Los Angeles County Office of Education: Special Education Review

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Executive Summary

The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) operates special education classes and services for students in County districts, charter schools, and juvenile court and community schools. LACOE is the administrative unit for four Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA), serving 2,617 students in those areas. These figures are drastically reduced from three years ago, when LACOE served six SELPAs and 5,219 students.[1] In March 2015, LACOE engaged Cross & Joftus, a national education consulting firm, to conduct a needs assessment that identifies reasons for declining enrollment, assesses the quality of instruction being provided in LACOE-operated classes, and looks for other areas of strength and challenges in the County's provision of special education services. Because of LACOE leadership's concerns with the Division of Special Education, the C&J team focused much of its review on the systemic issues contributing to its declining enrollment, while focusing its review of LACOE's Department of Special Programs on the programming at the County's court and community schools.

Based on interviews, focus groups, classroom walkthroughs, surveys of district special education directors, and extant data analysis,[2] the C&J review team concludes that LACOE's Division of Special Education (DSE) has reached a point of crisis by almost every measure. Since the 2012-13 school year, revenues, student enrollment, and number of participating SELPAs and districts have decreased drastically as districts "take back" programs (see Figures 1 and 2). Additional decreases are likely. LACOE's Los Angeles Charter SELPA (LAC Charter) is losing two of its nine members this year, although this SELPA does have potential for expansion and increased revenue with careful planning and implementation by LACOE. The largest SELPA continuing to purchase services (Southwest)—representing 75 percent of the division's remaining student enrollment[3]—is strongly considering a take back for the 2016-17 school year. If the SW SELPA does take back all or most of its programs, DSE would likely become insolvent.

Meanwhile, a vicious cycle has started that will be very difficult to break without bold action by LACOE leadership. Program "take backs" force LACOE to enact "reductions in force" (RIF), which require LACOE to transfer teachers, paraprofessionals, and other staff, and to increase the cost of services for districts continuing to purchase them. The RIFs and resulting transfers create uncertainty and program instability, lower morale, place educators in positions in which they are unqualified or unhappy, reduce accountability, and reduce curricular and instructional supports. As a result, program and instructional quality and student outcomes suffer (see Figures 3 and 4) even as costs increase, further reducing school and district satisfaction with LACOE and increasing the likelihood that they will also take back programs.

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[1] LACOE provided multiple, conflicting reports of student enrollment totals over this time span. These data are from California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) reports.

[2] See Methodology section at the end of this report for more information on the data that informed the needs assessment.

[3] This figure is based on SELPA-reported enrollment data as CALPADS does not differentiate by SELPA. The enrollment totals reported by SELPAs do not align with the CALPADs data.

Reduced program and instructional quality and increased costs, however, are not the only reason that schools and districts take back programs. According to LACOE administrators, district administrators are frustrated by LACOE's inability or unwillingness to implement program improvement strategies, engage with customers effectively, or provide budget clarity by charging a "fee for service," a strategy that could result in higher costs but more transparency for districts.[4]

Districts also take back programs to maintain greater control of the delivery of services and/or instruction and to ensure alignment with the services, instruction, and quality being delivered to their general education students. This rationale is actually difficult to argue with as research suggests, and C&J has found, that schools are less likely to take ownership of students being served by LACOE.

One way in which districts' lack of ownership for students served by LACOE manifests itself is through the facilities they provide their students with disabilities who are served by LACOE. C&J researchers found the districts' facilities provided to LACOE to educate their students with disabilities to be of lower quality—often significantly lower quality and sometimes inappropriately so—than those facilities used to educate the districts' general education students or students with disabilities not educated by LACOE. Moreover, as their needs change, some districts frequently move LACOE classrooms, creating greater uncertainty and instability for LACOE, its educators, and the students served, reducing program quality, and further increasing the likelihood that districts will take back programs.

All these issues taking place in the field are exacerbated by a central office that does not appear prepared to lead change. No vision for how—or whether—LACOE will support districts in improving outcomes for students with disabilities has been communicated. And no goals or metrics for improving programs, the divisions, related divisions (e.g., HR, finance) have been developed, let alone tracked, meaning that staff are not meaningfully held accountable for improved outcomes.

Communication within the central office and with stakeholders (e.g., teachers, district administrators) was consistently cited by those interviewed as a significant problem. Interviewees also consistently described decision making as slow (e.g., most decisions must be approved by a cabinet that meets infrequently) and ineffective (e.g., there is no clear process for non-cabinet members to have items placed on the cabinet agenda or for following up), which adversely affects customer service. Several staff mentioned that they had raised questions with significant policy implications months ago and had not received any feedback, and many staff struggled to answer questions about who would be responsible for changing a given practice, process, or system. As a result, C&J researchers found the culture in LACOE to be bureaucratic rather than entrepreneurial, rule abiding rather than problem solving, and focused on how things have been done in the past rather

[4] Some districts also believe that they can provide the service at a lower cost, although this seems to derive more from their frustration with how they are billed by LACOE.

than on how they should be.

To address these challenges and remain viable, LACOE leadership must take bold action to transform the way in which DSE delivers services and the quality of those services. LACOE must also transform itself into an entrepreneurial organization focused on outstanding customer service and greatly improved outcomes for students with disabilities. More specifically, LACOE should:

1) Transform LACOE and DSE central office.
2) Create and implement new approaches to delivering special education services.
3) Improve teaching and learning in DSE classrooms.
4) Turn around Central Hall using Barry J. Nidorf as a model.
5) Expand the LAC Charter.

These recommendations—detailed in the recommendations section of this report—will not only ensure that DSE remains viable but also expand its influence and support for districts in ensuring that all students with disabilities receive an outstanding education.

Assessment of Needs

Detailed findings from the needs assessment point to significant challenges in LACOE's ability to administer high-quality special education services to students. These details are organized under three overarching findings, which are:

- LACOE's Department of Special Education is edging towards insolvency.
- Program and instructional quality are uneven across LACOE's Department of Special Education and Department of Special Programs.
- LACOE—and especially DSE—structures, systems, and culture are not conducive to organizational improvement.

While these findings paint a troubling picture of LACOE programs, it is important to note that several promising practices and areas of opportunity were also uncovered in the review. These practices are highlighted alongside challenges in the pages that follow.

Finding 1: LACOE's Department of Special Education is edging towards insolvency.

The Department of Special Education has experienced sharp decreases in student enrollment. Department revenues follow a similar trend line as fewer students translate to less revenue. These declines appear to be a direct reflection of eroding trust in DSE's ability to implement and oversee high-quality and affordable programming for district students. These trends are expected to continue, threatening the Department's ability to continue its operations.

Declining Enrollment and Revenues

Over the past four years, several SELPAs and their member districts have dissolved their relationships with LACOE, believing that they could run regional programs better and more cost effectively than the County. As a result, LACOE's Department of Special Education student enrollment is plummeting. Total enrollment dropped from 5,219 students in the 2012-13 school year to 2,617 students in the 2014-15 school year. Primary enrollment was reduced from 1,672 students to 630 students over the same timespan.[5] According to DSE leadership, the number of special day classes administered by DSE has been reduced by 66 percent (from 323 in 2012-13 to 111 in 2014-15). The Department's revenue is also falling precipitously, dropping from approximately $84.5 million in 2012-13 to a projected $38 million in 2014-15.

[5] LACOE provided multiple, conflicting reports of student enrollment totals over this time span. These data are from California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System reports.

Figure 1: Department of Special Education Enrollment, 2012-13 to 2014-15

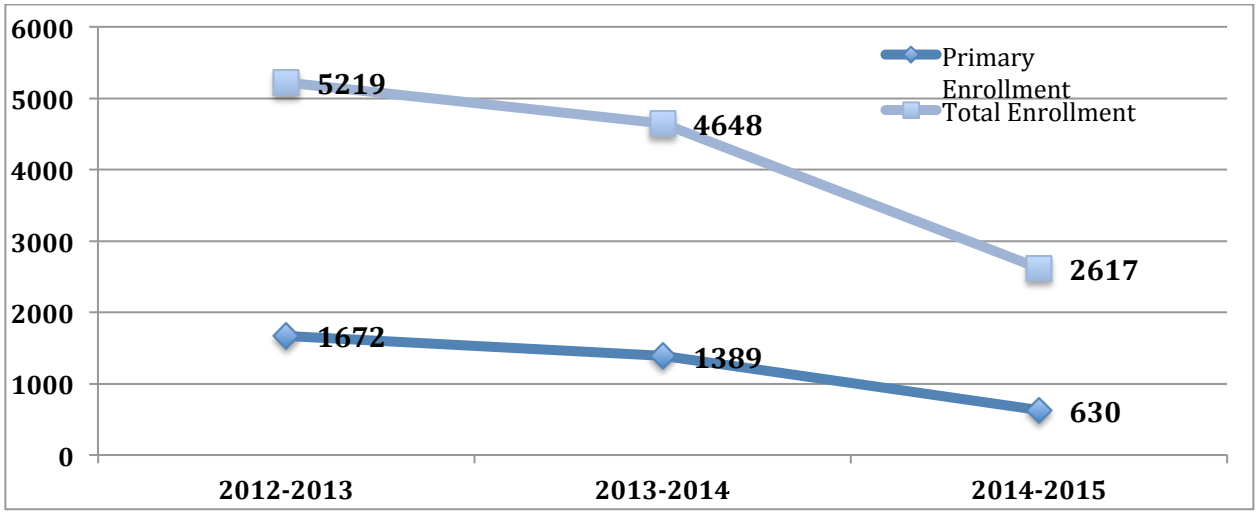
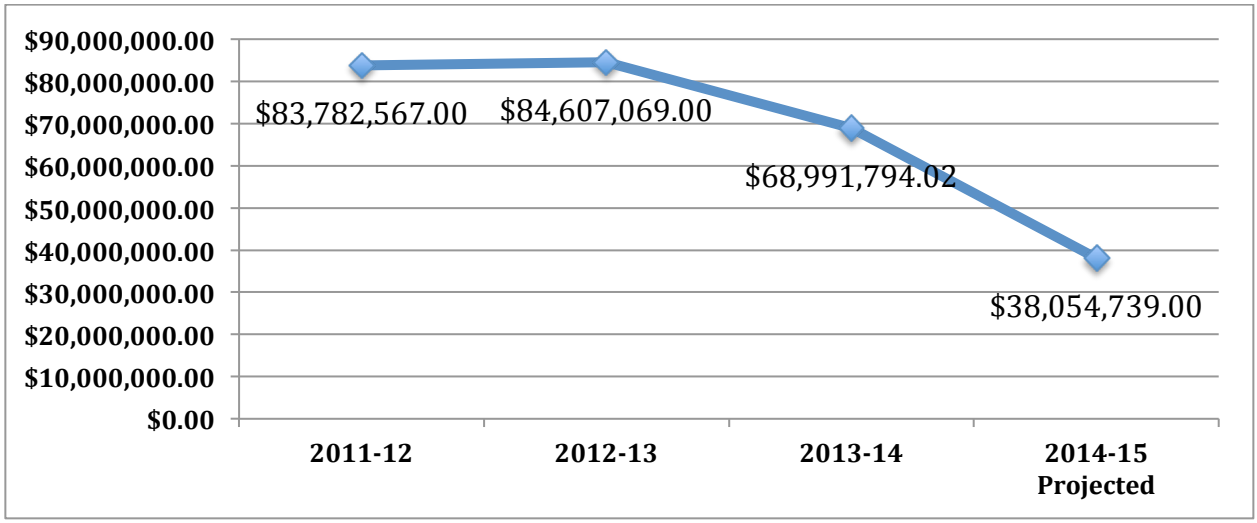


Figure 2: Department of Special Education Revenue, 2010-11 to 2014-15



Further Decreases Likely

The Southwest SELPA (SW), which accounts for 75 percent of DSE's enrolled students (not including those in charter schools)[6], is undergoing a review process to determine whether it will also "take back" its special education programming. SW gave LACOE its "year and a day" notice communicating its intent to return the administration of special education programming to its member districts but later rescinded that notice to undergo a take-back feasibility study. Many interviewees indicated that it is likely that SW will dissolve its relationship with LACOE by the 2016-17 school year, resulting in further reductions in student enrollment and revenues for DSE. Of the 20 respondents to C&J's survey of district

[6] This figure is based on SELPA-reported enrollment data as CALPADS does not differentiate by SELPA. The enrollment totals reported by SELPAs do not align with the CALPADs data.

and SELPA special education directors that indicated they have worked with LACOE in the past three years, six (20 percent) signaled that they were considering additional take backs. Others indicated that they have already retaken control of programs.

Eroding Confidence in LACOE

SELPA and district directors expressed concern about the perceived lack of service quality provided by DSE and the lack of administrative oversight of programs. According to one district administrator: "Nothing has been done in years that is worthy of trust. The Administration appears to be turning a blind eye to our students' needs and not listening to the districts (LACOE) serves." A SELPA director agreed: "The lack of caring and integrity is so systemic, a waste of money, with no accountability, that people do not believe any chance of change will occur." Almost half (40 percent) of C&J survey respondents who reported that they were unlikely to provide space for LACOE classes in the near future indicated that low quality was a determining factor. Only two respondents reported that they were satisfied with programs run on district campuses.

Finding 2: Program and instructional quality are uneven across Division of Special Programs and Department of Special Education programs.

DSE student outcomes seem to support the lack of confidence in the Department and LACOE. Few student outcomes are tracked; those that are reveal very low achievement levels for students. Extensive review of DSE and DSP's curricula, classroom instruction, assessment tools, and professional development opportunities reveal significant areas for improvement.

Low or Unknown Student Outcomes

DSE has limited access to LACOE's data system that collects student achievement data, and has not actively established its own system, making it difficult or impossible to ascertain student achievement levels or growth over time. An annual report issued by DSE shows low levels of achievement on the CAHSEE Math and ELA exams (see Figures 3 and 4). Almost half of survey respondents indicated that they were satisfied with improved outcomes for students in LACOE programs, signaling potential low expectations for students attending LACOE programs and/or a lack of information about student outcomes.

Figure 3: CAHSEE-Math Pass Rates of Diploma-Bound DSE Students, 2011-12 to 2013-14

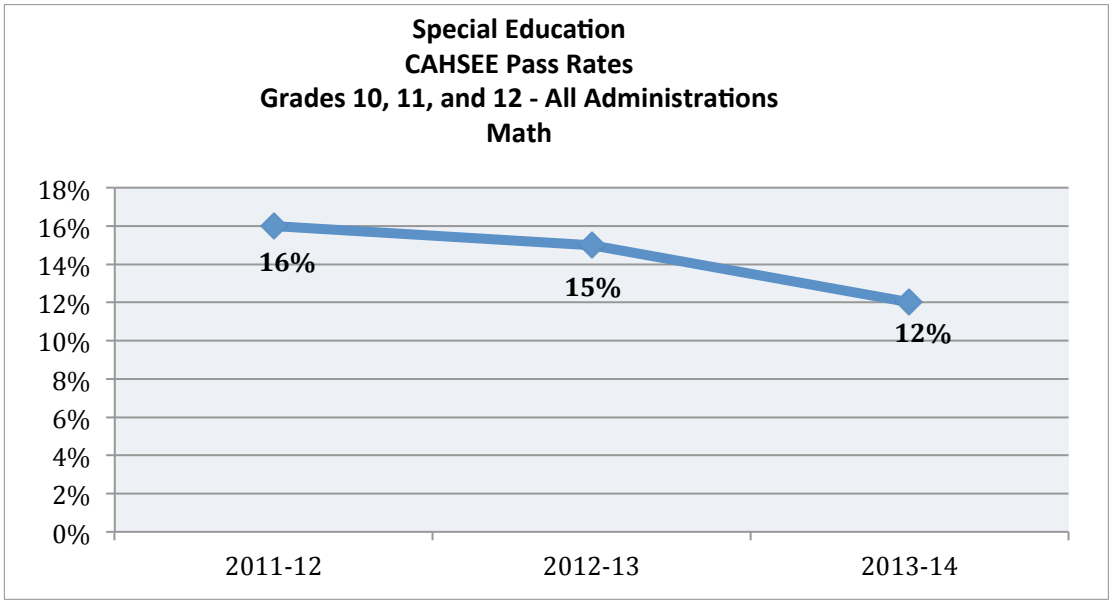
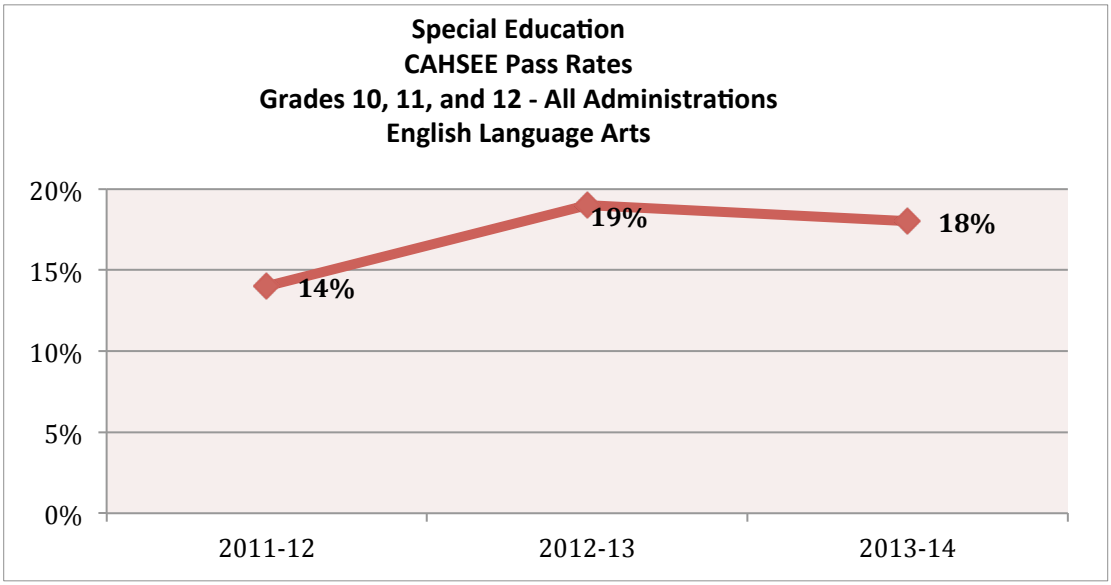


Figure 4: CAHSEE-English Language Arts Pass Rates of Diploma-Bound DSE Students, 2011-12 to 2013-14



Mixed Satisfaction Levels with LACOE-run Programs

Survey results point to mixed levels of satisfaction with various LACOE-administered programs. As summarized in Figure 5, for respondents who reported utilizing DSE programs, satisfaction rates range from 36 percent (emotionally disturbed program) to 100 percent (visually impaired and orientation/mobility programs). Similarly, Figure 6 shows that satisfaction with contracted services varies by program, with satisfaction rates ranging from 50 percent (speech/language and orthopedic impairment) to 100 percent (adaptive physical education and deaf or hard of hearing programs).

Figure 5: Satisfaction with LACOE SPED programs that students were placed in not on district campuses as a percentage of respondents who reported using them

Program	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Total	N
Visually Impaired	100%	0%	0%	100%	**3**
Orientation/Mobility	100%	0%	0%	100%	**5**
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	67%	0%	33%	100%	**6**
Orthopedically Impaired	67%	33%	0%	100%	**3**
Psychologist Services	67%	33%	0%	100%	**3**
Autism	57%	43%	0%	100%	**7**
Multiple Disabilities	57%	29%	14%	100%	**7**
Language and Speech	50%	50%	0%	100%	**4**
Audiology	50%	17%	33%	100%	**6**
Intellectually Disabled	43%	57%	0%	100%	**7**
Emotionally Disturbed	36%	55%	9%	100%	**11**

Figure 6: Satisfaction with services contracted with LACOE for students with disabilities as a percentage of respondents who reported using them

Program	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Total	N
Other (DHH and APE)	100%	0%	0%	100%	**3**
Visually Impaired	67%	17%	17%	100%	**6**
Orientation/Mobility	67%	0%	33%	100%	**6**
Audiology	63%	13%	25%	100%	**8**
Speech/Language	50%	25%	25%	100%	**4**
Orthopedic Impairment	50%	25%	25%	100%	**4**
TA for Inclusive Practices	0%	0%	100%	100%	**1**
ABA	0%	0%	100%	100%	**1**

Inconsistent Curricula and Assessments in the DSP and DSE

> "We need more academic language text [for ELL students]—the current curriculum was before the CCSS and it isn't the same."
>
> - DSP Teacher

Although DSP has a written curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) along with a developing systematic approach to assessment,[7] curricular supports for its English Language Learner populations (25 percent of DSP's total population) are reportedly lacking. DSP utilizes NWEA ELA and Math assessments to determine instructional needs and appropriate classroom placement. For students housed at the juvenile halls for longer periods of time, NWEA MAP assessments are administered every 6-8 weeks to determine progress and in some cases for use in professional learning communities (PLCs). The Division's Road to Success Academy (RTSA) is a promising initiative aimed at motivating students and providing real world learning opportunities through project-based learned. Most DSP sites are in early stages of RTSA implementation.

> "DSE is like an island. Every choosing their own assessment."
>
> -LACOE Administrator

In comparison, the DSE lacks curriculum aligned to CCSS and common assessments for both diploma bound and non-diploma bound students. It is unclear what all children will be taught and expected to learn in DSE programs. Only one survey respondent reported being satisfied with the alignment of LACOE's SPED programs, classes, or contracted services with the Common Core. Members of the C&J team observed no consistency in the content being delivered, even within similar programs across the PAUs. Of the classroom observed,[8] only 25 percent had CCSS standards visible to students and only 16 percent made a connection between the standards and what students were to learn. DSE teachers report that they do not have a written curriculum, pacing guides, or instructional materials aligned to the CCSS. Rather, they identify "topics" of

[7] For detailed information about the Juvenile Halls, see finding "Varying Quality in the Juvenile Halls" below.
[8] See Appendix A for a full set of classroom observation data.

instruction or activities and either make or buy the resources needed for instruction. Interviews with LACOE leaders confirmed that a plan with a timeline for DSE curriculum development and alignment to the CCSS is needed.

Moreover, LACOE lacks a "functional skills" curriculum for students with moderate/severe cognitive delays that defines what skills and competencies students need to participate as fully and independently as possible in the home, community, school, and work settings. Most observations revealed few, if any, opportunities for student interaction to foster language development, higher order thinking, or social skills. This void inhibits students' increased independence and limits interaction with non-disabled peers in daily activities—skills needed when students exit public education. That said, DSE's transition program (Career Education/Work Experience Education Program) does show promise.

> "We had SEACO [Special Education administrators of County Offices] curriculum for ELA, math, science, and social studies but it is not aligned to the CCSS and there are no resources. There is constantly a delay in getting resources"
>
> - DSE Teacher

Curricular resources are also problematic. For example, few DSE classrooms with diploma-bound students use textbooks aligned to those at the school site, making it difficult to either mainstream students or transition them back into the general education classroom. Teachers report that they do not have access to the textbooks used in districts. Five of nine (56 percent) of administrators responding to this question expressed dissatisfaction with LACOE's alignment to school and district practices.

Instructional Rigor Lacking

Components of effective classroom management were visible in DSP programs as 83 percent of observed classrooms were found to be clean, well organized, and adapted to learning, and 58 percent revealed a positive climate with a system to acknowledge appropriate student behavior. Moreover, teachers were found reinforcing student efforts and providing recognition in 67 percent of the classroom observed. Students demonstrated positive and respectful interactions with adults in 75 percent of the classrooms and with their peers in 50 percent of all DSP classrooms observed. Classroom observations of all juvenile halls revealed that 100 percent of all observed classrooms were using some instructional practice aligned to the CCSS for ELA/literacy. Students were engaged in demonstrating academic language, citing textual evidence, utilizing Close reading strategies, or making inferences from text.[9]

Similarly, for DSE classrooms observed, 88 percent were found to be clean, well organized, and adapted to learning. Teachers were found reinforcing student efforts and providing recognition in 56 percent of the classroom observed. In 88 percent of classrooms, students demonstrated positive and respectful interactions with adults. There appeared to be

[9] Again, for detailed more information about the Juvenile Halls, see finding "Varying Quality in the Juvenile Halls" below.

established classroom routines allowing adults to work as a team and staff displayed calm even when students did not. Teachers used participation strategies in 41 percent of the observations. For some, those strategies included homework and practice opportunities, which were observed in 63 percent of the classrooms. In 77 percent of the classrooms observed, 86-100 percent of students were engaged in the lesson. The preschool class at Gauldin Elementary School benefited from several observed key instructional and student engagement strategies and could be a model for others.

Challenges in both DSP and DSE classrooms related mostly to rigor. In 50 percent of DSP classrooms observed, 86-100 percent of DSP students were engaged in the lesson, but student activities were of low rigor, with 84 percent having "no thinking found" or "knowledge and understanding levels" of Bloom's taxonomy, and 42 percent were observed to have either "no depth of thinking" or low depths of "recall and reproduction." Instructional strategies that could support more rigorous instruction were observed infrequently. For example, only 18 percent of the observations revealed students engaged in activities that required them to identify similarities and differences or generate and test hypotheses. Classroom observations revealed no evidence of UDL or culturally relevant strategies in any classroom.

Similarly, in DSE classrooms observed, students were participating in activities of low rigor, with 94 percent of classrooms having "no thinking found" or "knowledge and understanding levels," and 63 percent were observed to have either "no depth of thinking" or low depths of "recall and reproduction." A leading cause of these low levels of rigor may be due to an excessive instructional support by paraprofessionals. Low levels of rigor are exacerbated by the fact that only 22 percent of classrooms demonstrated evidence of UDL strategies, and 28 percent demonstrated learning activities to meet differentiated needs of students. High numbers of paraprofessionals appeared to inhibit student engagement and responses.

Professional Development Overhaul Needed

For DSP programs, trainings to support teacher understanding of CCSS and aligned instructional practices have been provided to support implementation, but teachers, principals, and directors report initiative fatigue: Interviews reveal that professional development trainings are not taken seriously due to the ever-changing focus.

> "We can look up standards but in terms of really having a depth of understanding for how to implement them – we're winging it."
>
> -DSE Teacher

For DSE programs, a significant need for improved professional development was found. Although there are professional development plans in place, they target only initial instructional delivery and not implementation follow up, and systemic issues prevent teachers from attending professional development. Teachers receive two days throughout the year to participate in professional development,

but they report challenges in participating that include bad timing, long travel distances, and difficulty in finding substitutes to cover their class. According to teachers and paraeducators, finding qualified, reliable substitutes through the system is a challenge, leaving paraeducators responsible for teaching and learning in teachers' absence. Teachers are forced to choose between attending trainings and reducing learning time for their students or not attending trainings and making sure their classroom stays on track. According to interviewees, most choose the latter. These challenges could be overcome if teachers had access to effective job-embedded professional development, but this is not the case (see "Insufficient School-based Supports for Educators" in Finding 3).

Survey respondents were also interested in being able to access LACOE-administered professional development. This was the top service related to students with disabilities that respondents suggested LACOE provide (see Recommendations). Additional offerings of high interest to respondents include technical assistance for related service providers, results-driven accountability, and Common Core.

Varying Quality in the Juvenile Halls

The C&J review team drew from criteria established in a review of 29 County Offices of Education's juvenile detention centers to assess practices in LACOE's halls.[10] Using these criteria, our review found that Barry J. Nidorf is a model juvenile hall that should be emulated by both Central and Los Padrinos (and other juvenile halls across the country). Additionally, Los Padrinos is fast developing models of excellence and creative programs for all of its students; it appears ideally suited to continue making improvement and has developed a school culture that is supportive of teaching and learning across both education and probation. At the other extreme, Central Juvenile Hall is not meeting—or perhaps even pursuing—its educational mission and needs to be turned around.

The three 30-Day Teams were reviewed and focus groups held in all three halls related to these teams. The C&J review team found the work of these teams to be highly supportive of identifying students with disabilities who previously may have been missed. At each hall, between 20-30 new students come each day and 20-30 students leave. The processes put in place by all three teams support a much more efficient and cost effective system of child find, appropriate placement, and immediate service delivery for the students as they come into and out of the system. Additionally, these teams are seen by the C&J review team as a proactive way to meet compliance needs that prior to the implementation of these teams were at best inefficient and at worse leaving LACOE open to lawsuits and complaints related to required special education services.

Detailed findings for each hall are presented in the following table (Figure 7)

[10] Sacramento County Office of Education Report to its School Board (March 2015). "Promising Practices Supporting Academic Achievement in California Juvenile Court and Community Schools."

Figure 7: Detailed Findings from Review of Juvenile Halls

Promising Practices	Central Juvenile Hall	Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall	Barry J Nidorf Juvenile Hall
1. Overall Focus on Student Outcomes From the Adults a. Positive relationships with students b. Student engagement c. Belief system that students could learn d. High job satisfaction among staff	Student outcome focus was consistently absent with the exception of the Road To Success Academy (RTSA) classroom. Administrative staff and special education teachers reported having little knowledge of RTSA. Personal relationships with students appeared to be strained. Probation staff acted like guards and did not appear to have positive relationships with students.	All staff reported being happy to be at the facility. According to observations, teachers posted data indicating student progress on NWEA. During lessons, teachers were observed checking for student understanding and insuring that participation was class-wide. Teachers made sure students knew the expected outcome for the lesson.	Probation and school staff work together, and students appear to have positive relationships with adults. In all classes, there was a focus on lesson outcomes and student learning. NWEA data is used and exhibited. Instruction is individualized and at high levels with teachers frequently checking for understanding, and students predicting outcomes and making inferences.
2. Integrating Life Skills With Academic Content a. Staff belief in connection between academics and life b. Focus on jobs and careers integrated with project-based learning c. Emphasis on students working in teams, taking direction from supervision, and completing tasks. d. Promotion of student self efficacy	Most activities observed in classrooms appeared to be worksheet related or independent desk work. Much of the content appeared to be "busy work." The exception was seen in the RTSA and a former ED teacher's classroom where student engagement and direct participation with the teacher was observed. The Credit Recovery Program (APEX) is popular with students.	During classroom visits, teachers were seen relating subject content to real-world usage and problem solving. Some teachers demonstrated how learning could directly apply to getting a job in the future. Other teachers used these strategies less prolifically, but the skill of integrating life skills is clearly emerging at the school.	All classes observed were studying the Holocaust, and students were actively engaged in the discussions. Teachers used the topic in a thematic way by expanding content vocabulary, and having students read aloud and apply what they learned to modern-day scenarios. Reviewers had to ask the principal which classes were special education, because the teaching appropriately looked the same in every class. There were high expectations and coordination that create consistency across classes.

3. Implementing Common Core State Standards a. Provision of instruction through project-based learning and attention on "power" standards b. Classroom technology used by students for research and projects	Some standards were displayed in a few classrooms observed. Observations did not yield evidence of activities aligned to the posted standards, use of a core curriculum, or direct instruction. Teachers reported needing more training and materials to implement CCSS effectively.	In most classes observed, standards were posted. Teachers reported in focus groups that more work is needed to integrate CCSS into lessons, but efforts are underway to make school-wide improvements in this area. Administrators expressed interest in replicating the RTSA model across all classrooms where project-based learning could become a daily part of instruction.	Standards were clearly displayed in all classes observed. Teachers used adopted texts while modifying lessons to account for an array of reading levels. Instruction was implemented at a high level, and student participation and engagement were high. It was clear that teacher collaboration occurs based on lesson pacing and high-level standards implementation.
4. Data-Based Decision Making a. Educators adjust instruction based on data b. Frequent formative and interim assessment c. Teachers pinpoint students' needs	Although assessments were available to teachers through NWEA, student progress was either not displayed or months old. Reviewers surmised that data was not being used to inform instruction. Generally, class activities did not seem to have a direct correlation to students' academic needs.	Data-based decision making is an emerging skill of teachers and staff. Although many teachers have started recently, the leadership team has already made progress in emphasizing the value of formative assessments as a way to accelerate student learning. Administrators conduct frequent walk-throughs to coach teachers in the use of data.	Use of student data to inform instruction is the backbone of the academic program. Through NWEA and informal assessments, teachers know what their students need. The stability and data process used by the veteran teachers helps new teachers transition relatively easily. The principal knows students by name and visits classrooms daily.
5. Early Interventions and Technology Support a. Effective intake process b. Quick determination of intervention needs c. Students use technology for academic practice d. Goal of interventions clear and academically focused e. Students placed in appropriate academic level	SDC classrooms appeared to apply a "one size fits all" approach to lessons, with one exception noted above. No accelerated learning activities were observed, and teachers were not using technology as a tool (with the exception of the RTSA classroom).	According to focus groups, many interventions required by students with IEPs are also required for many students in general education. The school site is engaged in a process to enhance this effort through teacher teaming, coaching, and demonstration lessons.	Intervention tools include Read 180, Achieve 3000, NWEA, and teacher-modified lesson materials. Having a computer lab where students can practice literacy and numeracy skills has helped Barry J. to accelerate learning.

6. Meaningful PLCs a. Strong PLCs exist b. Staff collaborate and review student work c. Commitment to receiving additional support from educational service departments d. Regular professional development	In focus groups, it became apparent that teachers function largely on their own. No enthusiasm or joy in working was observed or shared. Teachers did not feel that there was sufficient time to collaborate regarding student work or engagement. They stated that LACOE offered trainings, but they did not attend unless required.	According to administrators, support staff, and teachers, they meet frequently to discuss behavior management, interventions, and use of CCSS. PLCs are held routinely and staff lead discussions on instruction and use of data. Administrators provide frequent feedback to teachers and staff. Training from LACOE is provided and appreciated by the school.	Principal holds discussions with teachers following classroom walk-throughs and ensures they have needed materials. He also holds teachers accountable for student learning. Teachers reported that they work together to ensure lessons are high quality. Staff use PLC time to identify relevant community resources. Staff receive training from LACOE.
7. Utilizing a Systemic Approach a. Sharing of promising practices across sites b. Coordinated services across sites to ease transition of mobile students c. Strong relationships with probation leadership and staff at each school	Above all other problems at Central Juvenile Hall, lack of a positive school culture seemed to be the lynch pin through which all other areas can improve. Few positive relationships between the LACOE staff and the probation staff were observed. Security staff simply sat at the door or in the classroom like guards. During a focus group, it was reported that the Probation Behavior Management Program had no connection to school behavior or performance on behalf of the students. No community partnerships were reported. Although the USC Medical Center is within walking distance to Central, no one indicated that meaningful relationships had been forged.	Probation administrators explained that turning around the lives of troubled youth requires the power of a strong education. These shared beliefs were reflected in the positive relationships observed between school staff and probation staff. Every staff member who participated in the focus group described their passion and desire to make a difference for the students they served. Positive behavior modification systems are widely used. An anti-bullying curriculum was developed with student input and used to insure that students were treating each other respectfully. Administrators constantly evaluate the needs of the site and make changes to improve the school culture.	Staff stability and principal leadership are key to Barry J.'s success. Probation staff work closely with LACOE staff, and positive behavior interventions from LACOE are reinforced by PBMP. Relationships between adults and students are positive. Barry J. has a culture of continuous improvement. The number of community partnerships at the school is impressive despite the school's geographic isolation. The principal has sought to create a school culture that is like "regular" schools, with access to activities and the arts. The active PTA meets monthly to hear about student learning, and to hear from a speaker who informs parents about community resources.

Finding 3: LACOE—and especially DSE—structures, systems, and culture are not conducive to organizational or educational improvement.

While pockets of best practice can be found in LACOE-run classrooms, for all students and teachers to be successful, they must be supported by an efficient and effective set of centralized systems and structures as well as a culture of continuous improvement. Review findings show that LACOE, and particularly DSE, is not currently organized or operated in a way that makes these supports possible.

Confusing Organizational Structure

According to LACOE staff and stakeholders, the Division of Special Education's (DSE) organizational structure creates significant confusion. DSE's structure comprises four SELPAs, three Principal Administrative Units,[11] departments for speech and language specialists, school psychologists, program areas (e.g., Deaf and Hard of Hearing), and functional divisions (HR, finance, etc.). Five organizational charts are needed to articulate the structure. Several LACOE staff are at least partially paid through DSE, though it is unclear whether and how County staff support DSE programs. These structures are reportedly confusing to districts and parents, who find it difficult to navigate the system and understand the roles and responsibilities of various players.

Bureaucratic and Entrenched Culture

LACOE is currently operating without a coherent vision for how it plans to improve programs and educational outcomes for the students it serves. Indicators are not used to assess the effectiveness of LACOE departments or hold them accountable. These challenges are exacerbated by a culture that appears to be slow moving and resistant to change. Interviewees and focus group members consistently cited communication and decision making as significant organizational challenges. Directors of Special Education in districts served by LACOE report that their questions often go unanswered and that they have little input on programmatic decisions affecting students. Nearly half of survey respondents reported that they were dissatisfied with LACOE's communication with school/district administrators.

LACOE program staff report being overwhelmed by LACOE "mandates" and rules with little support for carrying them out. Site-based employees often questioned how decisions were made. Many assumed that the DSE director makes most decisions about program operations. LACOE administrators, however, noted that many decisions are made at the cabinet level, and that infrequent cabinet meetings—which no established processes for placing items on the cabinet agenda or following up after meetings—can lead to significant lag time in decision making and resulting actions. Internal approvals processes also reportedly hold up important activities, including staffing, professional development, and

[11] The concept of a PAU appears to be confusing to both districts and to parents, and may be an antiquated term/configuration.

community based instruction. Directors for areas such as Pupil Personnel, ELL, fiscal, HR, and others do not appear to provide mutual support or communicate on a regular basis.

Despite this culture, LACOE staff have developed marketable tools and services that have the potential to foster entrepreneurship within the organization. The expansion of these tools and services has potential to generate significant revenue and the ability to retain staff in spite of future program transfers from districts. In addition to the programmatic best practices noted in the previous section, tools and services noted by the team to consider expanding are:

- ***SPED 4,*** which is a software tool specifically designed to promulgate compliance with special education mandates and time lines in juvenile halls and court schools. It can quickly identify students who need special education services in a continually changing population and track services provided. The software is user-friendly, comprehensive, and integrates with the Aeries student information system. It has the potential to incorporate other student-information system and IEP software and provide immediate summaries of key data to administrators via mobile-phone applications. LACOE already operates a "Help Desk" for users of the system within the DSP. This service can be expanded and fill a void in the current market across California and perhaps nationally.

- ***Special education services for districts and Regional Centers in the area***, which provide services to clients with developmental delays and their families throughout their clients' lifespan. Current LACOE services such as Braille transcription, sign language interpretation, assistive technology, orientation and mobility, in-home behavior support, and job placement and support could fulfill the needs of Regional Center contracts for clients outside of the educational setting. These could also be marketed to the charter school members in the LAC Charter SELPA.

- ***Los Angeles Charter SELPA (LAC Charter),*** which has been in operation since November 2011. LAC Charter currently has nine members, generating positive revenue for the SELPA operations. Two of the existing members are leaving to join Desert Mountain Charter SELPA starting July 1. According to leadership of these schools, reasons for their leaving LAC Charter include a lack of clarity on fiscal issues, lack of customer service orientation, no clear consistent full-time equivalent contact to support them in dealing with special education issues and concerns, a lack of infrastructure, and non-adherence to the Local Plan policies and procedures. If LACOE can address these challenges, it may be able to pursue as customers the large concentration of charter schools operating and being established in LA County.

Complicated Educational Responsibility for Students

Review of data point to a complicated set of procedures and rules establishing the educational responsibility for students served by LACOE programs. Students' enrollment in

LACOE classes from district referral requires a number of steps and agreements that call into question who is responsible for educating students. This ambiguity ultimately plays out at school sites in the placement of LACOE-run classrooms and the extent to which students and staff from LACOE programs interact with district faculty and other district students.

Unclear Billing Practices and Reports

Districts are billed for the provision of educational and related services to students. Related services have bill-back cost provisions that vary significantly. For example, a SELPA caseload average of 55 students is applied to Language Speech Specialists and Adapted PE teachers, while other service providers for Visually Impaired, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Orientation and Mobility, and others typically carry a much smaller caseload. When determining the excess costs for district pupils, LACOE creates an average per-pupil related services costs and charges districts for the number of students receiving related services, rather than accounting for actual per-pupil costs for the services.[12]

> "Decisions about take backs are being made by finance people, not program people."
>
> - LACOE Administrator

District leadership reportedly regard the billing process as confusing and lacking transparency. To understand costs summarized on LACOE invoices, district staff need to analyze significant detail. End-of-year invoices with higher charges than expected can be especially challenging for districts, which are unable to factor charges into their already approved future year budgets and programming plans. Most survey respondents who reported using LACOE's services indicated dissatisfaction with the County's billing procedures and cost effectiveness (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Satisfaction with LACOE's provision of SPED programs, classes, or contracted services as a percentage of respondents who reported using them

Program	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Total	N
Bill-Back Costs	0%	64%	36%	100%	**11**
Cost Effectiveness	8%	58%	33%	100%	**12**
Accuracy of LACOE Invoices	9%	36%	55%	100%	**11**

In response to these challenges, districts have requested an alternative billing model that would be similar to the models used by non-public schools and non-public agencies. Essential components of a billing report of this type could include the cost per student,

[12] DSE also charges an indirect rate of 6.75 percent, while the rest of LACOE charges 8.80 percent.

average class size, staff to student rations, FTEs associated with the line items, and an overall revenue versus expenditures analysis.

Substandard and Unreliable Facilities

During classroom walkthroughs, the review team observed consistent discrepancies between district facilities for district students and district-provided facilities for LACOE special education special day classes (SDCs). Not only were the conditions of most of the SDC classrooms unacceptable, they were also frequently in remote and difficult to reach locations on campuses, indicating little to no interest in integrating students attending LACOE's special classes with their district peers. LACOE leadership and staff report that their classrooms and offices are often moved when districts find a need to reclaim their facilities - often in violation of lease agreements with LACOE. Some staff reported moving three times in two years. According to LACOE facilities data, 22 percent of all current classrooms have been moved or established in the past year. More than half of classrooms (56 percent) have been in use less than five years. In general, districts with 10 or more LACOE classrooms have significant classroom movement (with only one exception – Hawthorne School District), while districts operating fewer than 10 LACOE classrooms have little to no classroom movement.

According to LACOE staff, uncertainty of program placements and disparities between facilities for students in district-operated versus LACOE-operated programs devalues and demoralizes staff, erodes trust with families, undermines district ownership of students with disabilities, and impedes student progress and integration into the community. Facilities issues also send a message to students, staff and visitors that the LACOE students and staff are not valued as integral school community partners.

Below is a photo of the newly built Lawndale High School. Compare that facility with the photo of the back of Lawndale's campus where the LACOE programs are housed. Visitors to the LACOE classes must wait at the chain-link fence for a staff member to unlock the padlock hanging on a chain to enter or exit.

Insufficient School-based Supports for Educators

According to LACOE educators, school-based supports for teachers and paraeducators are limited and dependent on Principal Administrative Unit (PAU) leadership and district principal leadership at school sites. LACOE principals and APs report that most of their time is spent in IEP meetings and on crisis management, limiting the time that they are able to spend with staff. Their ability to spend time in classrooms is further constrained by the geographic spread of site locations. Most teachers who participated in focus groups indicated that the bulk of their professional learning and problem solving is done independently. One exception to this can be found among three schools in the DHH program. Each Wednesday during early dismissal time, DHH teachers from Downey, Sussman Middle School, and Gaulden Elementary meet together in PLCs to support their Road to Success instructional strategies, CCSS, and instructional materials. Teachers report that they value this opportunity to collaborate with their peers. Several interviewees mentioned that LACOE program specialists were once able to provide needed coaching and mentoring to teaching staff. Those positions have reportedly been eliminated due to LACOE budget cuts.

Itinerant staff reported discrepancies in the amount of support and supervision they receive through LACOE. Speech and Language and Psychologists noted that they have easier access to PD options and are able to interact with their counterparts across LACOE. Other itinerant staff, including those working in Orientation and Mobility and Visual Impairment, indicated that they are unable to access colleagues or PD opportunities.

> "At our school, we've had trouble convincing school staff to integrate our kids. They are even telling other kids not to play with ours on the playground."
>
> -LACOE

Some teachers indicated that they receive support from district-based staff in the locations where the LACOE programs are housed. In some cases, LACOE educators are integrated into the school's faculty, attending staff meetings and trainings as their schedules allow. This appears to be the exception, however, and not the rule. Many teachers reported that they struggle to make connections with district staff in their schools, as well as between the students being served by LACOE programs and the other students at the sites.

High Staffing Levels

Classroom observations and stakeholder interviews raised concerns about staffing levels and particularly high numbers of paraeducators in classrooms. For example, in seven classrooms observed, the ratio of adults to student was more than one adult per student. According to LACOE leadership and staff, there is significant variation in district processes for determining paraeducator assignments, and LACOE reported that it lacks criteria and strategies for effectively

> "They have so many adults in the rooms and we see them reading the newspaper while children sit."
>
> - District Administrator

deploying adults. "It is easier to just agree to additional staff at an IEP than to observe and determine the student's real needs," one district administrator stated.

LACOE should consider developing policies and procedures to ensure appropriate access to paraeducators. For example, the county might adopt a rubric to help determine 1:1 provision paraeducator time requirements. It could also establish processes for working with districts and parents to design IEPs that provide educational benefit and accurately reflect the services required by students.

Inadequate Supervision of Educators

Teacher evaluations are conducted once a year for probationary staff and once every two years for permanent staff. The evaluation consists of at least one formal, announced observation and a review of relevant data to assess performance objectives developed by teachers and their evaluator at the beginning of the year. Multiple formal observations are recommended for staff who are not demonstrating satisfactory performance. "Pop-in" visits – shorter, unannounced classroom visits—are also encouraged of administrators, but these are not to be used for evaluative purposes. Paraeducators, who are also supervised by principals, are evaluated annually and twice during their year-long probationary period.

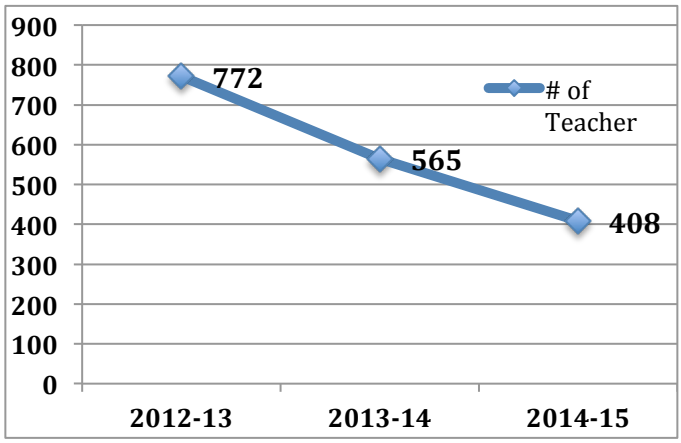
LACOE teachers and paraeducators reported a need for greater accountability of their counterparts. According to HR data, 14 of LACOE's 408 teachers – 3 percent – currently have documented, unsatisfactory performance. Two teachers have successfully been exited from the system due to performance issues in 2014-15, a practice that is reportedly uncommon. The HR team has begun tracking performance evaluation completion and results, and provides administrators with detailed instructions for completing performance appraisals. Given principal and assistant principals' time constraints, however, completing meaningful staff evaluations is and will likely remain an ongoing challenge.

> "I think districts look at LACOE and see a lot of people in the room – too often, too many of them are misrepresenting LACOE [by not acting professionally]."
>
> -LACOE educator

Disruptive Movement of Staff

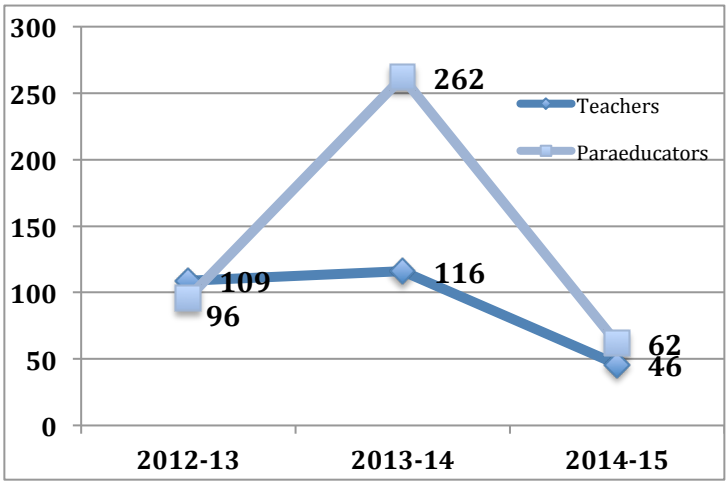
As student enrollment has decreased, LACOE has enacted a series of reductions in force (RIFs). Based on rules set out in California Education Code, the RIF process results in a domino effect of seniority-based staff movements – teachers and paraeducators with more seniority have rights to existing positions for which they are qualified. Newer hires or those

Figure 9, Number of LACOE Teachers, 2012-13 to 2014-15



with less seniority are exited from the system, placed on reemployment lists, and have rights to LACOE openings for which they are qualified as they become available. Sixty-five teachers currently comprise the certificated RIF reappointment list. The paraeducator list includes 605 former LACOE staff.

Figure 10, Number Teacher and Paraeducator Reductions in Force, 2012-13 to 2014-15



There are significant and numerous consequences to this process, but paramount is the inability to ensure that staff and administration are able to mutually agree on fit for a position. For example, a teacher may hold a credential in an area that s/he has not taught in for some time, or at all, but have rights to a position in that area based on seniority. Similarly, paraeducators with appropriate experience can, and reportedly often are, placed in classrooms serving specific populations with whom they have no experience. Teachers and paraeducators also stressed that the movement of staff has a significant impact not only on teaching and learning, but also on the emotional stability of students, many of whom need structured routines and have difficulty adjusting to change. While the HR team attempts to consider geography in placements, it's possible for teachers and paraeducators to be placed in positions that are a significant distance from their home, making commutes burdensome and, for some without reliable transportation, impossible. Continuous movement within the system also makes it difficult for teachers to develop relationships with other faculty and students at the school site.

Delays in Staff Hires

Staffing open positions within LACOE is reportedly a cumbersome and time-intensive process. The HR team provided a description of a position control process requiring 17 steps and approvals. LACOE educators and leadership reported up-to six month gaps between a position's opening and fill date, presumably impacted by the need to consider educators on the reemployment list, to gain the requisite approvals from various LACOE offices, and to ride out "hiring freezes" that are enacted before the reduction in force process each year. In one example provided, the paperwork was stalled for filling a position because the account for that position showed a $25 negative balance. These delays reportedly cause the system to lose qualified candidates, and result in an over-reliance on substitute use and likely a loss of learning opportunities for students. LACOE's HR, finance, and program leadership have recently reinstated an accountability team to try to work through the systemic issues that are causing significant hiring delays.

Insufficient Data Systems

DSE currently tracks student information in a variety of stand alone data systems and lacks a student information system that can quickly and accurately identify needed data sets for compliance reporting, graduation rates, assessment results, drop out rates, behavior incidents, and even student enrollment. DSE administration reported that much of the data required by the state CASEMIS and SPP must be calculated by "hand" since no system is yet available for DSE within either EPIC or Aeries. Enrollment data can be accessed through multiple systems though each reports very different figures. The current HRS system isn't linked to other major County systems, making time from vacancy to hire and other basic metrics impossible to track. The inability to collect and analyze data is a significant threat to the organization's capacity to understand its challenges and work to correct them.

Huge Geographic Region

LACOE currently serves 32 districts over 4,752 square miles. This geographic region exacerbates many of the challenges outlined throughout the rest of this report.

Recommendations

Without bold action by LACOE leadership, DSE will become insolvent and DSP will continue to struggle to serve all its students effectively. Yet districts and SELPAs in Los Angeles County will continue to require supports in order to educate all their students with disabilities effectively and incarcerated youth need and deserve to receive an outstanding education. Consequently, LACOE should view DSE and DSP as organizations that need to be transformed by implementing the following five recommendations:

1) Transform LACOE and DSE central office by planning strategically, fostering an entrepreneurial spirit, building nimble management systems, distributing leadership, and communicating transparently.

To implement this strategy, LACOE leadership should:

a) **Work with staff and stakeholders to draft a strategic plan that defines the vision, goals, metrics, objectives, and strategies for a transformed DSE.** The vision should emphasize three critical points:

i. Ensuring outstanding outcomes for students with disabilities is the focus
ii. Achieving outstanding outcomes will be accomplished by supporting and complementing—not replacing—the work of local districts.
iii. Receiving input and collaborating with internal and external stakeholders.

Goals should clearly set the direction for LACOE and DSE leadership as well as for related supporting divisions such as finance and human resources. Recommended goals and metrics that would be used to track the progress toward goal achievement (in parentheses) include:

i. Improved outcomes for students with disabilities (add metrics by disability)
ii. Satisfaction of district superintendents and special education directors (survey)
iii. Revenue and profitability (revenue and profit by service delivery model, service, or product)

b) **Revise the DSE organizational structure and job descriptions to implement the strategic plan and enhance communication with staff and stakeholders.** Reorganize DSE from PAUs into four programmatic configurations: Early Childhood (infant through preschool), Elementary, Secondary/Transition, and Related Service providers. A new organizational structure and job descriptions should foster entrepreneurship and staff accountability, ensure leadership for new special education service-delivery models (see recommendation 2), and promote excellent customer service for districts and students with disabilities.

c) **Work with all departments to develop clear, measurable objectives for helping with the transition to the "new" DSE.** For DSE's transformation to

succeed, internal supports—including data systems, curriculum and assessment, and professional development—as well as related departments such as human resources and finance must also go through a change process. For example, successful DSE transformation requires that school-based and central office staff be hired much more quickly than is currently done, a need that can be translated into a measurable objective for human resources. Similarly, budgeting and invoicing processes will likely need to change in order to implement new special education service delivery models effectively. Clear and consistent communication and collaboration processes will need to be implemented across divisions and with external stakeholders. Staffing levels and assignment policies will need to be reexamined. For example, LACOE should explore options for ensuring that all staff, including those being reassigned as a result of RIFs, are placed in positions for which they are not only credentialed but also experienced and qualified. And, the county must work closely with districts to ensure that all students with disabilities are educated in high-quality, appropriate, and stable facilities.

d) **Devolve decision-making authority and manage performance.** Primary authority and accountability for high-quality program and service delivery should reside with LACOE staff members directly involved. Staff should be empowered to make program decisions, interact with clients, shift resources within their budgets, and supervise team members. These leaders should also be engaged in a performance-management process managed by their supervisors. For example, a "Stat" process is a means to track individuals' or organizations' performance against a set of measurable objectives and hold them accountable for results. Typically, groups of managers—who have been empowered to lead well-defined parts of the change process—are brought together in a PLC-like environment to discuss their performance against the objectives, strategies for improvement, and requests for assistance. During this process, leadership asks probing questions, facilitates conversations, and helps determine next steps.

2) Create and implement new approaches to delivering special education services.

To realize its new vision and achieve its new goals, DSE needs to do business differently and deliver services to "clients" (districts, SELPAs, and Regional Centers) and their students with disabilities more effectively. C&J recommends that LACOE develop and implement five models from which districts can select. As outlined in Figure 11, these models range in the level of engagement and staffing provided by LACOE from the relatively limited—selling software, other resources, and consulting services—to the highly involved (creating and staffing "hubs" that educate students with specific disabilities from different districts).

Figure 11: Proposed Special Education Service Delivery Models for LACOE

Service Delivery Model	Description
Sell SPED4 and other resources	Develop, produce, sell, and service special education niche products and services (e.g., SPED 4, braille textbooks) at a cost determined and communicated to districts and Regional Centers prior to sale.
Provide technical assistance and PD to districts	Survey potential customers regarding needs, then hire, train, and supervise coaches and trainers who provide on-site coaching and professional development related to special education for special and general educators. Depending on the district need, LACOE submits a fixed-price scope of work and budget (based on hours to be worked times hourly rate of the coaches or trainers) prior to services being delivered; district pays budgeted amount at end of project or on invoice schedule that is mutually acceptable to districts and LACOE.
Serve as one-stop shop for itinerant staff	Hire, train, and supervise itinerant staff (e.g., language/speech, orientation/mobility, brailing, vision support, psychologists, transition support), and contract their services to districts. Costs for services will be based on numbers of students receiving services and the hourly rate of the professionals used.
Facilitate consortia for districts	Provide technical assistance to groups of districts creating a consortium to serve students with low-incidence disabilities. Assistance could include development of MOUs between districts in the consortium, IEP development and compliance of goals and objectives, recommended facility modifications, development of student groupings by ages and specific needs. Districts provide teachers, itinerant staff (unless also contracted with LACOE), and supervision. Districts provide teachers, itinerant staff (unless also contracted with LACOE), and supervision. LACOE bills districts or consortium for facilitators' and consultants' time on an hourly rate basis.
Create hubs that educate students with specific disabilities	Survey districts and develop a stakeholder oversight group to identify needs, then create, staff, and supervise classroom hubs in regional areas (depending on demand) to serve students with a particular disability (e.g., DHH, VI, OH, medically fragile) and students who are in transition. Organize hubs around age spans to mirror the new DSE organizational structure. Districts can send their students to appropriate hubs, paying a per-pupil annual cost that will be developed and agreed upon prior to the start of the school year.

Converting from its current service-delivery model to those described above will not be easy. Changing systems, structures, culture, and resource use across LACOE and fully engaging SELPAs and districts in the improvement process will be necessary to foster the innovation, entrepreneurship, and continuous improvement needed to serve clients and students effectively.

If, after approximately one year, LACOE leadership determines that this transition cannot be accomplished, LACOE should give "one year and a day" (or up to two years to support effective transfer) notice to all districts that DSE programs will be terminated.

3) Improve teaching and learning in DSE classrooms.

To accomplish this, DSE should:

a) **Increase collaboration opportunities** among LACOE directors of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, Professional Development, English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities. A calendar to ensure consistent, on-going collaboration between all stakeholders is needed to ensure that the needs of all students are considered during curriculum development, instructional strategy selection, and professional development planning.

b) **Develop a written curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** and instructional practices to ensure that all leadership, staff, and stakeholders understand what all children will be taught and expected to learn. To accomplish this, DSE should:

   i. Use CCSS-aligned curricula with a skills-development focus as a model to incorporate 21st century skills into the curriculum for all DSE programs. Potential examples include the Student Employment Competencies curriculum and New York Department of Education's Unique Learning System curriculum.
   ii. Collaborate with site districts to identify instructional materials and resources to increase academic performance and allow for more inclusion in core subject areas. Provide professional development on the new curriculum and aligned assessment, instruction strategies and resources.
   iii. Use the LACOE Classroom Observation Tool to target these initiatives. Develop a process and timeline for data collection and analysis.
   iv. Train and hold principals accountable for timely monitoring and data reporting. To accomplish this, new strategies and resources will be needed to free principals' time from IEP meetings. For example, school psychologists, speech/language specialists, or assistant principals could take on the bulk of IEP responsibilities.

c) **Develop an assessment system** to identify formative and summative assessments, track results, and inform student and program performance. Provide and train teachers in how to access and analyze data for instructional decision-making.

d) **Support teacher and principal participation in professional development** by revising the delivery model to support implementation and accountability, including by:

i. Creating short on-line professional learning modules that could be completed from any location.
ii. Establishing a blended learning model for participants that includes on-line, group, and 1:1 supports.
iii. Fostering peer-to-peer supports through PLCs.

e) **Engage SELPA and district administrators** in the design of an instructional vision and methodology, curriculum, assessment system, and professional development.

4) Turn around Central Juvenile Hall using Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall as a model.

Adopt best practices evident in the Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall to implement a clear instructional program and school wide positive behavior system (PBIS) at Central. Build administrators' capacity as instructional leaders by requiring all to participate in supporting IEPs alongside the 30-Day Team and school psychologists. Examine ways to engage probation as a partner and encourage an aligned focus on education and positive behavior systems (PBIS and probation's Behavior Management Program).

Provide special education staff with professional development in the areas of access to Common Core State Standards, Universal Design for Learning and differentiation, student engagement, and RtSA as well as high yield instructional strategies. Administrators should monitor the implementation of these strategies as well as lesson plan development during classroom walkthroughs, giving teachers feedback on instructional delivery and planning. PLCs that include special and general education teachers should be held weekly, utilizing classroom portfolio documents, RtSA information, assessment information, and information about high yield strategies. Administrators can also monitor the effectiveness of PLCs through reviews of teachers' lesson plans and instructional practice.

5) Expand LAC Charter. The LAC Charter should examine its funding operation in comparison not only with LAUSD but also with the El Dorado Charter, Desert Mountain, and Sonoma County Charter SELPAs to determine whether it is competitive and self-sustaining. Charter schools continue to open and Los Angeles County has a large concentration of potential customers. In order for the LAC Charter to be considered attractive by charter school customers, the LAC Charter must offer high-quality services with the following features:

- Fiscal transparency
- Member authority to steer the practices and future of the LAC Charter
- Professional development in IEP-writing and special education instruction
- Immediate availability of technical support for IEP-related questions and practices, as well as legal issues
- Community Advisory Committee (CAC) support for parents and stakeholders
- Viable website with updated and critical information on policies and procedures
- On-site visits

- Assistance with the procurement of special education services (this element could be a source of expanded employment for LACOE special education service providers via contracts with the LAC Charter school members)

These elements will require a fiscal model that generates funds for the LAC Charter to employ program specialist-type staff. LAC Charter members should be surveyed to determine the scope of needs. If the LAC Charter provides excellent services to its members, the LAC Charter will not have a need to market itself; word-of-mouth will be sufficient.

In regards to current and future charter clients, LACOE needs to honor its governance authorities in the LACOE SELPA and the LAC Charter SELPA local plans, as well as any policies, procedures, and fiscal allocation plans adopted by the respective SELPAs. Without doing so, trust cannot be developed, current members will continue to exit, funding will be unstable, and the likelihood of attracting new charter members will be slim. Allowing members of the SELPA governance councils to self-govern will allow them to make decisions about their future growth, development, and stability.

Methodology

Cross & Joftus (C&J) considered multiple data sources in this needs assessment, including:

- Interviews and focus groups with approximately 165 LACOE staff and stakeholders during multiple site visits.
- Five-minute observations of 12 special education and general education classes at LACOE juvenile halls and 32 DSE-operated special day classes. During these observations, pairs of C&J instructional experts employed LACOE's instructional observation tool to capture evidence related to teaching and learning.
- Observations of nine additional juvenile hall classrooms to provide contextual information.
- An analysis of electronic data and printed documents, including student outcome data, curricular materials, budgets, organizational and staffing charts, human resource transactional data, policy documents, and descriptions of special education programs.
- A survey sent to 89 Los Angeles County special education directors, with a response rate of 46 percent. Forty-nine percent of respondents indicated that they have placed students in LACOE classrooms in the past three years.

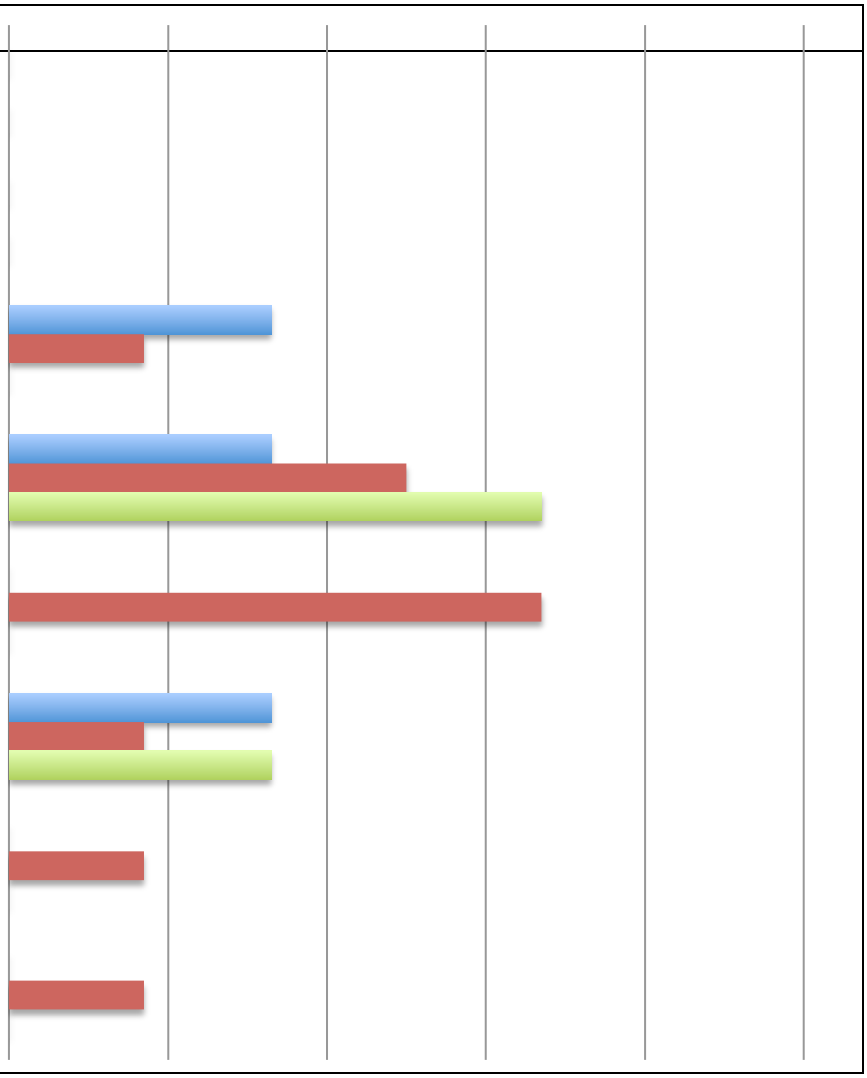
Resulting themes from the analyses of these data are included in the report findings.

Appendix A – Classroom Observation Data

Juvenile Hall Classrooms

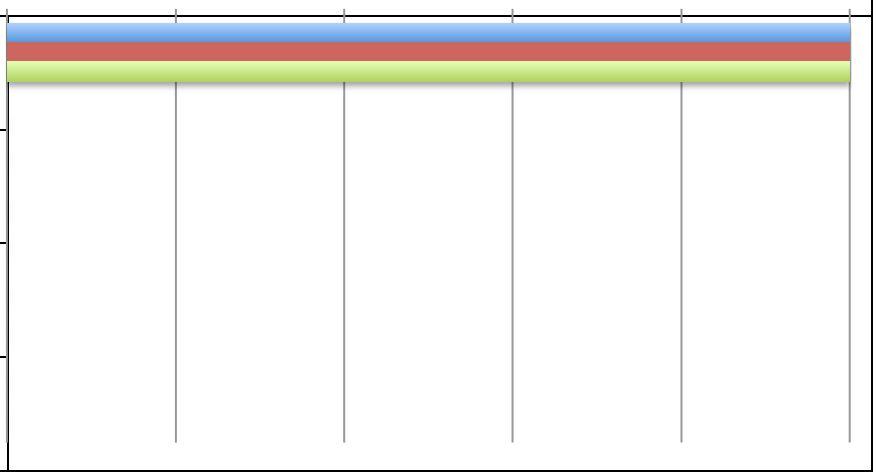
C&J instructional experts collected observational data in 12 LACOE juvenile hall classrooms. Classrooms primarily served students with disabilities, though some general education classes were also observed. The charts below show the percentages of classrooms with evidence of the management and instructional indicators included in LACOE's classroom observation tool.[13] Percentages are based on total records with responses for each item. Green bars indicate percentages for Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall classrooms, red bars indicate percentages for Central Juvenile Hall classrooms, and blue bars indicate percentages for Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall classrooms.

Subject (Multiple items may be selected)	
Elective	0% 0% 0%
ELD	0% 0% 0%
History and SS	33% 17% 0%
Language Arts	33% 50% 67%
Math	33% 17% 33%
Physical Education	0% 0% 0%
Science	0% 17% 0%
Other	0% 17% 0%

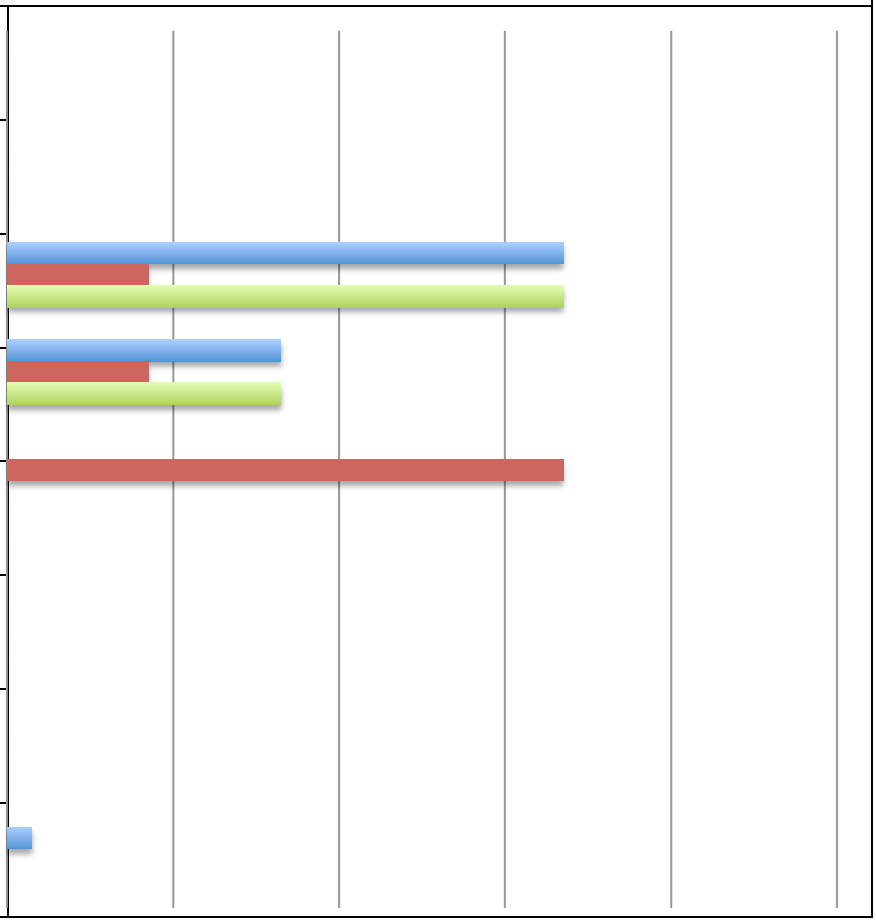


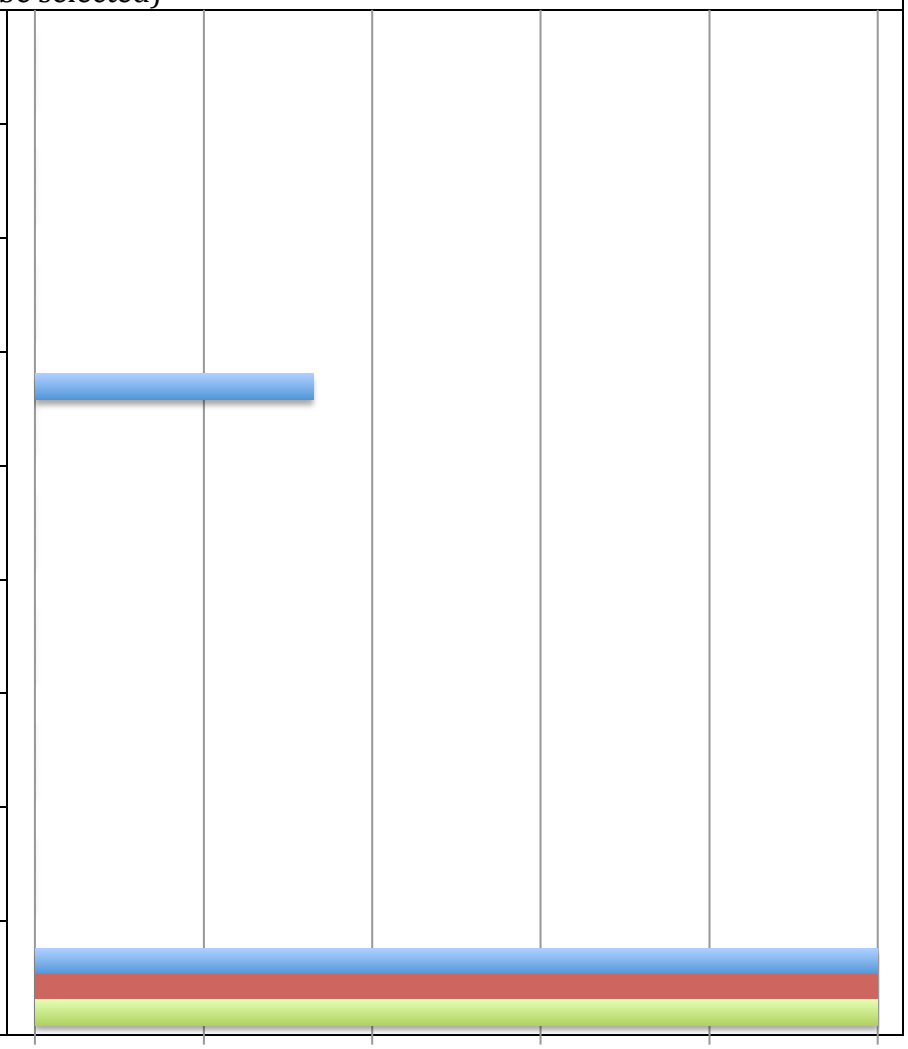
[13] Data were compiled via LACOE's electronic system. Reports provided by LACOE.

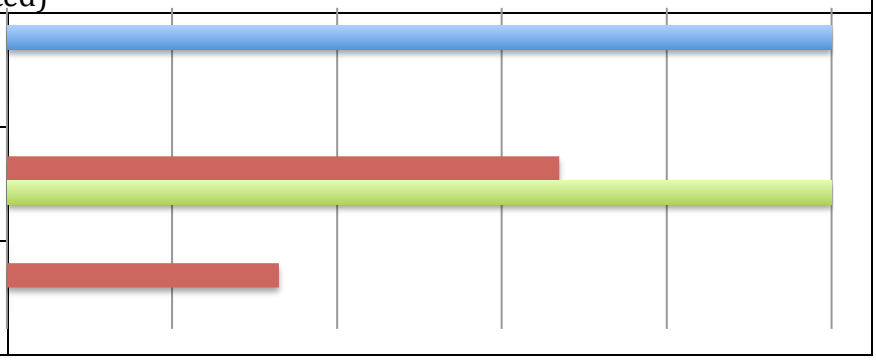
Setting (Multiple items may be selected)	
Classroom	100% 100% 100%
Computer Lab	0% 0% 0%
Library/Media Center	0% 0% 0%
Online	0% 0% 0%

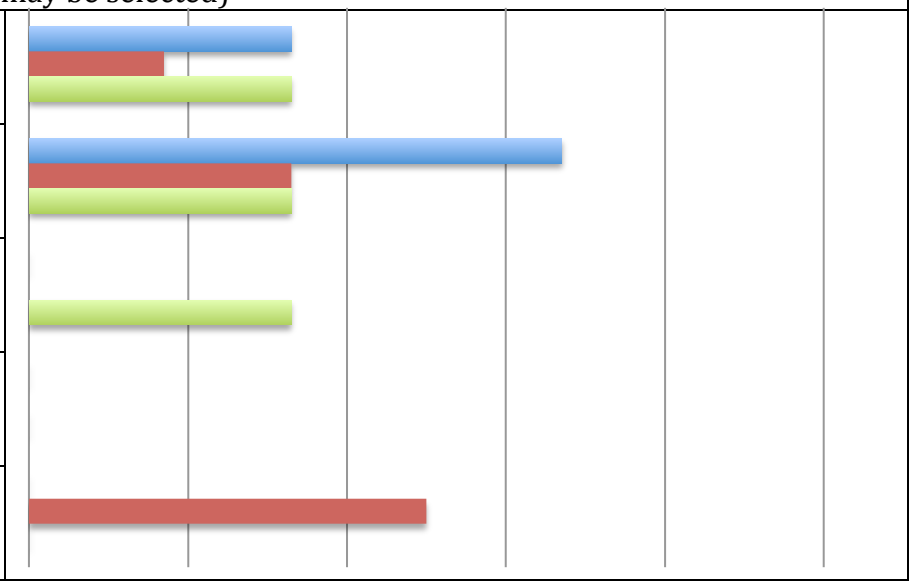


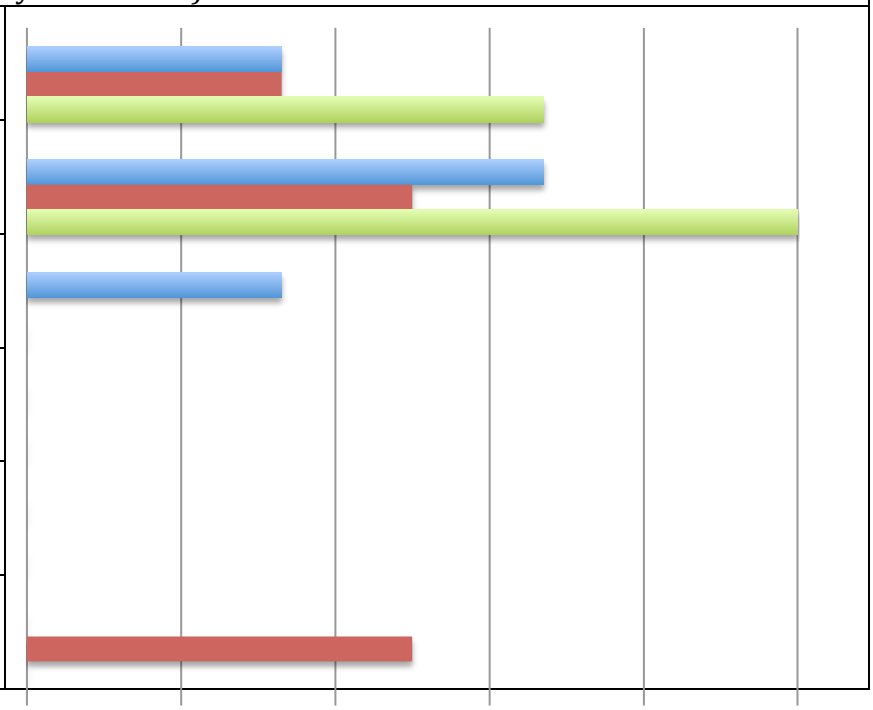
Period (Multiple items may be selected)	
N/A	0% 0% 0%
1	0% 0% 0%
2	67% 17% 67%
3	33% 17% 33%
4	0% 67% 0%
5	0% 0% 0%
6	0% 0% 0%
7	3% 0% 0%

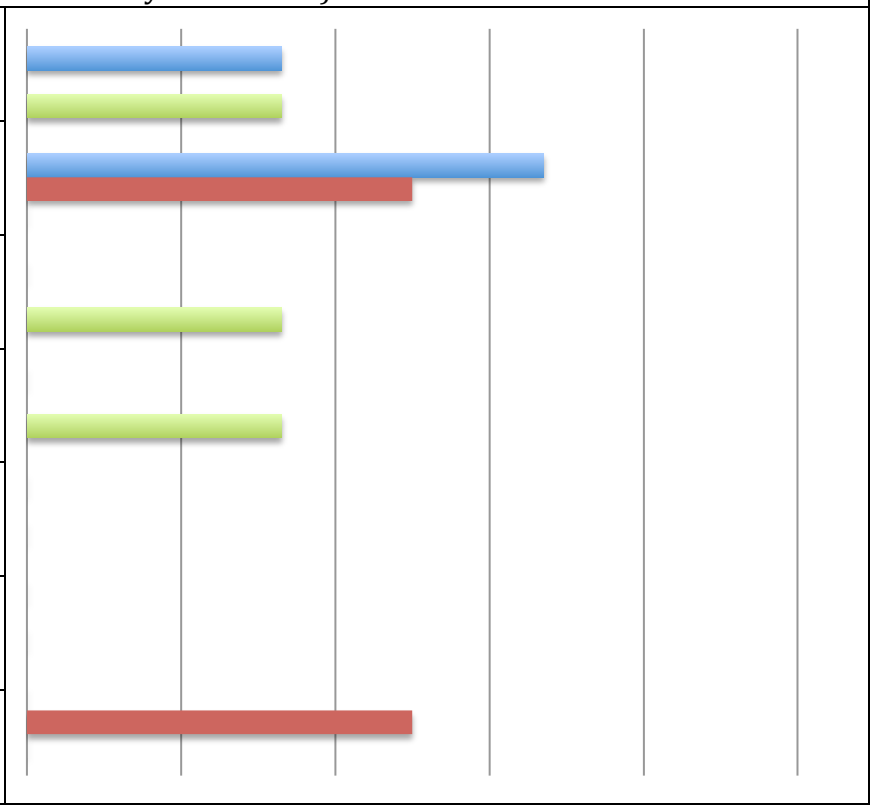


Type of Classroom (Multiple items may be selected)		
MD – Multiply Disabled	0% 0% 0%	
ID – Intellectually Disabled	0% 0% 0%	
OI – Orthopedically Impaired	0% 0% 0%	
DHH – Deaf/Hard of Hearing	33% 0% 0%	
ED – Emotionally Disabled	0% 0% 0%	
VI – Visually Impaired	0% 0% 0%	
AUT – Autism	0% 0% 0%	
RS – Resource Specialist	0% 0% 0%	
Other	100% 100% 100%	

Period Time (Multiple items may be selected)		
Beginning	100% 0% 0%	
Middle	0% 67% 100%	
End	0% 33% 0%	

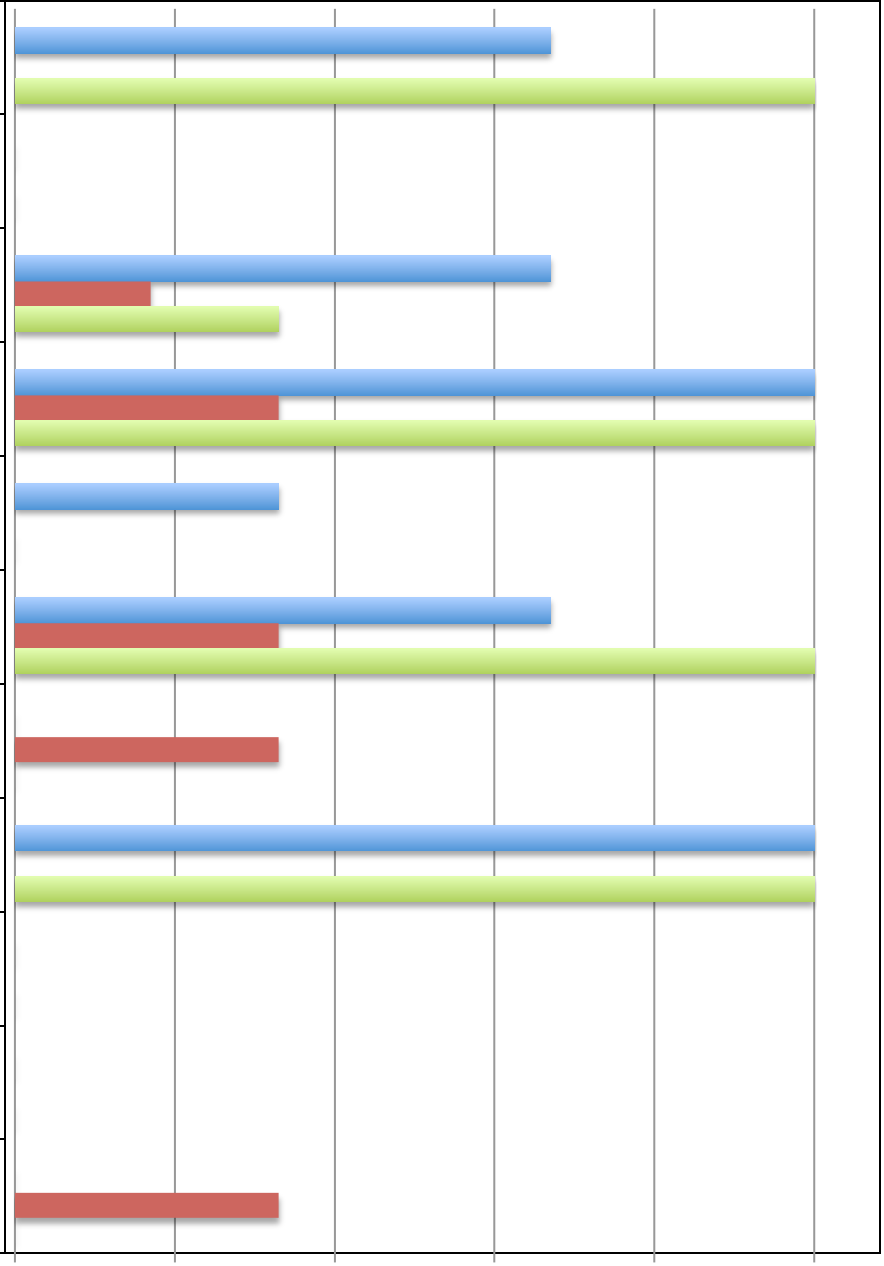
Depth of Knowledge (Multiple items may be selected)		
1 Recall & Reproduction	33% 17% 33%	
2. Skills & Concepts	67% 33% 33%	
3 Strategic Thinking/Reasoning	0% 0% 33%	
4 Extended Thinking	0% 0% 0%	
None Found	0% 50% 0%	

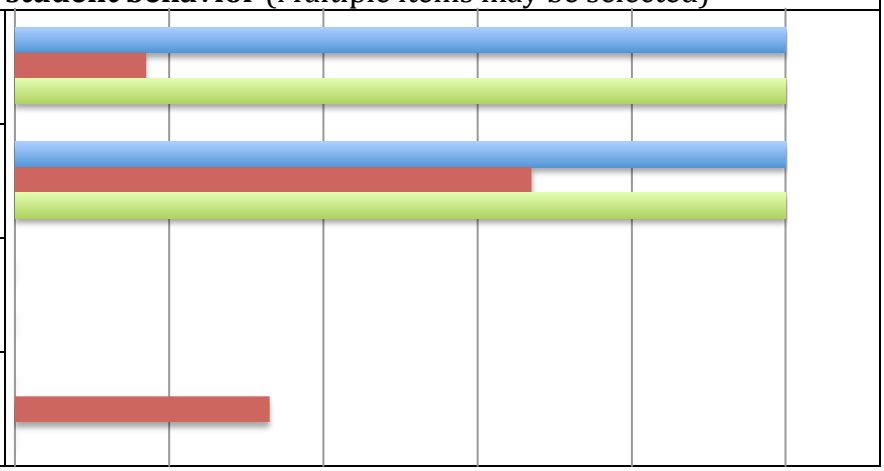
Instructional Delivery (Multiple items may be selected)		
Direct Instruction	33% 33% 67%	
Facilitation	67% 50% 100%	
Modeling	33% 0% 0%	
Guided Practice	0% 0% 0%	
Independent Practice	0% 0% 0%	
None Found	0% 50% 0%	

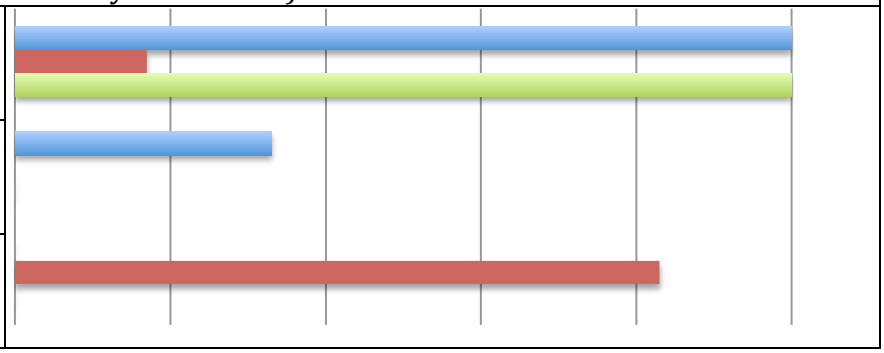
Thinking Level of Learning Task (Multiple items may be selected)		
Remembering	33% 0% 33%	
Understanding	67% 50% 0%	
Applying	0% 0% 33%	
Analyzing	0% 0% 33%	
Evaluating	0% 0% 0%	
Creating	0% 0% 0%	
None Found	0% 50% 0%	

TEACHER - CLASSROOM

Environment and Resources (Multiple items may be selected)	
Objectives/Standards posted	67% 0% 100%
Themes, EQs, projects evident	0% 0% 0%
Materials are in good condition	67% 17% 33%
Materials are standards-aligned	100% 33% 100%
Technology	33% 0% 0%
Textbooks	67% 33% 100%
Supplemental Resources	0% 33% 0%
Data Wall	100% 0% 100%
Portfolios, ILPs etc.	0% 0% 0%
CTE programs	0% 0% 0%
None Found	0% 33% 0%

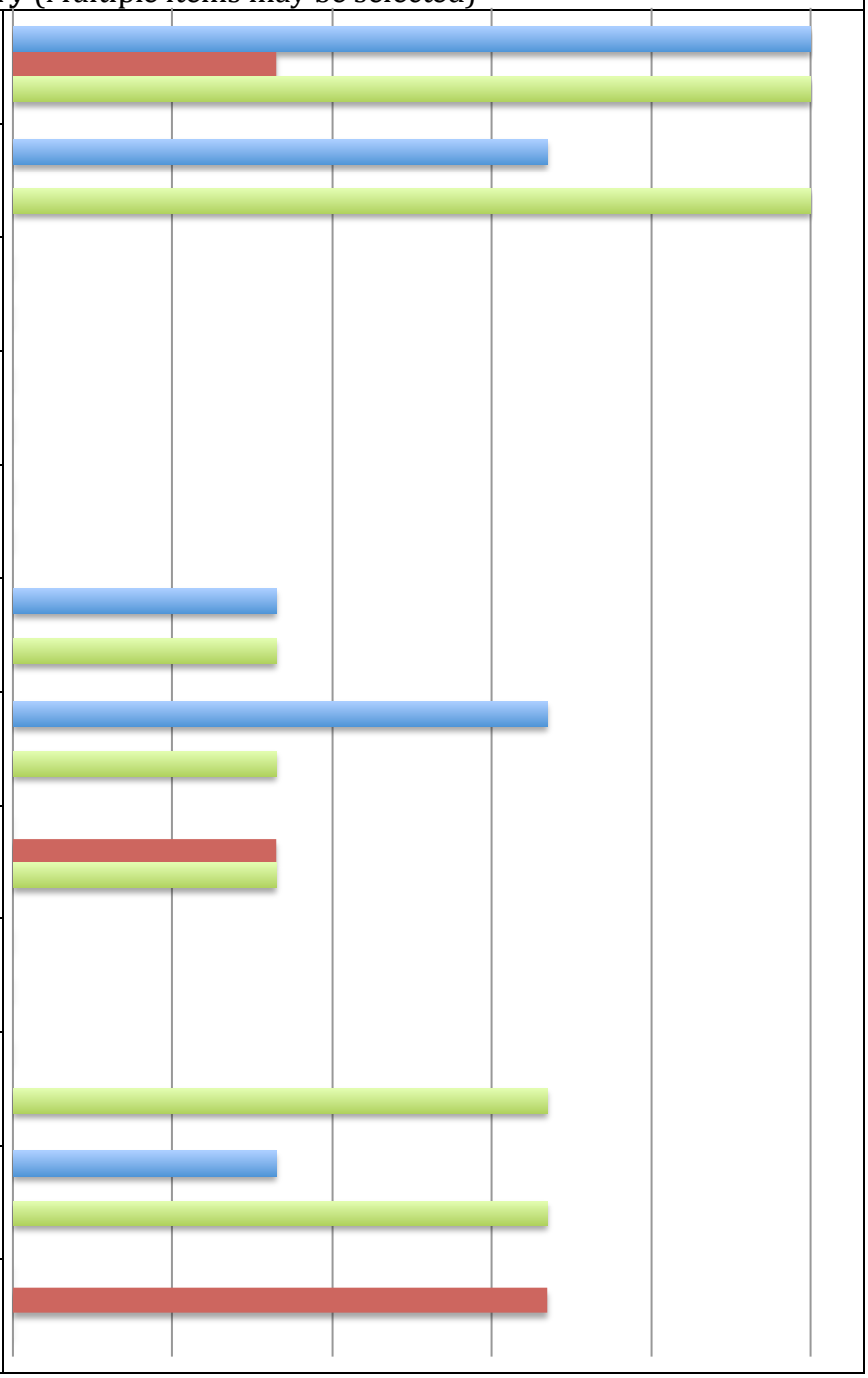


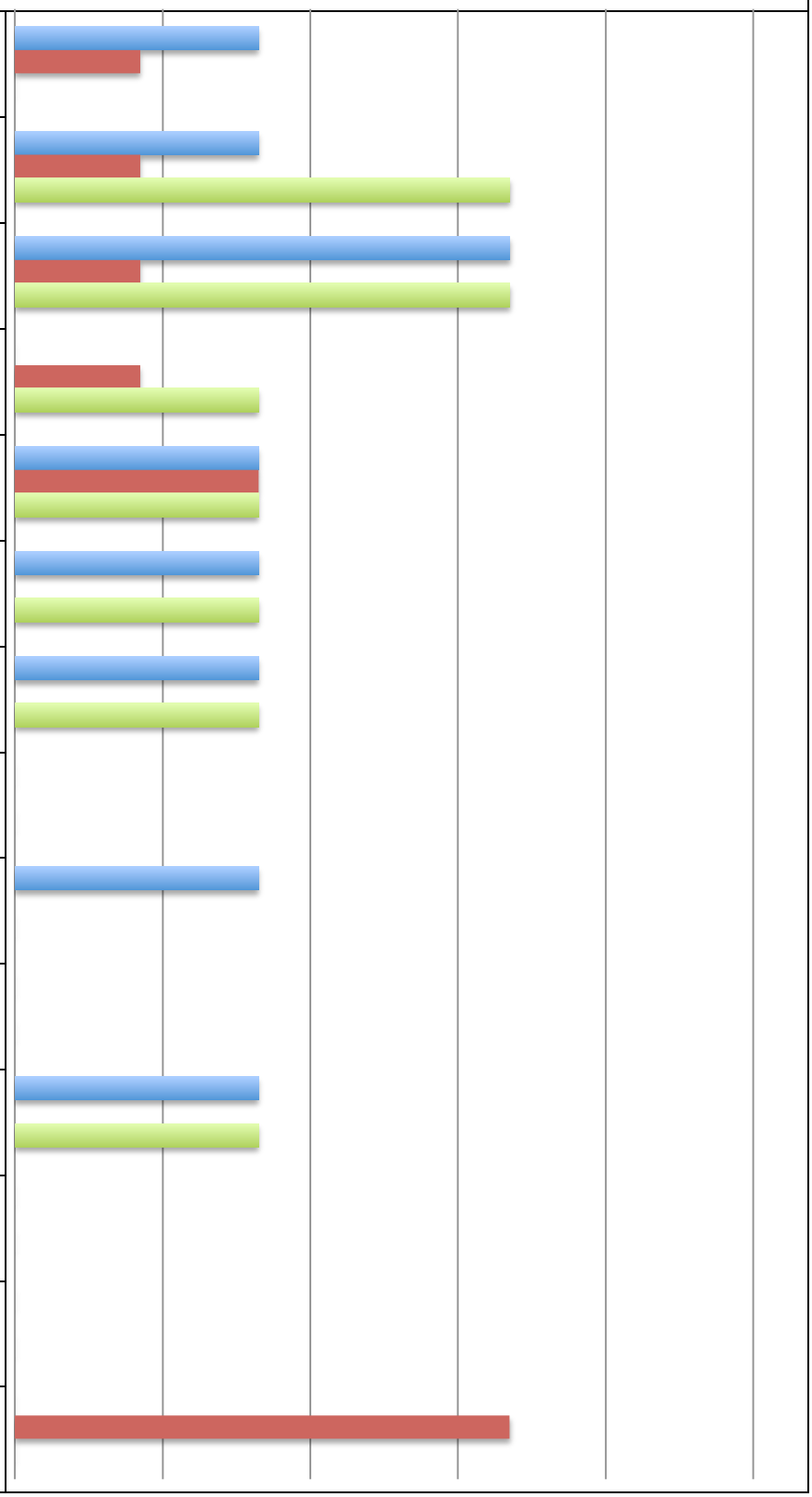
Safe environment and expectations for student behavior (Multiple items may be selected)		
An established positive climate	100% 17% 100%	
Clean, well organized, and	100% 67% 100%	
Certificates of achievement	0% 0% 0%	
None Found	0% 33% 0%	

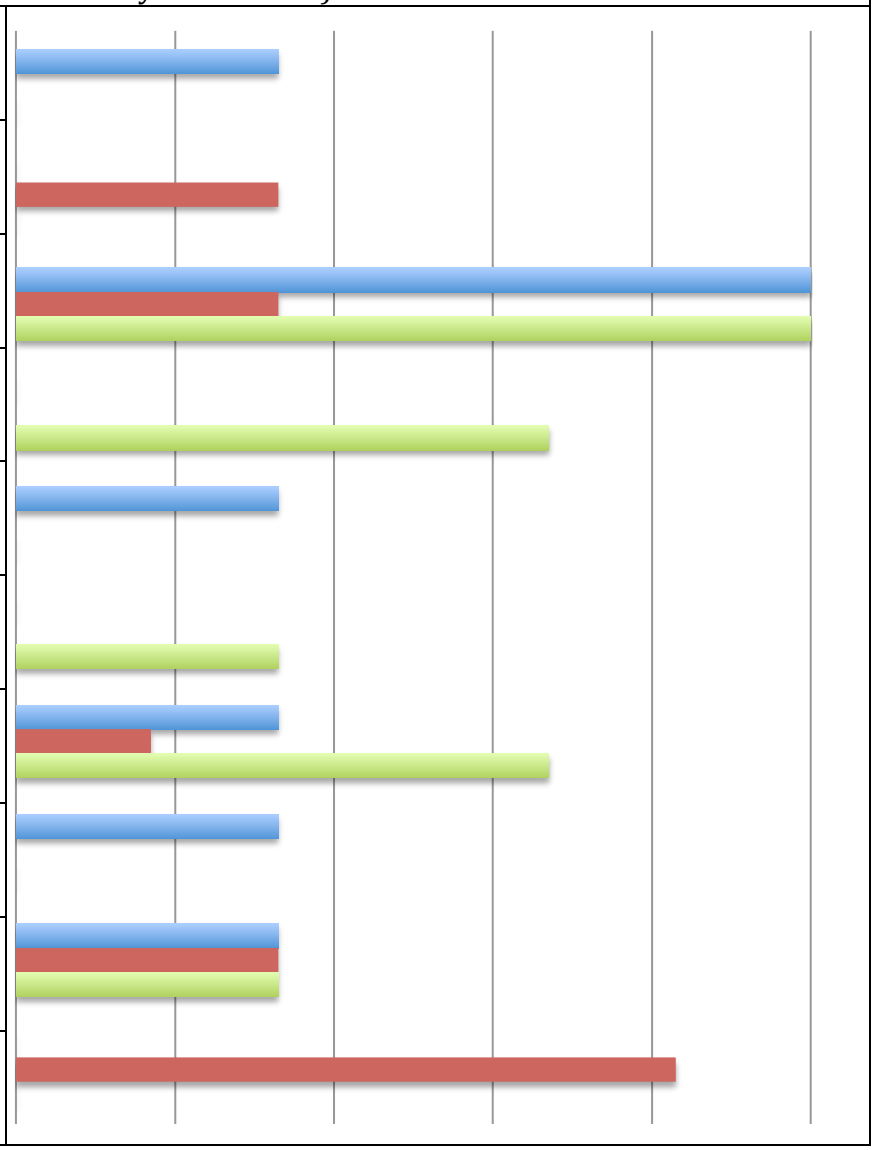
Student work showcased as: (Multiple items may be selected)		
Models of success	100% 17% 100%	
Steps in a process	33% 0% 0%	
None Found	0% 83% 0%	

LESSON FACILITATION

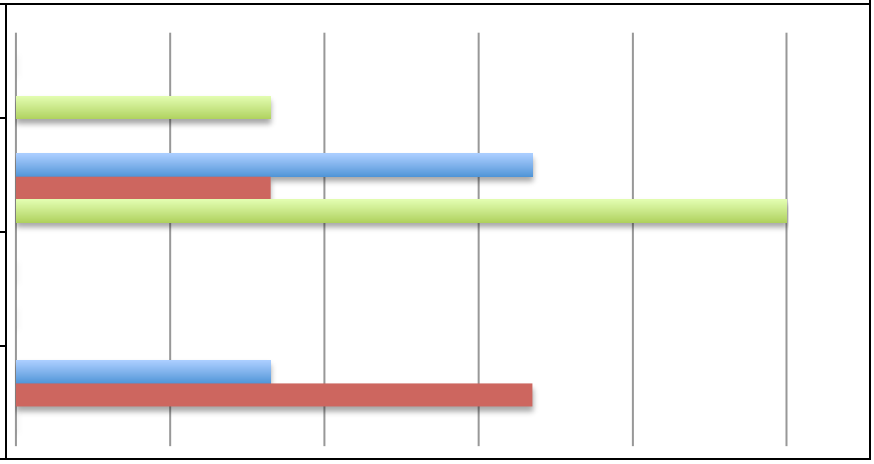
Teaching Strategies, Planning & Delivery (Multiple items may be selected)	
Checking for understanding	100% 33% 100%
Objective posted and connected	67% 0% 100%
Themes (RTSA)	0% 0% 0%
EQs and sub EQs	0% 0% 0%
UDL	0% 0% 0%
Technology integration	33% 0% 33%
Activating prior knowledge	67% 0% 33%
Strategies for st. engagement	0% 33% 33%
Culturally relevant pedagogies	0% 0% 0%
Diff. instructional activities	0% 0% 67%
Real world relevance	33% 0% 67%
None Found	0% 67% 0%



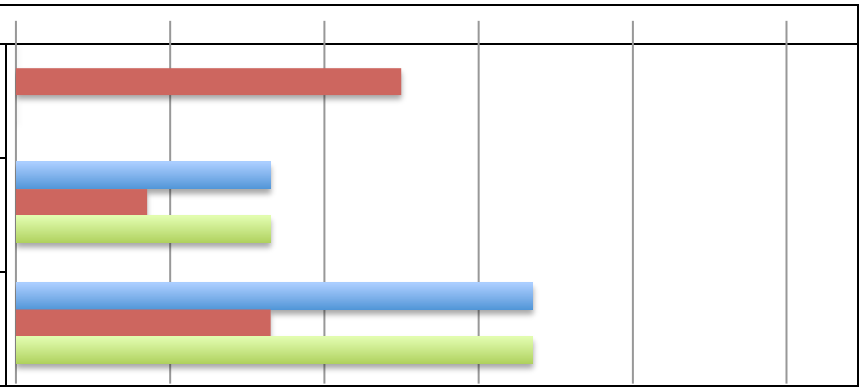
Common Core (CCSS) Implementation – Provides student opportunities to: (Multiple items may be selected.)		
Use Close Reading	33% 17% 0%	
Cite textual evidence	33% 17% 67%	
Demonstrate understanding of academic language	67% 17% 67%	
Analyze text structure	0% 17% 33%	
Make inferences	33% 33% 33%	
Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them	33% 0% 33%	
Reason abstractly and quantitatively	33% 0% 33%	
Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others	0% 0% 0%	
Model with mathematics	33% 0% 0%	
Use appropriate tools strategically	0% 0% 0%	
Attend to precision	33% 0% 33%	
Look for and make use of structure	0% 0% 0%	
Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning	0% 0% 0%	
None found	0% 67% 0%	

Marzano High Yield Strategies (Multiple items may be selected.)		
Identify similarities and diff.	33% 0% 0%	
Summarize and take notes	0% 33% 0%	
Reinforce efforts/proved rec.	100% 33% 100%	
Homework and practice	0% 0% 67%	
linguistic/non-linguistic forms of	33% 0% 0%	
groups/pairs/small groups	0% 0% 33%	
Set objective and feedback	33% 17% 67%	
Generate and test hypotheses	33% 0% 0%	
Use cues, questions, and ad. Org.	33% 33% 33%	
None Found	0% 83% 0%	

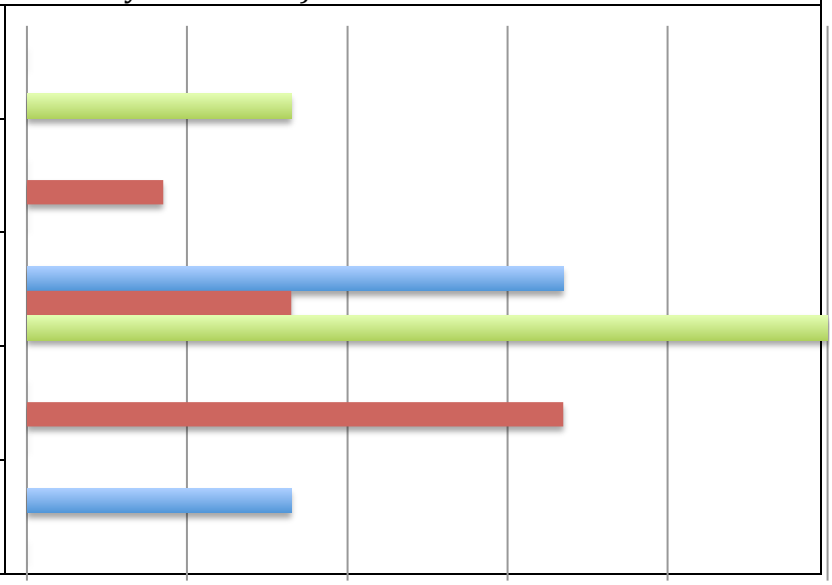
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Students interact with learning task		
Cooperative groups	0% 0% 33%	
Articulation of what they are learning	67% 33% 100%	
Present to an authentic audience, when applicable	0% 0% 0%	
None Found	33% 67% 0%	

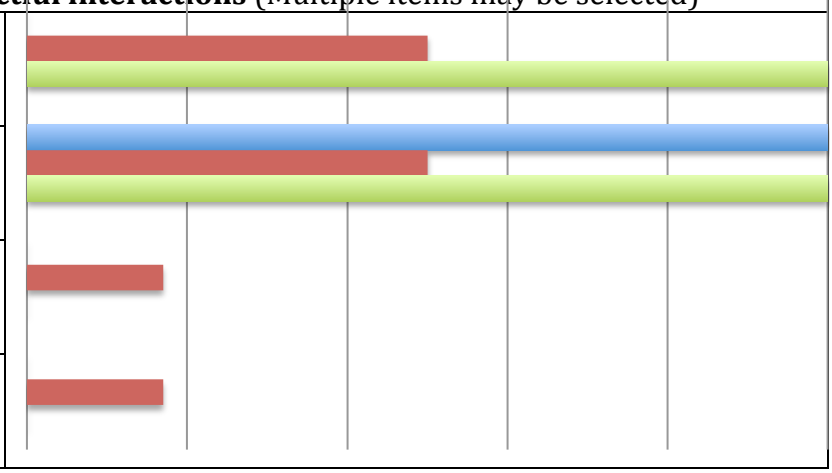
Percentage of students on task	
0 – 60 %	0% 50% 0%
61 % – 85 %	33% 17% 33%
86 % – 100 %	67% 33% 67%

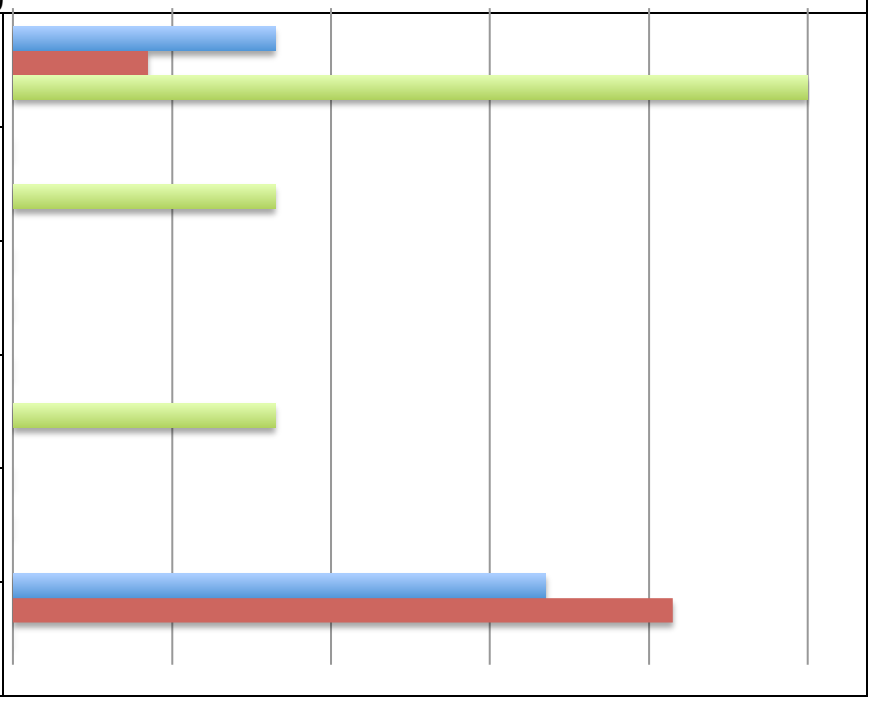


Students are utilizing resources (Multiple items may be selected)	
Instructional Technology (student computers, IWB, etc.)	0% 0% 33%
Tiered Interventions (READ180, MATH180, TTM, Achieve3000)	0% 17% 0%
Textbooks	67% 33% 100%
Supplemental Resources	0% 67% 0%
None Found	33% 0% 0%



Students demonstrate positive and respectful interactions (Multiple items may be selected)	
Student-to-student	0% 50% 100%
Student-to-adult	100% 50% 100%
Digital Citizenship	0% 17% 0%
None Found	0% 17% 0%

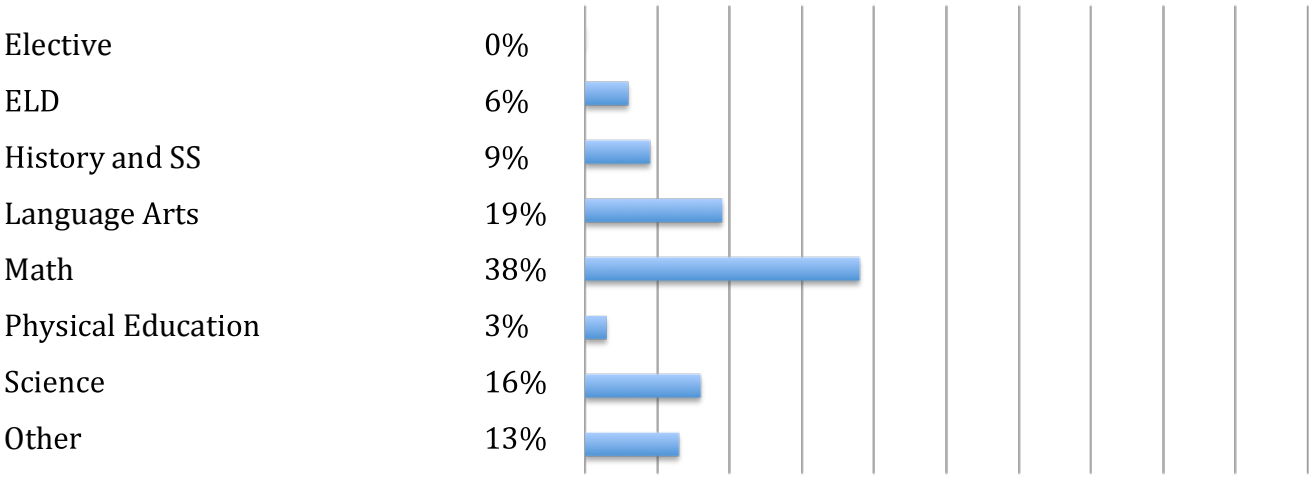


Product (Multiple items may be selected.)		
Students involved in activity/product related to learning objective	33% 17% 100%	
Students involved in activity/product related to identified DOK	0% 0% 33%	
Students use rubrics and/or contract to assess	0% 0% 0%	
Students have ownership and participate in groups	0% 0% 33%	
Students utilize metacognitive strategies	0% 0% 0%	
None Found	67% 83% 0%	

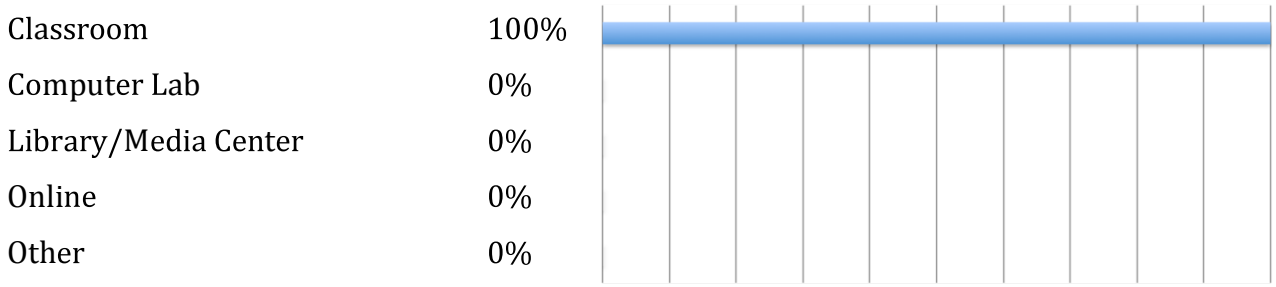
DSE Special Day Classrooms

C&J team members also collected observational data in 32 LACOE special day classes. The charts below show the percentages of classrooms with evidence of the management and instructional indicators included in LACOE's classroom observation tool.[14] Percentages are based on total records with responses for each item.

Subject
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)

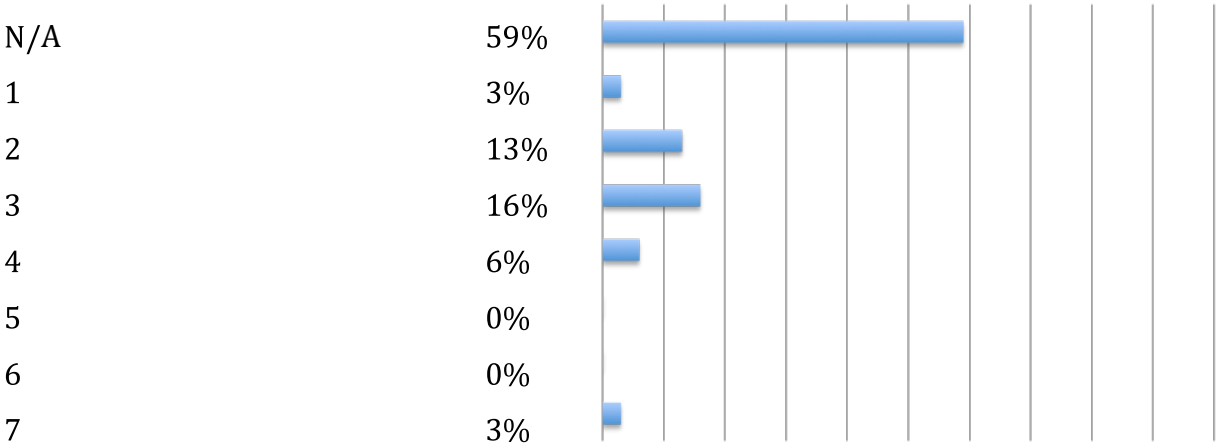


Setting
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (11)



[14] Data were compiled via LACOE's electronic system. Reports provided by LACOE.

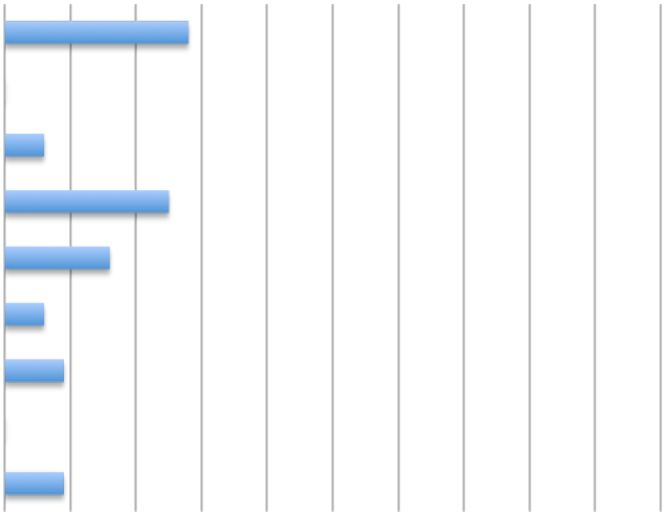
Period
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question



Period Time
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question

Type of Classroom
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (11)

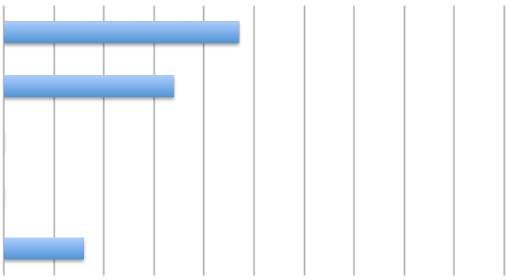
MD – Multiply Disabled	28%
ID – Intellectually Disabled	0%
OI – Orthopedically Impaired	6%
DHH – Deaf/Hard of Hearing	25%
ED – Emotionally Disabled	16%
VI – Visually Impaired	6%
AUT – Autism	9%
RS – Resource Specialist	0%
Other	9%



LESSON

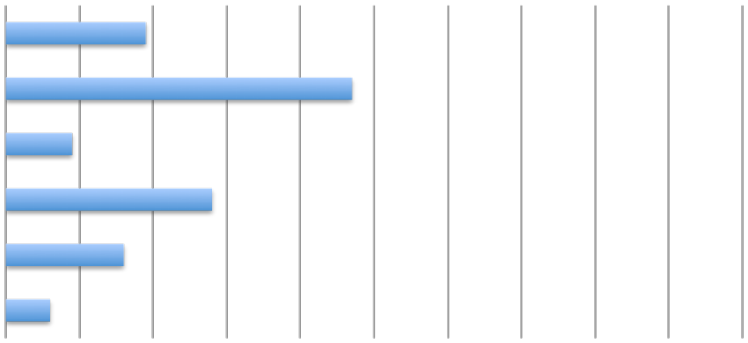
Depth of Knowledge
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)

1 Recall & Reproduction	47%
2. Skills & Concepts	34%
3 Strategic Thinking/Reasoning	0%
4 Extended Thinking	0%
None Found	16%



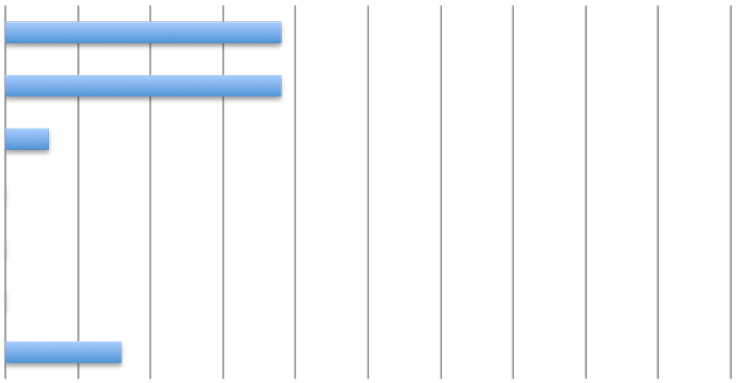
Instructional Delivery
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)

Direct Instruction	19%
Facilitation	47%
Modeling	9%
Guided Practice	28%
Independent Practice	16%
None Found	6%



Thinking Level of Learning Task
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)

Remembering	38%
Understanding	38%
Applying	6%
Analyzing	0%
Evaluating	0%
Creating	0%
None Found	16%

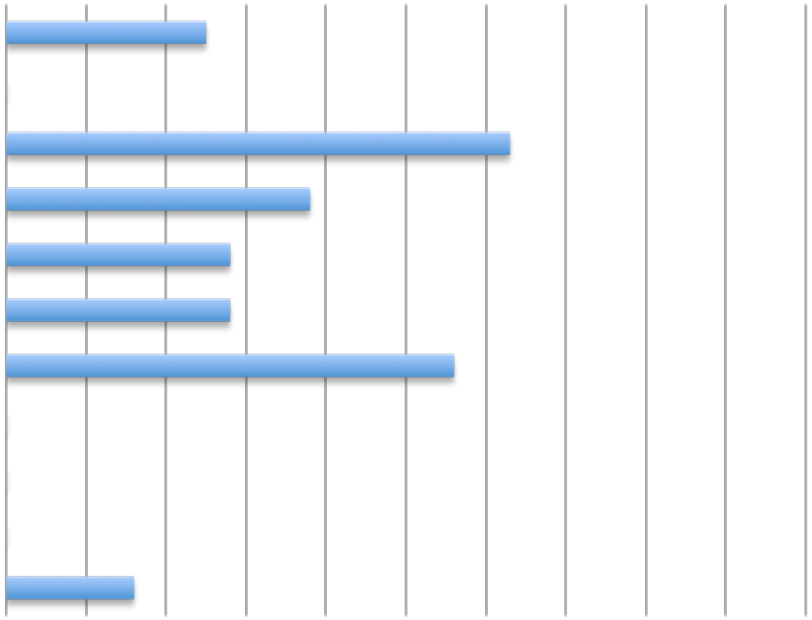


TEACHER CLASSROOM

Environment and Resources

Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)

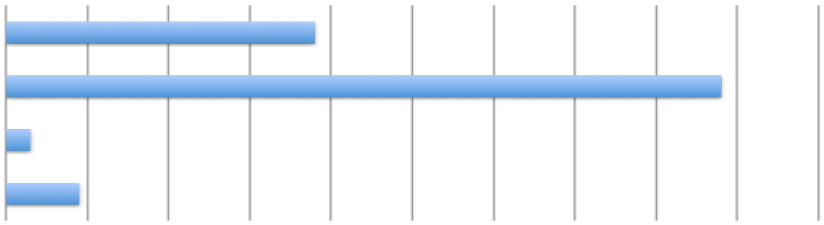
Objectives/Standards posted	25%
Themes, EQs, projects evident	0%
Materials are in good condition	63%
Materials are standards-aligned	38%
Technology	28%
Textbooks	28%
Supplemental Resources	56%
Data Wall	0%
Portfolios, ILPs etc.	0%
CTE programs	0%
None Found	16%



Safe environment and expectations for student behavior

Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)

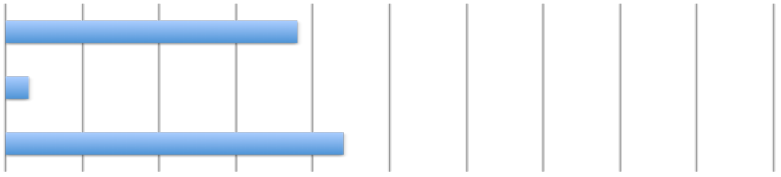
An established positive climate	38%
Clean, well organized, and	88%
Certificates of achievement	3%
None Found	9%



Student work showcased as:

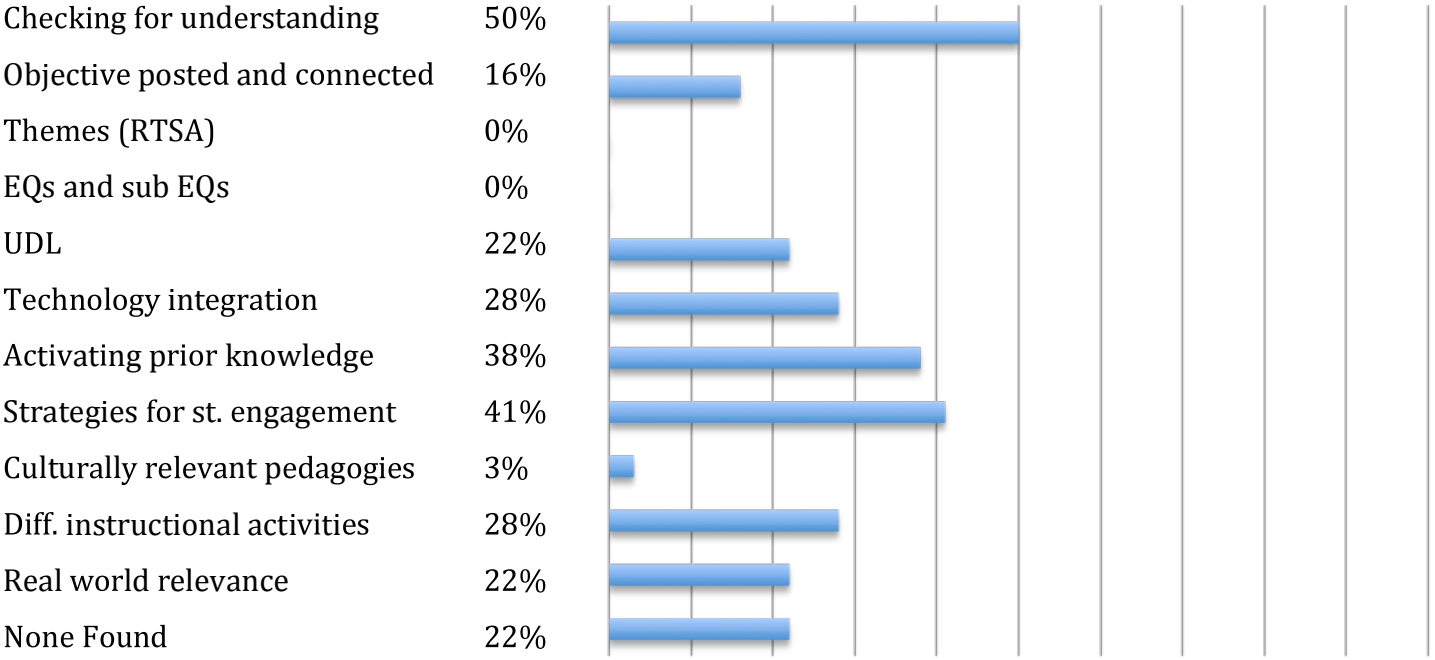
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)

Models of success	38%
Steps in a process	3%
None Found	44%

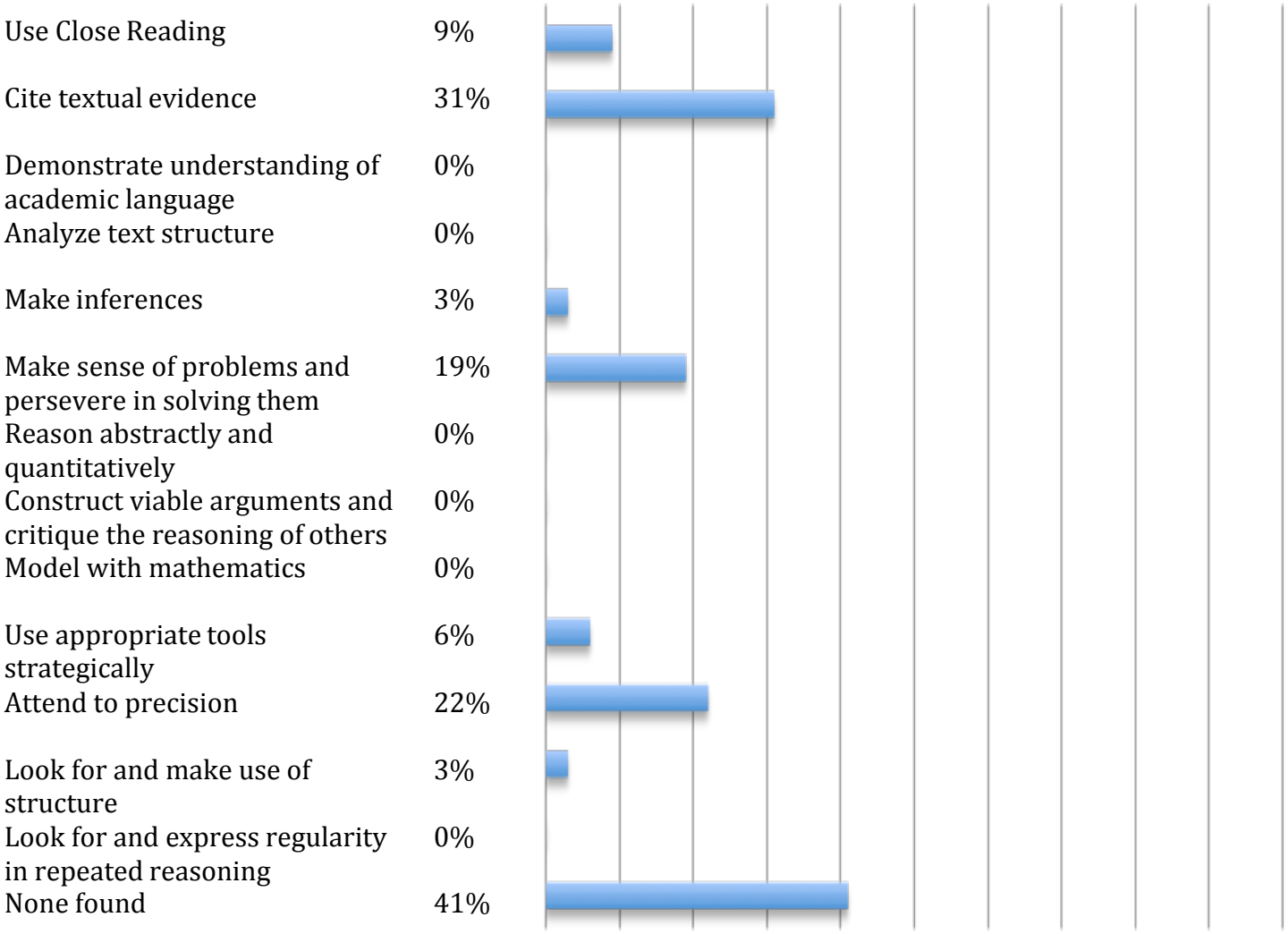


LESSON FACILITATION

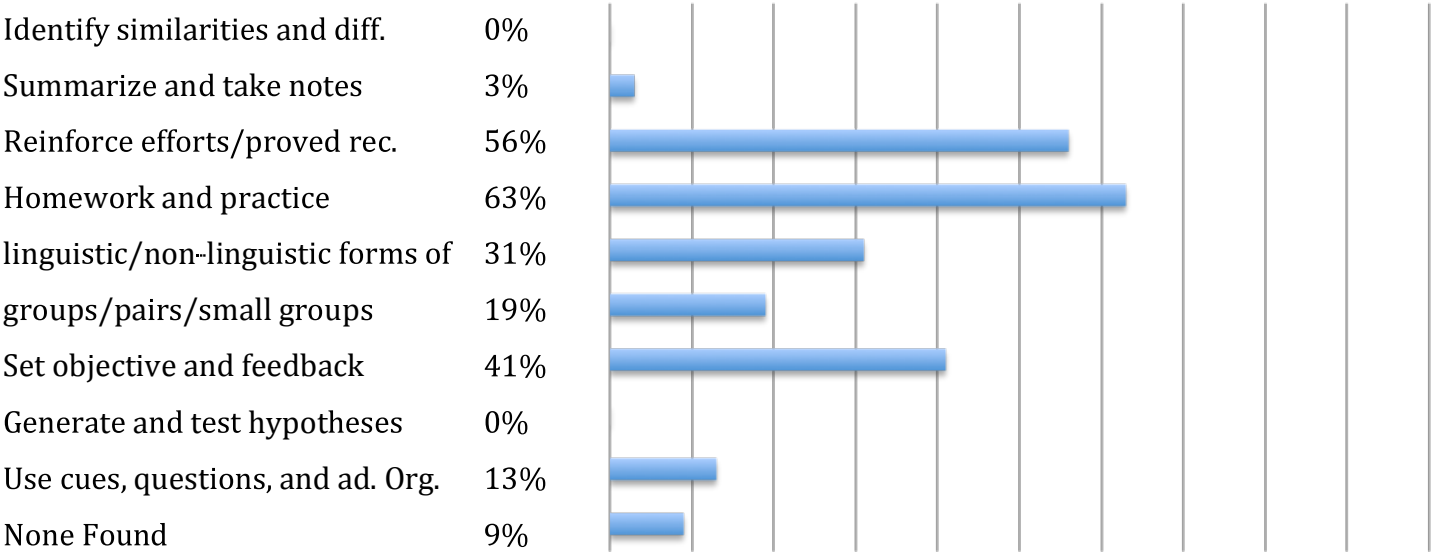
Teaching Strategies, Planning & Delivery
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)



Common Core (CCSS) Implementation – Provides student opportunities to:
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)

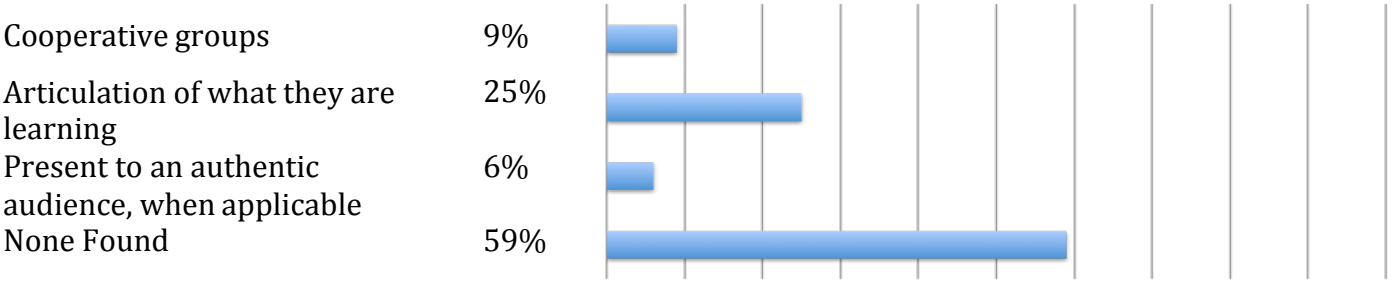


Marzano High Yield Strategies
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)

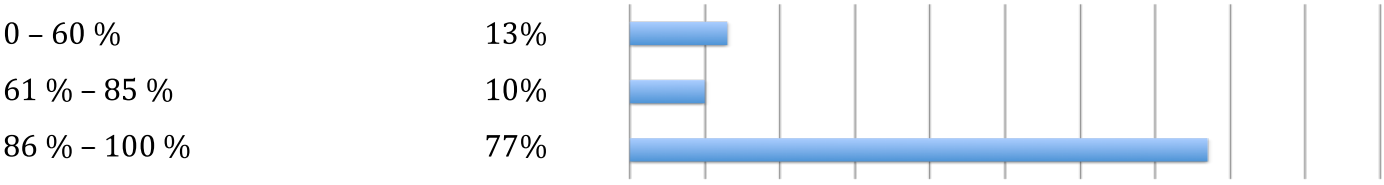


STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

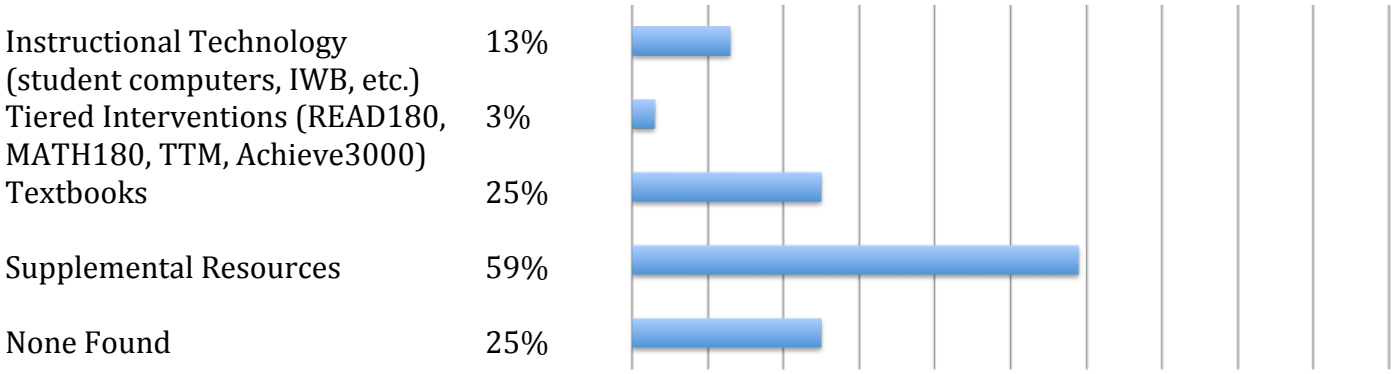
Students interact with learning task
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)



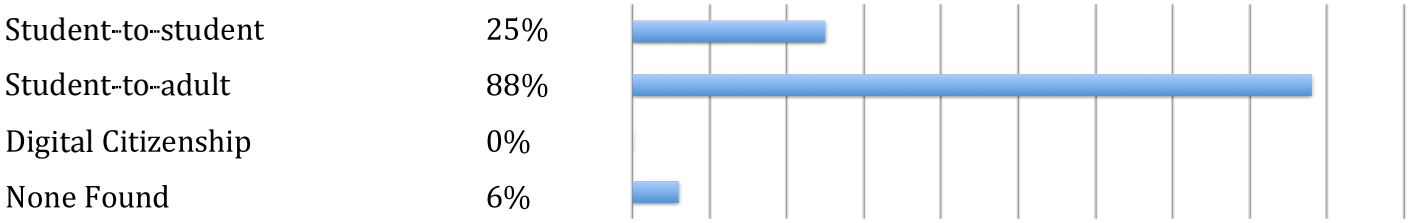
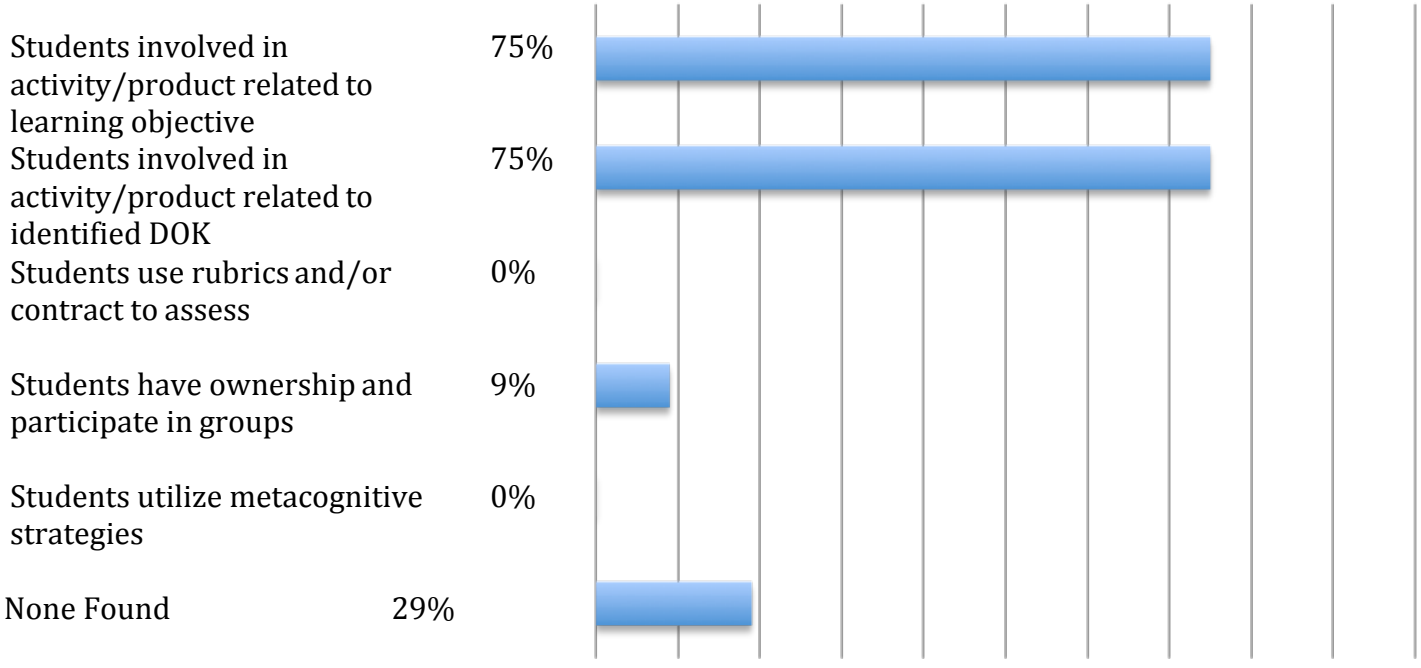
Percentage of students on task. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)



Students are utilizing resources
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)



Students demonstrate positive and respectful interactions
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)



Product
Multiple items may be selected. Percentage based on total records with response to this question (32)