Part Two Sample Questions and Written Assignments

This section is designed to assist you in responding to the multiple-choice questions and written assignments on Part Two of the assessment.

Included in this section are:

➢ Sample multiple-choice questions

➢ Annotated answer key for the sample multiple-choice questions

➢ Sample directions for the written assignments

➢ Sample written assignments

➢ An example of a strong response to each sample assignment

➢ An evaluation of the strong response to each sample assignment

➢ Scoring criteria that will be used in evaluating your response to each assignment

The sample multiple-choice questions are designed to illustrate the nature of the test questions. Work through the questions carefully before referring to the annotated answer key, which follows the sample multiple-choice questions. The answer key provides the correct response to each question, describes why each correct response is the best answer, and lists the objective within the assessment framework to which each question is linked.

For each sample assignment, you may want to take the following steps to prepare for the test:

☑ Review the directions for the written assignments.

☑ Read the assignment.

☑ Prepare your response to the assignment. It is suggested that you type your response to the assignment without using editorial tools, such as spell check and grammar check, in order to simulate the actual testing experience. These tools will not be available to you during the test session.

☑ After you complete the assignment, review the sample strong response, your response, the scoring criteria, and the evaluation of the sample strong response.

QUESTIONS

1. A school district leader is overseeing the development of a plan for enhancing the use of classroom assessment to improve student learning outcomes. The plan is most likely to achieve the intended goal if it includes provisions for:

   A. establishing mandated testing dates for each grade level and curriculum area based on the scope and sequence of the district's curriculum.

   B. ensuring that assessment is used as an integral tool for making instructional decisions on an ongoing basis.

   C. establishing a districtwide system of grading in which student grades are based on standard assessment practices and grading criteria.

   D. ensuring that district schools allow students to choose from a variety of assessment formats to demonstrate their learning.

2. A school district leader is committed to significantly reducing the incidence of bullying and harassing at district schools. As part of this effort, all staff will be held accountable for taking direct action in any situation involving student bullying or harassing that they witness or that is reported to them. The district leader can best help ensure the desired staff behavior by using which of the following strategies?

   A. communicating clearly to staff the reasons why direct action on their part is needed in responding to the problem of student bullying and harassing

   B. revising the criteria used for staff performance evaluations to include behavior and attitudes related to student bullying and harassing

   C. initiating a campaign to publicize the problem of student bullying and harassing and to urge staff and others to take appropriate action against this problem

   D. providing all staff with explicit training in how to identify and respond to incidents involving student bullying and harassing

3. A building leader asks a school district leader to support him in beginning proceedings to terminate a tenured teacher for unsatisfactory performance in various aspects of his job and an overall inability to play a positive role in helping achieve the district's vision for student learning. Before agreeing to support the building leader, it is most important for the district leader to receive which of the following?

   A. student records that illustrate the teacher's inability to provide adequate instruction

   B. documentation of actions taken in an effort to remediate the teacher's weaknesses

   C. a record of all disciplinary actions taken against the teacher by the building leader

   D. evidence of one or more actions by the teacher that are in conflict with the district's code of conduct

4. The leader of a district's Shared-Decision-Making Team is concerned that the team is not functioning effectively. Team members agree to complete a questionnaire designed to evaluate the functioning of the team. Each team member, including the leader, completes the questionnaire independently. As a *next* step, which of the following strategies is likely to be most effective in improving the team's functioning?

   A. The team leader and the district's human resources director analyze the questionnaire results and prepare recommendations for the team.

   B. The team reviews and analyzes the results of the questionnaire in order to identify perceived areas of strength in team functioning.

   C. The team leader analyzes the results of the questionnaire, then introduces appropriate changes to improve team functioning.

   D. The team analyzes and discusses the results of the questionnaire, then plans action steps to improve weak areas of team functioning.

5. Six of the 15 schools in a district are over 50 years old and in need of significant renovation and updating. The school district leader can best initiate action on this problem by:

   A. directing district staff to investigate and identify the specific needs and inadequacies of each building.

   B. arranging for stakeholder groups to tour new and remodeled school buildings similar to those in the district that require repair.

   C. submitting an initial request to the district governing body seeking fiscal support for a construction proposal.

   D. forming a broad-based committee of stakeholders to begin the process of selecting a knowledgeable and experienced construction consultant.

6. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), school districts are required to provide a "free appropriate public education" to children with disabilities. This means that school districts must provide every eligible student who has an identified disability with:

   A. an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that enables the student to achieve to his or her maximum potential.

   B. special education and related services that match or surpass a federally mandated array of services defined for the student's disability.

   C. an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that is tailored to meet the student's unique needs.

   D. special education and related services that will be of at least minimal educational benefit to the student.

Use the information below to answer the three questions that follow.

Residents of Rockridge School District are concerned about a number of recent trends in the local schools, including increased student violence and drug use, increased student absenteeism, declining graduation rates for some student groups, and decreased job placement rates for students graduating from the career and technology education programs. Dr. Owens, the recently hired school district leader of Rockridge, has made it a priority to address these problems. She has reviewed relevant data and has spoken to many individuals and groups in the schools and in the community about the problems.

7. At this point, which of the following steps would be most appropriate for Dr. Owens to take *first* to address the identified problems?

   A. initiating a districtwide campaign to alert students' families to the issues and challenge them to take personal action

   B. seeking guidance from school and community stakeholder groups in defining ways in which school programs and services can better address current needs

   C. creating a resource center to provide additional assistance to students in job- and career-related skills such as résumé building and interviewing strategies

   D. requesting the cooperation of the district governing body in expanding funding for the various student support services offered in the schools

8. As she visits district schools, Dr. Owens finds that many school personnel, including long-time teachers and administrative staff, appear to be focusing their energies more on complaining about the changes that have occurred in the district than on seeking ways to address them. Dr. Owens' best response under these circumstances would be to:

   A. begin an ongoing dialogue with district administrators and faculty to support innovation and leadership at the building level to meet the new challenges.

   B. send an open letter to administrators and faculty acknowledging the problems the district is facing and outlining her plans for addressing these problems.

   C. convene a meeting of senior faculty and staff members for the purpose of clarifying the attitudes and behavior she expects from them as leaders within the district.

   D. arrange for district faculty and staff members to attend a series of professional development seminars on how to achieve a sense of empowerment in the workplace.

9. A school building leader confides to Dr. Owens that the growing number and types of problems he encounters daily are causing him unprecedented levels of stress. He adds that other building leaders in the district are under similar pressure. Which of the following strategies would be most effective for Dr. Owens to use to address this issue?

    A. taking steps to protect building leaders from extraneous demands and to ensure that they do not feel isolated

    B. instituting districtwide policies to limit the amount of overtime put in by building leaders

    C. finding ways to encourage building leaders to keep sight of the district vision and to renew their commitment to it

    D. frequently expressing gratitude, both in public and in private, for the work done by individual building leaders

ANNOTATED ANSWER KEY

For question	The correct response is	Reason	Test Objective
1	B	Classroom assessments have the greatest positive effect on student learning outcomes when teachers use assessment results to guide their instructional planning. Student performance on classroom assessments gives teachers valuable information about their students' current strengths and needs and therefore helps teachers adjust the pace of instruction and the methods used in ways that are responsive to particular learning needs.	0001
2	D	When implementing a districtwide initiative such as the one described, district leaders would be best advised to provide explicit training aimed at clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all staff who are expected to participate. Such training would help ensure that all staff members have a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying or harassing behavior as defined by the district. Furthermore, it would promote greater consistency in how staff members respond to instances of bullying or harassing behavior.	0002
3	B	In the situation described, the school district leader must understand and apply appropriate procedures for terminating a tenured teacher whose performance is detrimental to the achievement of educational goals. Tenured teachers have a right to be protected from arbitrary dismissal. Therefore, it is important for the district leader to obtain evidence showing that the teacher has been informed about areas of weakness and has had ample opportunity to improve his performance through access to appropriate support and guidance. If documentation provided by the building leader shows that a good faith effort has been made to help the teacher improve performance, then the district leader can be confident about moving forward with the termination request.	0005

For question	The correct response is	Reason	Test Objective
4	D	Involving team members in analyzing and discussing the questionnaire results serves several purposes. Engaging in the process should help all team members recognize the need for improvement and will offer all team members an opportunity to participate in generating solutions to solve identified problems. This in turn can be expected to bring a wide range of ideas and strategies to the table, increase team members' acceptance of adopted solutions, and enhance all members' sense of responsibility for contributing to the development of a well-functioning team.	0006
5	A	In the situation described, the school district leader's first step should be to assess the particular needs that currently exist at each of the six schools requiring renovation. This will allow district staff to begin defining the precise nature and scope of the problems that must be addressed and identifying potential priorities for future action. Only then will the district leader be ready to put together a coherent and comprehensive case for district decision makers who will want information about the severity of needs, likely project costs, and other issues related to work that needs to be done.	0007
6	C	According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), every student with an identified disability who qualifies for special education services must be provided with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that reflects the student's specific needs and assists the student in achieving defined educational goals. The IEP is a legal document that specifies the supports, modifications, and services that the student is entitled to receive and serves as a road map for providing instruction and learning opportunities in the least restrictive environment consistent with the student's educational needs.	0008

For question	The correct response is	Reason	Test Objective
7	B	Based on the information provided, Dr. Owens has taken steps to define the nature of and perceptions about the problems in Rockridge. Her next step should be to determine what the schools can and should do in terms of providing programs and services to solve these problems and meet student needs. By involving stakeholder groups in the school and community in the initial stages of this process, Dr. Owens can help ensure that the ideas generated will be responsive to perceived needs and the solutions ultimately adopted will be broadly supported. Only after promising solutions have been identified and explored will Dr. Owens be in a position to take specific actions aimed at effecting positive change.	0003
8	A	In responding to school staff who have become bogged down in complaining and being negative about current problems, Dr. Owens's primary goal should be to promote a more positive outlook and a commitment to implementing new approaches for school improvement. She can best help achieve this goal by engaging school staff in ongoing interactions aimed at encouraging leadership and innovative solutions and providing reassurance that the district is committed to supporting positive action at the school level. In this way, Dr. Owens can help motivate and energize staff to meet the challenges that lie ahead.	0004
9	A	Although Dr. Owens cannot eliminate many of the daily challenges faced by school building leaders, she can control the number and nature of the demands placed on building leaders by the district. Reducing district demands on building leaders' time will make it easier for them to focus their energies on responding promptly and effectively to building-level challenges. Dr. Owens can also put in place procedures for reducing the building leaders' sense of isolation during a stressful time. For example, checking in regularly with individual building leaders and/or small groups of building leaders would provide support that could help the building leaders reduce stress and solve problems that are confronting them.	0004

DIRECTIONS FOR THE WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

A sample of the directions for the written assignments is shown in the box below.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

This section of the test consists of two written assignments. Assignment One is a Management Problem Solving assignment and Assignment Two is an Educational Program Analysis assignment. You are to prepare a written response of about 150–300 words to Assignment One and a written response of about 300–600 words to Assignment Two. Approximately 50% of your total test score is derived from the written assignments—approximately 17% from Assignment One, and approximately 33% from Assignment Two. You may complete the assignments in either order, and you may return to either assignment as time permits.

Read each assignment carefully before you type. Each written assignment appears on the screen with an answer box immediately below the assignment. Type your response in this answer box. For some written assignments, you may need to use the scroll bar to view the entire assignment. To view all parts of Assignment Two, you will need to click on buttons at the top of the screen labeled "Document 1," "Document 2," etc. As with the multiple-choice questions, you may select written assignments for review later during the testing time.

Your response to each assignment will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

*   **PURPOSE:** Fulfill the charge of the assignment.

*   **APPLICATION OF CONTENT:** Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.

*   **SUPPORT:** Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

Your responses will be evaluated on the criteria above, not on writing ability. However, your responses must be communicated clearly enough to permit valid judgment of your knowledge and skills. Your responses should conform to the conventions of edited American English. This should be your original work, written in your own words, and not copied or paraphrased from some other work.

Be sure to write about the assigned topics. You may not use any reference materials during the test. In order to maintain your anonymity during the scoring process, do not type your name in any portion of the answer box. Remember to review what you have written and make any changes that you think will improve your responses.

SAMPLE MANAGEMENT PROBLEM SOLVING ASSIGNMENT

Subarea: Managing District Resources and Compliance

Assignment One: Management Problem Solving

Use the information below to complete the task that follows.

Dr. Freed is a new school superintendent. During the previous five-year period, budgets in his district were limited, and district leaders made concerted efforts to identify supplementary funds. Administrators and teachers were very successful in finding grant funds to support specific programs. Some grants were a few hundred dollars, enough to take a group of students to a concert or play, and some were many thousands of dollars and large enough to provide significant professional development for teachers.

During the school year, a notification arrives informing Dr. Freed that a payment of grant funds is being withheld due to improper use. The funds, which were earmarked for professional development for math teachers, were instead used for a student field trip. This competitive grant was one of three grants that had been written and administered by Mr. Haigh, one of the middle school principals.

Mr. Haigh quickly acknowledges that a mistake had been made. Explaining that he had inadvertently charged the field trip to the wrong grant, he volunteers to prepare and submit the necessary amendment. Mr. Haigh tells Dr. Freed that grant writing increases the workload and bookkeeping for his staff, but he is pleased with the supplementary revenue and programs he has been able to generate for the school.

After looking into the issue, Dr. Freed learns that Mr. Haigh is not the only principal who has been administering several grants. The district business manager says that she has not been monitoring the grants, since they are being administered all over the district. Dr. Freed's concern grows as he discovers inconsistent fiscal account-ability and disregard of program protocol regarding grants. However, he does not want to dampen the enthusiasm of grant writers or eliminate this significant source of revenue. Dr. Freed decides that the district needs to develop a system to improve management of school grant funds.

Task

Write a response of about 150–300 words in which you:

- describe two important issues that Dr. Freed should consider when planning development of a system to improve management of school grant funds in this district;

- describe one strategy for improving management of school grant funds in this district; and

- explain why this strategy is likely to be effective.

■ Strong Response to the Sample Management Problem Solving Assignment

One important issue Dr. Freed would need to consider when developing a plan for managing the school grant funding program is the need to create a comprehensive system of oversight and management of the district's entire grant system. This system should be headed by a knowledgeable program administrator and should include a well-organized program handbook that is given to every participating staff member.

A second, related issue is the need to provide all involved staff with training in the management of grant funds. This training should include such areas as compliance with restrictions on specific funds and the importance of fulfilling reporting requirements. The apparently widespread popularity of the grant program, along with the fact that more than one principal is administering several grants, makes it increasingly likely that errors like Mr. Haigh's will recur without a management system that includes comprehensive oversight and systematic training for personnel at all levels who are involved in the program.

One strategy for improving the management of school grant funds in this district would be to ask the local Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) director or assistant director to collaborate with the district business leader to develop and implement a series of training sessions. One session should address the purpose and intent of the various types of grant funded initiatives within the district and would be mandatory for all personnel involved. Another would focus on management and compliance, explicitly identifying allowable expenditures, budget and object codes pertinent to the grant, and fiscal accounting. Another session should focus on the reporting of funding use and outcomes, contacts for technical assistance, and organization of documentation, both for reporting to the district business leader and in case of an audit.

This strategy would be effective because it would help ensure that staff members involved in the program have the necessary information (including where to direct questions) to write and manage grants appropriately. It would also communicate that compliance with system requirements is taken very seriously and that individuals who demonstrate noncompliance will be held accountable.

■ Evaluation of the Strong Response to the Sample Management Problem Solving Assignment

This response is considered a strong response because it reflects a thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills.

PURPOSE: Fulfill the charge of the assignment.

The response completely fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding fully to the given task.

All parts of the charge are addressed within the response. There is a description of two important issues to consider when planning development of a system to improve management of school grant funds (i.e., the creation of a comprehensive system of oversight, including a program administrator, and the establishment of a training program). A strategy is described that involves the collaboration between a BOCES director and the school district business leader to develop and implement a series of training sessions. There is an explanation of why the strategy described is likely to be effective (i.e., provides the necessary information and communicates that compliance with system requirements is taken very seriously and that individuals who demonstrate noncompliance will be held accountable).

APPLICATION OF CONTENT: Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates an accurate and highly effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates an understanding of leadership concepts and principles in relation to district financial management. There is evidence of understanding of the management and compliance issues involved in grant funding, as well as knowledge of appropriate contacts related to this concept (e.g., BOCES). The discussion of the strategy for improving the management of grant funds demonstrates an understanding of the elements of training that will be required and the responsibilities of all involved (e.g., use of appropriate codes, documentation).

SUPPORT: Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response provides strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning.

Relevant examples and sound reasoning are present in this response. For example, there is reasoning for providing a comprehensive system of management and training for personnel at all levels (i.e., to help prevent errors such as Mr. Haigh's). Examples of components of training for grant compliance and management are provided (e.g., contacts for technical assistance, documentation for auditing).

SAMPLE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT

Subarea: Leading the District Educational Program

<u>Assignment Two: Educational Program Analysis</u>

You are the new superintendent of Fowler School District. Read the five district documents on the pages that follow. Citing specific evidence from the information provided, write a response of about 300–600 words in which you:

- identify one significant strength of the district's educational program, and describe a strategy for building on this strength to improve the district's educational program;

- identify two significant weaknesses of the district's educational program;

- for *each* of the weaknesses you have identified, describe one strategy to address that weakness; and

- explain why each of these strategies is likely to be effective in improving the district's educational program.

Document #1: Excerpt from a memo written by the assistant superintendent to the new superintendent (current year)

M e m o r a n d u m

TO: [Superintendent]

FROM: [Assistant Superintendent]

DATE: [Current year]

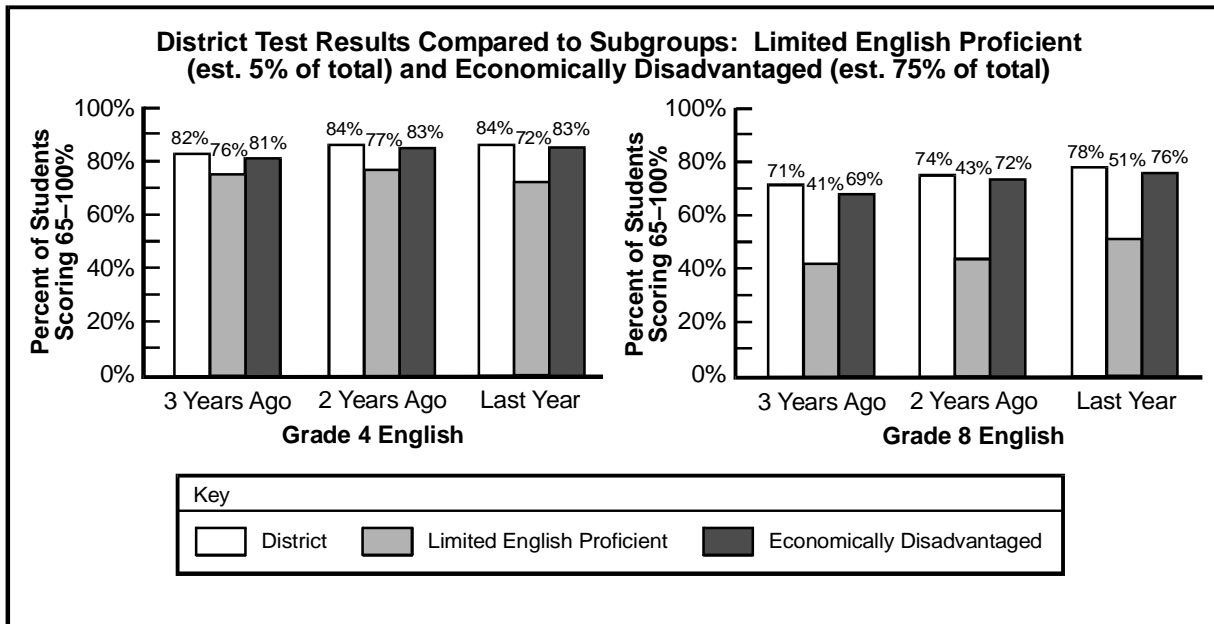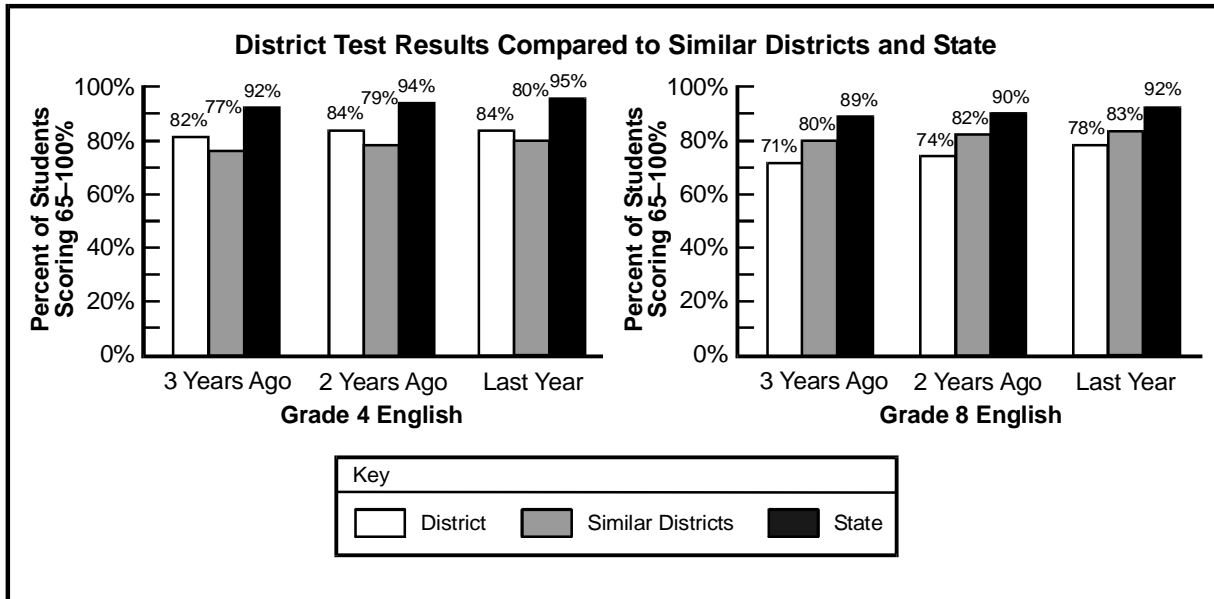SUBJECT: Background Information

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Welcome to the district! I have enjoyed meeting and talking with you, and I look forward to working with you in the coming school year.

You have asked me to pass along some background information about our district. As you know, Fowler School District is a large district in which the schools enjoy strong community and parent/guardian support.

Eleven years ago, with the renovation of three buildings, the district governing body voted to move the sixth graders from the elementary schools to the middle schools. Initially, these students followed the junior high model of a seven-period schedule. They began their day in homeroom and then had content-area instruction in different classrooms on a rotating schedule.

Five years ago, the middle school principals' advisory group of teachers and parents/guardians reported that the sixth graders were having trouble transitioning from the nurturing elementary school environ-ment of a self-contained fifth-grade classroom to the middle schools' multiple-class system, which required students to interact with a different teacher for each subject. The decision was made to desig-nate a "transition year" for sixth graders. The sixth-grade students were assigned to two-teacher teams: one teacher taught mathematics and science, and the other teacher taught English and social studies. This model is still in place, with students changing classrooms midday.

Document #2: Fowler School District state test results

District Test Results Compared to Similar Districts and State

Grade 4 English

	3 Years Ago	2 Years Ago	Last Year
District	82%	84%	84%
Similar Districts	77%	79%	80%
State	92%	94%	95%

Grade 8 English

	3 Years Ago	2 Years Ago	Last Year
District	71%	74%	78%
Similar Districts	80%	82%	83%
State	89%	90%	92%

Key: District, Similar Districts, State

District Test Results Compared to Subgroups: Limited English Proficient (est. 5% of total) and Economically Disadvantaged (est. 75% of total)

Grade 4 English

	3 Years Ago	2 Years Ago	Last Year
District	82%	84%	84%
Limited English Proficient	76%	77%	72%
Economically Disadvantaged	81%	83%	83%

Grade 8 English

	3 Years Ago	2 Years Ago	Last Year
District	71%	74%	78%
Limited English Proficient	41%	43%	51%
Economically Disadvantaged	69%	72%	76%

Key: District, Limited English Proficient, Economically Disadvantaged

Document #3: Newspaper article (last spring)

Middle School Study Committee Reports Concerns

[CITY]—Eleven years after moving sixth graders to the middle schools, and five years after major changes in the delivery of instruction, middle school student achievement levels are still below expectations. The District Middle School Study Committee, composed of parents/guardians and educators, has made public the results of its in-depth review of test scores and its survey of parents/guardians, designed to provide information about parent/guardian concerns and levels of satisfaction.

Although district elementary students over the past decade have generally performed at high levels, middle school performance drops significantly on state-mandated tests, according to the district's curriculum director.

Several parents/guardians on the committee recognized and expressed appreciation for staff attempts to design strategies to meet the unique needs of middle school students. But committee consensus is that although district middle schools are progressing, the teachers, curriculum, and instructional strategies are still not fully meeting the needs of middle school learners.

The committee presented concerns about teacher turnover and the frequent transfer of more experienced teachers from middle school to high school. As noted in the report, "A stable, experienced staff, committed to middle school teaching, continues as a high-priority need. The middle school environment is still not as nurturing and supportive as it needs to be in transitioning students entering from the elementary schools."

The committee identified inadequate recruiting, hiring, and training of middle school staff to meet the needs of this unique age group as key problems. Funding cuts and other mandated professional development requirements were cited as reasons why district professional development plans have not focused more on preparing teachers for middle school teaching. The administration has recognized this need and plans to provide increased professional development funds in the next budget.

The Middle School Study Committee will meet the second Tuesday of each month and is open to the public. Parents/guardians who are interested in serving on this committee are asked to contact the chair.

Document #4: Fowler School District faculty data

Fowler School District Teachers:
Years of Teaching Experience and Average Salaries

Years of Teaching Experience	High School Teachers	Middle School Teachers	Elementary Teachers	Districtwide Itinerant Teachers
Beginning	25	47	13	7
2–5 years	49	180	122	29
6–10 years	156	110	157	35
11–19 years	192	73	337	50
More than 20 years	183	48	276	42
Average Salaries	$54,000	$36,000	$47,000	$49,000

Fowler School District: Faculty Count

Level	Number of Teachers
High School (9–12)	605
Middle School (6–8)	458
Elementary (K–5)	905
Districtwide Itinerant	163
District Total (K–12)	2,131

Document #5: Preliminary schedule of professional development sessions for all teachers in the district (last year)

Preliminary Professional Development Schedule

Month	Topic	Presenter(s)
October	Restraint Training and CPR (Demonstration)	Special Education Director and School Nurses
November	Differentiated Instruction (Lecture and Video)	Professor Henry McGill
March	Collaborative Learning (Lecture)	TBA
April	Early Retirement: "Making It Work For You"	Union Panel Discussion
May	Review procedures for new data-processing system	Vendor

■ Strong Response to the Sample Educational Program Analysis Assignment

One of Fowler School District's strengths is community, educator, and parent/guardian support and involvement (Documents #1 and #3). For example, staff members are open to developing new strategies to help students adjust to the middle school (Document #1), and parents/guardians are actively involved on the District Middle School Study Committee (Document #3).

One strategy for building on this strength is to expand the role of the Middle School Study Committee. The committee's successful use of shared decision-making strategies and use of significant data to identify strengths and weaknesses in the middle school program is critical and should be further applied to the process of exploring, identifying, and implementing solutions to address problems the committee has identified. Given a new and broader mandate, the committee would likely benefit from increased membership, and perhaps reorganization into various subcommittees, each with its own area to address (e.g., teacher retention, enhancing professional development, meeting the needs of English language learners).

One weakness in the district is high teacher turnover at the middle school level and its likely effect on student achievement (Documents #3 and #4). Approximately half of the middle school staff have five or fewer years of experience (Document #4). One way to encourage staff stability would be to establish an effective mentoring program. Volunteer mentors (i.e., experienced middle school teachers) would be paired with new middle school teachers to provide support, feedback, and coaching. Administrators would provide release time for additional, relevant staff development opportunities (e.g., weekly meetings between new teachers and their mentors, observations by new teachers and their mentors within one another's classrooms).

Mentoring programs target the development of specific teacher behaviors, which can ultimately affect student achievement and result in improved test scores. Teachers who are supported and provided with relevant skill development and who see that their students are achieving are likely to be more successful and may experience greater job satisfaction. Increased job satisfaction among middle school teachers may reduce the turnover rate.

A second area of weakness is low student achievement on the eighth-grade state tests in English. The scores on the English test reflect consistent low performance (i.e., 71–78% passing) over a three-year period (Document #2). These scores are lower than both statewide scores and scores of similar school districts. In contrast, the fourth-grade English scores are better than the scores of similar school districts during the same three-year period. To address this weakness, the district should conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of the educational program at the middle schools. The Middle School Study Committee (or another similarly constituted committee) could be charged with conducting this assessment, which would include using state test data and data from other sources (e.g., questionnaires, interviews) to determine specific weaknesses in curriculum and instruction and to investigate other factors (e.g., leadership, resources, climate) that may be affecting student achievement.

This strategy would be effective because it involves major stakeholder groups in a collaborative process driven by data. Analyzing data will help stakeholders understand the needs of middle school students and determine causes of student underachievement. For example, state test data may indicate that eighth graders had difficulty with particular concepts on the tests. Using this information, the committee could examine the middle school curriculum and instruction to determine whether those concepts are being covered and if they are, whether they should be covered differently or in greater depth. Stakeholders could then use the data to make decisions regarding curriculum and instruction and to develop a plan for improving student achievement. For example, the middle schools may wish to purchase new textbooks that are more aligned with state standards, or they may decide to provide teachers with professional development on research-based instructional strategies in English language arts. The effectiveness of plans for improvement can then be measured by analyzing future performance on state tests for eighth graders.

■ Evaluation of the Strong Response to the Sample Educational Program Analysis Assignment

This response is considered a strong response because it reflects a thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills.

PURPOSE: Fulfill the charge of the assignment.

The response completely fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding fully to the given task.

All parts of the charge are addressed within the response. The response includes an identification of a significant district strength (i.e., community, educator, and parent/guardian support and involvement) and a description of a strategy for building on that strength (i.e., expanding the role of the Middle School Study Committee . . . to the process of exploring, identifying, and implementing solutions to address identified problems). Two significant weaknesses are identified (i.e., high teacher turnover at the middle school level and low student achievement on the eighth-grade state tests in English). A strategy to address each weakness is described (i.e., a mentoring program for inexperienced middle school teachers and a comprehensive needs assessment of the educational program at the middle schools). An explanation is provided about how a mentoring program would be effective in enhancing teacher support, effectiveness, and job satisfaction and in reducing teacher turnover. An explanation is also provided for why a comprehensive needs assessment would be effective (e.g., helping stakeholders understand the needs of middle school students and determine causes of student underachievement, providing information to help stakeholders develop a plan for improvement).

APPLICATION OF CONTENT: Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates an accurate and highly effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates the ability to distinguish between areas of strength and weakness within a district and to suggest effective interventions based on information provided and knowledge of the field. There is evidence of content knowledge within the field related to proper interpretation of data provided in documents (e.g., staff turnover and possible causes, comparative test results and their meaning) and the importance of data-driven planning. The response also includes knowledge of components of effective instructional change (e.g., involvement of stakeholders, use of data) and the need to align curriculum with state standards. In addition, there is an understanding of the importance of providing teachers with support and of the relationships among job satisfaction, staff development, student achievement, and teacher retention.

SUPPORT: Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response provides strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning.

The response includes ample evidence of both sound reasoning and support through examples. For example, there is sound reasoning present in the discussion of the potential impact of mentoring programs on student achievement and teachers' job satisfaction. The response includes many relevant, high-quality examples, including what an analysis of the state test data may reveal (e.g., inadequate coverage of curriculum concepts), how the analysis of results can be used to develop an improvement plan, and types of interactions required for a successful mentoring program (e.g., weekly meetings between new teachers and their mentors, classroom observations).

CRITERIA FOR SCORING THE RESPONSE

Each response will be evaluated based on the following criteria.

PURPOSE:	Fulfill the charge of the assignment.
APPLICATION OF CONTENT:	Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.
SUPPORT:	Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

Each response is rated on a four-point scale. The four score points of the score scale correspond to varying degrees of performance that are related to the above criteria.

Score Point	Score Point Description
4	**The "4" response reflects a thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills.** • The response completely fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding fully to the given task. • The response demonstrates an accurate and highly effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning.
3	**The "3" response reflects a general command of the relevant knowledge and skills.** • The response generally fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding to the given task. • The response demonstrates a generally accurate and effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides support with some relevant examples and/or generally sound reasoning.
2	**The "2" response reflects a partial command of the relevant knowledge and skills.** • The response partially fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding in a limited way to the given task. • The response demonstrates a limited, partially accurate and partially effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides limited support with few examples and/or some flawed reasoning.
1	**The "1" response reflects little or no command of the relevant knowledge and skills.** • The response fails to fulfill the purpose of the assignment. • The response demonstrates a largely inaccurate and/or ineffective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides little or no support with few, if any, examples and/or seriously flawed reasoning.

Please note: A response that is unrelated to the assigned topic, unreadable, written in a language other than English, or lacking a sufficient amount of original work to score will be considered **unscorable**. If there is no response to the assignment, then the response will be considered **blank**.