

DRAFT Needs Analysis of Kingman – Norwich, USD 331

Conducted by and for the Kansas State Department of
Education's Learning Network

I. Introduction

In September 2008, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) contracted with Cross & Jofus, LLC to implement a model for working with KSDE and five Kansas districts—Garden City, Kansas City, Topeka, Turner, and Wichita—struggling to demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP).

In 2009, this model, the Kansas Learning Network (KLN), was expanded to reach 12 more Kansas districts not making AYP, and subsequently in 2010, to reach 11 more, including USD 331, Kingman-Norwich School District. Since that time, one district has left the Network because it demonstrated AYP two consecutive years.¹ Seven additional districts demonstrated AYP in the area(s) identified for improvement, and they will continue to remain in the Network for at least one more year.

The rationale for the Learning Network is that districts struggling to demonstrate AYP need a combination of support and pressure to make difficult changes that will result in higher overall levels of student achievement and a narrowing of achievement gaps. Unfortunately, there is no “silver bullet” for making improvements, and the KSDE has finite capacity to help. Districts and the KSDE, however, can make significant progress if they think and act systemically, focus resources and energy on improving the teaching and learning process, and work collaboratively and with support from an external “critical friend.”

The goal, then, of the Learning Network is to improve school and district quality and increase student achievement through a collaborative, organization-development approach focused on applying systems theory and using data effectively.

One of the first activities in pursuit of this goal is to conduct a needs assessment of KSDE and all participating districts, focused on their ability to foster and sustain a school improvement process. The needs analysis encompasses an analysis of student achievement and other data; surveys of teachers, principals, and district administrators; and three-day site visits² that include interviews and focus groups with students, parents, civic leaders, teachers, academic coaches, principals, district administrators, and board members as well as classroom observations using a process designed by Cross & Jofus called the Kansas Process for Advancing Learning Strategies for Success (K-PALSS). All needs assessment activities are designed both to produce findings leading to recommendations for technical assistance and to train school and state officials to do their own needs assessments and classroom observations in the future.

The site visits conclude with a debriefing conducted by Cross & Jofus for the district’s leadership that includes a presentation of some preliminary findings. This report presents all findings and represents the culmination of the needs assessment for Kingman-

¹ Under the No Child Left Behind Act, a district must demonstrate AYP two consecutive years in order to be removed from the “needs improvement” list.

² The site visit for Kingman-Norwich occurred November 8-10, 2010.

Norwich School District, USD 331 (referred to throughout the report as USD 331 or Kingman-Norwich).

USD 331 Student Demographics

The Kingman-Norwich School District serves two communities, Kingman and Norwich, located approximately 27 miles apart. Students in the two communities attend three schools—Norwich K-12 School, Kingman Elementary/Middle School, and Kingman High School. As of September 30, 2010, 248 students attended the Norwich K-12 School, 397 students attended Kingman Elementary, 169 students attended Kingman Middle School, and 271 students attended Kingman High School.

There is little racial/ethnic diversity in the two communities—95% of residents are White and a small percentage identify as American Indian, Hispanic, Multi-Racial, or Asian. Approximately 96% of Kingman-Norwich’s 1,085 students are classified as White, almost 2% as American Indian, 1% as Asian, and less than 1% as Hispanic, African-American, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Almost 48% of students qualify for free and reduced priced lunches, an increase of approximately 10% from the 2006-2007 school year. Additionally, 25% of students are classified as students with disabilities—far above the state average of 13.5%—also an increase over the last several years.³

Student Achievement

Overall, Kingman-Norwich students have demonstrated relatively high levels of student achievement. All students, as a group, have exceeded state achievement benchmarks in both reading and math for the past three years (for additional detail, see Table I below). In 2010, Kingman-Norwich schools also garnered several Kansas standards of excellence awards, including a building-wide award for Kingman Elementary.

Table I—Kingman-Norwich—Summary Adequate Yearly Progress Data

Reading – Met AYP in 2008; did not meet in 2009 and 2010. On Improvement

Student Category	Year & State Target		
	2008 - 72%	2009 - 76.7%	2010 - 81.3%
All students	Met (87.3%)	Met (85.8%)	Met (83.2%)
Free & Reduced Meals	Met (80%)	Met (78.2%)	Met (77.2%) ⁴
Students with Disabilities	Met (68%) ⁴	No (60.8%)	No (52.5%)
ELL Students	N/A	N/A	N/A
African-American Students	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hispanic	N/A	N/A	N/A
White	Met (87.1%)	Met (85.6%)	Met (83.2%)

³ District data.

⁴ The percent standard or above is below target but above the criterion percent when the hypothesis test (at the 99% level of confidence) is applied.

Asian & Pacific*	N/A	N/A	N/A
American Indian or Alaskan*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Racial*	N/A	N/A	N/A

Mathematics – Met AYP in 2008; did not meet in 2009 and 2010. On Improvement

Student Category	Year & State Target		
	2008 - 64.6%	2009 - 70.5%	2010 - 76.4%
All students	Met (86.4%)	Met (77.9%)	Met (80.2%)
Free & Reduced Meals	Met (81.8%)	Met (70.8%)	Met (75.9%) ⁴
Students with Disabilities	Met (72%)	No (57.4%)	No (60.8%)
ELL Students	N/A	N/A	N/A
African-American Students	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hispanic	N/A	N/A	N/A
White	Met (86.9%)	Met (77.3%)	Met (81.1%)
Asian & Pacific*	N/A	N/A	N/A
American Indian or Alaskan*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Racial*	N/A	N/A	N/A

Graduation Rate: 2008—91.7%; 2009—88.5%; 2010—89.2%

Notes:

*These categories were reconfigured in 2010—Asian-Pacific Islander was split into two categories: Asian and Native Hawaiian or Pacific; Multi-Ethnic was changed to Multi-Racial in 2010; and, Alaskan was added to American Indian.

Despite these accomplishments, however, USD 331 faces some achievement challenges as well. Students with disabilities did not meet reading or math benchmarks in 2009 and 2010, placing the district on improvement. Further, students eligible for free and reduced priced lunches also appear to be struggling to meet benchmarks.

The Big Picture

As a district, Kingman-Norwich displays a number of strengths. Stakeholders we met with see the board of education as committed and capable, and the new superintendent has established an effective working relationship with the board. Though the superintendent has only been in USD 331 since July 2010, he appears to be welcomed and accepted by the community. Students, parents, and community members also see principals and teachers as caring staff members, who have worked hard to establish a positive, welcoming climate in the schools. Moreover, there appears to be significant community support for district activities and events.

Kingman-Norwich must draw on these strengths and others to address four key systemic challenges as it works to improve:

- 1) AYP and instructional challenges for students with disabilities, who currently comprise more than 25% of the total student population in the district

- 2) A need to fully implement aligned curriculum, assessment, instruction, and professional development to support student learning and achievement
- 3) A need to strengthen collaborative efforts across the two school communities—among principals, general education teachers, special education teachers, cooperative staff, and other staff to improve instruction and increase professional knowledge and skills
- 4) A need to revise and fully implement a strategic improvement plan for the district.

The report elaborates on these strengths and challenges in the Findings section below. Detailed recommendations about how to address them can be found in the section titled Recommendations for Technical Assistance.

II. Findings

Findings from the needs assessment of Kingman-Norwich are summarized below in the areas of Leadership; Empowering Culture and Human Capital; and Curriculum, Assessment, Instruction, and Professional Development.

Leadership

One of the main findings of the needs analysis in Kingman-Norwich is that the district currently lacks systemic coherence to achieve their goals. Coherence means that “the elements of a school district work together in an integrated way to implement an articulated strategy.”⁵

The district does have a clear theory of action—that the deep infusion of instructional technology in the district will improve student achievement. Over the last three years, Kingman-Norwich has dramatically increased technology across the district. Every student in grades 4-12 has been issued a laptop. Smartboards are located in all K-5 classrooms and in many of the 6-8 classrooms as well. Kingman Elementary School received a Technology Rich Classroom grant from the Kansas State Department of Education that provided funds for a Smartboard, projector, document camera, digital camera, wireless audio amplification, and curriculum related software for each classroom that is part of the grant. In addition, with the support of the grant, the district has employed a half-time technology instructional facilitator.

Though USD 331 has a clear theory of action around technology, the district’s resources, stakeholders, and systems are not currently fully aligned for effective implementation of the technology initiative. Most people we met with saw the technology initiative as a positive move for students, but they also reported inconsistent implementation and training across the district in both the Norwich and Kingman communities—it appears that too much technology was introduced too quickly, without a well-designed plan for training and support.

⁵ Childress, S., R. Elmore, A. Grossman, and Caroline King (2007). “Note on the PELP Coherence Framework.” Public Education Leadership Project at Harvard University.

Moreover, over the past three years the district focused most of its efforts on technology improvements, while a number of other important issues were stalled. As a result, there are major concerns regarding a viable curriculum for all grade levels, instructional resources and support for teachers, the role of professional learning communities (PLCs) in supporting professional development and student learning, assessments of student work, meaningful staff evaluations, and the role of principals as instructional leaders.

One of the key questions facing USD 331 is whether the current theory of action—to emphasize technology as the key initiative to improve student achievement—is appropriate, or whether the emphasis needs to rest elsewhere, where technology becomes an important tool to support student learning, but is not the focal point for improvement.

As it addresses this question and others, Kingman-Norwich can draw upon some important leadership strengths to build systemic coherence and realize significant gains in student achievement in the coming years.

“The board of education is supportive of changes and will work with the superintendent to do whatever he needs us to do.”

—USD 331 Board of Education focus group participants

- Stakeholders we interviewed see the board of education as a body that functions well together and is able to make important decisions in an informed, thoughtful fashion. Community members we met with appreciated the efforts of the board members, as they faced significant challenges in the past two years.
- The board hired Bob Diepenbrock to serve as superintendent last July. In four months of working together, the board and Mr. Diepenbrock have established a good working relationship that bodes well for future planning and implementation. In addition, community and staff members we interviewed reported that Mr. Diepenbrock has been visible in the district and the community, and appears to be well accepted.
- The school board established a strategic plan in 2007 through a collaborative process that was praised by both community and staff. The priorities and strategies in the plan reflect good planning and direction for the district.
- The district has begun several positive initiatives in the past few years including the infusion of technology, PLCs, the use of data for instructional decisions, and a classroom observation walkthrough process.
- The district leadership team is experienced and qualified. Kingman-Norwich has a small leadership team reflecting the size of the district, and this has both strengths and challenges. It is easier to have strong communication and understanding among the group of six administrators. There are no silos in Kingman-Norwich.

- There is some understanding among principals and teachers that principals should serve as the instructional leaders of their schools. This is a positive step in terms of improving student achievement.
- District leaders have managed USD 331's financial affairs well during the recent economic downturn. The board of education has had to make a series of difficult cuts over the past few years, and they have wisely levied the legal maximum for the Supplemental General Fund to support the schools.
- Kingman-Norwich has an enviable pupil-teacher ratio at all levels. Small class sizes are a positive for teachers and students, as they provide more individual attention for students and help build positive relationships between staff, students, and families. However, with the funding and staffing challenges facing the district, such low ratios should be reviewed to determine whether an increase in class size could provide needed funds for other priorities (e.g., a curriculum director or other instructional support staff).

Kingman-Norwich must draw on these strengths to address a number of related challenges.

- Though the district's strategic plan seems to be well crafted, the plan also appears to have stalled over the past three years. Most people interviewed said it was not well known and had little or no impact on the district. The challenge will be to re-create the positive energy connected to the planning process and use the energy for effective implementation of the activities and programs that support the goals. The board of education and the superintendent have already begun discussions regarding a complete review of the current plan before next school year.
- Kingman-Norwich has started a number of positive initiatives as mentioned above. The initiatives don't appear to be implemented strategically, however. For example, while the technology initiative has had some success, there are many challenges remaining, especially around training teachers to use technology as an effective tool for teaching and learning. There has been some training of staff in PLCs, but there is little consistency across the district in how these are organized and used effectively. The same can be said about the classroom walkthrough process, which is used intermittently and appears to have little impact on professional development planning or on improving student achievement. Additionally, teachers and principals report little training related to the use of student assessment data to make decisions regarding instruction and professional development.
- The district's small leadership team can be an asset in many ways. The challenge facing this small team is to plan and implement—with input from key stakeholders—needed initiatives to improve student achievement, with limited staff support.

- USD 331’s principals expressed a desire to serve as instructional leaders, but appeared unsure as to what this means and how they would meet expectations. On a positive note, the superintendent has already begun conversations with principals regarding their role as instructional leaders.
- Because of the current school finance problems in Kansas, the board has had to make some difficult personnel cuts in the past few years, including a curriculum director, instructional technology support personnel, and two tutor teachers. The challenge currently facing the board and leadership is to weigh past and future cuts in staff and support against the impact on student achievement. While it is easy to say that a district’s leadership is “top-heavy,” a district has to be careful not to cut too deeply critical support needed by students and teachers. The elimination of the curriculum director and the teacher tutors has been difficult—teachers interviewed, for example, noted that the loss of this support has been detrimental.
- Kingman-Norwich faces the added challenge of supporting much needed initiatives with a declining funding base. Enrollment in the district has declined over the last several years, resulting in fewer state funds each year. At the same time, the district needs to initiate or re-start programs to improve student achievement. Some of those programs were mentioned above. There are also needs related to new technology, long-range facilities maintenance, and district vehicles. The district will have to set priorities for the next 3-5 years to effectively manage the district finances to boost student achievement. Borrowing from the strategic planning model used in 2007, a collaborative planning process involving all stakeholders could be a good first step in developing district priorities and direction.

Empowering Culture and Human Capital

USD 331 serves two separate communities, Kingman and Norwich. While there is one board of education, one superintendent, one strategic plan, and one budget, there is a distinct feeling that since there are two communities there are also two school districts.

There appears to be little interaction among the students and staff members of the two communities, with the exception of the Norwich principal who meets with the principals from Kingman regularly. There were feelings among the two staffs and community members with whom we met that the schools in the “other community” get preferential treatment. Apparently, this situation has created no major problems for the district or either community, but it does create some challenges for the district.

To address this challenge and others, USD 331 can build on several strengths in the area of Empowering Culture and Human Capital.

- Both communities were described as good places to raise a family, places where people care about each other and are particularly concerned about the welfare of the young people. The location close to Wichita and Hutchinson, the small town atmosphere, and the low crime rate were some of the reasons that people used to describe why they enjoy living in the two communities. The school district is seen as one of the strengths of the communities and another reason why people live there.
- “The schools are the lifeblood of our business.”

—*Business leader*
- All persons interviewed expressed the view that the schools provide a good education for students and prepare students for life after high school. Parents and community members noted that the district has high expectations for students.
 - Focus groups noted that the schools provide a safe and secure learning environment for the students, and classroom observations conducted during the site visit confirmed this finding. The district was also described as having caring staff members who worked hard to establish a positive, welcoming climate in the schools.
 - Parents we interviewed felt that communication from the schools was generally good. They appreciate, for example, the phone messaging system. The parent portal that allows parents and students to access information from teachers regarding attendance, grades, homework, test results, etc. also received very high praise from those parents using it.
 - The district has high-quality facilities, thanks in part to a 1999 bond issue that helped to provide new facilities in both Kingman and Norwich. The challenge is to maintain those facilities in a timely, planned way to ensure they continue to be points of pride for the district.
 - Students we interviewed reported satisfaction with the education they were receiving. Many students participate in activities at the schools, and they expressed appreciation for the support from the community. The students at Norwich have an interest in having a National Honor Society, and students in both high schools expressed an interest in having some more rigorous courses such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

USD 331 also faces several challenges in the area of Empowering Culture and Human Capital.

- As the district has infused more technology into the schools, there have been problems with teachers needing more training or the technology not working when needed. The district has only two technology personnel and both are housed in Kingman. If something goes wrong in Norwich, it is difficult for the two to address the problem in a timely manner.

- There appears to be no voice for Norwich in the leadership group (including classified leaders) except for the Norwich principal. When the classified leadership group meets to discuss district issues, Norwich seems to be missing from the table.
- The district has to ensure that both staffs are fully informed, actively engaged, and that both receive and hear the same messages regarding curriculum, instruction, professional development, data, etc. This is challenging, given the location of the two communities and the way in which communication is structured.
- Though parents appreciate the district's parent portal, the district faces the challenge of communicating information about the portal to parents and training them on how to use it. Some parents with whom we met knew nothing about the portal. None reported any training provided by the district; those who used the portal said that they taught themselves how to use it. Parents who do not have computer skills had no way of knowing how to access and use the portal. Another challenge is to ensure that the information on the portal is up to date and that there are clear expectations regarding staff responsibilities in utilizing and updating the information.
- USD 331's Web site was also seen as a source for information, but not as highly regarded as the portal by those parents who use it. Staff in Norwich reported that the Web-based information about their school was not up to date.
- The district has a personnel evaluation program in place, but it seems to have little or no impact on improving performance.
- Currently, Kingman-Norwich lacks job descriptions for all positions, as well as a handbook for classified staff. Also, lines of authority between principals and classified staff are unclear at this point.

Curriculum, Assessment, Instruction, and Professional Development

Findings related to the areas of Curriculum, Assessment, Instruction, and Professional Development are based upon a comparative analysis of information from the following three sources: (1) student achievement data; (2) perceptions identified by Kingman-Norwich educators on surveys of educational practices, and by representatives from all constituent groups during focus groups and interviews; and (3) data collected during classroom visits, which document to what extent effective teaching/learning practices are being implemented.

More detail about the data collected during classroom visits using the K-PALSS (Kansas Process for Advancing Learning Strategies for Success) process can be found in the Appendix of this report.

Curriculum and Assessment

USD 331 has some important curriculum and assessment strengths.

- The district is in the initial year of MTSS structuring. MTSS leadership teams for each school have been identified. Training is provided through MTSS state approved facilitators affiliated with the Educational Services and Staff Development Association of Central Kansas (ESSDACK).
- State standards provide the foundation for the curriculum. Principals in focus groups noted that schools use tested indicators as a major component of the curriculum to prepare students for state assessments. The Kansas interim assessment is being used this year in grades 3-8 to determine math readiness for the assessments.
- The district is in the second year of implementing core math programs—including Everyday Math in the elementary schools and Math Connect in the middle schools. A more traditional Glencoe math series was selected for the high school.
- The high school offers multiple opportunities for students to access college-level material and credits, including concurrent enrollment at the community college, as well as interactive distance learning through the Southeast Kansas Education Service Center.
- There is evidence that the district extends the curriculum beyond the schools—through an On the Job Training program and several opportunities for students who are members of Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) to connect with local businesses.
- As part of the strategic plan initiated by USD 331 in 2007, the district began piloting MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) testing. Now, MAP tests are used K-11 in the fall, winter (for some students—teachers determine which groups of students take the winter MAP), and spring as a screening and diagnostic tool. All new students take the MAP when entering the district.
- Educators appear to understand the key components of the various state assessment tests. Teacher and principal focus groups spoke to the efforts of the schools to determine which students take the KAMM (Kansas Assessment of Modified Measures) test; they were also aware of the percentage of alternate

“The MTSS training has been really good as far as the staff working together and solving problems.”

“To make MTSS work, we need enough release time to plan and implement the process.”

—*Teachers*

assessments/KAMM tests taken each year and how to use KCA (Kansas Computerized Assessments) formative assessments.

USD 331 also faces some significant curriculum and assessment challenges.

- Kingman-Norwich currently lacks a guaranteed, viable, horizontally and vertically aligned curriculum throughout the district. Rather than aligning the curriculum with the state standards, the district uses the state standards as its “curriculum.” Further, there is the need to develop a comprehensive scope and sequence linked to a timeline and skills.

“Unified curriculum?
Right now everybody’s
doing their own thing.”

—*Teacher*
- As articulated during the district's presentation to the KLN team, observed in the classrooms, and confirmed by the teacher and principal focus groups, there is a need for a district-wide language arts/reading adoption. Given the new MTSS initiative, the curriculum materials and assessment framework should include screeners, diagnostics, and progress monitoring to support the proposed tiered instruction.
- While Everyday Math is used at the elementary level in both elementary schools, there are no other examples of district-wide curricula. Moreover, though Everyday Math is used at the elementary level, there appears to be little understanding of this curriculum at the middle school or high school. Upper level math teachers expressed a desire for professional development and/or collaboration between the schools in Everyday Math to assist them to understand the content and instructional model.
- While all stakeholders in Kingman-Norwich are proud of the level of technology available in the district, there is a need to develop standards for student computer usage. Teachers and paraprofessionals noted that prior to the 1:1 student computer initiative, students would complete an assignment and pick up a library book to read. Some students now use the laptop to listen to their choice of music or play games. The focus groups were also concerned about the amount of “free time” or self-select laptop activities the students were allowed with the laptops, which decrease the focus on core curricula in regular and special education classes.
- While software programs (e.g., Symphony of Math and Academy of Reading) serve as the supplemental mainstay of the special education curriculum, there is minimal evidence that students with disabilities are getting access to the core curriculum. There is a need to strengthen the alignment between regular education and special education curricula.

“We need to hold the
teachers accountable for
teaching all students.”

—*Teacher*

While general education elementary teachers use Everyday Math, for example,

special education staff use Saxon Math. We saw no evidence of co-teaching, with regular and special education teachers providing instruction and curriculum in the same class.

- There appears to be no systemic process for monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing the curriculum. Few supports are available from the central office for principals or teachers in implementing curriculum. There is no curriculum director, and there are no instructional coaches.
- There is a need for training around the use of formative assessments to guide instruction. While Kingman-Norwich uses MAP tests, the district does not appear to use multiple evaluation and assessment strategies to continuously monitor and modify instruction to meet student needs and support proficient student work. Test scores should be used to identify curriculum gaps. Multiple assessments should be specifically designed to provide meaningful feedback on student learning for instructional purposes.
- Educators would benefit from using a more systematic approach to data analysis. The district currently lacks data-based decision-making processes and policies designed to integrate and sustain academic performance. Teachers and principals noted on the Cross & Jofus survey administered prior to the site visit that there is minimal evidence that educators meet regularly on school-based learning teams to plan instruction and assessment (see Table II below). Moreover, the April 2009 Effectiveness & Efficiency School Review report, prepared for Kingman-Norwich by the Center for Innovative School Leadership, recommended that USD 331 develop a longitudinal data plan for analysis of student demographics and achievement. The data management capabilities within Infinite Campus, an online data management system, would make this a relatively inexpensive undertaking.
- In discussions with principal and special education director focus groups, participants talked about a need to look at student KAMM scores as another measure to place students with disabilities in correct KCA groups. Last year there were students who took the KAMM and were placed in the “exceeds standards” and “exemplary” levels, who could possibly take the general assessment with accommodations.

Instruction

Table II presents the results from a survey of teachers (response rate 104%—includes some Cooperative teachers as well) and principals (response rate 100%) administered online by Cross & Jofus. Instructional strategies that principals and teachers *believe* are most strongly evident and are least evident, are highlighted below. Additional instructional strengths and challenges are identified later in this section.

In general, principals identified very few sound instructional strategies as strongly evident. The sound instructional strategies that *principals* believe are most *strongly evident* in their schools include:

- delivering subject matter to students at an appropriately rigorous level (cited by 40% of principals as strongly evident and 0% as not evident or minimally evident)
- fostering collegial relationships with families, school personnel, and the larger community to support students' learning and well being (cited as strongly evident by 40% of principals and not evident or minimally evident by 20%).

The sound instructional strategies that *principals* believe to be *least evident* include:

- measuring the effectiveness of staff development by the level of classroom application and the impact of those practices on student learning (cited by 0% of principals as strongly evident and by 80% as minimally evident or not evident)
- providing adequate resources (human, fiscal, and physical), incentives, and interventions to support teacher and administrator learning (cited by 0% of principals as strongly evident and by 60% as minimally evident or not evident)
- providing adequate resources (human, fiscal, and physical), incentives, and interventions to support student learning (cited by 0% of principals as strongly evident and by 60% as minimally evident or not evident).

In general, teachers' views are less optimistic than principals'. More than 40% of *teachers* only identified one strategy as *strongly evident*:

- creating safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments (cited as strongly evident by 60% of teachers and not evident or minimally evident by 1%).

Among the strategies *teachers* believe to be *least evident* include:

- meeting regularly on school-based learning teams to examine student work and identify effective teaching practices that address learning priorities (cited by 4% of teachers as strongly evident and by 68% as minimally evident or not evident)
- meeting regularly on school-based learning teams to plan instruction and assessment (cited by 12% of teachers as strongly evident and by 57% as minimally evident or not evident)
- providing adequate resources (human, fiscal, and physical), incentives, and interventions to support teacher and administrator learning (cited by 7% of teachers as strongly evident and by 51% as minimally evident or not evident)
- measuring the effectiveness of staff development by the level of classroom application and the impact of those practices on student learning (cited by 7% of teachers as strongly evident and by 51% as minimally evident or not evident).

Table II—Extent to Which Principals and Teachers Believe that Sound Instructional Strategies Are Present in Their Schools

Please rate the extent to which you believe the following instructional practices are evident in your school.	Principals		Teachers	
	Strongly Evident*	Not Evident or Minimally Evident^	Strongly Evident*	Not Evident or Minimally Evident^
Subject matter is delivered to students at an appropriately rigorous level.	40%	0%	26%	13%
Educators foster collegial relationships with families, school personnel, and the larger community to support students' learning and well being.	40%	20%	24%	21%
Educators participate in staff development designs that provide opportunities for practice, feedback, and support for implementation.	20%	0%	18%	39%
Educators create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments.	20%	0%	60%	1%
Educators use a variety of appropriate instructional strategies and resources, including technology, to actively engage students, encourage positive social interaction, and emphasize critical thinking, problem solving, and interdisciplinary connections.	20%	20%	39%	12%
Educators provide equitable opportunities to learn that are based on respect for high expectations, development levels, and adaptations for diverse learners.	20%	20%	26%	13%
Teachers and administrators use data from class, school, districts, and state assessments to determine results-based staff development.	20%	60%	28%	22%
Educators meet regularly on school-based learning teams to plan instruction and assessment.	20%	60%	12%	57%
Educators meet regularly on school-based learning teams to examine student work and	20%	60%	4%	68%

Please rate the extent to which you believe the following instructional practices are evident in your school.	Principals		Teachers	
	Strongly Evident*	Not Evident or Minimally Evident^	Strongly Evident*	Not Evident or Minimally Evident^
identify effective teaching practices that address learning priorities.				
Students are empowered to use data to monitor their own progress.	20%	60%	23%	37%
Students participate in research-based instructional practices that assist them in learning the curriculum, meeting rigorous academic standards, and preparing for assessments.	0%	0%	23%	10%
School or district leaders facilitate, monitor, and guide the continuous improvement of instruction.	0%	40%	11%	37%
Educators collaboratively function as a community of learners focused on improving student learning using appropriately allocated time and resources.	0%	40%	15%	30%
Educators apply research to decision-making to develop instructional practices related to diverse learning needs of students.	0%	40%	16%	25%
Administrators, academic coaches, or teacher leaders monitor instructional practices and provide meaningful feedback to teachers.	0%	40%	12%	49%
Students who are struggling to master content are identified by educators and provided with support individually or in small flexible groups using differentiated instruction.	0%	40%	23%	34%
Adequate resources (human, fiscal, and physical), incentives, and interventions are provided to support student learning.	0%	60%	6%	38%
Adequate resources (human, fiscal, and physical), incentives, and interventions are provided to	0%	60%	7%	51%

Please rate the extent to which you believe the following instructional practices are evident in your school.	Principals		Teachers	
	Strongly Evident*	Not Evident or Minimally Evident^	Strongly Evident*	Not Evident or Minimally Evident^
support teacher and administrator learning.				
The effectiveness of staff development is measured by the level of classroom application and the impact of those practices on student learning.	0%	80%	7%	51%

Teacher Response Rate = approximately 82/79 (includes some Cooperative teachers)

Principal Response Rate = 5/5

Source: Cross & Jofthus survey of Kingman-Norwich principals and teachers November 2010.

*The response option "Evident" was deleted from this presentation to help highlight differences.

^The response option "No Opinion" was deleted from this presentation. Six percent or less of teachers and 0% of principals selected this option on any response.

Survey results only tell part of the story. Classroom observations, reviews of assessment data, and conversations with focus group participants suggest some important instructional strengths in USD 430.

- One indicator of effective instructional practice is the percentage of students scoring proficient or above on the Kansas State Assessment. All students, as a group, have exceeded state benchmarks in reading and math for the past three years.
- During observations of 42 classrooms using the Cross & Jofthus protocol, PALSS (Process for Advancing Learning Strategies for Success), all levels of schooling demonstrated orderly and well-managed environments conducive to learning at least 90% of the time. Several other sound instructional practices were observed:
 - At all levels of schooling, research-based instructional practices were used to assist students in learning the curriculum, meet rigorous academic standards, and prepare for assessments.
 - Elementary and middle school teachers regularly checked for student understanding throughout the lesson in almost 80% of classrooms observed.
 - At all levels of schooling, teachers used cues, questions, and advance organizers; provided instruction in auditory or visual representations; and provided practice opportunities in at least 70% of classrooms observed. (See Appendix for specific percentages of these and other practices that contribute to accelerating student learning.)
 - These findings were consistent with the teacher survey, where 90% of teachers reported using research-based instructional practices to assist student learning.

- Kingman-Norwich continues to focus on integrating technology into the classroom. The district plans to build upon the knowledge and integration methods learned as a result of the Technology Rich Classrooms grant and expand technology to every classroom in the district. The laptop provided to each teacher also helps support integration of instructional technology into the curriculum.
- Schools have named MTSS leadership teams who, along with building administrators, have attended MTSS structuring training through the ESDACK service center. It will be important to continue and expand this training to other school staff.

There are some clear instructional challenges, as well, however.

- Instructional materials and strategies are not jointly selected by the district and the special education cooperative to ensure alignment with the core curriculum and to promote the practice required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)—that special education services must be designed to help students with disabilities “have access to and make progress in the core curriculum.” Teachers describe searching for instructional materials to teach the required curriculum, while others have the district-purchased materials but choose not to use them. Special education teachers voiced frustration about this issue, as they support students with disabilities in the resource room. General education teachers have had no training on the software programs Symphony Math or Reading Plus, which special education teachers use to support or monitor alignment with the curriculum standards. Moreover, special education teachers report that they have not participated in curriculum committee work where strategies and resource selections may be discussed.
- The number of students identified as students with disabilities in the district has increased from 20.44% in 2006- 2007 to 25.07% in 2010-2011.⁶ It appears, however, that the district has embraced an inclusionary model for students with disabilities that limits students’ access to core instruction. General education and special education teachers describe the model as “push-in with para-educator support” or “pull out, where the core is delivered by the special education teacher.” In reality, however, para-educators in focus groups noted that they take students out of the regular classroom to “teach” and support assignment completion. Special education teachers described one school situation in which nearly 50% of the students with disabilities received the core reading or mathematics curriculum in the resource room taught by a special education teacher who is not licensed in either content area. Kingman-Norwich needs to define the inclusion model and provide general and special education teachers and para support staff with professional development to improve instructional delivery for students with disabilities.

⁶ USD 331 report based on the September 20, 2010 FTE count.

- Related to this and particularly noteworthy are the data from the Kansas IDEA State Performance Plan related to “least restrictive environment” (LRE). For three successive years (with the most recent data for FY 2008-09 reported on March 15, 2010), the district has not met one of the key state targets for Indicator 5, Least Restrictive Environment for student learning: data from 2009 indicate that only 45% of students with disabilities were included in the regular classroom for **80% or more** of their school day, a figure 14 percentage points below the state target.
- Teachers in focus groups noted that strong content knowledge is a strength of staff across the district. At the same time, however, teachers acknowledged that they lack adequate knowledge and sufficient practice to implement effective instructional strategies that support *student learning of the content*. Further, the district lacks an instructional design and delivery model to select the “research-informed practices” it wishes to promote. It needs to implement a system to ensure that practices are understood and used effectively by general and special education staff members.⁷
- The need for instructional improvement becomes clear when classroom observations are taken into account. The following research-based effective teaching practices were observed to be minimally evident in the classrooms visited (see Appendix for specific percentages):
 - Identifying similarities and differences
 - Summarizing and taking notes
 - Representing knowledge in linguistic and non-linguistic forms
 - Organizing learning in groups: cooperative learning/pairs/small groups
 - Setting objectives and providing immediate/continuous feedback
 - Generating and testing hypothesis.
- Further, student kinesthetic learning opportunities were observed in less than 50% of the classrooms observed, differentiated instruction was observed in less than 15% of the classrooms observed, and student opportunities to display learning using multiple intelligences (e.g., interpersonal; logistical-mathematical; visual-spatial; musical-rhythmic) were observed to be minimally evident as well.
- Even though the classroom observations demonstrate that students are involved in various and often engaging activities, contrary to teachers’ perceptions on the Cross & Joftus survey, in general students are not being asked to think critically and/or at higher levels. Instruction at higher levels of thinking including application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation were observed in less than 50% of the classrooms visited. Teachers need to take instruction and activities to the next

⁷The district should consider a model that engages students in instructional activities that are predictably linked to gains in student achievement. See for example, Marzano, R.J, D.J. Pickering, & J.E. Pollock, (2001). *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Also see Lazear, D. (1991). *Seven Ways of Knowing: Teaching for Multiple Intelligences*. Palatine, IL: Skylight Publishing.

level, by engaging students in learning that requires them to explain, create, compare, evaluate, and judge.

Professional Development

USD 331 has a number of professional development strengths.

- Special education teachers and paraprofessional support staff have opportunities to participate in professional development provided through the South Central Kansas Special Education Cooperative. Over 200 online learning courses are available for para-educators. The cooperative has offered professional development related to the use of the Handwriting Without Tears, Reading Plus, and Symphony Math. Professional learning opportunities are communicated through the cooperative’s Web site and blog.
- Kingman-Norwich values professional development, as is demonstrated by the nine professional development days included in the district calendar. The online system, My Learning Plan, is used to manage the professional development points staff members need for licensure and movement on the salary schedule.
- The district also has access to professional development through the ESDACK service center. Teacher teams and administrative staff have received training in PLCs, MTSS, Brain Based Learning, and Kagan Cooperative Learning.

To capitalize on these strengths, however, Kingman-Norwich must also address some clear professional development challenges.

- USD 331 currently lacks systematic procedures for conducting classroom visits and using classroom observation data to inform professional development priorities. Systems and procedures should ensure that administrators monitor the implementation of varied and research-based practices, provide substantive feedback to teachers, and follow-up with support in order to target practices that accelerate student learning.
- Both teachers and administrators agreed that staff members need additional professional development to integrate and use technology effectively in the classroom—so that students are able to use it meaningfully, participation increases, and new learning occurs. Classroom observation data underscore this point: only 22% of the middle school classrooms and 29% of the senior high classrooms demonstrated the use of an individual laptop or computer. (See Appendix for more specific walkthrough data by school level.)
- Teachers and administrators in focus groups all agreed that professional development lacks focus and is not data-driven. There is a need for a professional

“We need focused direction for professional development.”
—*Principal*

development plan that includes a systematic process to identify needs and challenges, support implementation of improvements through coaching and feedback, and measure effectiveness. The plan must be focused on data that identify students' instructional needs, as well as the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) requirements.

- Special education teachers and paraprofessionals report a lack of adequate and on-going professional development through the cooperative, to ensure consistent, job-embedded learning that supports the academic and behavior needs of students with disabilities. Focus groups reported that a great deal of their cooperative training involves completing paperwork related to employee benefits and writing IEPs. Professional development focused on differentiated instruction, instructional strategies, and inclusion models could better equip *all* teachers, including special education teachers and paraprofessionals, to address the needs of students with disabilities. It would also provide a voice for special education teachers and paraprofessionals in district planning.

III. Recommendations for Technical Assistance

One of the primary goals of this needs assessment is to identify areas in which the district could most benefit from technical assistance. Building on the district's current capacities and strengths, technical support should help increase the quality of individual schools and the achievement of all their students.

At the outset of this report, four key systemic challenges were identified:

- 1) AYP and instructional challenges for students with disabilities, who currently comprise more than 25% of the total student population in the district
- 2) A need to fully implement aligned curriculum, assessment, instruction, and professional development to support student learning and achievement
- 3) A need to strengthen collaborative efforts across the two school communities—among principals, general education teachers, special education teachers, cooperative staff, and other staff to improve instruction and increase professional knowledge and skills
- 4) A need to revise and fully implement a strategic improvement plan for the district.

To address these challenges and others identified in this report, technical assistance should address the following recommendations:

- 1) Initiate a planning process, involving all stakeholders, to review the current strategic plan and make changes that will reflect the priorities and the direction of the district for the next 3-5 years.
- 2) The district's revised strategic plan should address the following elements:
 - a. Development and implementation of an aligned curriculum across the district.

- b. A student assessment system aligned to the curriculum. The system should include frequent, common assessments that explicitly relate to what has been taught. This tight alignment between curriculum and assessment will provide a common context for instructional planning among teachers.
 - c. A system-wide instructional model tied to rigorous standards. This model should draw on an analysis of student achievement data and identify research-based instructional practices that will have the greatest impact on increasing achievement.
 - d. Development and implementation of common classroom observations and protocols to use classroom observation data to inform instruction and professional development.
 - e. Strengthened professional learning communities, with clear structures, roles, and expectations that enable PLCs to serve as an important asset for improving student achievement.
 - f. Consistent implementation of MTSS across the district.
 - g. Initiatives should involve staffs from both Kingman and Norwich—and where appropriate, the special education cooperative—working together to ensure accountability, reliability, and consistency across the district.
- 3) Review the current emphasis on technology, to determine whether this is the right lever for improving student achievement.
- 4) Define the role of “principal as instructional leader”; establish expectations and provide support for principals to serve in this role.
- 5) Review the district’s pupil-teacher ratio to determine whether an increase could free up funds for needed programs without harming student achievement.
- 6) In collaboration with KSDE’s Special Education Technical Assistance Support Network, and external support if needed, conduct an in-depth review of special education services. This review should examine the district’s processes for identifying students with disabilities and look at overall progress and capacities for improving the success of students with disabilities. Once the review is complete, the district should set specific milestones for improvement.
- 7) Based on findings from the special education review, foster improved communication between the district and the cooperative.
- a. Both the district and the cooperative should work together to maximize participation in relevant professional development sponsored by the cooperative or the district.
 - b. Time should be included in the schedule for collaboration between the general and special education teachers to include the para support staff.
 - c. District and cooperative leadership should increase communication beyond the “one time per year” meeting, which is currently the norm.

- d. This process should include identification of an instructional design and delivery model to support implementation of inclusion.
- 8) Review staffing needs related to instructional support, regarding a curriculum director, principal support at Norwich, teacher tutors, and an instructional technology facilitator. Such a review might consider resource sharing with similarly situated districts.
- 9) Undertake a facilities audit within the next 3-5 years to determine long-range facilities and maintenance needs.
- 10) Develop job descriptions for all positions and a handbook for classified personnel within the next 1-3 years. Clear lines of authority between principals and classified personnel should be established.
- 11) Develop and implement a new personnel evaluation program, with student achievement as part of the evaluation criteria.
- 12) Increase and enhance the use of the parent information portal by providing more information to parents regarding access and usage. Establish expectations and provide support for teachers to manage and share information on the portal. Look for other ways to expand information sharing to both the Kingman and Norwich school communities, so parents without regular online access are connected and informed.

Once district leadership has had an opportunity to review this report, a representative from Cross & Joftus will contact the Kingman-Norwich superintendent to finalize a technical assistance plan that includes 24 days of external support for the time period January through October of 2011. This plan, developed in collaboration between the senior leadership of the district and Cross & Joftus will describe in detail the goals, objectives, activities, service provider, and timeline of the technical assistance.

**NOTES ON APPENDIX (See attached PDF)
Findings from Classroom Observations
KINGMAN-NORWICH SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Using the K-PALSS (Kansas Process for Advancing Learning Strategies for Success) process, Cross & Joftus staff in collaboration with representatives from the Kansas State Department of Education and other district staff visited classrooms and recorded observations of effective “teaching” demonstrated by the teacher and “learning” demonstrated by the students.

The entries under the “plus” column on the left side of the charts attached show the percentage of classrooms visited in which research-based practices that consistently

contribute to enhanced learning were observed. The entries under the “delta” column on the right side highlight areas that the district should address to improve the teaching and learning process.

Data were aggregated in school-level alike (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school) groupings to determine the percentage of classrooms in which evidence of the specified practices were observed. For reporting purposes in the narrative, we describe practices as having ***strong evidence*** if they were observed in 70% or more of the classrooms visited, ***evidence*** if they were observed in 50-69% of classrooms visited, and ***minimal evidence*** if they were observed in less than 50% of classrooms visited.