Teachers were unfamiliar with any district-wide protocol for examining data, and many reported that they do not utilize the district-wide data system. All staff must be trained on and utilizing the data system where all students' data are available across the district. It was unclear to building administrators whether or not this data system is comprehensive enough to input and track student interventions and outcomes.

It would be helpful to create guidance about how to examine data and ensure it is used district-wide. For example, creating a district-wide data resource that outlines best practices for data meetings, norms, procedures for data analysis, sample meeting agendas, meeting minutes, and sample student action plans. While some schools had sample meeting minutes from data meetings, it was inconsistent across schools. It will also be important to identify requirements for sharing the minutes of data meetings and/or instructional decisions as a component of the district data system.



Recommendations

- Examine schedules to ensure that all teachers across the district have built-in opportunities to have data meetings, which will be necessary to accelerate student learning over time.
- Create a district data guidance document that outlines best practices for data meetings, norms, procedures for data analysis, sample meeting agendas, meeting minutes, and sample student action plans.

Assessment Mapping

Assessment mapping is the process of creating an inventory of available assessments in each tier of instruction. Often, districts create and maintain assessment maps for elementary and secondary schools within each focus area (i.e., elementary literacy and social-emotional learning).

The district utilizes multiple summative assessments, most being state-mandated, including Smarter Balanced Assessment, Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science, WIDA, WA-AIM, and WAKIDS. The district also utilizes Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) as the chosen summative assessment and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) as the dyslexia screener. The district assessment calendar does not identify diagnostic or formative assessments.

There is an opportunity for growth in assessment practices. Classroom observations revealed a heavy reliance on traditional paper pencil and closed-book tests. By incorporating more flexibility into formative and summative assessments, students can have options to demonstrate their learning in ways that are meaningful to them. The district can develop guidelines and resources to effectively support teachers in implementing flexible assessments.

The district's policy on assessment states that the district "utilizes the core principles of the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) process which combines a district-wide balanced assessment framework, decision-making and a multi-tiered services delivery



model to improve educational and social and emotional behavioral outcomes for all students.” It is important that this philosophy be communicated at all schools and that building administrators are given the proper support to carry out this mission of balanced assessments. This includes but is not limited to, updating the assessment calendar to include formative and diagnostic assessments. Progress monitoring tools and timelines should also be identified and provided to schools.



Recommendations

- Update assessment maps to include diagnostic and formative assessments that are standards-based and authentic.
- Integrate opportunities and tools for continuous progress monitoring into the assessment framework. These tools should enable educators to regularly track and evaluate student progress, facilitating timely and targeted interventions.
- Explore an end-user-friendly, comprehensive data system that can accommodate tracking interventions, progress monitoring, and outcomes to provide a full picture of a student’s experience within the district.

Student Outcomes

- **What is the impact of systems work on student outcomes?**

Although the district has committed to improving outcomes for those furthest away from educational justice, there is no evidence of this in the performance data, as Black students continue to perform almost 50% below their white counterparts. The efforts thus far have not impacted how these students perform on state-wide summative assessments.



Students Meeting Grade Level Standards as Measured by SBA and WCAS

	Black/African American	White	Difference
ELA SBA	28.7%	78.2%	49.5
Math SBA	17.3%	67.5%	50.2
Science WCAS	14.9%	62%	47.1

The achievement gap persists beginning at the start of a student’s educational journey. In the 2022-2023 school year Black/African American students entered kindergarten 33.4% behind their White peers in six areas of development and learning, according to the kindergarten readiness screener. 79.5% of White students entered ready in all six areas, while only 46.1% of Black/African American students entered ready in all six areas.

That gap continues to grow as students take the Smarter Balanced Assessment. Not only are Black students underperforming White students, they are not showing growth at the same rate. Growth data shows that White students demonstrate 7% more growth than Black/African American students in English Language Arts and 11% more in Math.

These achievement gaps impact graduation rates. 90.7% of all White students graduate in four years, while 86.3% of Black/African American students graduate in four years, according to the last reported data cycle of 2021-2022.

The highest reported performance of Black students comes from the Salmon Bay K-8 school, where the population of Black students is only 1.2%. Of that number, of those who were eligible to take the ELA Smarter Balanced Assessment, 60% met grade-level standards, which is higher than any other reported group of Black students across the district. The highest reported Math score of 55.4% comes from West Seattle Elementary, where 72.1% of the student population are Black students. This progress is worth examining to determine the instructional differences that impact these results.



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

When the district identifies students as “those furthest from educational justice,” the English Learner population should be a high priority, as they have demonstrated very little academic proficiency. While 40.9% of English Language Learners made progress on the WIDA, only 7.8% met the standard.

Attendance does have an impact on student outcomes. Schools that have reported having 90% or higher of students regularly attending schools also report having some of the highest percent of students who met grade-level standards on the Smarter Balanced Assessments:

School	Attendance	ELA SBA	Math SBA
Bryant Elementary	90%	84.6%	79.4%
Cascadia Elementary	93.5%	97.4%	95.6%
Hamilton International Middle	90.9%	80.1%	68.5%
John Stanford International	90.5%	90.3%	91.3%
McDonald International	92.6%	81.5%	87.3%
Stephen Decatur Elementary	96%	98%	98%
Wedgewood Elementary	93.4%	86.2%	80.2%



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

These schools should be analyzed more closely for best practices.

Out of the seven schools above that reported having over 90% attendance rates, five of those schools do not have enough students who identify as Black to retrieve SBA data. The two schools that do have data for Black students report the following performance data:

School	Attendance	White Students ELA	Black Students ELA	White Students Math	Black Students Math
Hamilton International	90.9%	83.1%	43.5%	70.8%	26.1%
Tops K-8	90.6%	77.4%	40.8%	76%	26.5%

Schools with attendance rates lower than 60% report having some of the lowest percent of students who met grade-level standards on the Smarter Balanced Assessments:

School	Attendance	ELA SBA	Math SBA
Baily Gatzert Elementary	57%	39.6%	29.7%
Chief International High	58.6%	49.5%	16.1%
Concord International	57%	25.4%	17.8%



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

Emerson Elementary	59.2%	21.4%	17.9%
Lowell Elementary	40.9%	43.9%	36%
Roxhill Elementary	52.9%	33%	24.5%
Sanislo Elementary	58%	34.5%	31%
Seattle World	45.1%	10%	6%

Within the schools with some of the lowest attendance rates, with corresponding low-performance scores on SBA, there is a clear discrepancy between how White students and Black students perform.

School	Attendance	White Students ELA	Black Students ELA	White Students Math	Black Students Math
Bailey Gatzert Elementary	57%	81%	25.8%	58.8%	29.7%
Chief International High	58.6%	71%	42.9%	29.7%	16.1%
Concord International	57%	56.5%	23%	43.5%	23%



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

Lowell Elementary	40.9%	75%	34.8%	59.4%	23.9%
Roxhill Elementary	52.9%	59.3%	12%	48.1%	12%
Sanislo Elementary	58%	46.7%	15%	40%	15%

In both scenarios, whether schools report high or low attendance rates, Black students chronically underperform White students.

The district has tried many initiatives to elevate those furthest from educational justice, in order to evaluate the impact of an intervention, there must be a clear theory of change that describes the chain of events that leads from the intervention to intermediate outcomes to the desired final outcomes. This means that for every role, both at schools and at the central office, there should be a clear understanding of how each person's actions drive student outcomes. This allows the district to hold everyone accountable for intermediate outcomes and assess whether the role effectively improves student outcomes.



Recommendations

- Conduct a thorough review of PreK programs to assess the readiness skills taught, particularly focusing on preparing students furthest from educational justice. The goal is to ensure these students enter kindergarten with readiness skills comparable to their white counterparts, thereby reducing educational disparities from an early age.
- Evaluate the current English Learner curriculum to determine its effectiveness in meeting the needs of multilingual students.



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

- Study schools within the district that have higher attendance rates to identify and understand their best practices. The insights gained from this analysis can inform strategies for improving attendance across the district.
- Offer additional resources and support to schools where attendance rates are between 50% and 60%. This targeted intervention should focus on identifying and addressing the specific challenges these schools face in improving student attendance.



Conclusion

This comprehensive needs assessment for Seattle Public Schools underscores the critical importance of a systemic, equity-focused approach in implementing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). The findings and recommendations presented in this report provide a roadmap for the district to enhance its educational practices, ensuring that all students, particularly those furthest from educational justice, receive the quality education they deserve.

Implementing a comprehensive MTSS framework, integrated with robust professional development programs on UDL, culturally responsive practices, and implicit bias, is essential. By prioritizing an equity-focused operational model, the district can address and rectify disparities in resources and services, ensuring each school receives support tailored to its unique needs. Additionally, enhancing inclusive and authentic engagement with families and community members will strengthen the district's efforts in building an educational environment that is truly representative and responsive to its diverse population.

The revitalization of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) is another crucial step. These communities should be harnessed as platforms for collaborative learning and sharing of best practices in inclusive education and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). PLCs can also support the rigorous process of curriculum review and assessment mapping, using the district's "Criteria and Relevant Instruments for the Identification of Bias" tool as well as the "Approval of Supplementary Instructional Materials," ensuring that instructional materials and assessment practices align with the district's goals for equity, standards-based instruction, and inclusivity.

Implementing these recommendations will require sustained commitment, resources, and collaborative effort from all district stakeholders. It is a journey that necessitates continuous reflection, evaluation, and adaptation. By embracing these changes, Seattle Public Schools can set a precedent for delivering an equitable and high-quality education that meets the needs of every student, particularly those who are furthest from educational justice.



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Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

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Document Review

The following resources informed this assessment, as well as emails exchanged with district administrators and recently published peer-reviewed research on building equitable systems through the lens of MTSS.

- District strategy
- Annual district improvement plan for current and previous year
- HR onboarding manual with interview questions, performance tasks, or other hiring criteria.
- Teacher Induction Program Manual
- District curriculum maps and/or scope and sequence documents
- List of common assessments given district-wide for universal screening, progress monitoring, etc.
- Schedules from participating Cohort 1 schools
- School improvement plans from participating Cohort 1 schools
- Classroom observations from Cohort 1 schools
 - [Gatewood Elementary](#)
 - [Lowell Elementary](#)
 - [Garfield High](#)
 - [Ingraham](#)
 - [JAMS](#)
 - [Nathan Hale](#)



Comprehensive MTSS Needs Assessment Document Review

- Focus group data from Cohort 1 schools from educators, students, parents, and leaders
 - [Gatewood Elementary](#)
 - [Lowell Elementary](#)
 - [JAMS](#)
 - [Garfield HS](#)
 - [Ingraham HS](#)
- Sample of evaluations from Cohort 1 schools
- Data available on Washington Report Card