

## V. SUMMARY

A Curriculum Management Audit® is basically an “exception” report. That is, it does not give a summative, overall view of the suitability of a system. Rather, it holds the system up to scrutiny against the predetermined standards of quality, notes relevant findings about the system, and cites discrepancies from audit standards. Recommendations are then provided accordingly to help the district improve its quality in the areas of noted deficiency.

With a new superintendent, the school division is at a natural point for reviewing, evaluating, and affirming or changing its practices and plans. This juncture is an ideal time to request external review such as that given through the Curriculum Management Audit and its analysis protocol. The audit invitation also expresses the commitment to ongoing improvement on behalf of division and school leaders.

Chesterfield County Public Schools faces numerous challenges, not the least of which is housing its steady growing student population. Most school systems are facing a tightening of revenues, increasing requirements of the *No Child Left Behind* law, and an increase in the diversity of needs among students. For CCPS, these challenges have not formed obstacles to continued efforts to establish informed focus for improving learning for all students. An emphasis on data-driven decisions and practices and commitment to professional development to help staff members meet the challenges of the decade are noticeable.

The intent of this audit report is to identify areas in which the education program and supporting division operations do not meet audit criteria for effectiveness and to offer reasonable recommendations related to the identified areas of need. The report contains 19 findings, for which auditors have provided eight comprehensive recommendations with action steps to help bring the specified conditions to a status of congruence with audit standards.

**Standard One** addresses the overall direction to division administration for management of the educational program and system operations. Policy direction is in need of updating and revision, primarily because desired policies are absent or are not specific enough to provide the direction needed. Policy direction is lacking in several crucial areas such as curriculum management, student assessment and program evaluation, and the budget development process. Updating and/or clarifying policies will provide clearer guidance to division leaders and to the organization as a whole. Increasingly, the division’s six-year strategic plan is used to guide decision making in several areas of operation and is adequate in design to provide a clear focus for decisions. School improvement plans are, for the most part, well linked to the plan. Technology and capital improvement plans have been developed but do not have all components necessary for direction. Not all department plans are integrated well with the six-year plan to provide a cohesive focus of effort over time. Analysis of the current organizational chart revealed problems in areas of span of control, chain of command, logical grouping of functions, scalar relationships, and full inclusion. However, the auditors also found that most job descriptions are strong.

The auditors concluded that, for the majority of employees, the school system’s policy manual provides inadequate guidance for personnel evaluations and does not address state requirements. Staff directives for administrator evaluations are adequate. However, administrative guidance in both current teacher evaluation handbooks does not incorporate the state requirement to establish accountability for student academic achievement and is inadequate. Performance evaluations for the overwhelming majority of teachers and many administrators do not provide feedback required by the state; the feedback that is generated is inadequate to support professional development and other personnel actions.

In **Standard Two** analysis, the auditors found that curriculum management direction is scattered among numerous documents. They identified many elements of planning present in the documents, but current documents do not meet audit criteria for planned curriculum management.

CCPS has replaced traditional hard-copy curriculum guides with a variety of online documents and resources. When combined, these documents constitute the written curriculum in the system. Auditors found the scope (availability of written curriculum for the curriculum offered students) of the curriculum to be 100 percent in all content areas at the elementary level, but the scope is less than the minimum audit standard of 70 percent at the middle and high school levels. Overall, across the three levels the scope of the written curriculum is 50.7 percent, which is considered inadequate to direct instruction across all subject areas and courses offered in the schools.

The auditors also found that the quality of the curriculum documents in the Chesterfield County Public Schools is inadequate to facilitate teaching and learning and promote alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum. The existing guides lack the precision and specificity between the objectives, assessments, resources, and teaching strategies, needed to enhance teacher preparation and curriculum delivery. In analyzing the documents for deep alignment, the auditors used the areas of Mathematics and English Language Arts for review. They found some areas of deficiency in English Language Arts and Mathematics guides, materials, and assessments especially selected as samples for this analysis. Auditors focused on internal consistency within the curriculum as well as cognitive complexity.

The auditors found that supplemental programs in Chesterfield County Public Schools are generally not systematically designed, implemented, and evaluated to provide alignment with the curriculum and to increase student achievement.

**Standard Three** involves analysis of connectivity within the system and rational equity within the educational program. Auditors review information about staff development as a critical means for connecting the written curriculum with the classroom and for enhancing the quality of job performance among all staff members of the organization. Professional development is clearly valued in the CCPS. Auditors heard that message from persons in all roles. However, they found that the planning of professional development is inadequate to clarify needs and prioritize time and resources in providing training opportunities. With minimal board policy guidance for planning or implementing professional development, and no comprehensive staff development plan, professional development planning and delivery is fragmented across the system and at school sites. Some offerings have included overlapping, duplicative sessions from the various departments within the division. No systematic approach for following up with support to implement skills learned and to evaluate the impact, especially on student achievement, is in place.

The auditors visited classrooms in all schools during their visit. The purpose of these brief walk-through visits was to obtain a “snapshot view” of what instruction and student learning activities looked like across the division. They noted a lack of variation in instructional practices and found that, for the most part, the instruction did not reflect the expectations communicated by the Division. The predominant instructional strategies involved direct instruction to a full class, whole group student activities, and seat work. Certainly, numerous examples of collaborative student activities, small group instruction, and hands-on learning strategies were observed, too; but these were not in the numbers expected, given the messages in both interviews and documents of value placed on differentiated instructional practices. If the brief observations across the system are representative of daily instruction, the variation in strategies expected is not occurring. Auditors also took note of the available computers in classrooms for student use in learning. They saw only 22.5 percent of the available computers being used for instruction, though the emphasis placed on technology for instruction and learning would suggest more use.

Under Standard Three, the audit uses two terms with specific meaning: *equality*, which means exactly the same; *equity*, which refers to differences based on need or fairness. Issues of disparity and disproportional representation also fall into the category of *equity*. The audit team noted several examples of inequities in the Chesterfield County Public Schools. The data analyzed showed inequities in student discipline practices. Black and Hispanic students and males are more likely to receive more severe penalties. Black and Hispanic students are substantially under-represented in higher level classes and programs, while they are over-represented in Special Education and Title I programs. Auditors found that “ability” grouping (tracking) at early ages exacerbates the imbalance of minority students in higher level classes and programs. Further, Black and Hispanic students are substantially more likely to be retained than their White classmates. All racial/ethnic subgroups, except White, are under-represented among both the faculty and the administration of the Chesterfield County Public Schools when compared with the racial/ethnic distribution of the respective student populations.

Obtaining feedback to use in ongoing decision making at all levels of the school organization is the focus of **Standard Four**. The auditors found that use of student data is an emerging practice at the division and school levels, even without a formal plan for student assessment and program evaluation. There are no established and consistent procedures or protocols for effective decision making regarding curriculum and instruction for the improvement of student achievement, or for the adoption, review, modification, or deletion of supplemental or intervention programs.

The audit looks at the assessments available for the curricular areas offered in a school system, or the scope of assessment. The scope of formal student assessment in the Chesterfield County Public Schools is inadequate across all grade levels. At the elementary level, the scope of assessment is 100 percent in English Language Arts and Mathematics but inadequate in other areas. At the middle school level, the scope of assessment is 100 percent in Social Studies but below the 70 percent level required for adequacy in all other areas. The high school scope of assessment was inadequate in all content areas. All assessments administered division-wide to all students are state-required tests or division-developed benchmark assessments for state-tested courses.

CCPS students perform at or above the state average on most *SOL* tests in Grades 3, 5, and 8, and the overall performance is increasing. Student performance on the high school *SOL* and *End of Course tests* is increasing in all subject areas and is near or slightly above the state average in most subject areas. The percent of students performing in the Advanced Proficient level of the *SOL* and the *EOC* tests is increasing in many grade levels and subject areas and is equal to or greater than the state average in the Advanced Proficient level.

However, when data were disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, problems were identified. In general, female students perform at a slightly higher level than male students in most grade levels and subject areas. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students consistently perform at lower levels than the district average in all subject areas and grade levels. That achievement gap is projected to close from one year to never in Grades 3, 5, and 8. Black and Hispanic students consistently perform lower than Whites in all grade levels and subject areas. Their achievement gap is projected to close from one year to never. Limited English proficiency students consistently perform at a lower rate than the division average in all subject areas and grade levels. Student performance on the *SAT* is stable and slightly above the national average, but below the state average. Achievement gaps identified by the auditors, in general, are not projected to close unless significant changes occur. This finding constitutes a major alert for the CCPS school system, as well as for individual schools.

The auditors found that although board policy direction is inadequate and no formalized assessment plan exists to direct the use of data in improving student achievement, the division collects and disseminates an abundance of data that are used by many administrators and teachers. These data are used to inform instruction in teachers’ daily and weekly planning, for example, and to plan for improving student

performance on state and national tests. The use of data has received attention in recent years at the school and division level, and auditors observed a commitment among administrators and teachers to continue this emphasis because they are now at the stage where they see and experience the benefits of data use in the process of instruction.

The audit review under **Standard Five** emphasizes productivity, or the capacity of the organization to improve results over time, given the same or reduced revenues. Among the factors included here are the budget development process, interventions (programs or practices) to target specific needs for change in order to improve results, and the facilities/support services of the organization. The auditors found that current budget development and decision-making processes of the Chesterfield County Public Schools do not yet provide tight linkage between the resources provided and system goals and priorities, nor do they systematically include data from program evaluations. Reportedly, there are informal considerations of student data when making decisions, but the process is not formalized to ensure that data-based decisions are made when determining allocations. The budget development process does not meet audit expectations as currently practiced.

The auditors found that at both school division and school site levels, the steps in selection, planning, monitoring, and evaluating are not systematically included in the design at the point of the original intervention decision making. Most interventions noted were specific programs, but some interventions included actions or changes in ways of conducting a specific service or activity. However, regardless of the change or the intervention chosen, auditors were provided no evidence of any evaluation measures and associated data being used consistently in determining the continuation, expansion, modification, or termination of interventions.

Housing the growing student population is one of the biggest challenges facing CCPS. With over 300 trailers being used as classrooms, and no sign of relief in sight, the auditors particularly looked at the planning processes and criteria. The auditors determined that the Chesterfield County Public Schools' long-range facility planning meets seven of eight audit standards. However, construction continues to run behind growth, in part due to the variations used in projecting student enrollment. The current Capital Improvement Plan has several facility needs missing in its content, and projection variations between those of the Division and those used by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors continue. Nevertheless, auditors found most schools well maintained and in good condition to serve students and teachers although several of the classroom trailers face specific challenges in security, communications, and technological capacity.

Overall, the audit team found the motivation and intent of professionals in the Chesterfield County Public Schools to be student-centered and forward-looking. The Division holds periodic feedback sessions in which parents, community members, and staff participate together to discuss issues of critical importance to education in CCPS. Most classrooms visited by auditors were cheerful, pleasant settings focused on learning. Auditors sensed a professional pride among both division and school staffs in visits and interviews. However, some visual indicators of needs for teacher support in teaching to an increasingly diverse student group were noted. Some staff opinions reflected implicit socio-economic biases and resistance to the economic and well as ethnic changes in the school communities, implying that these are the "excuses" for some students not learning. Research clearly shows that these circumstances are simply barriers to be overcome, and that they can be overcome with aligned curriculum, effective teaching practices, and system- and community-wide support for improved student achievement. With the professional backgrounds, experience, and commitment of so many division and school leaders and staff members, the auditors firmly believe that the Chesterfield County Public Schools will move to higher levels of excellence.

The PDK/CMSi audit team has suggested numerous steps for improving all areas in which the current status precluded meeting audit criteria. While additional actions might be developed by the division

administration and staff to implement these recommended changes, most of the recommendations that have been offered have a history of success in similar school systems. The first step is for the Superintendent to develop a work plan for responding to the findings and recommendations. With eventual approval by the Board and active implementation over the next three to five years by the administration, this blueprint can bring organization effectiveness and student achievement to new heights.