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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,



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



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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:

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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.

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### Students

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and improved achievement

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.

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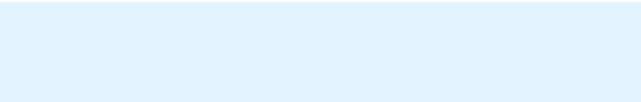
### Committed Leadership

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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

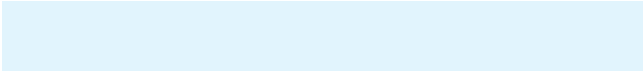








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## Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

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

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y Examine existing district organizational structures in relation to goals outlined in the

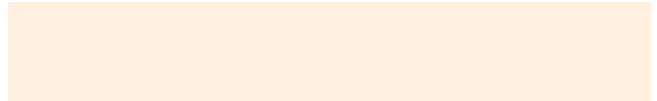


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### Overview

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





- y The district does not have clear, rigorous expectations for teachers regarding high-quality, standards-based instruction.
- y There is no district-wide curriculum, which

- o 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.
  - o 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.
  - o 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.
  - y Develop a structure to support teachers in effective implementation of the new curriculum.
    - o Develop a staged approach to implementing the curriculum to ensure adequate time and resources for training and ongoing support for teacher and administrators.
    - o 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).
    - o Build a model of intensive one-on-one instructional coaching.
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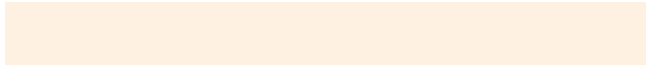
- y In the future, engage teachers in the design of effective curriculum. The skill of instructional design is of great value to teachers, as it allows individual educators to address specific student needs and differentiate instruction in their classrooms.

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**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 ine effective instruction**

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- y 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.
- y Upon adoption of a new curriculum, examine the current intervention programs to ensure alignment.
- y



## Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

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

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

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**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**

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- y If the assessment system is not aligned, work with the vendor to provide a sequence of
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## Focus Area 2.3: Equity in Course Offerings

### Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- y There are inconsistencies in course offerings and inequitable opportunities for students at all grade levels.
  - o Students attending magnet and other specialized elementary schools receive wider access to art, music, and physical education than their peers.
  - o A very small percentage of students at the elementary level have access to offerings such as dance, computer, and foreign language.
- o While many of the middle schools offer similar electives, specialized schools tend to offer more unique electives.
- o 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/uni ed arts offerings across elementary schools

- y Create district alignment in expectations (non-negotiables) and best practices for master scheduling.
- y Review academic and specials course offerings and scheduling practices across schools to ensure equity of opportunities for students.
- y 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

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







## Recommendations

The recommendations for this focus area are:

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### Recommendation 3.1.1 Develop a menu of effective intervention models

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

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### Recommendation 3.1.2 Develop consistent intervention schedules

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- R Unearth questions that need to be escalated and resolved in order to implement efficiencies (oftentimes these questions are compliance-related).
- y Develop and finalize new guidelines for streamlined processes.
- y Communicate these new guidelines to case managers and teachers.
- y 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:

- y 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.
- y 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.

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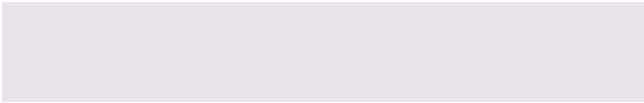








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- y JPS uses a principal supervisor (area superintendent/assistant superintendent) model to distribute responsibility for schools and principals. Areas for improvement exist in the principal supervisor role in JPS based on research-based best practice and what research says about equity for all students in a district this size.
  - y 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.
- y 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:

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### 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

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

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### 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 informs

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- y 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

### Recommendations

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

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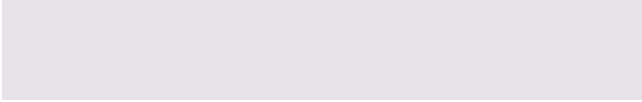
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Recommendation 4.2.2 Research and implement an instructional leadership and principal support framework to establish common language and understanding of the

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- y 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.
- y 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.
- y Research compensation practices that promote attracting and retaining effective teachers and principals, considering differentiated compensation based on performance.
- y Include opportunities to move from high-quality teacher/teacher leader to aspiring, novice,





- y Develop professional learning opportunities for leaders to ensure consistency in observations across schools.
- y Provide professional learning opportunities for teachers, ensuring these opportunities are directly aligned with real-time data from teacher evaluations.
- y 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:

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### 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

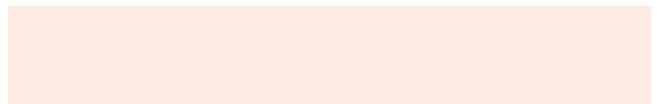
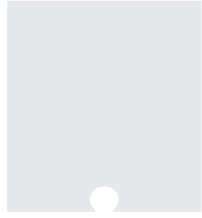
- y Convene a cross-functional stakeholder group to explore the differences in methodologies used to calculate growth.
- y Explore the methodologies of organizations who are capable of providing these calculations (e.g. Colorado State University, Education Analytics at University of Wisconsin, and SAS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

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

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









- y A steady decline in enrollment in JPS has led to a revenues decline and an increase



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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 sta considering class sizes best for student achievement and use of resources

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y Commit to training teachers, providing appropriate structures, and ensuring time is well



## Focus Area 5.2: Federal Funds


### Findings

The major findings in this focus area are as follows:

- y Federal grant data from 2013-2014 to 2017-2018 shows that JPS consistently spends far less federal funding than is







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 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.