

*Chapter 2:*

*Instructional Delivery*

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*Chapter 2*

## ***Instructional Delivery***

This chapter examines the instructional delivery of North Rock Creek Public Schools (NRCPS) in the following sections:

- A. Instructional Delivery and Student Performance
- B. Professional Development
- C. Gifted and Talented Education
- D. Special Education
- E. Guidance and Counseling
- F. Federal Programs
- G. Textbooks

The primary purpose of any school system is educating children. Effective instructional delivery is based upon the district’s mission for educating students and requires policies and procedures to direct the instructional process, well designed programs to meet the needs of all students, and resources to support program implementation. The monitoring and evaluation of program effectiveness based on student performance data is also essential.

School districts offer educational services to students through a variety of programs including regular education programs and special programs. Special programs are designed to provide quality services for certain student populations, such as those in Gifted and Talented Education, Special Education, and Career and Technology Education.

***Background***

**Exhibit 2-1** provides fall enrollment, ethnicity, and eligibility for free or reduced price meals for NRCPS for 2008-09 and comparative data for Community Group F2 and the state totals.

**Exhibit 2-1  
Student Enrollment and Socioeconomic Characteristics  
2008-09**

| Campus                    | Grade Span | Fall Enrollment | Ethnic Groups |            |           |            |                 | Eligible For Free or Reduced Price Meals |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------|---------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|--|
|                           |            |                 | Caucasian     | Black      | Asian     | Hispanic   | Native American |  |
| North Rock Creek          | EC-8       | <b>2,575</b>    | 57%           | 2%         | 1%        | 4%         | 37%             | 56.3%                                    |
| <b>Community Group F2</b> |            |                 | <b>54%</b>    | <b>5%</b>  | <b>1%</b> | <b>6%</b>  | <b>34%</b>      | <b>68.4%</b>                             |
| <b>State Totals</b>       |            | <b>6,462</b>    | <b>57%</b>    | <b>11%</b> | <b>2%</b> | <b>11%</b> | <b>19%</b>      | <b>56.3%</b>                             |

*Source: Office of Accountability, Profiles Database*

**Exhibit 2-2** provides ethnicity and eligibility for free or reduced price meals for NRCPS, each of

the peer districts, comparison Community Group F2, and the state totals. NRCPS has a lower percentage of students eligible for free and reduced meals that that of Community Group F2 but equals that of the state. Among peer districts, NRCPS has the third highest percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price meals.

**Exhibit 2-2  
Demographic Data  
2008-09**

| Entity                    | Ethnic Groups |            |           |            |                 | Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals |
|---------------------------|---------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|--|
|                           | Caucasian     | Black      | Asian     | Hispanic   | Native American |  |
| <b>North Rock Creek</b>   | <b>57%</b>    | <b>2%</b>  | <b>1%</b> | <b>4%</b>  | <b>37%</b>      | <b>56.3%</b>                             |
| Grove                     | 69%           | 2%         | 4%        | 3%         | 22%             | 23.0%                                    |
| Pioneer                   | 86%           | 3%         | 0%        | 3%         | 8%              | 43.8%                                    |
| Pleasant Grove            | 41%           | 4%         | 0%        | 2%         | 52%             | 70.5%                                    |
| South Rock Creek          | 73%           | 4%         | 1%        | 0%         | 22%             | 31.5%                                    |
| Whitebead                 | 60%           | 2%         | 0%        | 25%        | 13%             | 58.0%                                    |
| <b>Community Group F2</b> | <b>54%</b>    | <b>5%</b>  | <b>1%</b> | <b>6%</b>  | <b>34%</b>      | <b>68.4%</b>                             |
| <b>State Average</b>      | <b>57%</b>    | <b>11%</b> | <b>2%</b> | <b>11%</b> | <b>19%</b>      | <b>56.3%</b>                             |

*Source: Office of Accountability, Profiles District Report*

From 2004-05 through 2008-09, NRCPS' average daily membership (ADM) increased, beginning and ending with a 9.9 percentage difference over the five year period. Compared to peer groups, three districts experienced an increase in student population while two had decreases. The Community Group F2 noted a significant increase in ADM while the state experienced only a slight increase (**Exhibit 2-3**).

**Exhibit 2-3  
Student ADM Trends  
2004-05 to 2008-09**

| Entity                    | Average Daily Membership |                |                |                |                | Percentage Change |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
|                           | 2004-05                  | 2005-06        | 2006-07        | 2007-08        | 2008-09        |                   |
| <b>North Rock Creek</b>   | <b>484.4</b>             | <b>486.4</b>   | <b>504.6</b>   | <b>536.2</b>   | <b>532.4</b>   | <b>9.9%</b>       |
| Grove                     | 391.0                    | 412.3          | 410.8          | 413.2          | 357.3          | (8.6)%            |
| Pioneer                   | 307.0                    | 309.0          | 325.7          | 339.8          | 331.9          | 8.1%              |
| Pleasant Grove            | 230.0                    | 229.4          | 233.2          | 234.1          | 237.5          | 3.3%              |
| South Rock Creek          | 346.0                    | 324.1          | 337.1          | 316.5          | 320.2          | (7.5)%            |
| Whitebead                 | 399.3                    | 405.2          | 422.6          | 410.5          | 415.1          | 4.0%              |
| <b>Community Group F2</b> | <b>353.3</b>             | <b>352.6</b>   | <b>692.9</b>   | <b>705.5</b>   | <b>697.8</b>   | <b>97.5%</b>      |
| <b>State Average</b>      | <b>1,153.5</b>           | <b>1,162.2</b> | <b>1,172.2</b> | <b>1,176.7</b> | <b>1,194.3</b> | <b>3.5%</b>       |

*Source: Office of Accountability, Profiles District Report*

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**A. INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

Managing the instructional process to ensure academic success for all students is the responsibility of the school district. A district's instructional program, along with its allocation of resources, determines the extent to which the district meets the educational needs of all students. A well designed and managed process for developing curriculum and directing instruction, collecting assessment data to evaluate and monitor programs, and providing the resources needed to support educational efforts is essential if a district is to meet the needs of its students.

Curriculum development and instructional delivery are critical components of student learning. The presentation of materials, concepts, skills, and new ideas greatly affect the acquisition of knowledge. Curriculum content and instructional strategies must be properly aligned and regularly evaluated in order to promote improvement of student performance.

Local School Boards and superintendents must provide principals and teachers with the tools necessary to consistently deliver the state adopted curriculum, Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS), and to prepare students to be successful on state mandated assessments. Districts must provide curriculum documents that clearly define standards and learning objectives for each subject and each grade so that teachers know content expectations and instructional timelines for student mastery of objectives.

Starting in 1998, Tim Waters, Ed.D. Robert J. Marzano, Ph.D., and Brian McNulty, Ph.D. from Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL) began synthesizing the body of research on the effects of leadership practices on student achievement. In *Balanced Leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement*, McREL identified 21 leadership responsibilities that are significantly associated with student achievement. They have translated the results of this research into a balanced leadership framework that describes the knowledge, skills, strategies, and tools leaders need to positively impact student achievement. The framework moves beyond abstraction to concrete responsibilities, practices, knowledge, strategies, tools, and resources that principals and others need to be effective leaders.

McREL's leadership framework is based upon the idea that effective leadership means more than simply knowing what to do. Effective leadership means knowing when, how, and why to take action. A combination of knowledge and skills is the essence of balanced leadership ([www.mcrel.org/balanced\\_leadership](http://www.mcrel.org/balanced_leadership)).

***Oklahoma School Testing Program***

Student assessment is an integral part of measuring student performance. The Oklahoma State Testing Program (OSTP) details the various standards-based tests that students must take during the school year. The Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT) consists of criterion-referenced tests designed to measure student attainment of skills established in core classes. These skills are guided by PASS. OCCT helps monitor student and school performance relative to state-mandated curriculum standards. The OSTP used a phase in process to increase the number of tested grades and subjects.

In 2008-09, Criterion Referenced Tests (CRT) were administered in mathematics and reading in grades three through eight, writing in grades five and eight, science, and social studies/U.S. history in grades five and eight, and geography in grade seven. End-of-Instruction (EOI) tests are administered in high school following completion of instruction for specified subject-area competencies: U.S. History, Geometry, English II and III, Algebra I and II, and Biology I.

On the 2008-09 CRTs, NRCPS grade three students performed below Community Group F2 and state averages in reading and above the averages in math. In reading, NRCPS student performance was the second lowest among the peer districts and the second highest in math (**Exhibit 2-4**).

**Exhibit 2-4**  
**Percentage of NRCPS and Peer District Grade 3 Regular Education,**  
**Non-High Mobility Students Scoring Satisfactory or Above**  
**2008-09**

| Entity                    | Reading    | Math       |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|
| <b>North Rock Creek</b>   | <b>63%</b> | <b>72%</b> |
| Grove                     | 65%        | 58%        |
| Pioneer                   | 71%        | 58%        |
| Pleasant Grove            | 100%       | 100%       |
| South Rock Creek          | 52%        | 58%        |
| Whitebead                 | 76%        | 62%        |
| <b>Community Group F2</b> | <b>65%</b> | <b>64%</b> |
| <b>State Average</b>      | <b>71%</b> | <b>70%</b> |

*Source: Office of Accountability, Profiles District Report*

**Exhibit 2-5** shows 2008-09 test results of fourth grade students in NRCPS. Performance was lower than the average for Community Group F2 reading and higher in math. Student performance was lower than the state performance in both reading and math. Compared to peer districts, NRCPS reading scores were the lowest while math was the second lowest.

**Exhibit 2-5**  
**Percentage of NRCPS and Peer District Grade 4 Regular Education,**  
**Non-High Mobility Students Scoring Satisfactory or Above**  
**2008-09**

| Entity                    | Reading    | Math       |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|
| <b>North Rock Creek</b>   | <b>60%</b> | <b>70%</b> |
| Grove                     | 71%        | 69%        |
| Pioneer                   | 76%        | 76%        |
| Pleasant Grove            | 100%       | 100%       |
| South Rock Creek          | 80%        | 76%        |
| Whitebead                 | 78%        | 83%        |
| <b>Community Group F2</b> | <b>61%</b> | <b>65%</b> |
| <b>State Average</b>      | <b>68%</b> | <b>71%</b> |

*Source: Office of Accountability, Profiles District Report*

The 2008-09 OCCT grade five tests included five content areas: reading, math, social studies, science, and writing. **Exhibit 2-6** shows the results for grade five students in NRCPS. Student performance was above Community Group F2 in all tested subjects except writing. NRCPS student scores were above the state in three of the tested content areas. Performance was lower than the state in reading and writing. Compared to its peer districts, NRCPS student performance was the second lowest in reading and third lowest in social studies. Overall performance was the third highest in math, science, and writing among peer districts.

**Exhibit 2-6**  
**Percentage NRCPS and Peer District Grade 5 Regular Education,**  
**Non-High Mobility Students Scoring Satisfactory or Above**  
**2008-09**

| Entity                    | Reading    | Math       | Social Studies | Science    | Writing    |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| <b>North Rock Creek</b>   | <b>65%</b> | <b>72%</b> | <b>81%</b>     | <b>95%</b> | <b>88%</b> |
| Grove                     | 74%        | 67%        | 87%            | 91%        | 91%        |
| Pioneer                   | 75%        | 75%        | 93%            | 96%        | 96%        |
| Pleasant Grove            | 63%        | 63%        | 69%            | 88%        | 67%        |
| South Rock Creek          | 70%        | 57%        | 73%            | 90%        | 86%        |
| Whitebead                 | 88%        | 82%        | 88%            | 97%        | 84%        |
| <b>Community Group F2</b> | <b>62%</b> | <b>60%</b> | <b>73%</b>     | <b>86%</b> | <b>89%</b> |
| <b>State Average</b>      | <b>70%</b> | <b>68%</b> | <b>75%</b>     | <b>87%</b> | <b>89%</b> |

*Source: Office of Accountability, Profiles District Report*

**Exhibit 2-7** shows 2008-09 test results for sixth grade students in NRCPS. Performance was higher than Community Group F2 in both reading and math, but lower than the scores for the state in both content areas. Compared to peer districts, NRCPS's performance for sixth grade was the second lowest in both reading and math.

**Exhibit 2-7**  
**Percentage NRCPS and Peer District Grade 6 Regular Education,**  
**Non-High Mobility Students Scoring Satisfactory or Above**  
**2008-09**

| Entity                    | Reading    | Math       |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|
| <b>North Rock Creek</b>   | <b>67%</b> | <b>65%</b> |
| Grove                     | 82%        | 95%        |
| Pioneer                   | 74%        | 74%        |
| Pleasant Grove            | 44%        | 63%        |
| South Rock Creek          | 71%        | 81%        |
| Whitebead                 | 74%        | 67%        |
| <b>Community Group F2</b> | <b>61%</b> | <b>60%</b> |
| <b>State Average</b>      | <b>69%</b> | <b>68%</b> |

*Source: Office of Accountability, Profiles District Report*

Performance for students in grade seven is shown in **Exhibit 2-8**. The results show that NRCPS students scored above Community Group F2 and the state average in reading and math and slightly below both groups in geography. Comparison to the peer districts shows NRCPS

performance was the third highest in reading and the fourth highest in math. Performance was the lowest among peer districts in geography.

**Exhibit 2-8**  
**Percentage NRCPS and Peer District Grade 7 Regular Education,**  
**Non-High Mobility Students Scoring Satisfactory or Above**  
**2008-09**

| Entity                    | Reading    | Math       | Geography  |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>North Rock Creek</b>   | <b>79%</b> | <b>72%</b> | <b>86%</b> |
| Grove                     | 91%        | 97%        | 97%        |
| Pioneer                   | 66%        | 81%        | 90%        |
| Pleasant Grove            | 27%        | 64%        | 91%        |
| South Rock Creek          | 80%        | 87%        | 100%       |
| Whitebead                 | 73%        | 55%        | 94%        |
| <b>Community Group F2</b> | <b>69%</b> | <b>59%</b> | <b>87%</b> |
| <b>State Average</b>      | <b>74%</b> | <b>67%</b> | <b>88%</b> |

*Source: Office of Accountability, Profiles District Report*

The 2008-09 grade eight tests included five content areas: reading, math, history/constitution/government, science, and writing. **Exhibit 2-9** shows the results for grade eight students in NRCPS. Student performance was above the Community Group F2 averages in all content areas except history/constitution/government. Student performance was below state averages in reading, math, and history/constitution/government and above in science and writing.

NRCPS scored the second lowest in reading and science and the lowest in math and history/constitution/government when compared to peer districts. Performance equaled that of two peer districts in writing with a score of 100 percent.

**Exhibit 2-9**  
**Percentage NRCPS and Peer District Grade 8 Regular Education,**  
**Non-High Mobility Students Scoring Satisfactory or Above**  
**2008-09**

| Entity                    | Reading    | Math       | History/<br>Constitution/<br>Government | Science    | Writing     |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|---|------------|-------------|
| <b>North Rock Creek</b>   | <b>71%</b> | <b>59%</b> | <b>67%</b>                              | <b>91%</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| Grove                     | 87%        | 100%       | 86%                                     | 97%        | 97%         |
| Pioneer                   | 81%        | 76%        | 86%                                     | 100%       | 100%        |
| Pleasant Grove            | 50%        | 83%        | 73%                                     | 83%        | 90%         |
| South Rock Creek          | 74%        | 67%        | 70%                                     | 96%        | 96%         |
| Whitebead                 | 88%        | 69%        | 88%                                     | 96%        | 100%        |
| <b>Community Group F2</b> | <b>68%</b> | <b>57%</b> | <b>71%</b>                              | <b>89%</b> | <b>95%</b>  |
| <b>State Average</b>      | <b>72%</b> | <b>65%</b> | <b>76%</b>                              | <b>90%</b> | <b>95%</b>  |

*Source: Office of Accountability, Profiles District Report*

The End of Instruction (EOI) tests are administered to students taking the related high school level coursework. Eighth grade students taking related courses are included in the results of the

testing program. NRCPS and comparison peer districts administered EOI tests in Algebra I, but courses for high school credit were not offered to students in the remaining tested content areas. **Exhibit 2-10** show student performance for NRCPS students, Community Group F2, and the state in Algebra I. Performance was higher than the average for Community Group F2 and the state but the second lowest among peer districts.

**Exhibit 2-10**  
**Percentage of NRCPS and Peer District Secondary Regular Education,**  
**Non-High Mobility Students Scoring Satisfactory or Above**  
**2008-09**

| Entity                    | Algebra I |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| <b>North Rock Creek</b>   | <b>92</b> |
| Grove                     | 100       |
| Pioneer                   | DNA       |
| Pleasant Grove            | 83        |
| South Rock Creek          | 95        |
| Whitebead                 | 100       |
| <b>Community Group F2</b> | <b>79</b> |
| <b>State Average</b>      | <b>83</b> |

*Source: Office of Accountability, Profiles District Report*

*\*DNA: Data Not Available; Grade Configuration of PreK through Grade 8*

Under the accountability provisions in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the federal government evaluates all public schools sites, school districts, and states for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The NCLB annual report card for NRCPS in 2008-09 shows that the district met the AYP standard.

### ***Educational Planning and Assessment System***

The Educational and Planning Assessment System (EPAS) was created by the state of Oklahoma and ACT, Inc. The system uses an integrated series of assessments and reporting services to support educators as they help students set and reach goals for life after high school. The components of EPAS are the EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT assessments. EPAS assessments provide information about academic progress at crucial points in a student's educational career. Information provided by EPAS assessments is linked longitudinally to provide an academic information management system. These linked reports can be used to monitor student progress over time, detect trends, and evaluate instructional outcomes in support of school improvement efforts. The program is funded by the OSRHE, and content guides are available online to assist districts in curriculum alignment and improvement efforts (<http://okhighered.org/epas/>).

EXPLORE, the eighth grade assessment, is the entry point to EPAS. The EXPLORE test includes objective assessments in English, math, reading, and science reasoning. Activities are included so that students begin the process of career and educational exploration. EXPLORE provides baseline data for monitoring student progress through the high school years.

**Exhibit 2-11** shows NRCPS performance on the EXPLORE test as compared to their peers

nationally. NRCPS scores were higher than that of peers across the nation in reading and science and lower in math. Performance equaled that of peers in English and in overall composite score.

**Exhibit 2-11**  
**NRCPS 8<sup>th</sup> Grade EXPLORE Scores**  
**Compared to the Nation**  
**2009-10**

| Subject     | NRCPS Score | National Score |
|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| English     | 14.2        | 14.2           |
| Mathematics | 14.4        | 15.1           |
| Reading     | 14.2        | 13.8           |
| Science     | 16.1        | 15.9           |
| Composite   | 14.9        | 14.9           |

*Source: EXPLORE, Profile Summary Report*

### *Classroom Teachers*

The ratio of students per classroom teacher in NRCPS decreased over a three year period (**Exhibit 2-12**). The district's ratio in the first two years was above community group and below in 2006-06. The average student teacher ratio in NRCPS was below the state averages in all years. Compared to its peer districts, the ratio was the third or fourth lowest in all years. All peer districts were below the state required average of 20 students per teacher. Data for the ratio of students per regular classroom teacher is not available beyond the 2006-07 school year.

**Exhibit 2-12**  
**NRCPS and Peer District Students per Regular Classroom Teacher**

| Entity                  | 2004-05           | 2005-06           | 2006-07           | Percentage Change |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>North Rock Creek</b> | <b>14.8</b>       | <b>15.1</b>       | <b>14.7</b>       | <b>(0.7%)</b>     |
| Grove                   | 13.4              | 13.4              | 14.7              | 9.7%              |
| Pioneer                 | 15.4              | 14.7              | 14.6              | (5.2%)            |
| Pleasant Grove          | 14.1              | 15.0              | 15.4              | 9.2%              |
| South Rock Creek        | 15.8              | 15.1              | 16.1              | 1.9%              |
| Whitebead               | 14.8              | 15.6              | 15.4              | 4.1%              |
| <b>Community Group*</b> | <b>*(G2) 14.5</b> | <b>*(G1) 13.8</b> | <b>*(F2) 15.2</b> | <b>4.8%</b>       |
| <b>State Average</b>    | <b>17.2</b>       | <b>16.8</b>       | <b>16.7</b>       | <b>(2.9%)</b>     |

*Source: Office of Accountability, Profiles District Report*

*Data not available beyond 2006-07*

*\*Community groupings changed yearly*

The average experience of NRCPS teachers decreased 10.6 percent from 2004-05 through 2008-09. The Community Group F2 average increased 5.6 percent, and the state average decreased 0.8 percent (**Exhibit 2-13**). NRCPS teachers averaged more years of experience than their community group and state experience in all comparison years. As a whole NRCPS teachers rank the highest in years of experience among their peer districts in 2004-05 and 2005-06 but began to decline each year from 2006-07 through 2008-09 being the only district to note a percentage of decrease over the five year time.

**Exhibit 2-13**  
**NRCPS and Peer District Average Years of Experience of Regular Classroom Teachers**

| Entity                    | 2004-05     | 2005-06     | 2006-07     | 2007-08     | 2008-09     | Percentage Change |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| <b>North Rock Creek</b>   | <b>16.1</b> | <b>16.4</b> | <b>14.6</b> | <b>14.0</b> | <b>14.4</b> | <b>(-10.6%)</b>   |
| Grove                     | 13.9        | 15.0        | 14.4        | 15.6        | 16.6        | 19.4%             |
| Pioneer                   | 11.5        | 12.0        | 11.6        | 11.6        | 12.4        | 7.8%              |
| Pleasant Grove            | 11.6        | 12.0        | 12.9        | 12.5        | 13.4        | 15.5%             |
| South Rock Creek          | 15.6        | 16.4        | 17.2        | 16.6        | 17.6        | 12.8%             |
| Whitebead                 | 13.4        | 12.9        | 14.3        | 13.5        | 14.8        | 10.5%             |
| <b>Community Group F2</b> | <b>12.5</b> | <b>14.2</b> | <b>13.4</b> | <b>13.6</b> | <b>13.2</b> | <b>5.6%</b>       |
| <b>State Average</b>      | <b>12.8</b> | <b>12.7</b> | <b>12.7</b> | <b>12.7</b> | <b>12.7</b> | <b>(0.8%)</b>     |

*Source: Office of Accountability, Profiles District Report*

The percentage of teachers in NRCPS with advanced degrees was above the Community Group F2 and state average in 2004-05 through 2008-09 (**Exhibit 2-14**). Compared to peer districts, the percentage was higher than all peers except in 2008-2009 when the percentage was slightly below one of the peer districts.

**Exhibit 2-14**  
**Percentage of NRCPS and Peer District Regular Classroom Teachers with Advanced Degrees**

| Entity                    | 2004-05      | 2005-06      | 2006-07      | 2007-08      | 2008-09      |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>North Rock Creek</b>   | <b>44.6%</b> | <b>48.4%</b> | <b>44.2%</b> | <b>36.5%</b> | <b>33.3%</b> |
| Grove                     | 39.2%        | 42.1%        | 36.4%        | 30.9%        | 31.3%        |
| Pioneer                   | 8.0%         | 12.4%        | 13.4%        | 4.4%         | 8.5%         |
| Pleasant Grove            | 32.3%        | 34.4%        | 34.6%        | 25.6%        | 24.2%        |
| South Rock Creek          | 26.8%        | 27.9%        | 26.2%        | 28.9%        | 34.9%        |
| Whitebead                 | 22.2%        | 19.2%        | 18.2%        | 24.3%        | 21.3%        |
| <b>Community Group F2</b> | <b>23.8%</b> | <b>26.0%</b> | <b>26.2%</b> | <b>23.9%</b> | <b>24.6%</b> |
| <b>State Average</b>      | <b>27.8%</b> | <b>27.0%</b> | <b>26.7%</b> | <b>26.5%</b> | <b>25.7%</b> |

*Source: Office of Accountability, Profiles District Report*

**FINDING 2-1**

NRCPS teachers in grades PreK-8 develop and use grade level benchmark assessments to monitor student learning, align instruction, and plan instruction and interventions. The analysis of benchmark data allows teachers to adjust curriculum and instruction to increase students' mastery of learning objectives.

The district uses the Scantron Prosper assessment system to support teachers in implementing formative benchmark assessments for all grades. NRCPS teachers have worked in grade level teams to develop benchmark assessments using state test specifications. Teachers selected test items from a variety of sources, such as textbooks, Buckle Down materials, state OCCT practice tests, and the Prosper assessment system. These assessments are administered by teachers every

nine weeks and counselors conduct make-up testing. In interviews, the principal and counselors explained that the benchmarks align to state assessments with respect to format and are administered in a similar testing manner. The principal supports teachers by scoring tests and entering student answers for first and second grade.

Elementary teachers meet each nine weeks by grade level to discuss assessment results, revise instruction, and plan to re-teach needed skills. Middle level content teachers analyze benchmark data as individuals. With the Prosper system, the formative assessment results can be quickly used to guide or refocus class instruction. Teachers use the assessment reports to target the performance and proficiency of individual students, subgroups, and the entire class. Through the design of the assessments and benchmark data analysis, teachers are actively involved in discussing curriculum, modifying instruction, and realigning curriculum or assessments as needed.

At the elementary level, the benchmark assessments are also used as part of the Response To Intervention (RTI) program to identify students with learning disabilities. According to the special education lead teacher, the OSU professor that worked with the district to implement RTI approved the use of the benchmark assessments as a “universal test,” which has allowed the teachers to embed RTI into the formative assessment process. Planning interventions has become a part of the grade level teams’ ongoing work to use data in modifying and differentiating instruction for all students.

## COMMENDATION

**NRCPS teachers develop and use benchmark assessments to monitor student learning and adjust curriculum and instruction to increase students’ mastery of learning objectives.**

## FINDING 2-2

NRCPS provides extended learning opportunities to increase student achievement. By recognizing that students learn at different rates and in different ways, the district increases student success with a variety of extended learning opportunities offered both during the school day and after school.

The NRCPS Comprehensive Local Education Plan (CLEP) addresses the importance of offering extended learning opportunities, which provide students with additional time and instructional support in meeting learning goals. In interviews, the superintendent and dean of students described a variety of extended learning opportunities available to students. These include:

- Students Needing Academic Practice (SNAP) uses Achieving Classroom Excellence (ACE) funds to support eighth grade students who did not perform satisfactorily on the seventh grade OCCT reading or math assessment. Students are provided two, thirty minutes sessions each week during the Accelerated Reading period.
- Zeroes Aren’t Permitted (ZAP) provides additional time for students in grades 6-8 to complete assignments and improve grades by eliminating zeroes on class assignments.

- After School Tutoring Academy uses REAP federal funds to provide a team of teachers to tutor all students, grades 3-8, after school for two weeks before the state tests.
- Tutoring program for Indian Education uses Title VII to provide after school tutoring for eligible students in grades 3-8 for four days a week during the months of September-April.
- Four week summer school program for first, second, and third graders provides extended learning time in reading and math.

By providing additional learning time and academic support for students, the district is increasing students' opportunities for success. Research from the National Center for Time and Learning illustrates that time is a critical factor in learning, and additional time and individualized instruction increases students' ability to attain mastery ([www.timeandlearning.org](http://www.timeandlearning.org)).

## COMMENDATION

**The district provides extended learning opportunities to increase student achievement by offering a variety of experiences, both during the day and after school, which will provide more learning time and support to students.**

## FINDING 2-3

The district adapts facilities and staffing configurations to support teachers in collaborative teaching to improve student learning. As a result, teachers at several grade levels team teach and differentiate instruction through the use of flexible learning groups, small group instruction, and multiple learning centers.

NRCPS teachers in Pre-Kindergarten and first grade developed proposals to create collaborative teaching environments aimed at meeting the diverse needs of students. Renovations to existing facilities were necessary and were supported by the district. In interviews the principal stated that the superintendent and School Board were willing to consider the initial proposal submitted by PreK teachers, approved the staffing configuration, and renovated classrooms into one large open space to support the team teaching approach. According to the superintendent, the positive outcomes of the PreK team teaching program led to a similar proposal from two of the three first grade teachers. The first grade teachers' proposal was approved, and two additional classrooms were renovated to provide an open classroom space.

By supporting teachers in the collaborative approach to instruction, the superintendent and School Board recognized the importance of allowing teachers to collaborate in creating alternative learning environments to accommodate student needs. In interviews, the principal stated that while the diverse needs of students can be met in a single teacher classroom, team teaching offers several unique advantages. It allows teachers to divide their time between taking the lead in instruction and providing small group or individual instruction. In a single teacher classroom it is sometimes difficult to ensure each student receives the individual attention needed.

Teachers involved in the team teaching classrooms stated that team teaching allows more flexibility in addressing individual student needs by providing small group instruction, individual attention, and multiple learning centers. Teachers are also able to share expertise in lesson planning. In *The Benefits of Team Teaching in Primary Schools*, Stephanie Williams noted that teams offer students an opportunity to observe teachers working together and are given real world examples of collaborative work ([www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com)). The superintendent stated that an unexpected outcome of the team configuration was the instructional continuity provided in these classrooms if a substitute should be needed for one of the teachers.

## COMMENDATION

**NRCPS has adapted facilities and staffing configurations to support collaborative teaching to improve student learning.**

### FINDING 2-4

NRCPS does not have a clear vision of the organizational structure needed to address student learning needs in grades six through eight. A clear vision is critical as the district prepares to open a new facility in 2013 and develops transition plans, instructional schedules, staffing patterns, and student programs.

To open the new school in 2012-13, the district expects to develop a transition plan to address logistics of scheduling shared staff, course offerings in the elective areas, and the configuration of special program services such as guidance and counseling and special education. In interviews, the superintendent and teachers stressed the importance of preparing and planning to ensure a smooth transition.

From interviews conducted with administrators, counselors, and teachers, it was noted that grades six through eight were referred to interchangeably as the junior high, middle school, or the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. When asked about the varied use of terms, the superintendent stated that most had not thought about the middle level grades with respect to a particular educational philosophy, instructional approach, program design, or even to the naming of the new school. There is no clear vision to guide the transition planning process.

The National Middle School Association (NMSA) cites research that suggests the structure of schools makes a difference in student achievement for adolescent youths. Educators do not usually view the terms junior high and middle school as interchangeable terms, but rather as two distinctly different structures for organizing and educating. The differences are described by S.D. Powell, *Introduction to Middle School* (2005), which delineates the structures and philosophies as follows:

- **Junior High** is typically considered subject centered with a primary emphasis on cognitive development and academic classes. Teachers are organized in subject based departments using more traditional instructional strategies. Classes are scheduled for six or eight periods a day with a homeroom period, and classrooms are arranged randomly, or by subject or grade.

- **Middle School** is considered student-centered with an emphasis on both the cognitive and affective development of students. Classes include exploratory, academic, and non-academic courses with teachers and students organized in interdisciplinary teams. Schedules may be flexible or organized in blocks and there is an advisor/advisee program that supports academic and social development. Classrooms are organized by teams and a student's classes are all in close proximity. NMSA indicates the middle school provides more opportunity for interdisciplinary learning, integrated curriculum, and developmentally appropriate staff prepared to teach young adolescents ([www.nmsa.org](http://www.nmsa.org)).

Another structure for schools is offered by the Oklahoma A+ Schools network which organizes schools around a set of commitments that include cross-curricular integration with a focus on fine arts and experiential learning ([www.aplusok.org/](http://www.aplusok.org/)). The A+ Schools network provides ongoing professional development that focuses on collaborative, research based practices as a means of school reform. The infrastructure in A+ Schools supports common planning time, shared vision, and faculty commitment to the goal that schools work for all students.

## RECOMMENDATION

**Establish a clear vision of the organizational structure needed to address student learning needs in grades six through eight that will guide the transition planning, instructional scheduling, and staffing decisions necessary for the opening of the new school.**

The superintendent and principal should engage the faculty in exploring possible organizational structures for the new school program. The superintendent should use professional development time and faculty meetings to initiate the visioning process and engage staff in study sessions to review current literature on educating the adolescent youth. Study groups should review the research on the middle school concept, as well as that on Oklahoma A+ Schools, to develop a common vocabulary and knowledge base of possible school structures for grades 6-8. After adequate time to study and explore the various structures, the superintendent and principal should facilitate discussions focused on organizational structure and philosophy for the new school. The transition plan team should use this vision to drive decisions regarding schedules, staff configurations or interdisciplinary teams, classroom assignments for teachers or teams, and the scheduling of shared teachers.

In O'Fallon, Illinois, when the community decided to build a new school, the district used the opportunity to create the ideal school for educating the middle level child. This district's experience is chronicled in an online article, "Embracing the Whole Child in the Middle Grades," which can serve as a resource for NRCPS faculty as they explore options ([www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/education\\_update/jul10/vol52/num07/toc.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/education_update/jul10/vol52/num07/toc.aspx)). Another primary resource for exploring middle school configurations and other districts' experiences in structuring the middle grades can be found in literature available through NMSA and Oklahoma A+ Schools.

## FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

**FINDING 2-5**

NRCPS does not have a curriculum scope and sequence to guide instruction. Without such a document, instruction is not consistently aligned to ensure student success, and teachers new to a course or grade level are left without clear direction.

In interviews, the principals and teachers indicated that PASS objectives and textbooks serve as the basis for curriculum for all grade levels. The superintendent stated there are no curriculum maps or documents to guide instruction in any content area, and teachers new to the district receive no orientation or guidance regarding curriculum. According to the superintendent, the teachers had worked to develop curriculum calendars, but there had been no follow through for implementation.

The principal stated that since there is usually just one teacher at each content area in grades six through eight, the individual teacher interprets PASS objectives, develops instructional strategies, and determines the sequencing and pacing of learning objectives. In the elementary grades, teachers use the benchmark assessments to provide general direction to the grade level scope and sequence. In interviews, the superintendent stated that until the past textbook adoption cycle, NRCPS teachers selected math textbooks based on individual preferences. With this adoption cycle, the superintendent required that a single textbook series be selected for all grades, making the textbook selection process a support to aligning instruction to PASS. Other than benchmark assessments, no curriculum documents are in place to ensure consistent horizontal or vertical alignment of curriculum.

In interviews with the principal and teachers, there was limited discussion of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) recently adopted by the State Department of Education (SDE) to replace PASS. According to the state timeline, districts should develop a transition plan in 2010-11 for moving from PASS to CCSS and continue the curriculum revision process until completion in 2014 (<http://sde.state.ok.us/Curriculum/CommonCore/default.html>).

The Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) supports districts in aligning instruction through a technique called curriculum mapping, where teachers collaborate to create an operational curriculum, rather than a static document of learning objectives. Curriculum maps include: learning objectives, what is actually taught, instructional timelines and sequence, assessment tools, instructional materials, student activities, and essential questions. This is an ongoing process that allows teachers to work together to make critical decisions about student learning and develop a clear scope and sequence for instruction.

The staff from the SDE's Office of Standards and Curriculum is available to assist schools through the mapping process to align district curriculum to PASS and provide a transition to CCSS. Noble Public Schools in Noble, Oklahoma implemented curriculum mapping with support from the SDE by using a multi-year timeline for implementation.

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## RECOMMENDATION

### **Develop curriculum scope and sequence documents to guide and align instruction in all content areas to provide consistency in learning across grade levels and increase student success.**

The superintendent should meet with the principal and dean of students to determine a timeline and framework for curriculum development for the district. In working with teachers to develop the scope and sequence documents, the district should consider using resource consultants from the SDE to facilitate a mapping process. The benchmark assessments that teachers previously designed for each grade provide a starting point for curriculum design. By using a design down approach, the teachers from each grade level and content area should discuss objectives to be taught, timeframe for teaching, and a comparison of PASS to CCSS. Middle level teachers should meet across content areas to develop plans for the content literacy strand found in CCSS ([www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards](http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards)).

The second phase of the process should focus on establishing the sequence of instructional objectives within each grading period and ensure alignment across grade levels in each content area. Assessment tools can also be included in scope and sequence documents. Since the time allotted may not be sufficient for some students, discussions should focus on interventions for students who are unsuccessful with the paced instructional plan.

Once the draft curriculum document is completed, the principal and teachers should engage in ongoing dialogue to evaluate and revise instructional guides, as well as review benchmarks for continued alignment. Initial scope and sequence documents should provide clear instructional timelines, CCSS transition plans, and alignment of PASS/CCSS related learning objectives for each content area across all grade levels.

## FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

## FINDING 2-6

NRCPS does not provide opportunities for teachers to work together as vertical teams to address curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As a result, teachers are not able to collaborate across grades to ensure consistency in learning and increase student performance.

In interviews, superintendent and principal identified communication across grade levels as an area for improvement. In focus group meetings, teachers stated vertical teaming is needed and suggested that professional development days be used for structured curriculum discussions across grade levels. Teachers stated that discussions about curriculum and instruction across grade levels only occur informally, and that structured vertical collaboration is limited to the textbook selection process.

While elementary teachers have common grade planning periods each day, the principal and teachers stated these are not regularly used to discuss curriculum alignment, and no efforts have

been made to create opportunities for conversations across grade levels. Middle level teachers have a planning time each day that is determined by scheduling needs. However, this planning time is not used for curriculum discussions with colleagues.

In addition, the principal and teachers noted there is no structured time for collaboration across the primary and middle level. The superintendent shared that there is no congruency between elementary and middle level curriculum, and that teachers do not have time to collaborate. In interviews, the superintendent stated that vertical collaboration is needed in order for teachers to align curriculum, monitor performance, and establish continuity in instructional strategies to improve student achievement.

According to the superintendent, the principal receives state assessment data to share with teachers, but the use of the data to improve student learning varies by teacher and grade. Teachers receive stipends to meet after school or during the summer to analyze data. However, these are grade level discussions, and no structured time is provided for vertical teaming.

Vertical communication is a critical component of continuous improvement. Teachers need to meet regularly to discuss the sequencing of skills and assessment data in order to design instruction that improves student performance. It is necessary that teachers have the opportunity to share best practices and develop strategies across grades to increase student performance. El Reno Public Schools (ERPS) has committed to structuring time for both horizontal and vertical teaming. All grade level or content teams meet at least once per week to discuss curriculum and assessment, and a daily plan time is structured at the secondary level for vertical teaming.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Implement vertical teaming by structuring time for teachers to work together across grades to align core content curriculum to increase student performance.**

The superintendent should work with principals and the School Advisory Council to review current practices and explore ways to provide time for collaboration across all grade levels and content areas. Time should be provided on a regular basis for elementary teachers to connect with each other and with middle level teachers. Consideration should be given to:

- Flexing the elective schedule to provide time for primary and intermediate teachers to meet or for intermediate teachers to meet with a designated middle level content teacher.
- Use professional development days for vertical teaming and cross grade level training for curriculum mapping and data analysis.
- Using regularly schedule staff meetings to provide time for teachers to collaborate on curriculum and instruction.
- Requesting permission from the state to deregulate time to provide a regularly scheduled time for vertical teaming and to increase professional development days to create opportunities for vertical teaming.

The allocated time for vertical teaming should support teachers in creating content curriculum maps to align instruction, formative assessments, and sequencing and pacing guides across all grade levels. In addition, regularly scheduled meetings should provide time for vertical teams to develop transition plans for changing from PASS to CCSS, review new state testing blueprints, analyze student performance on state tests, and align instructional strategies and units of study as a means of increasing student performance.

The superintendent, principal, and dean of students should serve as facilitators during the initial stages of teaming and on structured professional development days to ensure vertical teaming discussions result in desired outcomes (<http://www.sedl.org/pubs/change34/2.html>).

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

## **FINDING 2-7**

NRCPS does not evaluate the district assessment program to ensure that the testing schedule and types of assessments support increased student achievement. Without periodic review, the district assessments may not provide relevant data for improving classroom instruction, and testing schedules may negatively impact performance.

NRCPS uses a variety of assessments to measure student learning. The superintendent provided a copy of the district testing schedule for the state tests. This schedule shows that the writing test is scheduled in February, according to state guidelines and all other OCCT, except those for special education, are scheduled on two days within the allowed state testing window. With this schedule, all fifth and eighth graders take two tests each day with math and reading scheduled in the morning, and science and social studies in the afternoon. In interviews, counselors stated that the schedule was compressed into two days due to scheduling difficulties and the inability to secure testing monitors.

There is no written schedule to summarize all district and state assessments administered during a school year. In interviews, the principal and counselors stated that, in addition to OCCT, the following assessments are administered to NRCPS students:

- Cognitive Ability Test (CogAT) is administered every other year to identify gifted and talented students.
- Iowa Test of Basic Skills is used at first and second grade to identify second graders for the Gifted and Talented program; results distributed for teachers to review.
- Benchmark assessments are administered at each grade level three times a year at nine week intervals to assess student learning at that point in time for the purpose of monitoring curriculum, modifying instruction, re-teaching concepts as needed, and identifying students in need of intervention using Response To Intervention (RTI).
- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is administered to first through

third graders three times each year, at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year, to meet state Reading Sufficiency requirements and to assist teachers in identifying students in need of specific reading intervention.

- The district developed fine arts written assessment is given each year in third through eighth grades to meet a state mandate for some form of arts assessment.
- Accelerated Reading (AR) assessments are administered as students complete books that meet AR goals.

According to the superintendent, the district assessment program is not evaluated to determine its effectiveness in improving student achievement or monitoring student learning. It is not clear, in some instances, how teachers understand or use the data provided by standardized tests. In interviews, the principal stated that ITBS results were distributed to individual teachers with no discussion of norm-referenced data or the appropriate use for such information.

In *Assessment FOR Learning, the Achievement Gap, and Truly Effective Schools*, 2008, Rick Stiggins, Educational Testing Service (ETS) Assessment Training Institute (ATI), points out that districts administer assessment for different purposes ([www.assessmentinst.com/author/rick-stiggins/](http://www.assessmentinst.com/author/rick-stiggins/)). Some are assessments “for learning” which are used solely for the purpose of guiding and improving classroom learning. Others are used to measure student learning at a point in time for the purposes of reporting the results; these are assessments “of learning.” Stiggins states, “We must change our assessment beliefs, or we must abandon hope that all students will meet standards or that the chronic achievement gap will close.” There must be a balance of assessments to meet the needs of all instructional decision makers and assessment literacy throughout all systems ([www.ets.org/](http://www.ets.org/)). Stiggins also notes that critically important instructional decisions that bear directly on student learning are made on the basis of classroom assessments, but there has been little investment made in assuring either the quality of these assessments or their effective use in the learning process.

## RECOMMENDATION

**NRCPS should evaluate the district assessment program to ensure that the testing schedule and the various types of assessments support student achievement.**

The superintendent should facilitate the work of a district team comprised of the principal, counselors, Special Education lead teacher, and teacher representatives from each grade to evaluate the current assessment schedule and identify the purpose and use of each assessment tool. The team should use Stiggins’ assessment categories “for learning” and “of learning” to analyze the primary purpose of each assessment, determine how each tool is used and its effectiveness in improving student performance, and consider an appropriate balance of the various types of assessments.

In evaluating the purpose and value of district assessments as well as determining the balance of assessment to instruction, the district team should consider the following:

- OCCT schedule for fifth and eighth graders.

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- Administration and use of CogAT and ITBS.
  - DIBELS as the reading benchmarks at first through third grades.
  - Numbers of instructional hours spent on district required assessments as compared to the use of the assessments for improving student achievement.
  - Use of fine arts assessment to inform instruction and the options provided by the state for assessing fine arts.

Based on the evaluation of the district assessment program, the superintendent should guide the faculty to refine or revise the program to ensure a balance of assessments and appropriateness of each type. A written schedule of assessments should be provided annually and include district and state assessments with a notation of purpose on each one. The assessment program should be reevaluated at the end of each school year to determine if program changes are needed to better support student achievement.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources. If it is determined that some tests should be eliminated, there could be a cost savings to the district.

### **FINDING 2-8**

NRCPS does not conduct ongoing evaluations of the Accelerated Reader (AR) program to determine its effectiveness for teaching reading in grades 1-8. As a result, the long-standing program may not be instructionally appropriate for all students in all grade levels.

The AR program is a progress monitoring software produced by Renaissance Learning. AR provides immediate feedback on students' reading comprehension of books and other materials. Books included in the program are assigned point value. According to Renaissance Learning, AR feedback is motivational for students and provides teachers with data used to inform instruction and monitor and guide student's independent practice.

In interviews, the superintendent and principal stated NRCPS has used AR for many years. No program evaluation has been conducted to determine overall impact on reading achievement and the teaching of reading. The district's AR program focuses primarily on goal setting and uses Reading Practice Quizzes to assess whether or not a student has read a book. During focus group discussions, teachers shared that AR has taken the place of teacher led reading instruction at some grade levels, and that too much emphasis is being placed on this reading program. Teachers stated middle level students are required to meet individual AR goals in order to be eligible for participation in extra-curricular activities.

The principal stated that as a part of AR program, students set reading goals, select and read books at the appropriate level, take the Reading Practice Quizzes, and earns points for books successfully read. Elementary teachers work with students one on one to set AR goals, select books at the appropriate level, and accomplish set goals. Students in elementary grades use the

computer lab or the classroom computer for AR testing. In focus group discussions, elementary teachers expressed concerns that students could no longer visit the school store to spend points earned for meeting AR goals. Teachers stated that the extrinsic reward contributed to success in getting students to read.

In interviews, the principal and dean of students stated that students in grade 6-8 are assigned to a 30 minute AR period each day. During this time students engage in sustained silent reading, AR assessment using the classroom computer, and goal setting. The dean of students manages the AR program for these grades and assists students in setting goals. Secondary students who meet AR goals have the opportunity to participate in four field trips each year. If students do not stay on track with accomplishing goals, they are placed on probation and assigned to detention to assist them in meeting goals. The superintendent stated that goal setting and following through on those goals are important components of AR.

In focus group discussions, teachers also stated that AR should be reviewed to determine its effectiveness and that the faculty could benefit from program evaluation discussions. Some suggested that the 30 minute AR period at middle level could be better spent teaching reading to students experiencing difficulty. Teachers also expressed concern that the AR program should not substitute for the teaching of reading at any grade. The principals stated that some teachers may tend to use AR as the reading program.

Renaissance Learning promotes that the AR can positively impact reading achievement if it has been implemented according to recommended, research based *Accelerated Reader Best Classroom Practices*. AR provides a variety of assessments: Reading Practice Quizzes, Recorded Voices Quizzes, Vocabulary Practice Quizzes, Literacy Skill Quizzes, and Reading Quizzes developed to align to reading series textbooks. The Reading Practice Quiz, as described by Renaissance Learning, assesses literal comprehension of books read. AR is not intended to assess higher order thinking skills, to teach or otherwise replace curriculum, to supersede the role of the teacher, or to provide extrinsic rewards. Renaissance Learning does not require or advocate the use of incentives with the assessment, although it is a common misperception.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Evaluate the Accelerated Reader program to determine its effectiveness in supporting reading achievement and the teaching of reading.**

The superintendent and principal should develop a teacher survey to gather input and identify program strengths and weaknesses. Using a synthesis of survey data as a tool, the superintendent and principal should plan a series of faculty study sessions to explore the benefits of AR, concerns about AR, and possible modifications to ensure a positive impact on reading achievement.

As a component of the study sessions, the faculty should research the pros and cons regarding AR to gain a better understanding of the full program, its potential benefits, and the ways it can be successfully implemented. The following resources address research and also reference other sources of information:

- Renaissance Learning: Report from Renaissance Learning ([www.renlearn.com](http://www.renlearn.com))
- What Works Clearinghouse: Intervention: Accelerated Reader ([http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/beginning\\_reading/arr/](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/beginning_reading/arr/)).
- North West Regional Education Lab (NWREL): The Catalog of School Reform Models (<http://www.nwrel.org>).
- Journal of Children’s Literature: The Lack of Experimental Evidence Supporting the Use of Accelerated Reader, Stephan Krashen, 2003 ([http://www.sdkrashen.com/articles/does\\_accelerated\\_reader\\_work/](http://www.sdkrashen.com/articles/does_accelerated_reader_work/)).

The evaluation process should address teacher concerns expressed during focus groups and survey questions. Consideration should be given to the role of extrinsic rewards in achieving success in reading, designating a class period for AR in middle school, reconfiguration of language arts to include more direct instruction and less AR only learning time, and use of AR data in evaluating student success.

The evaluation of AR should result in findings that will allow the district to refine and strengthen the program for all students. By engaging teachers in evaluation discussions, the district will increase teachers’ understanding of full program implementation and involve them in a continuous process for improving the use of AR.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

## **FINDING 2-9**

NRCPS administrators do not have a structured program of leadership development to provide them with the skills and tools necessary to design, facilitate, and assess initiatives to increase student performance. Without ongoing leadership development, administrators are not able to maintain or acquire new skills essential for leading school improvement efforts.

The NRCPS administrative leadership team consists of the superintendent, principal, and the dean of students. In interviews, the superintendent stated that the team meets frequently to discuss related experiences, district operations, and district issues; during these meetings few structured conversations are planned to address the curriculum and instructional needs, or the academic performance of students. However, the leadership team does meet regularly for professional growth and uses a book study model as the primary tool for their professional development. According to the superintendent, the team is currently reading *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. Other than SDE meetings, Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administrators (CCOSA) conferences, and book studies, no specific leadership activities are provided for NRCPS administrators.

Research conducted by the National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students suggests that the foundation of productive and effective schools begins with the leadership of the school

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principal (<http://www2.ed.gov/offices/OERI/At-Risk/index.html>). The research also indicates that a positive school climate can neither be established nor maintained without strong and effective leadership by the principal.

The Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) developed a school improvement tool, *Ways to Improve School Effectiveness* (WISE), which addresses nine elements essential to effectiveness and includes a rubric for school leadership (<http://sde.state.ok.us/Curriculum/Essential/default.html>). The following indicators are among those addressing effective leadership:

- School leaders use the evaluation process to provide teachers with follow-up and support to change behavior and instructional practices.
- School administrators collaborate with district leadership to create a personal professional development plan that develops effective leadership skills.
- School leaders disaggregate data for use in meeting needs of diverse populations and communicate that data to staff.
- School leaders use the indicators identified in the areas of academic performance, learning environment, and collaborative leadership to assess school needs.

## RECOMMENDATION

**NRCPS administrators should work together to develop or identify a leadership program that will provide them with the skills and tools necessary to lead school improvement initiatives focused on increasing student performance.**

The superintendent should facilitate the work of the principal and dean of students to create a leadership development program that supports ongoing learning. The structure should provide a core of common professional development that ensures the leadership team has foundational knowledge to identify school improvement needs, develop initiatives, and lead change. McREL's *Balanced Leadership* professional development program suggests possible components to consider: the phases of change and a focus on the "what works" research that best address district priorities (<http://www.mcrel.org>). Another source to consider in developing a district program is the leadership rubric included in the SDE's *WISE* planning tool.

The classroom "walk through" model for instructional improvement could be a component to consider for increasing the impact on student achievement at all levels. Oklahoma State Department of Education provides professional development on a research based "walk through" model as part of the department's *Windows on Curriculum*. A program of this nature would provide administrators with a common language for talking about curriculum and instruction and for observing classroom instruction. The training provides district administrators with a common set of skills that target the analysis of teaching, data gathering, and curriculum analysis. A "walk through" program is enhanced when teacher training is based upon observation data and feedback with teachers.