

**A Curriculum Audit™**  
of the  
**Delivery of the Curriculum at:**

**KNIGHTDALE HIGH SCHOOL**  
**EAST WAKE MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
**HODGE ROAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**  
**KNIGHTDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

in the

**WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM**

**Raleigh, North Carolina**



**Conducted Under the Auspices of  
Curriculum Management Systems, Inc.**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Curriculum Delivery Audit scope is centered on curriculum and instruction, and any aspect of operations in a school that enhance or hinder the effective delivery of curriculum. The audit is an intensive, focused, “post-holed” look at how well each of the four schools in Eastern Wake County has been able to focus its resources, manage and respond to data, and engage students in learning for overall improved achievement.

The premise for any audit is comprised of the five standards against which the quality and effectiveness of all curriculum management practices in the school are measured. As a result, the standards reflect an ideal management system, but not an unattainable one. The Curriculum Delivery audit of each school focuses on all the standards, but with increased attention on standard three, which expects all teaching (delivery) to align with instructional expectations for students that the district establishes (design).

The five standards include:

1. **Governance and Control:** The school demonstrates its control of resources, programs, and personnel.
2. **Direction and Clientele Expectations:** The school has established appropriate, clear, and valid objectives for students and clientele that align with the Common Core State Standards.
3. **Connectivity and Equity:** The school has demonstrated internal consistency and rational equity in its program development and implementation.
4. **Assessment and Feedback:** The school has used the results from district-designed or adopted assessments to adjust, improve instruction, and/or terminate ineffective practices or programs.
5. **Productivity and Efficiency:** The school district has improved its productivity and efficiency, particularly in the use of resources.

A finding within an individual school audit of its delivery of curriculum is simply a description of the existing state, negative or positive, between an observed and triangulated condition or situation at the time of the audit and its comparison with one or more of the five audit standards. To accomplish this review, the auditors observe in classrooms, interview staff members, and review data to determine whether each school is meeting specific goals and objectives, and where there are gaps in building management or procedures that are in fact hindering the attainment of building goals.

### **Background**

The Wake County Public School System has been focused on improving student achievement for all students since the first Curriculum Management Audit conducted for WCPSS in 2007. Since that time, the district has performed several individual school audits in an attempt to identify and address the specific, building-based issues that undermine student achievement. This individual school audit is a similar project; district leaders, out of concern for four schools located in Eastern Wake County, contracted with CMSi to conduct the audits and provide them with clear direction for actions that should be taken to turn the low-performing schools into high achieving schools. This executive summary of the findings and recommendations of each report represents the culmination of that project.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### Approach of the Audit

The Curriculum Audit™ has established itself as a process of integrity and candor in assessing public school districts. It has been presented as evidence in state and federal litigation concerning matters of school finance, general resource managerial effectiveness, and school desegregation efforts in Kansas, Kentucky, New Jersey, and South Carolina. The audit served as an important data source in state-directed takeovers of school systems in New Jersey and Kentucky. The Curriculum Audit™ has become recognized internationally as an important, viable, and valid tool for the improvement of educational institutions and for the improvement of curriculum design and delivery.

The Curriculum Audit™ represents a “systems” approach to educational improvement; that is, it considers the system as a whole rather than a collection of separate, discrete parts. The interrelationships of system components and their impact on the overall quality of the organization in accomplishing its purposes are examined in order to “close the loop” in curriculum and instructional improvement.

### The Model for the Curriculum Audit™

The model for the Curriculum Audit™ is shown in the schematic below. The model has been published widely in the national professional literature, including the best-selling book, *The Curriculum Management Audit: Improving School Quality* (1995, Frase, English, Poston).

### A Schematic View of Curricular Quality Control

General quality control assumes that at least three elements must be present in any organizational and work-related situation for it to be functional and capable of being improved over time. These are: (1) a work standard, goal/objective, or operational mission; (2) work directed toward attaining the mission, standard, goal/objective; and (3) feedback (work measurement), which is related to or aligned with the standard, goal/objective, or mission.

When activities are repeated, there is a “learning curve,” i.e., more of the work objectives are achieved within the existing cost parameters. As a result, the organization, or a subunit of an organization, becomes more “productive” at its essential short- or long-range work tasks.



Within the context of an educational system and its governance and operational structure, curricular quality control requires: (1) a written curriculum in some clear and translatable form for application by teachers in classroom or related instructional settings; (2) a taught curriculum, which is shaped by and interactive with the written one; and (3) a tested curriculum, which includes the tasks, concepts, and skills of pupil learning and which is linked to both the taught and written curricula. This model is applicable in any kind of educational work structure typically found in mass public educational systems, and is suitable

for any kind of assessment strategy, from norm-referenced standardized tests to more authentic approaches.

### **Standards for the Auditors**

While a Curriculum Audit™ is not a financial audit, it is governed by some of the same principles. These are:

#### **Technical Expertise**

CMSi-certified auditors must have actual experience in conducting the affairs of a school system at all levels audited. They must understand the tacit and contextual clues of sound curriculum management.

The East Wake Middle School Curriculum Audit™ Team selected by the Curriculum Management Audit Center included auditors who have been school superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors, public educational systems in several locations.

#### **The Principle of Independence**

None of the Curriculum Audit™ Team members had any vested interest in the findings or recommendations of the East Wake Middle School Curriculum Audit™. None of the auditors has or had any working relationship with the individuals who occupied top or middle management positions in the East Wake Middle School, nor with any of the past or current members of the East Wake Middle School Board of Education.

#### **The Principle of Objectivity**

Events and situations that comprise the data base for the Curriculum Audit™ are derived from documents, interviews, and site visits. Findings must be verifiable and grounded in the data base, though confidential interview data may not indicate the identity of such sources. Findings must be factually triangulated with two or more sources of data, except when a document is unusually authoritative such as a court judgment, a labor contract signed and approved by all parties to the agreement, approved meeting minutes, which connote the accuracy of the content, or any other document whose verification is self-evident.

Triangulation of documents takes place when the document is requested by the auditor and is subsequently furnished. Confirmation by a system representative that the document is in fact what was requested is a form of triangulation. A final form of triangulation occurs when the audit is sent to the superintendent in draft form. If the superintendent or his/her designee(s) does not provide evidence that the audit text is inaccurate, or documentation that indicates there are omissions or otherwise factual or content errors, the audit is assumed to be triangulated. The superintendent's review is not only a second source of triangulation, but is considered summative triangulation of the entirety of audit.

#### **The Principle of Consistency**

All CMSi-certified Curriculum Auditors have used the same standards and basic methods since the initial audit conducted by Dr. Fenwick English in 1979. Audits are not normative in the sense that one school system is compared to another. School systems, as the units of analysis, are compared to a set of standards and positive/negative discrepancies cited.

#### **The Principle of Materiality**

CMSi-certified auditors have broad implied and discretionary power to focus on and select those findings that they consider most important to describing how the curriculum management system is functioning in

a school district, and how that system must improve, expand, delete, or reconfigure various functions to attain an optimum level of performance.

**The Principle of Full Disclosure**

Auditors must reveal all relevant information to the users of the audit, except in cases where such disclosure would compromise the identity of employees or patrons of the system. Confidentiality is respected in audit interviews.

In reporting data derived from site interviews, auditors may use some descriptive terms that lack a precise quantifiable definition. For example:

- “Some school principals said that ... ”
- “Many teachers expressed concern that ... ”
- “There was widespread comment about ... ”

The basis for these terms is the number of persons in a group or class of persons who were interviewed, as opposed to the total potential number of persons in a category. This is a particularly salient point when not all persons within a category are interviewed. “Many teachers said that...,” represents only those interviewed by the auditors, or who may have responded to a survey, and not “many” of the total group whose views were not sampled, and, therefore, could not be disclosed during an audit.

In general these quantifications may be applied to the principle of full disclosure:

<b>Descriptive Term</b>	<b>General Quantification Range</b>
Some ... or a few ...	Less than a majority of the group interviewed and less than 30 percent
Many ...	Less than a majority, more than 30 percent of a group or class of people interviewed
A majority ...	More than 50 percent, less than 75 percent
Most ... or widespread	75-89 percent of a group or class of persons interviewed
Nearly all ...	90-99 percent of those interviewed in a specific class or group of persons
All or everyone ...	100 percent of all persons interviewed within a similar group, job, or class

**Data Sources of the Curriculum Audit™**

A Curriculum Audit™ uses a variety of data sources to determine if each of the three elements of curricular quality control is in place and connected one to the other. The audit process also inquires as to whether pupil learning has improved as the result of effective application of curricular quality control.

Data sources for this audit of four schools consisted of the following:

- District and school documents collected prior to and during the on-site visit;
- Interview data from nearly all teachers during and before the school visit;
- Survey data collected prior to the on-site visit from every teacher. The survey consisted of 30 open-ended questions targeting the use of the WCPSS curriculum for planning and teaching, the extent of monitoring and coaching, professional development to support teaching and learning, and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the school. Fifty-eight (58) members of the instructional staff completed the survey;

- Interview data from the school principal and other administrative and support staff at the school; and
- Classroom observations from nearly every classroom. The auditors' schedules were arranged in such a way to allow classroom observations for every time segment during the day in order to get a precise picture of typical instruction at the school. In several cases, classrooms were revisited in order to capture instructional time rather than transitional time or time when students were waiting for passing periods and therefore not engaged in instruction.

Over the course of the five days spent in the four school buildings, the auditors collected online surveys from over 200 teachers and personally interviewed over 200 teachers, building support staff, building administrators, and district administrators. After reviewing all data sources, the auditors compiled their findings, with corresponding recommendations for addressing them. The findings and recommendations presented in each report are listed here, by school.

### III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Knightdale High School

The findings and recommendation for Knightdale High School are presented below.

**Finding 1: Despite a strong culture that promotes academic success and high expectations for all students, inconsistencies in monitoring, student discipline, and teacher expectations impede continuous improvement in student achievement. District-level issues with student support services and inequities in resource allocation contribute to building-level challenges.**

There have been many good changes at Knightdale High School over the last several years, and several good initiatives are in place. However, given the large size of the building and the high percentage of beginning teachers, there are still inconsistencies across the building that impede effectiveness and lessen the likelihood that goals will be met. District-level inequities in resource allocation and/or other related services also present challenges to teachers.

**Finding 2: Curriculum delivery is aligned with district curriculum but not consistently aligned with common core standards in context and cognitive type. The most frequently observed instructional approach was direct instruction, with individual student work the second. Cognitive types were inconsistent across the student artifacts collected.**

Teachers are, in general, teaching the C-MAPP curriculum and student work was highly aligned to the Common Core, except in the area of context. Teachers were most frequently observed delivering direct instruction; on-task behavior was not consistent building-wide and was less likely in classrooms taught by inexperienced teachers (two or less years of experience). Students are engaged in work that is sometimes reflective of more challenging cognitive types, although this is not consistent nor adequately reflective of the desire for 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills.

**Finding 3: Achievement is at or slightly below that of state means and generally trending toward improvement. Staff are using data to inform instructional decision making despite the lack of high quality aligned formative and diagnostic tools to evaluate student progress in mastering the curriculum.**

Teachers at Knightdale High School are delving deep into data, which has resulted in a variety of levels of proficiency in interpreting those data and using them for instructional decision making. The PLTs are an excellent medium for discussing and collaborating on both common assessments and responding to data, but several teachers still commented on being overwhelmed by the quantity of data they are expected to respond to in some way. The teachers lack quality, aligned, formative assessments that they can use diagnostically.



**Recommendation 1: Strengthen the focus on the mission, vision, and values statements in a first step toward improving consistency and communication in the building. More clearly define the leadership structure of the building, defining the roles and responsibilities of leaders within the school in the efforts to increase student learning, and review for teachers all components of the culture of consistency in behavioral and academic expectations. Continue the use of PLTs to collaborate in improving the delivery of instruction. Increase monitoring to maintain consistency and increase curriculum alignment. Divert resources for additional staffing and increased STEM materials and technology; and to teacher training, coaching, and support.**

### *Knightdale High School Summary*

The auditors are confident that Knightdale High School has the leadership capacity and energy to make the needed changes within the building. Indeed, there are many initiatives underway that already serve to improve school efficacy; these include a strong collaborative culture, with functioning PLTs and departmental cohesion; a strong vision and mission that permeates the school environment; a Beginning Teacher program and mentoring program; robust staff development focused on improving curriculum delivery; and initiatives to establish a culture of consistency.

In schools with high percentages of students in poverty or from low-income backgrounds, establishing and maintaining the highest of expectations for their academic success is critical. This must serve as the foundational principle that guides all other initiatives and actions taken by every staff member.

Philosophy and beliefs drive decisions more than anything else; if teachers and building leaders do not relentlessly, aggressively believe in Knightdale's students' abilities and potential, the students are less likely to believe it themselves. With such a population, inspiration and motivation typically come from without, initially, until students start to see that success is indeed possible and learning can be both relevant and rewarding.

The auditors found that the school continues to face many challenges, although there have been improvements in the culture and safety of the building in recent years. Consistency in behavioral expectations and enforcing those expectations is still inadequate, an issue that is exacerbated by the high percentage of inexperienced teachers in the building. The mentoring program for new teachers needs greater focus and an in-classroom coaching component, to assist teachers with engaging students, particularly the "non-learners." Adding two coaches to the high school is strongly recommended, to alleviate the mentoring burden to an extent and to provide the focus and support new teachers need. These coaches can also help focus the STEM program and assist in maximizing the effectiveness of instructional delivery.

The high school has a high turnover rate among teachers, which corresponds to the high percentage of new teachers. The auditors recommend incentives for teachers who come and who stay, even if not monetarily based. Such an initiative is intended to recognize the efforts of the hard-working teachers in the building, improve morale, and recognize progress. Celebrating successes is an important factor of reform.

The auditors also found that continuity in the focus areas for teachers' growth every year is inadequate. There are too many initiatives layered on top of prior ones, leaving teachers feeling somewhat overwhelmed. Better to stick to a few simple modifications and implement them over several years—a minimum of three. Time is needed to effect change and personalize the learning; otherwise, it is more likely to be abandoned in the tyranny of the urgent.

Therefore, the auditors recommend going deeper and more intentional with the STEM focus, defining it more explicitly and how it is expected to shape the overall design and delivery of the educational program at Knightdale. Develop a plan for it, involving multiple stakeholders, and then broadcast it widely. Given the needs of the population, such a focus is both beneficial and relevant, but continue to integrate language/literacy skills throughout to support students' weaknesses. Identify key leaders for STEM and

literacy integration, as well as for the implementation of effective strategies with students, differentiation of curriculum, and classroom management skills. Increase the visibility of leaders in classrooms and common areas; monitoring is the most crucial component in increasing consistency, improving student behavior, and assuring the alignment of curriculum.

Most importantly, however, recognize students' progress and development whenever and wherever possible, assisting them in a personal awareness of the great gains they make over their four-year career. Student learning is the reason everyone is there; their learning is the product sought and as such should be acknowledged and celebrated when possible.

Given the suggestions in this report, the auditors are confident that Knightdale can become one of the highest-performing high schools in Wake County. The diversity in the building is a strength and a challenge, but the potential and the capacity among staff members to effect real reform and to bring out the best in all students is there. It is hoped this report offers real suggestions and guidelines to be truly innovative in planning for continuous improvement.

## **B. East Wake Middle School**

The findings and recommendations for East Wake Middle School are presented below, followed by a summary of the report.

**Finding 1: Teachers and building leaders are committed to improving student achievement and delivering high quality instruction. However, leadership has not maintained a consistent focus on a few attainable building goals and expectations for teachers and students are inconsistent. There is no clear strategy or process for addressing socio-economic challenges.**

The auditors found that although there is a very strong, cohesive, collaborative culture in the building, as reported by teachers, there is a lack of focus in the building that is distracting teachers from the most important areas of focus, most importantly student achievement. The auditors found no clear strategy or plan to deal with the many challenges of the population.

**Finding 2: Effective curriculum delivery is hampered by problems with district services and the inequitable distribution of resources. Other inequities include issues with busing, facilities, and food service.**

The auditors found several inequities in services to East Wake Middle School, support services that nevertheless have a significant impact on student learning. Student assignment has exacerbated the difficulty in involving and engaging parents, as so many students live far away from the school building. Busing gets some children to school late every day, and the students and teachers both complained about the food and the food service running out of food on a regular (almost daily) basis. East Wake Middle School does not appear to receive funding commensurate with other buildings or even commensurate with its level of need, and the facility is in a dire state of disrepair.

**Finding 3: Curriculum delivery is aligned with district curriculum but not consistently aligned with common core standards in context and cognition. Instructional approaches are mostly direct instruction with high percentages of students on task. The monitoring of instruction is inconsistent by grade level.**

There is some monitoring occurring on a regular basis, but it is not consistent across grade levels. Monitoring is also not tied to curriculum alignment or effective instructional strategies. Students were observed to be on-task, and the most dominant mode of teacher activity was direct instruction.

**Finding 4: Sixth grade students come into the middle school with low levels of proficiency. Achievement is comparable to other buildings across the district with similar or better demographics. The system has not provided quality, aligned formative and diagnostic tools to evaluate student progress in mastering the curriculum.**

East Wake Middle School students face a great number of challenges. Literacy skills are a key weakness in the student population and, accordingly, bring test scores down. The school leaders have implemented a reading program but lack a literacy coach to support its implementation. There are inadequate formative, diagnostic tools available to teachers to specifically diagnose what students' needs are across all content areas for use in instructional decision making.

**Finding 5: Despite a competent teaching staff and growth in student achievement, a negative community perception of East Wake Middle School persists. There is no plan in place for engaging parents and promoting a positive school image to the community.**

East Wake Middle School continues to battle a negative community image. The building, which is physically unattractive and does not support effective instruction and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills.

**Recommendation 1: Immediately commit funds to comprehensively renovate the East Wake Middle School facility to comply with policy regarding health and safety, to support 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning, and to improve the school's needs for equity and credibility in the community. Allocate supplementary resource support sufficiently to satisfy and meet the requirements for equity. Resources for staffing and for instructional materials and tools should be allocated according to student need, to ensure that those students who require more support to attain academic success have a fair chance at doing so.**

**Recommendation 2: Provide the building leadership team with training and support in monitoring the delivery of curriculum and in coordinating efforts to support the building's mission and vision. Work collaboratively to define the mission and vision of the building, refine current building goals, and emphasize and promote the potential and benefits of the STEM program.**

**Recommendation 3: Implement an aggressive public relations campaign to turn around public perception of East Wake Middle School, with the appreciation for diversity and the STEM program as pivotal characteristics of the school's image. In cooperation with the Student Support Team (see Recommendation 1), develop a plan that has increasing parental involvement and communication as its primary goal, and that directs all efforts and initiatives to increase that parental engagement.**

### *East Wake Middle School Summary*

The auditors know that East Wake Middle School has the leadership capacity and energy to make the needed changes within the building. Indeed, there are many initiatives underway that are moving the school in the right direction; these include a strong collaborative culture, with functioning PLTs and grade-level cohesion; the PRIDE program, which is focused on improving students' reading skills; the STEM program and program coordinator that is aimed at engaging students in cutting edge projects and activities that will increase engagement, problem solving, and ultimately learning and achievement. Additionally, the auditors observed teachers with extremely high levels of dedication and an ethic of caring that is important for middle school students.

In schools with high percentages of students in poverty or from low-income backgrounds, establishing and maintaining the highest of expectations for their academic success is critical. This must serve as the foundational principle that guides all other initiatives and actions taken by every staff member. The STEM program serves as an excellent catalyst for this philosophy, and integrates the concepts and values embedded in the Common Core standards. Teachers are working hard to address and teach the new Common Core standards, and with the additional support provided from improved C-MAPP and formative assessments, their instruction will continue to improve.

Overall, the auditors found that the staff of East Wake Middle School have one of the neediest, if not **the** neediest, populations in the County. With the highest percentage LEP, low income, and Special Education students and the lowest percentage of Academically and Intellectually Gifted students, East

Wake Middle School has great challenges that other middle schools do not face. Parental involvement is a concern; many parents are working hard and find it difficult to be involved at the school, in addition to some families coming from long distances away. Teachers and staff members reach out to parents, but a parent liaison is needed to help facilitate home visits and reaching out to families to build those connections so vital to students' academic success.

Monitoring in the building is inconsistent. Building leaders that are present in classrooms have teachers who feel better about their job, about the leadership in the building, and about student disciplinary issues. Monitoring the delivery of curriculum and ensuring that what teachers are teaching is aligned with district and state expectations is top priority, but monitoring means also supporting teachers' effective delivery, their strategies and approaches, and supporting their classroom management practices. Increased monitoring also means increased visibility in the common areas, which results in improved student behavior, and encourages relationships between principals and students building-wide.

Curriculum delivery was highly aligned to the C-MAPP, although increased attention to the actual grade level and cognitive type of the activities students are engaged in is warranted. Teachers were almost all teaching bell-to-bell, and students were mostly on-task in all classrooms visited. A major factor limiting teachers' ability to individualize instruction is the lack of comprehensive, formative assessments that teachers can use whenever they need to evaluate a student's progress. The current tool is too infrequent and the data not specific enough to use for instructional decision making.

Overall, many pieces are in place to implement the recommendations presented in this report. The shift to track four for the entire building is a step toward greater consistency and will support teachers' teaming and collaboration. Building leaders are focused first on students. With improved consistency and renewed focus on delivering the highest quality, most cognitively challenging and engaging instruction, East Wake Middle School can serve as a center for educational enrichment and student success.

### **C. Hodge Road Elementary School**

The findings and recommendations for Hodge Road Elementary School are presented below, followed by a summary of the report.

**Finding 1: Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) district policy requires lessons planned to be congruent with the authorized written curriculum (C-MAPP). While WCPSS has put forth much effort to align the objectives on C-MAPP to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) at the content level, the written curriculum lacks sufficient specificity in context and cognitive levels to be considered adequate to direct teaching for successful student performance on the more demanding CCSS *Smarter Balanced* assessments. Additionally, C-MAPP is not available in a timely manner for year-round schools and is lacking appropriate resources for teachers.**

The C-MAPP is an excellent resource for teachers and a noteworthy achievement by curriculum leaders in the district since 2007. However, due to the recent shift to Common Core, the C-MAPP is undergoing revision at a fast pace and the revisions are not always available to teachers at year-round schools in a timely manner. Furthermore, the C-MAPP does not specify clearly enough what mastery of discrete skills, as generally described in the Common Core, looks like, particularly in English/language arts.

**Finding 2: Expectations for the WCPSS curriculum to be taught in classrooms are clear; however, effective curriculum delivery at Hodge Road Elementary School is limited by a fragmented schedule, inadequate rigor in classroom instruction, and limited use of effective instructional strategies.**

The auditors found that most teachers are indeed using the C-MAPP to guide instruction. However, pull-out interventions and interruptions during instructional time are extremely distracting for students and are hindering continuity in the academic setting. The majority of instructional strategies observed by auditors

were of less demanding cognitive types and did not effectively engage students in challenging, rigorous learning activities.

**Finding 3: WCPSS expectations for monitoring the delivery of the curriculum are inconsistent and inadequate to ensure higher levels of student learning.**

Monitoring is a critical part of ensuring effective delivery of curriculum. The auditors found that district direction for monitoring is present but inadequate; the purposes, procedures and expectations for monitoring are not specifically defined in policy and support and training for building administrators is insufficient.

**Finding 4: Inequalities and inconsistencies exist that affect student access to comparable programs, services, and learning opportunities.**

The auditors found inconsistencies in student assignment, resource allocation (including staffing) and materials availability for Hodge Road that prevent equity and a level playing field for these needy students.

**Recommendation 1: Continue refinement of C-MAPP to provide a deeply aligned curriculum document that provides teachers with student objectives that are aligned in content, context, and cognition to Common Core State Standards and the upcoming *Smarter Balanced* assessments.**

**Recommendation 2: Provide training for all teachers in all aspects of powerful teaching strategies: cognitively engaging instruction, differentiation, language proficiency, best practices, and integration of technology. Implement the concepts and information learned from training by modeling expectations, providing feedback, and coaching teachers to success. Develop a daily instructional schedule that protects time for good first teaching and is calm and focused for all students.**

**Recommendation 3: Clearly establish expectations and procedures for principals and central office administrators to monitor the delivery of the curriculum.**

**Recommendation 4: Research, identify, and implement strategies to eliminate inequities and inequalities that impede opportunities for all students to succeed.**

**Hodge Road Summary**

Hodge Road Elementary faces many challenges, not the least of which is adapting to its changing student population as well as issues related to classroom instruction. They along with schools across the country are facing the demands of increasing the rigor of teaching as called for in Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the new tests that will be used for assessing student proficiency in 2014-15 developed by the *Smarter Balanced* Assessment Consortium, which North Carolina has selected to participate with in the development of student assessments. These demands put Hodge Road Elementary at a critical juncture in determining important next steps for delivering quality instruction for the boys and girls who attend this school.

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

When reviewing the current status of Hodge Road Elementary School in relationship to audit standards most findings fell under Standard Two and Standard Three. In examining Standard Two, which addresses teaching and learning and the district's direction to schools, auditors analyzed whether there was clear alignment of the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) written curriculum guide (C-MAPP) with what was being taught and tested at Hodge Road Elementary. The auditors found that the WCPSS policy

requires that lessons planned are to be congruent with C-MAPP and much effort has gone into aligning the objectives of C-MAPP to Common Core State Standards at the content level. However, the written curriculum lacks sufficient specificity in the cognitive type (type of thinking that students are expected to do) and the context level (how students are expected to perform to show evidence of mastery) to adequately direct teaching for successful student performance. Also, it was noted that it is common for curriculum resources to be lacking or non-existent for all teachers and C-MAPP is not available in a timely manner for year-round schools such as Hodge Road.

Under the parameters of Standard Three, the auditors examined internal consistency and rational equity in program implementation. During visits to all school classrooms, the auditors observed that curriculum delivery at Hodge Road is limited by some basic tenets of classroom instruction. Overall, there is a low level of cognitive rigor for students, the use of powerful instructional strategies is limited and totally absent in some classrooms, the use of strategies to support students who are English language learners are inconsistently implemented, the use of instructional technology by both students and teachers is minimal, and instructional time is fragmented due to many interventions and scheduling that fails to protect time for high quality core instruction. Additionally, teachers are frequently pulled from classrooms for professional development leaving critical instructional time to substitute teachers.

Auditors found that current WCPSS documents specify an expectation for monitoring the delivery of curriculum but structures have not been put in place by district leadership to support or to clarify for principals and other school administrative staff the means by which monitoring teaching and learning is to be accomplished. At Hodge Road there is not a formalized system to provide teachers with ongoing and meaningful feedback on their delivery of the approved WCPSS curriculum and the monitoring and feedback that takes place is inconsistent.

Inequalities and inconsistencies exist at Hodge Road Elementary that affect student access to comparable programs, services, and learning opportunities in WCPSS. Despite efforts by district leadership and the school's principal to confront some of the obvious inequities, they still exist for this community. These inequities include student assignment patterns over the past decade that have reassigned neighborhood children to other schools and assigned increasing numbers of students who must be transported to school, including many children in poverty who come to school speaking a language other than English. Staff demographics do not reflect the school's shifting demographics and the ability of staff to communicate with all parents is limited with only a few staff members speaking Spanish. There is disproportional student enrollment in special programs without adjustments made in testing to accommodate second language students. Budgeting processes at the county level do not address differences in student need and school level decisions on the use of the budget have put all the resources into interventionists leaving inadequate funds available to meet the basic material and background needs of the student population. Also contributing to the inequities and inconsistencies for the students at Hodge Road Elementary are communication systems among all levels of the organization that are unreliable and imprecise.

The audit team has suggested four comprehensive recommendations with action steps. The timing is appropriate for district level attention to continued refinement of C-MAPP and the alignment to CCSS and the *Smarter Balanced* testing requirements of 2014. Adding the dimension of increased contextual challenge for students in responding to the assessments and increasing the cognitive rigor for all students of WCPSS will be of primary importance as well as identifying expectations for instructional practices, planning for and supporting practices that support equity in all programs, and identifying expectations and supporting the learning of school level leadership in monitoring and supporting the teaching and testing of the written curriculum.

At the school level, the key recommendations include professional development to support teachers' implementation of planning and deep alignment of the written curriculum of WCPSS and CCSS. Using powerful instructional strategies and supports for second language learners will be critical to increasing academic achievement. Planning for more uninterrupted time for teaching the core curriculum and

focusing on good first teaching, increased visibility and monitoring of the school administration in classrooms, and continued focus on eliminating inequities and inconsistencies that impede opportunities for all students to succeed will be of primary importance.

Overall the audit team found the motivation and intent of most professionals at Hodge Road Elementary School to take on the needed changes that will launch strong advances in student achievement. There are some excuses for students not learning-socioeconomic and language-a mindset that must be overcome. Research clearly shows that these circumstances are simply barriers to be overcome, and that they can be overcome with aligned curriculum, effective teaching practices, and system and community wide support for improved student achievement.

It is hoped that the curriculum audit report will provide the stimulus for the WCPSS district leadership team and the Hodge Road principal, staff, and community to develop an agenda for systematic change and improvement. If the process yields the kind of quality and consistency envisioned in the recommendations of the audit, there is every reason to be optimistic about the future of Hodge Road Elementary School. The recommendations that have been offered have a history of success in similar schools. The first step is for the superintendent and school principal to develop a work plan for responding to the findings and recommendations. With active implementation over the next two to three years by the administration, this blueprint can bring organization effectiveness and student achievement to new heights.

#### **D. Knightdale Elementary School**

The findings and recommendations for Knightdale Elementary School are presented below, followed by a summary of the report.

**Finding 1: Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) district policy requires lessons planned to be congruent with the authorized written curriculum (C-MAPP). While WCPSS has put forth much effort to align the objectives on C-MAPP to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) at the content level, the written curriculum lacks sufficient specificity in context and cognitive levels to be considered adequate to direct teaching for successful student performance on the more demanding CCSS *Smarter Balanced* assessments.**

The C-MAPP is an excellent resource for teachers and a noteworthy achievement by curriculum leaders in the district since 2007. However, due to the recent shift to Common Core, the C-MAPP is undergoing revision at a fast pace and the revisions are not always available to teachers at year-round schools in a timely manner. Furthermore, the C-MAPP does not specify clearly enough what mastery of discrete skills, as generally described in the Common Core, looks like, particularly in English/language arts.

**Finding 2: Expectations for the WCPSS curriculum to be taught in classrooms are clear however effective curriculum delivery at Knightdale Elementary School is limited by inadequate rigor in classroom instruction, and limited use of effective instructional strategies.**

The auditors found that most teachers are indeed using the C-MAPP to guide instruction. However, pull-out interventions and interruptions during instructional time are extremely distracting for students and are hindering continuity in the academic setting. The majority of instructional strategies observed by auditors were of less demanding cognitive types and did not effectively engage students in challenging, rigorous learning activities.

**Finding 3: WCPSS Expectations for monitoring the delivery of the curriculum are inconsistent and inadequate to ensure higher levels of student learning.**

Monitoring is a critical part of ensuring effective delivery of curriculum. The auditors found that district direction for monitoring is present but inadequate; the purposes, procedures and expectations for

monitoring are not specifically defined in policy and support and training for building administrators is insufficient.

**Finding 4: Inequalities and inconsistencies exist that affect student access to comparable programs, services, and learning opportunities.**

Resource allocation and support for the school are not sufficient to address increased needs at Knightdale Elementary. The auditors did not find evidence that resources are allocated based on need.

**Recommendation 1: Continue refinement of C-MAPP to provide a deeply aligned curriculum document that provides teachers with student objectives that are aligned in content, context, and cognition to Common Core State Standards and the upcoming *Smarter Balanced* assessments.**

**Recommendation 2: Provide training for all teachers in all aspects of powerful teaching strategies: cognitively engaging instruction, differentiation, language proficiency, best practices, and integration of technology. Implement the concepts and information learned from training by modeling expectations, providing feedback, and coaching teachers to success. Extend the daily instructional schedule that protects time for good first teaching and is calm and focused for all students.**

**Recommendation 3: Clearly establish expectations and procedures for principals and central office administrators to monitor the delivery of the curriculum.**

**Recommendation 4: Research, identify, and implement strategies to eliminate inequities and inequalities that impede opportunities for all students to succeed.**

## SUMMARY

Knightdale Elementary School faces challenges, not the least of which is adapting to its changing student population as well as issues related to classroom instruction. They, along with schools across the country, are facing the demands of increasing the rigor of teaching as called for in Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the new tests that will be used for assessing student proficiency in 2014-15 developed by the *Smarter Balanced* Assessment Consortium, which North Carolina has selected to participate with in the development of student assessments. These demands put Knightdale Elementary at a critical juncture in determining important next steps for delivering quality instruction for the boys and girls who attend this school.

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

When reviewing the current status of Knightdale Elementary School in relationship to audit standards most findings fell under Standard Two and Standard Three. In examining Standard Two, which addresses teaching and learning and the district's direction to schools, auditors analyzed whether there was clear alignment of the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) written curriculum guide (C-MAPP) with what was being taught and tested in Knightdale Elementary classrooms. The auditors found that the WCPSS policy requires that lessons planned are to be congruent with C-MAPP and much effort has gone into aligning the objectives of C-MAPP to Common Core State Standards at the content level. However, the written curriculum lacks sufficient specificity in the cognitive type (type of thinking that students are expected to do) and the context level (how students are expected to perform to show evidence of mastery) to adequately direct teaching for successful student performance. Additionally, it was noted that it is common for curriculum resources referred to in C-MAPP to not be available or to be non-existent for all teachers.

Under the parameters of Standard Three, the auditors examined internal consistency and rational equity in program implementation. During visits to all Knightdale Elementary classrooms, the auditors observed that curriculum delivery is limited by some basic tenets of classroom instruction. Overall, there is a low level of cognitive rigor for students, the use of powerful instructional strategies is limited and totally missing in some classrooms, the use of strategies to support students who are English language learners are inconsistently implemented, the use of instructional technology by both students and teachers is minimal, and the system to support positive student behavior is in the beginning stages and is not supported by all staff.

Auditors found that current WCPSS documents specify an expectation for monitoring the delivery of curriculum but structures have not been put in place by district leadership to support or to clarify for principals and other school administrative staff the means by which monitoring teaching and learning is to be accomplished. At Knightdale Elementary there is not a formalized system to provide teachers with ongoing and meaningful feedback on their delivery of the approved WCPSS curriculum and the monitoring and feedback that takes place is inconsistent.

Inequalities and inconsistencies exist at Knightdale Elementary that affect student access to comparable programs, services, and learning opportunities in WCPSS. Despite efforts by district leadership and the school's principal to confront some of the obvious inequities, they still exist for this community. These inequities include staff demographics that do not reflect the school's shifting demographics and the ability of staff to communicate with all parents is limited with only a few staff members speaking Spanish. There is disproportional student enrollment in special programs without adjustments made in testing to accommodate second language students. Budgeting processes at the county level do not address differences in student need. Also contributing to the inequities and inconsistencies for the students at Knightdale Elementary are communication systems among all levels of the organization that are inconsistent.

The audit team has suggested four comprehensive recommendations with action steps. The timing is appropriate for district level attention to continued refinement of C-MAPP and the alignment to CCSS and the *Smarter Balanced* testing requirements of 2014. Adding the dimension of increased contextual challenge for students in responding to the assessments and increasing the cognitive rigor for all students of WCPSS will be of primary importance as well as identifying expectations for instructional practices, planning for and supporting practices that support equity in all programs, and identifying expectations and supporting the learning of school level leadership in monitoring and supporting the teaching and testing of the written curriculum.

At the school level, the key recommendations include professional development to support teachers' implementation of planning and deep alignment of the written curriculum of WCPSS and CCSS. Professional development in the use of powerful instructional strategies for all students and more specifically for second language learners needs to be a priority for Knightdale Elementary to increase student achievement. A focus for both district and school administrators on increased monitoring and feedback for teaching and learning in classrooms should take precedence along with a continued focus on eliminating inequities and inconsistencies that impede opportunities for all students to succeed.

Overall the audit team found the motivation and intent of most professionals at Knightdale Elementary School to take on the needed changes that will launch strong advances in student achievement. There are some excuses for students not learning-socioeconomic and language-a mindset that must be overcome. Research clearly shows that these circumstances are simply barriers to be overcome, and that they can be overcome with aligned curriculum, effective teaching practices, and system and community wide support for improved student achievement.

With insightful leadership and a renewed commitment to teaching all children, auditors believe that the time is perfect for Knightdale Elementary to begin this work of creating new and better ways of doing the business of educating students. It is hoped that the curriculum audit report will provide the stimulus for

the WCPSS district leadership team and the Knightdale principal, staff, and community to develop an agenda for systematic change and improvement. If the process yields the kind of quality and consistency envisioned in the recommendations of the audit, there is every reason to be optimistic about the future of Knightdale Elementary School. The recommendations that have been offered have a history of success in similar schools. The first step is for the superintendent and school principal to develop a work plan for responding to the findings and recommendations. With active implementation over the next two to three years by the administration, this blueprint can bring organization effectiveness and student achievement to new heights.