Ready to Rise:

Our Students, Our Future, Our Time

Report of Findings and Recommendations for the
Jackson Public Schools

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FOREWORD

In an era of high-stakes accountability, a widening achievement gap, and a sense of despair with public schools, there has never been a more important time for the community to come together with the common goal of ensuring that all students in Jackson have the opportunities a great education can provide.

District improvement is challenging work. It requires all aspects of the system to function effectively. This means not only that all adults working in our schools must be ready and willing to contribute to improvements, but–perhaps more importantly–that all involved must work together, effectively and seamlessly, to address the complex challenge of improving the system while supporting each and every individual within it.

Without analyzing the historical and present issues impacting the district's effectiveness, the district will not be able to effectively implement the changes needed to improve. This report presents an honest and comprehensive assessment of the district's performance and is grounded in rich feedback from students, educators, community members, and community leaders. In summary, it presents a story of a district that has the heart to achieve, but one that has struggled to do so in the recent past.

The work ahead is urgent, and the reality is that achieving these goals will take time. We have seen districts across the country work hard to address the challenges of improvement, with many failing to meet the demand. But the last decade has taught us valuable lessons about district improvement. Chief among those lessons is that improvements must be systematic and sustainable to create a culture that consistently expects students can and will do well, and acts according to that understanding. This report takes these lessons and leverages them to present recommendations that are measured and deliberate. It intends to provide a road map for success, one step at a time.

The recommendations in this report will require thoughtful coordination, skillful implementation, and continued reflection. Even when this process presents challenges that seem insurmountable, the community can and must find ways to work through them together on behalf of all JPS students. They deserve it.

The study team presents this report with a great deal of optimism and hope. This student-centered assessment presents an opportunity to acknowledge the challenges and move forward together to craft practical solutions. The recommendations presented

in this report are part of a solid foundation for district improvement that is necessary–and possible. But first, we must believe it is possible. If we don't, we will never accomplish the goal of providing a high-quality education that is responsive to the needs of each student the district serves.

Jackson is a community filled with individuals and organizations deeply invested in their community and committed to doing what's best for their students. Through their thoughtful dialogue, continued reflection, and strategic action, Jackson Public Schools can be a model for public school systems across the nation.

Overview

In the fall of 2016, given significant declines in the district's performance on state-mandated assessments, as well as violation of numerous state accreditation standards, Jackson Public Schools (JPS) was placed on probation by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). The department voted to take over the district in September 2017 and submitted to Governor Bryant a proposed declaration of emergency as required by law. Rather than carry out the declaration, Governor Bryant consulted Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and various education experts to determine a plan that would best serve the students of JPS. The result was a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between JPS, the Office of the Governor of the State of Mississippi, the Office of the Mayor of Jackson, Mississippi, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation that called for the creation of a commission charged with conducting a student-centered assessment of JPS that would inform a plan of action for the district. With these goals in mind, the Better Together Commission (BTC) was formed with 15 members appointed by Governor Bryant, Mayor Lumumba, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and JPS.

Taking Action

To begin the work of charting a new course for JPS, the BTC released a Request for Proposals in December 2017 to identify an organization to conduct an assessment and create a plan for JPS. Insight Education Group (Insight) was selected to fulfill this role and began partnering with the BTC and JPS in February 2018. Based on the BTC's priorities, Insight conducted a nine-month long student-centered study to inform the creation of a community-wide vision and plan of action with the goal of creating an excellent, equitable education system that benefits all students in JPS. Insight submitted this report on November 1, 2018 to the BTC to share with the MOU partners, JPS Board of Education, and the incoming Superintendent of Schools for their use in guiding a strategic district improvement process.

METHODOLOGY

Insight Education Group conducted a comprehensive needs assessment that considered all aspects of the district's functioning between February and October 2018. The team met with numerous stakeholders from the district and larger community to draw on as many perspectives as possible and to confirm trends by collecting multiple data sets. The needs assessment included an analysis of:

- District student achievement, attendance, and behavior data
- District staffing
- School scheduling
- Classroom instruction
- Leadership capacity
- Instructional coaching
- Professional development
- Programming and staffing related to struggling students and students enrolled in Exceptional Education
- District finances

Additionally, the study team conducted a thorough review of the rich information available in reports created by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE-c, 2017) and the Council for Great City Schools (CGCS-a, 2017) and factored the reports' findings into this set of recommendations for JPS.

The data collection process included the following activities:

- Quality School Reviews, including student, leader, teacher, and instructional coach focus groups
- Review of longitudinal student achievement, attendance and behavior data
- Teacher surveys
- Parent focus groups
- Central Office focus groups
- Assessment of current programming for struggling students
- Assessment of the district's finances
- Meetings with stakeholders

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Prior to delving into areas in need of improvement, it is noteworthy to highlight some overall assets that are driving positive change in JPS. While the district has several areas identified as in need of improvement, it will be essential to understand the assets of the district and assess how they might support the district in enacting change more quickly.

Students

The students in the Jackson Public Schools are an incredible asset, and they must be seen and treated as such in order for real change to occur. They are the constituents for whom this report exists. They have incredible hopes and dreams and the capacity and desire to achieve them. This report provides a set of recommendations to support JPS students in all aspects of their development and support them in their efforts to achieve their hopes and dreams backed by the excellent education they deserve.

Committed Leadership

The recently appointed JPS Board of Education members exhibit a strong commitment to improving the state of education for all students in JPS. Discussions with school board members demonstrated their clear understanding of current conditions, unwavering dedication to improving those conditions, and uniform commitment to providing all students equitable access to a high-quality education and improved achievement. The JPS Board of Education also recently appointed a new superintendent. This appointment is an important step in ensuring a new future for the students in Jackson.

Caring Staff

As evidenced in numerous conversations at all levels of the organization, JPS staff members care deeply about the students in the district. They recognize the myriad challenges present for children and families in Jackson, as well as the potential barriers the district faces, such as inequitable distribution of resources at the state level, poor infrastructure, and a tightening budget. However, the majority of staff members convey an overwhelming sense of wanting to do more to help students achieve academic and social-emotional success and are optimistic about the impact this study and resulting recommendations could have on their work.

Community Support

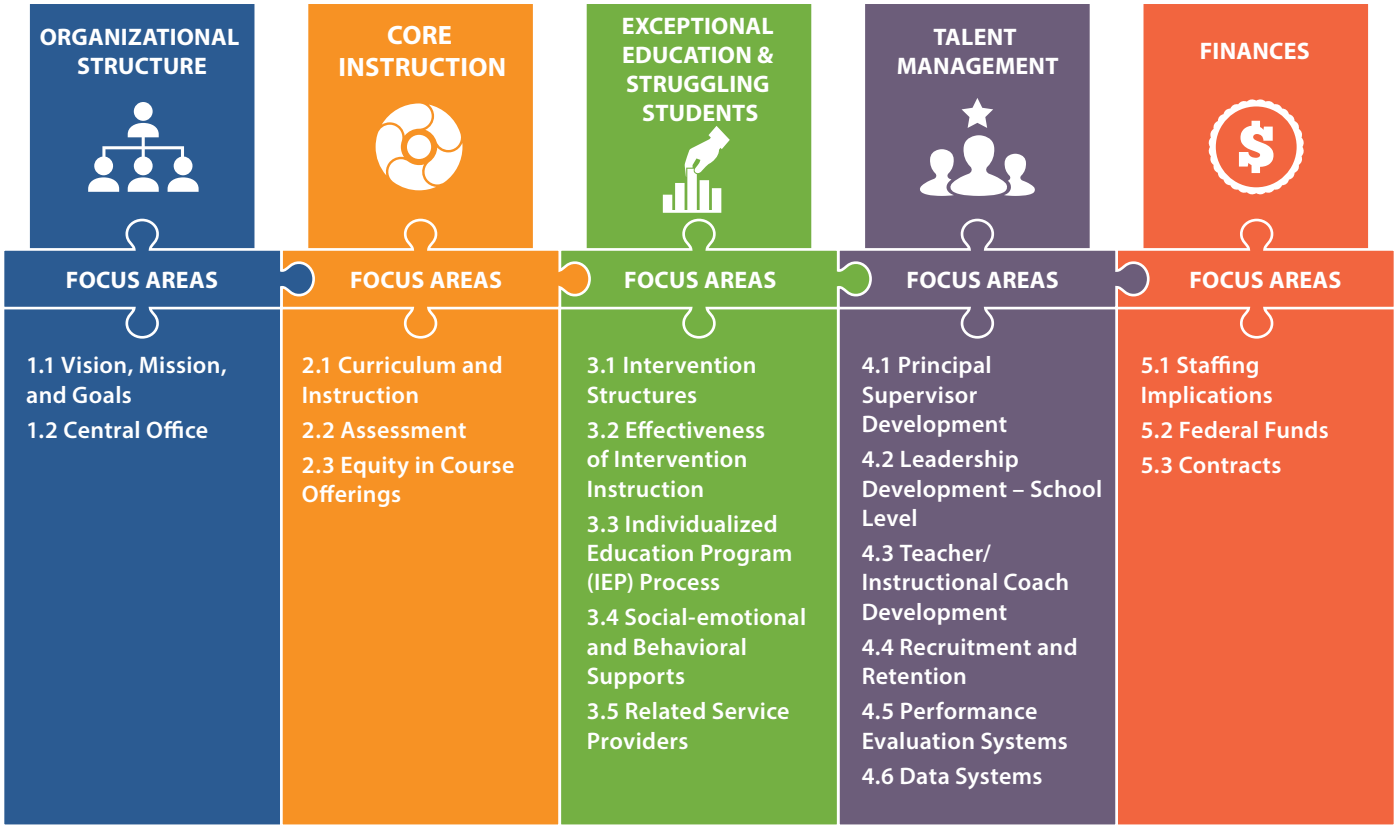
The broader Jackson community has a vested interest in helping the district gain

traction and improve conditions for all students. In the study team's conversations with stakeholders representing a multitude of government, business, philanthropic, higher education, and community-based organizations, it became clear that JPS has become a unifying force for several entities who are invested in helping the district improve at all levels. The work occurring in JPS may someday be looked upon as a national model of collaboration among stakeholders representing vastly different sectors of the community unifying around a singular mission to better serve students.

Domains in Need of Improvement

This report summarizes major findings and recommendations based on the data collection efforts described above. Our analysis revealed five domains in need of improvement, and we have broken down each domain by focus areas based on trends from the data.

While the domains and focus areas are all interconnected, this delineation is intended to provide more specificity in order to make the analysis more meaningful and the recommendations more actionable.



DOMAIN 1: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Overview

The first domain relates to organizational structure in JPS, both at the school and district levels. In our needs assessment, we found widespread uncertainty about the district's theory of action and an inability across stakeholders to articulate its mission, vision and goals. With regard to the district structure, stakeholders at all levels indicated a need for changes to the role and function of Central Office, particularly related to its ability to streamline support and foster instructional improvement. Areas identified as requiring the most immediate attention in Central Office include fragmented departments, undefined decision-making structures, lack of clear reporting structures, and minimal cross-departmental collaboration across offices and departments. The recommendations for this domain include steps for JPS to define and communicate its vision and goals, as well as reorganize the district's organizational structure to serve those goals and improve teaching and learning in schools.

Focus Area 1.1: Vision, Mission and Goals

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- There is widespread uncertainty about the district's theory of action, mission, vision, and goals. Stakeholders noted that there were school and classroom goals in place, largely tied to improving test scores, but that there was little evidence that those goals were related to a larger district vision.
- In spite of low proficiency rates among students, teachers largely indicated satisfaction with their school's leadership, mission and vision, focus on student achievement, and allocation of resources in their survey responses. This is an area of concern for further review given the district's pervasively poor student achievement rates.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 1.1.1 Develop new district vision, theory of action, and goals

- Collaborate with stakeholders to use the assessment of the district's needs contained in this report, as well as any other sources of information deemed appropriate, to begin to develop a vision and mission for the district; a theory of action aligned to the vision and mission; and core beliefs that all members of the organization can embrace.
- Outline the theory of action and its component parts in a multi-year Strategic Operating Plan (SOP) that becomes the unifying force for district improvement.
- Develop and align priorities and goals to the new district theory of action and its components.

Recommendation 1.1.2 Communicate vision, theory of action, and goals

- Provide internal and external stakeholders with opportunities to review and understand the district's new direction prior to the JPS Board of Education adoption of the plan.

Recommendation 1.1.3 Align school and department goals

- Align Central Office department and school goals to the district's plan.
- Measure each Central Office and school staff members' performance through achievement of goals related to the district SOP.
- Require each department and individual to develop a standard reporting mechanism and established timelines for reporting progress to the superintendent.

Focus Area 1.2: Central Office

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- Stakeholders feel the need for changes to the role and function of Central Office, particularly related to its ability to streamline support and foster instructional improvement.
- The Central Office has fragmented departments, undefined decision-making structures, lack of clear reporting structures, and minimal cross-departmental collaboration. Many stakeholders in JPS voiced the need for important changes in the role and function of the Central Office, particularly related to its ability to streamline support, as opposed to impede instructional improvement. Specifically, respondents indicated that more streamlined and efficient processes, increased communication and collaboration between key offices, and more consistent progress-monitoring of initiatives and purchases were essential to realizing improvement.
- Given the lack of coherent organizational structure, it is unclear if the Central Office is appropriately staffed. Data from the Council of Great City Schools (CGCS, 2017-a) suggests JPS has higher staffing levels of non-classroom based employees than is typical of urban districts of comparable size.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 1.2.1 Align the district's organizational structure to district goals

- Examine existing district organizational structures in relation to goals outlined in the strategic plan.
- Assess whether the current structures are aligned to the new direction of the district.
- Assess the gaps between the existing organizational structures, positions, and staff competencies and those needed to achieve the new goals.
- Align JPS' organizational structure to district goals.

Recommendation 1.2.2 Create a new organizational chart

- Develop an organizational chart that reflects the new direction of the district and is aligned to the district's needs.
- Establish the expectation that all members of the superintendent's cabinet and the larger Central Office understand their role in improving conditions for students.
- Develop systems to promote intersectionality among roles and create cross-functional teams to expedite district progress.

Recommendation 1.2.3 Examine staffing levels and individual competencies within Central Office teams to ensure alignment to the district's structure and functions

- Prepare detailed job descriptions with clearly outlined expectations for performance, including student achievement, for each existing or newly created role.
- Determine appropriate staffing levels for Central Office teams and staff accordingly.

Recommendation 1.2.4 Establish structures for a high-functioning leadership team

- Develop structures and cadence for cabinet meetings to ensure effective monitoring of district-wide initiatives.
- Ensure alignment between the district Strategic Operating Plan and each department's operating plan.
- Develop an accountability structure for progress toward each department's plan.

DOMAIN 2: CORE INSTRUCTION

Overview

The Core Instruction domain includes the study team's assessment of JPS' curriculum and instruction; assessment systems; equity in course offerings; and data systems. Undergirding our findings across these focus areas is the district's pervasive poor student achievement outcomes, perhaps best illustrated by students' proficiency rates in English Language Arts and math. In our classroom observations and conversations with educators, we found a widespread misunderstanding of, and therefore poor implementation of standards-based instruction, as well as either inconsistently implemented or nonexistent curricula. Instructional practices across classrooms are varied and there is a lack of clear, rigorous expectations for teachers.

Regarding assessment, the study team found misalignment between the standards taught and those assessed. Assessments appear to be used as compliance exercises, and the frequency with which they are given allows little time for teachers to shift instruction before the next cycle of assessment begins. These findings are indicative of a larger issue the district and schools face: they do not have a systematic process for continuous improvement.

Finally, with regard to equity in course offerings, the study team found inconsistencies in offerings for students at different schools in unified arts (elementary schools), elective opportunities (middle schools), and advanced courses (high schools). The recommendations for this domain are wide-ranging and include ways for the district to address the needs identified across the four focus areas.

Focus Area 2.1: Curriculum and Instruction

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- Students in JPS demonstrate significantly poor academic achievement, negatively impacting their potential to graduate from high school college- and career-ready, as evidenced by the following measures:
  - 14.8% of JPS seniors reported by MDE as college-and-career ready in 2017
  - Graduation rate: 71%
  - Proficiency rates:
    - ELA: 20.9%
    - Math: 16.9%
    - Science: 37.3%
    - U.S. History: 31.3%

- The district does not have clear, rigorous expectations for teachers regarding high-quality, standards-based instruction.
- There is no district-wide curriculum, which results in inconsistent, and generally less rigorous, instruction for students. Observations and focus groups revealed:
  - High levels of direct instruction with little evidence of engaging students deeply in rigorous academic content.
  - Minimal opportunities for student collaboration.
  - Inconsistent use of effective instructional practices.
  - Need for high-quality instructional resources.
- Note: To address the lack of curriculum, the district is currently engaged in a process to design curriculum for classroom teachers. However, the process needs a robust professional development system necessary to ensure consistent and effective implementation.
- In the absence of effective core instruction throughout the district, interventions are heavily utilized to attend to student learning. Intervention structures and staffing are inconsistent throughout the district, and thus not effectively serving the students most in need of intervention.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 2.1.1 Establish Central Office structures to support curriculum and instruction

- Establish a Curriculum and Instruction Office, under the direction of a senior district leader, to ensure the district can implement and monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the district.

Recommendation 2.1.2 Develop an instructional framework

- Develop an instructional framework that clearly articulates instructional expectations and is grounded in existing research and demonstrated best practices regarding instruction (e.g. Elmore's Instructional Core, 21st Century Learning or Portrait of a 21st Century graduate, College and Career Ready Standards).
- Develop a plan for initial training on the instructional framework and ongoing support for administrators, coaches, and teachers.

Recommendation 2.1.3 Develop plan for ensuring a comprehensive curriculum for all subject areas and grade levels

- Engage in immediate decision-making regarding the future of curriculum in the district.

- First, assess the quality of the curriculum. In a district that has experienced historically uneven achievement, to what extent can there be assurances that there is little variability in high quality curriculum across the system? Variability in quality produces greater chances of inequitable access to rigorous content. Reducing variability in the quality of resources would require both high degrees of quality assurance and an iterative process of field testing in which materials are revised frequently to increase quality and validity.
- If the district intends to continue the process of building a curriculum using teacher writers, it must:
  - Create a clear plan/timeline and budget to ensure completion.
  - Develop an iterative process of field testing, gathering feedback, and revising curriculum materials in order to assure quality (including vertical alignment) and reduce variability.
  - Plan to assess effectiveness of curriculum based on student assessment and achievement data.
  - Develop a plan to ensure adequate training and support of teachers to ensure effective implementation.
- If the district decides to purchase a curriculum, it must:
  - Immediately engage in a process to vet potential programs in time for the 2019/20 budgeting process to ensure adequate resources are allocated both to purchase the curriculum and cover the costs associated with training and support.
  - **Note:** Based on current instructional practice, poor student achievement, the high percentage of new teachers in the district, and a lack of Central Office capacity to both develop a curriculum and support implementation, we strongly recommend purchasing off-the-shelf curriculum. This will reduce variability in access to high-quality content, within and across grades, and preserve time for professional development required to ensure consistent, rigorous implementation.

- Develop a structure to support teachers in effective implementation of the new curriculum.
  - Develop a staged approach to implementing the curriculum to ensure adequate time and resources for training and ongoing support for teacher and administrators.
  - Build a model of intensive and skillfully staged professional development regarding curriculum implementation regardless of the district's approach to curriculum (e.g. continuing to use district-developed materials, replacing district developed materials with off-the-shelf curriculum or a hybrid approach).
  - Build a model of intensive one-on-one instructional coaching.

- In the future, engage teachers in the design of effective curriculum. The skill of instructional design is of great value to teachers, as it allows individual educators to addresses specific student needs and differentiate instruction in their classrooms.

Recommendation 2.1.4 Re-evaluate tiered intervention program to ensure it is leveraged as a method for supporting students truly in need of intervention services and not as a replacement for ineffective instruction

- Adopt and communicate a clear district theory of action regarding the importance of improving core instruction versus significantly relying on tiered interventions. Invest heavily in clarifying what good core instruction looks like and training teachers on how to achieve it.
- Upon adoption of a new curriculum, examine the current intervention programs to ensure alignment.
- Adopt intervention strategy and programs as appropriate.
- Provide training and guidance for schools on the appropriate use of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions and on implementation the district's selected program(s).

Focus Area 2.2: Assessment

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- The district's benchmark assessment system does not drive instructional practice due to the following issues:
  - Misalignment between standards taught and those assessed due to a lack of alignment between the district's pacing guides and assessment pacing
  - Data that is not consistently usable for teachers
  - Difficulty getting disaggregated data in a timely manner for use in school data meetings
- School-level personnel expressed frustration with the large volume of assessments required with little time to shift instruction before the next. This has resulted in a pervasive use of assessments as compliance exercises rather than as tools to assess instructional effectiveness. (It is important to note that the district has reduced the number of student assessments for the 18/19 academic year to address this issue.)
- The district needs a systematic process and guidance for the use of benchmark assessment data in schools.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 2.2.1 Create a district vision for assessment, including a definition of its role in improving instruction and achievement

- Review and revise the district's approach to formative and summative assessment practices and streamline assessments to minimize interruptions to daily instruction.

Recommendation 2.2.2 Analyze the current benchmark assessment system to determine its fit within the district's pacing guide and overall vision for assessment

- If the assessment system is not aligned, work with the vendor to provide a sequence of assessments that is more appropriately aligned to the district's pacing of standards.
- If necessary, identify a new benchmark assessment system that is better aligned with the district's curriculum and intended uses.

Recommendation 2.2.3 Develop a unified District Assessment Calendar that provides an explanation of assessments and their purpose

- Develop and publish a calendar that allows adequate time between assessments for analysis of data results and instructional adjustments.
- Provide professional development on the timing and purpose of each assessment so that school level staff understand the rationale for regular common assessments as part and parcel of effective instruction and not something that is disconnected from instruction.

Recommendation 2.2.4 Develop and implement a consistent system to collect, analyze, report, and present student data to schools

- Implement a data dashboard that tracks and displays progress toward district- and school-level goals, producing user-friendly and relevant reports for all district, state, and community stakeholders as requested.
- Provide schools with student- and teacher- level data that is immediately actionable and provide technical support to schools in understanding the use of that data to shift instruction.

Recommendation 2.2.5 Establish and monitor processes and procedures to ensure high standards for data integrity, maintain and report data in accordance with state and federal laws, inform the district's data strategy, and guide the use of data for continuous improvement

- Ensure accountability for this by including this specific recommendation in job descriptions and performance reviews for appropriate staff.

Focus Area 2.3: Equity in Course Offerings

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- There are inconsistencies in course offerings and inequitable opportunities for students at all grade levels.
  - Students attending magnet and other specialized elementary schools receive wider access to art, music, and physical education than their peers.
  - A very small percentage of students at the elementary level have access to offerings such as dance, computer, and foreign language.
  - While many of the middle schools offer similar electives, specialized schools tend to offer more unique electives.
  - Most high schools in JPS offer limited access to advanced, rigorous courses. For example:
    - There are few AP or Advanced World Language courses offered across the district.
    - There are no Dual Credit Social Studies or World Language courses offered across the district.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 2.3.1 (Elementary School) Develop a plan to standardize specials/ unified arts offerings across elementary schools

- Create district alignment in expectations (non-negotiables) and best practices for master scheduling.
- Review academic and specials course offerings and scheduling practices across schools to ensure equity of opportunities for students.
- Consider sharing specials teachers between schools to provide access to a wider variety of specials.

Recommendation 2.3.2 (Middle School) Develop a plan to standardize electives and course offerings across the district

- Consider standardizing the middle school arts and electives courses available to all students.
- Provide intervention or new strategic offerings.
  - Replace a reduced section of an existing course with an intervention section or a new elective aligned with the school's strategic direction.

- Investigate using shared or part-time staff to increase the breadth of electives offerings at all schools.
  - For example, schools could share a foreign language teacher across multiple schools.
  - In some schools, part-time positions can provide needed work/life flexibility for teachers.

Recommendation 2.3.3 (High School) Develop a plan to increase the rigor of course offerings

- Examine entry criteria into Advanced, AP, IB, and Dual Credit courses to see if it is a) consistent district-wide and b) too restrictive.
- Identify enrollment goals by school and department for rigorous courses and encourage student enrollment and participation.
- Repurpose partial FTEs in each department to increase course offerings.
  - For example, if a school can save .2 FTE of a Science teacher, the school could use that extra teacher time to offer an Advanced Physics course (as long as it has adequate enrollment).
- Combine AP and advanced courses into one section.
  - For example, many schools combine Advanced and AP French into one course with the instructor differentiating.
- Increase partnerships with local colleges and universities.
  - This will allow students to attend college courses off campus or the district to bring college instructors to teach courses on campus, which can be valuable experiences for students.
- Build an online course catalogue.
  - Online courses allow schools to offer "low-interest" courses to students who would not otherwise have access.
    - For example, if only one student wanted to take AP Latin, they would be able to access it online.

DOMAIN 3: EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION & STRUGGLING STUDENTS

Overview

The third domain considers JPS' programming for exceptional education and struggling students. Struggling students, including students placed in exceptional education (having IEPs), are significantly impacted by a Central Office that is disorganized in its approach to teaching and learning and by inconsistent delivery of high-quality core instruction at the school level. The intervention service-delivery plan, meaning how the district conceptualizes providing support to struggling students, is inconsistent across schools in JPS. Instruction for struggling students is over-reliant on interventions rather than core instruction and often has struggling students receiving academic supports from non-certified staff that frequently lack the appropriate content expertise. Many staff members shared that they are invested in supporting their students and are committed to their well-being; have built strong relationships with their students; and have a desire to improve their skill set to better support their students. Specifically, staff members expressed a desire to learn more about supporting students struggling academically and providing better social-emotional and behavioral supports to students in their classroom. The recommendations in this domain include next steps for JPS to modify: their intervention models and intervention instruction; the IEP process; the social-emotional and behavioral support systems available to students; and the roles of related service providers in schools.

Focus Area 3.1: Intervention Structures

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- There is an inconsistently implemented intervention service-delivery plan across schools and interventions for struggling readers vary greatly by school in JPS. While some schools provide struggling students with access to extra time for intervention support (RTI), other schools do not. There is no singular framework dictated by best practice in the district.
- School interventionists in JPS spend less than 50% of their time with students on average, and individual interventionists' schedules vary widely. Providers spend their time away from students conducting other school duties as assigned, preparing materials, and completing paperwork. There is a need for clearly defined roles and responsibilities for interventionists.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 3.1.1 Develop a menu of effective intervention models

- Develop and provide a consistent selection of extra-time models, aligned with the district's Response to Intervention (RTI) framework, for schools to adopt.

Recommendation 3.1.2 Develop consistent intervention schedules

- Set consistent guidelines district-wide to determine what class time (e.g., reading, math, etc.) students cannot miss when they receive intervention.

Recommendation 3.1.3 Provide all struggling students with consistent intervention

- Integrate all struggling students, including students with mild-to-moderate disabilities, into the extra-time model to maximize the benefit of these efforts for as many students as possible.

Recommendation 3.1.4 Maximize interventionists' time with students

- Integrate interventionists within the extra-time model so that their time with students is maximized.
- Review interventionists' additional responsibilities (i.e. assigned school duties) and streamline their work to further maximize the time that they can spend with students.

Focus Area 3.2: Effectiveness of Intervention Instruction

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- Students who are among the most vulnerable learners in the district are receiving their interventions from the least qualified adults.
    - Multiple non-certified staff members support the district's struggling students in intervention services. Three such paraprofessional roles are teacher assistants, classified school interventionists, and school interventionist assistants.
    - Despite having limited training and certifications, teacher assistants spend on average 85% of their time supporting the district's most at-risk students on academic content.
    - Despite having no clear standards for certification or training, classified school interventionists and school intervention assistants in JPS spend 100% of their time supporting students academically.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 3.2.1 Reassess roles and responsibilities of staff members to ensure that struggling students receive instruction from content experts

- Ensure that all struggling students receive instruction from staff who have content expertise, providing knowledge and training where needed.
- Place teaching assistants in their areas of instructional and non-instructional expertise.
- Identify the strengths of current staff members, leverage those strengths when specializing staff roles, and provide training in special areas of identified needs.

Focus Area 3.3: Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- JPS currently has an IEP system in place (System for Educational Management) but JPS exceptional education teachers are overwhelmed with their responsibilities and struggle to adequately service their large caseloads.
- There are no consistent guidelines in the district that direct how IEP paperwork should be completed.
- Exceptional education teachers on average spend approximately 60% of their time directly supporting students and the range stretches from 24% to 89%. When not supporting students, exceptional education teachers carry out a wide range of other tasks and responsibilities including other school duties as assigned, planning, and preparation of materials.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 3.3.1 Examine and streamline the responsibilities of exceptional education teachers

- Conduct interviews and focus groups with staff in order to:
  - Better understand their biggest pain points during their time spent apart from students.
  - Map certain responsibilities and identify potential efficiencies (efficiencies may occur if steps are either reduced or removed).

- Unearth questions that need to be escalated and resolved in order to implement efficiencies (oftentimes these questions are compliance-related).

- Develop and finalize new guidelines for streamlined processes.
- Communicate these new guidelines to case managers and teachers.
- Support case managers and teachers throughout the implementation process.

Focus Area 3.4: Social-emotional and Behavioral Supports

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- The district has a strong foundation for providing social, emotional, and behavioral supports within JPS' existing RTI system. Despite having these foundational supports, it is unclear how key roles fit together to create a coherent and proactive system.
- School psychologists and psychometrists, guidance counselors, and positive behavior specialists often lack coordination between their roles and responsibilities. As a result, some duties overlap that may not have to, and staff members' time may not be put to best use. Role clarity and coordination is an aspect of how the district could improve the social, emotional and behavioral components of its existing RTI system.
- The district has wraparound supports and school programs to support students' social and emotional needs, but these services are inconsistently implemented and it is unclear how key roles and programs fit together to create a coherent and proactive system. Specific services and programs are:
  - Marion Counseling to provide additional counseling supports
  - PBIS
  - Tools for Life
  - The use of "calm down corners"

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 3.4.1 Research and implement a district-wide consistent framework to address Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Recommendation 3.4.2 Develop all staff members' capacity to understand and address students' social-emotional needs

- Provide the necessary training, resources, and supports to all teachers to build capacity to deliver social-emotional and behavioral supports to all students.

- Seek new or expand outside partnerships, e.g. with local counseling agencies or universities, to augment district resources.

Recommendation 3.4.3 Clarify staff roles and responsibilities to determine how they can best support a comprehensive social-emotional learning strategy

Recommendation 3.4.4 Identify strengths and expertise within current staff in order to better leverage them within the context of the district's tiered system of supports

Recommendation 3.4.5 Streamline meetings, paperwork, and the overall IEP process across roles to increase the amount of time available to support students and provide strategies to classroom teachers

Focus Area 3.5: Related Service Providers

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- Related service providers include speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists and physical therapists. The district would benefit from utilizing thoughtful scheduling based on student need and develop clear and consistent entrance and exit criteria for services.
- Related service providers spend time working directly with students, while also participating in evaluations, report writing, and data analysis. Proactive scheduling would help ensure that speech and language pathologists and other related service providers are able to maximize their time with students, keep their workload to a manageable level, and meet all students' needs.
- JPS staff members serving as related service providers lack guidance/structures on how they spend their time and how to more effectively leverage their time to serve more students, making it challenging for staff to schedule their services and group students appropriately.
- Speech and language therapists spend the majority of their time in group sizes serving only one or two students per session, which significantly impacts the overall number of students they can see and potentially leaves some students without adequate service.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 3.5.1 Develop and implement clear role guidelines for related service providers (speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists and physical therapists)

- Develop role guidelines for time spent with students, considering both direct and consultative service responsibilities.
- Develop guidelines for group size for related services and consultative services, based on the intensity, grade level, and type of student need.
- Implement these guidelines with thoughtful scheduling of related services providers.
- Develop potential IEP process efficiencies which may allow staff to spend more time with students.

DOMAIN 4: TALENT MANAGEMENT

Overview

Domain 4 considers talent management structures, processes, and practices across the district and school levels in JPS. JPS struggles with leadership capacity at all levels of the organization. At the district level, the study team assessed the current principal supervisor model in which four area superintendents oversee grades K-12 for between 9 and 16 schools. Conversations across stakeholder groups indicated that most consider the current model in need of revision. Specifically, school and Central Office staff noted the large and disparate numbers of schools that area superintendents oversee; the additional responsibilities that area superintendents have beyond principal development; and inconsistent practices in principal development across networks as major concerns.

Regarding professional development opportunities for school leaders and teachers, the study team found that the district needs structure and alignment on expectations and processes to systematically improve educators' capacity. This is evidenced by poor student achievement and high rates of leader and teacher attrition. There is an inconsistent approach to instructional coaching for teachers across the district (some schools do not have instructional coaches at all), and coaches' efforts are often scattered due to a lack of clear direction and expectations from school leadership teams.

Finally, with regard to the district's performance evaluation system, school staff cited a lack of a rigorous and consistently implemented evaluation plan. Some Central Office leaders indicated that they are not evaluated at all and that the district does not currently link performance evaluation with student achievement data or other quantifiable measures. Teachers and leaders widely expressed interest in receiving more substantive, consistent feedback on their practice.

The recommendations in this domain include steps for JPS to make revisions to its principal supervisor model; increase the capacity of its educators; develop a robust plan for recruitment and retention; and codify expectations for performance at all levels through an accountability system based on the instruction framework.

Focus Area 4.1: Principal Supervisor Development

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- JPS uses a principal supervisor (area superintendent/assistant superintendent) model to distribute responsibility for schools and principals. Areas for improvement exist in the principal supervisor role in JPS based on research-based best practice and what research says about equity for all students in a district this size.
- There are currently four principal supervisors who oversee all schools K-12 in their geographically assigned area. Each principal supervisor is responsible for between nine and 16 schools.
- School and Central Office staff consistently cited challenges associated with the current practice, including the large and disparate numbers of schools principal supervisors oversee, additional responsibilities they have beyond principal development, and the inconsistent practices in principal development across the networks.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 4.1.1 Delineate and clearly communicate the role and required competencies of principal supervisors and narrow principal supervisor responsibilities and spans of control

- Provide a definition of roles and scope of responsibilities for all Central Office employees, and, urgently, principal supervisors.
- Eliminate the many additional responsibilities principal supervisors currently have, allowing them to focus specifically on developing, coaching, and evaluating principals.

Recommendation 4.1.2 Use national standards, such as the Council of Chief State School Officers' Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards, to develop a framework that identifies key competencies for the role of principal supervisor and specific action steps to improve the efficacy of the role in JPS

- Strategically select and deploy principal supervisors, matching skills and expertise to the needs of schools.
- Provide principal supervisors with the professional development, training, coaching, and feedback they need to assume new instructional leadership roles.
- Assess principal supervisors' skills and expertise to determine if there is a match with the reconceptualized role of principal developer.
- Hold principal supervisors accountable for the progress of their schools, and ensure alignment in the processes and measures used to assess teacher, principal, and principal supervisor performance.
- Base a portion of the principal supervisors' evaluations on specific metrics on principal effectiveness and student achievement.

- Establish information-sharing policies or procedures to ensure clear lines of communication and collaboration between principal supervisors and Central Office staff.

Focus Area 4.2: Leadership Development – School Level

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- There is uneven leadership capacity in JPS. While there are some bright spots, JPS struggles with leadership capacity at all levels of the organization, including schools. The district needs structures to systematically improve building leaders' capacity.
- A factor contributing to the leadership capacity challenge is that many leaders in the leadership core are novice and are leading novice teaching staffs.
- Other factors in JPS point to the need to develop a principal supervisor model that is consistent across the district and one that leverages a consistent approach to improving instructional core and shifting achievement. JPS students experience a high rate of transience, further necessitating equal access to consistent, effective supports and opportunities across areas.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4.2.1 Define and codify expectations regarding the beliefs and practices of highly effective leaders (see Recommendation 2.1.2 as well)

Recommendation 4.2.2 Research and implement an instructional leadership and principal support framework to establish common language and understanding of the vision for leadership in JPS

- Ensure that principal supervisors are calibrated on the elements of the framework so that there is equity in implementation.

Recommendation 4.2.3 Align resources and create conditions to meet the needs of principals and develop their leadership capacity

- Develop a calendar of regularly scheduled sessions for principal leadership development.
- Ensure that sessions contain a framework grounded in research and school-level problems of practice.

Recommendation 4.2.4 Implement a principal supervisor model that attends to principals' development

- Provide principals with high-quality, differentiated professional development, job-embedded observation, coaching and feedback support.

- Develop principals' understanding and implementation of effective instructional leadership teams.
- Develop and stage principal leadership academies to ensure a coherent understanding and actualization of core leadership competencies.

Focus Area 4.3: Teacher/ Instructional Coach Development

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- Historically and pervasively poor student achievement suggests the need for JPS to develop and implement a plan for instructional coaching to develop teachers' capacity to improve instruction.
- The MDE currently provides literacy coaches for JPS elementary schools identified as having low English Language Arts scores and has a structured coaching model to help teachers shift instruction and achievement. Some JPS schools use the building's interventionists, theme coaches (IB), principals, and others as quasi-instructional coaches. The district has also worked with multiple outside coaching consultants to provide contracted coaching services to teachers and administrators.
- There is no evidence of a common understanding nor approach to coaching being provided to teachers across the district.
- Staff shared that the coaching support they have received has been helpful in improving their instructional practice, but the district needs to increase coaching supports.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 4.3.1 Convene a stakeholder group (teachers, teacher leaders, principals, etc.) to examine best practices in coaching and examine pockets of success within current coaching efforts to create the instructional coaching expectations for JPS

- Gather data on high-performing teachers and the instructional practices that enable them to be successful in supporting all the needs within their classrooms.
- Examine pockets of success within current coaching practices.

Recommendation 4.3.2 Create a plan that standardizes the recruiting, hiring, training, and staffing of coaches in each building

- Develop a differentiated staffing model for schools, based on school size, number of teachers and student achievement.
- Hire and train coaches in accordance with newly established role guidelines.

- Develop common district expectations regarding the size of coaches' caseloads as well as the amount of time they should be spending with teachers on a weekly basis.

Recommendation 4.3.3 Establish a Teacher Leader/Instructional Coach Leadership Academy

- Develop a framework and evaluation process for instructional coaches.

Focus Area 4.4: Recruitment and Retention

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- JPS experiences significant difficulty recruiting teachers and leaders and has high rates of teacher and leader attrition, resulting in numerous long term teacher vacancies. The district does not currently have a talent recruitment and retention plan developed to address these concerns.
- Staff at all levels need more differentiated and focused professional learning.
- Strategic staffing should be weighed as an approach to assure that schools serving the children with the greatest need have the best possible principals, teachers, and staff.
- There are currently no career pathways in place to ensure a plan for teacher advancement.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 4.4.1 Develop a plan to expand the teacher and leader applicant pool and improve quality of hires through strategic recruiting, including use of social media

- Review current teacher and leader hiring sources and build strong relationships with neighboring colleges, universities, and alternate-route-to-certification programs to enhance current talent pool.
- Research existing sources of state and national talent such as the Mississippi Teacher Corps and Principal Corps Programs at the University of Mississippi, and Teach for America (TFA).

Recommendation 4.4.2 Develop a formal teacher mentoring program for beginning teachers

- Provide teachers in their first three years of service with formal mentors and job-embedded instructional coaching.

Recommendation 4.4.3 Develop a talent retention plan

- Identify current practices that facilitate retention of high-performing teachers and principals.

- Research best practices of talent retention and develop an implementation plan for SY 2019-2020 that mediates the gaps between the district's current status and best practice.
- Research existing career pathways and best practice nationally. Develop a plan to build career pathways for high-quality teachers as an aspect of a talent retention plan.
- Research compensation practices that promote attracting and retaining effective teachers and principals, considering differentiated compensation based on performance.
- Include opportunities to move from high-quality teacher/teacher leader to aspiring, novice, veteran principal, and principal supervisor.
- Research and implement formal, informal, and asynchronous opportunities for teachers to collaborate with other teachers.

Focus Area 4.5: Performance Evaluation Systems

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- Performance management is a considerable concern in JPS. There is not a rigorous and consistently implemented evaluation plan in place.
- Some Central Office leaders indicated they they were not evaluated by anyone and that the district does not currently link performance evaluation with student achievement data or other quantifiable measures.
- Teachers and leaders expressed interest in receiving more substantive, consistent feedback on their performance.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 4.5.1 Develop an accountability system for teachers, principals and Central Office leaders based on the instructional framework

- Ensure that the accountability system uses multiple measures.
- Develop a performance-based accountability system that uses metrics related to student achievement (classroom/school/department goals and accompanying scorecards).
- Develop a support dimension that focuses on building capacity and access to opportunities for all staff members to continue to develop.

Recommendation 4.5.2 Develop a system of relevant, job-embedded professional learning

- Research systems of relevant, job-embedded professional learning.
- Develop a system to provide timely, relevant, job-embedded feedback and a coherent system of continuous and differentiated professional development for teachers, principals, and Central Office leaders to help improve capacity at all levels of the organization.

- Develop professional learning opportunities for leaders to ensure consistency in observations across schools.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for teachers, ensuring these opportunities are directly aligned with real-time data from teacher evaluations.
- Research, purchase, and implement an online platform for performance management.

Focus Area 4.6: Data Systems

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- Assessment must be an integral and integrated part of students' instructional experience. The use of valid and reliable assessments is critical to helping teachers and leaders understand students' grasp of content and allows practitioners to make adjustments to core instruction to remediate or advance student understanding.
- District systems and processes in JPS can better support leaders and teachers in using data effectively to improve instruction and ultimately improve student achievement.
- Purchasing a robust Human Capital Management System will improve the district's ability to understand staff members' ability to improve student achievement.
- It will be important for the district to develop a consistent system for calculating student growth in order to standardize understanding of and improvement in student achievement.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 4.6.1 Establish a cross-functional stakeholder group to study various methodologies for calculating student growth and select an outside vendor to support implementation

- Convene a cross-functional stakeholder group to explore the differences in methodologies used to calculate growth.
- Explore the methodologies of organizations who are capable of providing these calculations (e.g. Colorado State University, Education Analytics at University of Wisconsin, and SAS Institute).

Recommendation 4.6.2 Identify a robust Human Capital Management System (HCMS) for the district

- Review functions needed from an HCMS.
- Purchase an HCMS to aggregate data across schools and disaggregate data for specific educators.

- Use data to make informed decisions on hiring, support, and non-renewal of employee contracts.

Recommendation 4.6.3 Link the systems used/selected for student and educator data

- Explore new platforms' ability to link data to avoid siloing.

Recommendation 4.6.4 Ensure the use of data within the district aligns with best practices

- Align and distribute the ownership, access, and use of data to the greatest extent possible given the new organizational structure.
- Provide all departments with real-time access to all pertinent data in order to make the most informed decisions.

DOMAIN 5: FINANCES

Overview

The final domain relates to the district's financial status. Similar to other areas of the district's operations, JPS has struggled financially for many years. To fully assess the district's financial situation, the study team conducted a historical analysis of district revenues and expenditures and assessed alignment relative to enrollment and other contextual trends. Additionally, through this assessment, the study team reviewed the overall budget development process, including a mapping of the district's budget timeline, an examination of available financial data at the time of budgeting, and an assessment of how decisions are made. The team further explored communication tools and strategies as a way of understanding the specific challenges of the district related to effectively managing the district's finances.

Over years of declining enrollment across the system, the district has not been able to adjust spending to match actual enrollment numbers. In fact, spending has remained roughly constant despite declining enrollment. Furthermore, the federal funds available to the district are not yet being fully utilized. These and other factors have combined to create a situation in which millions of dollars that could be directed to seeing real improvements in student achievement are either being lost or simply distributed across the system ineffectually.

Despite its fiscal challenges, the district does appear to have opportunities to improve its financial health and better align its budget and spending patterns to the resources that can support instruction and enhance services to students. However, some of the below opportunities may require that tough decisions and trade-offs be made to attain desired goals, and this context should be kept in mind when considering any potential next steps. The purpose of this fiscal assessment is to provide data and perspectives that can better enable district leadership to make the difficult decisions that will be necessary as it seeks to strike the appropriate balance between fiscal responsibility while maximizing supports and services to students. Three areas specifically covered here are staffing guidelines, the use of federal funds, and spending on contracts.

Focus Area 5.1: Staffing Implications

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- A steady decline in enrollment in JPS has led to a revenues decline and an increase in per-pupil spending. JPS has not made appropriate and equivalent changes to their costs or staffing at the same rate as declines in revenue.
- ***Elementary schools:*** The district is not currently staffing elementary schools to current enrollment levels. If the district raised its average class sizes, and still kept class sizes well below the state maximums, the district could reallocate up to 57 FTE and dedicate funds towards other priorities, such as instructional coaches.
- ***Middle schools:*** JPS currently staffs its middle schools using a teaming model in which a cohort of students are taught core courses by a team of teachers. However, there is currently no uniform approach to teaming.
    - Because resources are heavily leveraged in this model, the district should examine whether the team model is delivering the desired outcomes given the cost of the investment.
- ***High schools:*** The district is not currently staffing to enrollment at high schools. If the district slightly raised its average class sizes, while still keeping class sizes well below the state maximums, the district could reallocate up to 99.6 FTE and dedicate funds towards other priorities.
- Class sizes vary greatly both within and across high schools in core and non-core classes. Additionally, there are several low-enrollment courses, and a key component to managing class size is to manage low-enrollment courses. Currently, courses with 15 or fewer students are being offered across all seven high schools.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 5.1.1 (Elementary School) Right-size class size and staffing

- Consider slightly increasing class sizes so that they are larger than current practices but still well below state maximums.
- Assign staff based on forecasted student enrollment trends.
- Review how staff are allocated to schools.
- Consider reconfiguring grade spans in elementary schools.
    - For example, shifting from K-5/K-8 school configurations to K-1, 2-3, and 4-5 school configurations.
- Consider using multi-age classrooms.

Recommendation 5.1.2 Given expected declining enrollment among students at the elementary grade level, consult with a third-party organization experienced in school consolidations/closings to identify strategies to align enrollment to staffing more quickly and aggressively

Recommendation 5.1.3 (Middle School) Decide whether the team model is still the most viable model for the district as well as how to allocate staff considering class sizes best for student achievement and use of resources

- Commit to training teachers, providing appropriate structures, and ensuring time is well used to ensure an effective middle school teaming model OR shift away from the teaming model and devote resources elsewhere.
- Establish district-wide class size targets and use state maximums for core and non-core classes.
- Review variance in both core and non-core class sizes within and between each school.
- Develop guidelines for the content and scheduling of independent study and study skills courses.
    - Consider how to pair the most struggling learners with the greatest content experts.
    - Consider how to increase on-track students' access to interesting and enriching electives.
- Review how staff are allocated to schools.

Recommendation 5.1.4 (High School) Raise class sizes beyond current practice (and not necessarily to the state maximums) and pursue methods to limit low enrollment courses

- Establish district-wide class size targets and maximums for core and non-core classes.
- Review variance in both core and non-core class size within each school.
- Establish guidelines to manage low enrollment courses.
    - Merge similar courses. This approach is often used for World Language courses, where it is often possible to offer multiple levels of a course (e.g., French III and French IV) as a single class.
    - Offer low-enrollment courses on a rotating basis. Some schools will offer some courses once a year in a given semester to maximize the number of students taking the course at one time.
    - Set minimum enrollment thresholds. Some schools will establish a minimum threshold of enrollment for a course as a prerequisite for offering that course.
- Review how staff are allocated to schools.

Focus Area 5.2: Federal Funds

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- Federal grant data from 2013-2014 to 2017-2018 shows that JPS consistently spends far less federal funding than is appropriated. Part of the gap between appropriated and expended amounts is in part due to carryover of funds from previous years to future years. Though federal guidelines provide a 28-month window to expend the funds, JPS has been cited by the state for having excessive carryover year-over-year.
- High leadership turnover and a lack of clarity within Central Office and between Central Office and principals over available federal dollars have contributed to the significant underspending.
- Given the large federal allocation, it is critical for the district to plan and manage federal funds more intentionally.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 5.2.1 Employ various strategies to ensure that the district is maximizing the use of its appropriated federal funds

- Prioritize consistency in leadership to aid in developing a consistent federal funds strategy.
- Create a cohesive, district-wide plan to help every school maximize its funds.
- Investigate the lack of full appropriations spending.
- Develop a plan to limit year-to-year carryover and administrative expenses.
- Develop a system to track individual school spending to assist district leaders in understanding spending trends and providing timely assistance to school leaders.

Recommendation 5.2.2 Implement a system and processes to strengthen accountability and oversight functions

- Implement financial reporting processes that provides regular updates to the superintendent and the Board to ensure federal funds are effectively and fully expended as well as aligned with the district's key strategic initiatives.

Focus Area 5.3: Contracts

Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- Districts use contractors as a way to supplement or add competencies and services to their offerings. Given the large investments to purchase these services, it is critical to periodically review the state of contract spending and ensure alignment with the district's strategic priorities.

- JPS contracts were selected for review based on both their total value and the strategic importance to the district. As a part of this process, data was gathered on the total value, pricing structure, purpose, and related department for each contract. In order to narrow the focus and select a few contracts for analysis out of the top 15, a few factors were considered:
  - Contract value: Does this contract represent a significant portion of district spending?
  - Strategic importance: Does this contract align to a potentially important instructional priority?
- In the five contracts selected as focus areas for this analysis, funds spent on these contracts represent over $4.1 million of the $6.3 million spent on contracts during the 2016-2017 school year, 66% of total spending for the district's top 15 contracts.
- The contracts all served to support the JPS in areas of identified need; for example, tracking and filling staff absences and providing cost-effective social-emotional support services to district students.
- There are no metrics in place to measure the effectiveness of district contracts, their cost-effectiveness or their benefits for students and staff.

Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

Recommendation 5.3.1 Develop a method to determine the impact and effectiveness of all district contracts

Establish metrics to measure the effectiveness of contracts**,** and whether services are benefiting students, teachers and leaders.

- Develop a system to differentiate support through contracted services to schools in the greatest need.
- Determine how well curriculum and instruction contracts align to district curriculum.

LOOKING FORWARD

While this report and those of other organizations have outlined the numerous, seemingly intractable challenges facing the district, there is also cause for hope and optimism. This report provides an aspirational bar for Superintendent Greene and his staff, the school board, mayor and city council, faith-based and community leaders, community-based organizations, business leaders, higher education partners, social and human service agencies, and philanthropic organizations. Maintaining the collective will and organizational commitment to move the guidelines outlined in this report forward will require significant collaboration, grit and focus over a sustained period of time. This will not be a quick fix, but a process that, if sustained, can create a vastly different reality for the students and school community in JPS.

Throughout the study team's data collection process, we heard the voices of Jackson stakeholders frustrated by a persistent and pervasive history of poor performance in the schools and also sadness at the absence of a coherent plan to rectify conditions that students face daily. JPS and the community will need to commit to working together across boundaries that frequently create fragmentation and competition to create a unified approach to reaching the outcomes the people of Jackson want for children, families and the overall Jackson community. A unified vision and action to realize that goal will provide the necessary framework to set the district on a trajectory of improvement that can positively and significantly impact the lives of thousands of students to come. In turn, the action JPS takes now has the potential to reshape the city of Jackson as the students who attend its schools receive the quality of education that is their right.

We recommend that the superintendent and his staff study the recommendations here and develop a strategic, multi-year approach to build the district's capacity and discipline to focus on improving student achievement. We believe Jackson has a tremendous opportunity under the leadership of Dr. Greene to bring a renewed enthusiasm, focus, and determination to sustaining the work ahead.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Insight Education Group study team is grateful for the opportunity we had to meet so many stakeholders in Jackson and for the honest and extremely informative conversations during the engagement process. It is clear that Jackson has a community deeply invested in its schools and many stakeholders who are interested in doing their part to ensure that the children enrolled in JPS receive a quality education. Insight greatly appreciates the time, energy, and commitment of the many stakeholders–including district leadership, school leaders, teachers, families, students, and others–who participated in surveys, contributed to focus groups, invested in conversations and other engagements, and in other ways were responsive to sometimes multiple requests for input to inform this report.

About Insight Education Group

Insight Education Group is an international educational consulting organization that works with education leaders to develop aligned strategies and provide embedded supports to facilitate teacher and school leader growth and positively impact student achievement. Since 2000, we have supported schools, districts, charter management organizations and states through some of their largest challenges, including:

- successfully turning around chronically underperforming schools
- fostering school cultures around mentoring, coaching, collaboration, and shared knowledge and skills
- developing guidance for programmatic development and sustainability of initiatives
- supporting teachers and educational leaders with innovative tools to continue professional learning
- training aspiring and current educational leaders to be strategic and establish priorities for positive change
- helping to change the culture of teacher growth to one of trust

Through our partnerships with states, districts, and schools across the country, such as the District of Columbia Public Schools, Guilford County Schools, the Syracuse City School District, and Metro Nashville Public Schools, Insight has brought thousands of educators' practices to the next level. We have developed award-winning systems and solutions that are used in schools and districts in the United States and abroad, but it is our commitment to a partner-driven implementation process that sets us apart from others and gets the right results.

About District Management Group

Founded in 2004, District Management Group seeks to address the most important management challenges facing American public school leaders. The leaders of our school systems are charged with the enormous responsibility of providing students with the resources to succeed in school and beyond. To achieve this, district and school leaders must not only be great educators, they must also be great managers.

District Management Group seeks to provide district leaders with the best management techniques and educational practices to produce measurable, sustainable improvements that help schools and students thrive. Our unwavering focus is on solutions that improve student outcomes, and simultaneously enhance operational efficiency and resource allocation. Achieving only one of these objectives in isolation is not enough. It is in achieving these three objectives simultaneously that student outcomes improve and the public education system as a whole can be made sustainable.