

December | 09

# Needs Analysis of Goodland School District – USD 352

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 & Joftus, 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 Learning Network, was expanded to reach all 17 Kansas districts not making AYP, including Goodland School District, USD 352.

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 visits<sup>1</sup> 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 & Joftus called Kansas Process for Advancing Learning Strategies for Success (K-PALSS). All needs assessment activities are designed to both 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 & Joftus 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 Goodland School District, USD 352 (referred to throughout the report as the district or Goodland).

Goodland’s student population is largely White—77.7% of students identified as White in 2009, with almost 20% (19.9%) identifying as Hispanic, 1.5% as African-American, and slightly less than 1% as “other.” Just under 10% of students are identified as English

---

<sup>1</sup> The site visit for Goodland occurred November 16-18, 2009.

language learners (ELL students), and 20% are identified as students with disabilities—a percentage considerably higher than the state average of 13.5%.

The district's 2009 state testing data show White students exceeding both target and growth goals in reading. Three other student groups—students eligible for free and reduced meals, English language learners, and Hispanic students—met only the growth goals. Students with disabilities, while making progress, did not reach either target or growth goals in reading.

In math, the results were slightly better. White students exceeded both target and growth goals, as did those eligible for free and reduced meals. Three other groups—students with disabilities, ELL students, and Hispanic students—met their goals for growth but not the target goals. The three groups did show strong gains in their scores, 10-11% increases compared to 2008 scores.

Like many small school districts, Goodland is forced to do more with less. A shrinking student population—from 1,011 in 2003 to 915 in 2009—and limited resources mean that it has to effectively manage decline. Goodland's operating budget has declined from \$7.1 million in 2008 to \$6.4 million as of November 2009, and as support from the state continues to shrink, the district expects to lose an additional \$2 million by 2012.

As a result of shrinking resources, Goodland has had to cut back on support for arts education, sports, and extra-curricular activities, including the dance team, tennis, debate, and public speaking. Opportunities seem limited for students to learn about career options or develop career interests. And, like other small school districts, Goodland has to operate without dedicated staff in key organizational functions such as human resources, technology, finance, and transportation, requiring some personnel to have multiple responsibilities. For example, the person in charge of transportation is also the chief mechanic as well as bus driver in tight situations. In the area of technology, the district uses a committee of teachers and principals to determine the need for equipment upgrades, new purchases, and training.

In the face of these challenges, however, Goodland exhibits several strengths that hold promise for the district's future. The superintendent—Shelly Angelos—appears to be well liked and respected throughout the community, and the district's culture is permeated by a culture of mutual support and open communication. Goodland has also taken steps to build an aligned curriculum, implement MTSS, and develop professional learning communities to support instructional improvement. To capitalize on these strengths, the district must fully implement an aligned curriculum, assessment, instruction and professional development system, and continue to strengthen supports for that system.

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 Goodland are summarized below in the areas of Leadership; Empowering Culture and Human Capital; and Curriculum, Assessment, Instruction, and Professional Development.

### Leadership

In the face of structural challenges posed by economic decline and population loss, Goodland’s overall approach to improvement shows real promise.

The superintendent, now in her fourth year, has inspired a “can-do” attitude about fueling greater academic success, and is working to enhance improvement efforts across all grades. Three initiatives form the core of these efforts: Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), and curriculum alignment.

“I don’t think we could possibly find a superintendent more focused on improving student success.” – *Civic leader*

There appears to be widespread trust in and community support for the superintendent and the school board, with effective communication among the superintendent, administrators, and the board. The board meets monthly with the superintendent and principals to review school performance.

There are also substantial technology resources across the district, and both teachers and principals receive professional development when new technology is introduced.

“We have a real academic leader in charge of things.” – *Board member*

At the same time a number of leadership challenges demand focused attention:

- There appears to be a lack of alignment between the district’s vision and goals and the plan of action for improving academic performance across all student groups. There are multiple improvement initiatives in motion—many on separate tracks—and they are not well integrated within a comprehensive action plan. A more integrated plan would go a long way toward sharpening the focus on improving instruction and learning. The plan should include progress milestones, measures for assessing progress, and a framework for aligning priorities with resource use.
- An important task for the District Planning Team is determining the direction and pacing of improvement efforts. However, the extent to which the team’s decision-making is driven by the collection, analysis, and management of achievement-relevant data is unclear. It is also difficult to discern how the work of this team

integrates with activities of the SITs (Student Improvement Teams). Goodland appears to actively use surveys for gathering information, but it's not clear how the results are being used.

- After two years of discussion and study, district leadership appears ready to make a decision on a difficult facility issue. The decline in the student population has left Goodland with an excess of classroom space. A decision to close one of the buildings is likely to have been made before the district sees this report. In the face of this difficult challenge, the district needs to communicate effectively in order to continue strong community support.
- District leadership is working to align curricula across the grades, but work is proceeding slowly. The district will want to ensure that an implementation plan is in place, with responsibilities and timelines spelled out.
- There does not appear to be a robust, well-defined strategy and timetable for implementing MTSS.
- There does not appear to be a thorough strategy in place for supporting principals as instructional leaders. An important part of this role involves structured walk-throughs in classrooms to provide teachers with practical feedback for improving instruction.

## **Empowering Culture and Human Capital**

Goodland exemplifies a professional culture of mutual support for working together on challenging assignments. Communications among leadership, the board, principals, and teachers appear positive and transparent.

Principal evaluations include considerations for student achievement. The district has also dealt effectively with the need to have highly qualified teachers in every classroom; although physics does not currently have a highly qualified teacher, the district is addressing this problem by having the biology teacher become officially certified to teach physics.

Goodland displays a number of other strengths in this area as well:

- The district has begun to use surveys—including climate surveys for each school building—to gather a variety of data.
- Students are encouraged to get involved, and a large percentage of youth participate in projects and volunteer work in the community.
- Goodland's strategic partnership with the Oakley Co-Operative has resulted in improved supports for special education teachers and appears to be building a very positive team spirit.

Nonetheless, challenges persist:

- Administrators and teachers don't appear to interact routinely to discuss academic improvement issues. Some teachers expressed interest in having access to relevant information from the District Planning Team about the district's overall progress and possible pathways for improvement.
- Although school climate data are collected regularly, educators and administrators do not appear to use the data to improve school quality.
- Teacher evaluations do not consider students' academic progress as a criterion for teachers' effective performance.
- Goodland does not appear to have clear expectations for continuous professional learning and growth by teachers and principals.
- While students are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular and civic activities, some feel that there are not enough positive and interesting activities to keep them involved. There is need for greater adult support and coaching for student leadership activities.
- Several students expressed the opinion that their points of view are not heard, especially on important issues such as the need for the district to do a better job of accommodating a wider range of student types and helping them fit in.
- There appear to be limited opportunities for the voices of parents to be heard in district discussions on important issues. Some parents are eager to play more active roles supporting school improvement efforts.
- The district does not make use of academic coaches to improve instruction and learning.
- Some district leaders noted that there is insufficient support for students needing extra academic tutoring and behavioral supports.

## **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 Goodland 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**

The Goodland needs assessment site visit revealed a number of curriculum strengths:

- Goodland has adopted a standards-based K-6 literacy curriculum, Reading Street, which includes aligned materials and assessments. The embedded assessments support differentiated instruction for students based upon their identified needs. Teachers and administrators gave Reading Street high marks for aligning the K-6 literacy curriculum and providing a framework for implementing MTSS. Teachers received extensive staff development before the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year to support the initial implementation of Reading Street.

“Our new literacy curriculum has shown us how needy we were.”- *Elementary teacher*
- A standards-based K-6 math program is in place. Four years ago, Goodland adopted Everyday Math as its K-6 math series, replacing Saxon Math.
- The district has established a process for aligning curriculum. This process has engaged all staff in identifying what students should know and be able to do at each grade level and in each high school course. As part of this process, Goodland has identified indicators of success and set expectations for teaching and learning. The district has utilized an on-line tool from the Southwest Plains Service Center to assist in the curriculum alignment process.
- Students with disabilities and English language learners have access to the core curriculum, with limited numbers pulled out of regular classrooms.
- Through collaboration with Colby Community College, a number of college classes are taught at the high school that allow students to earn college credit. Classes offered include Pre-Calculus, Calculus, Chemistry II, and English Composition. Additionally, an agreement with Northwest Kansas Technical College (NWKTC) allows a limited number of students to attend NWKTC and earn both college and high school credit.
- Curriculum decisions are made with teacher input. For example, teachers drove the decision to adopt a new elementary reading curriculum after achieving inadequate results with their former reading program.

- Junior high teachers talked positively about Study Island as a support for state assessment preparation. Lessons are differentiated for students and expectations are aligned with the state standards.

While Goodland has many curriculum strengths, the district faces a number of challenges in its quest to build and implement an aligned curriculum:

- There is clear curriculum alignment in math and reading in grades K-6. When students transition to junior high, however, there is distinct shift in curriculum and expectations in both subjects. Unlike the elementary math and reading programs, the junior high and high school do not have an aligned, coherent approach to math and literacy—each teacher at the secondary level makes his or her own determination about what materials/approaches should be utilized. This has led to dramatically different approaches to curriculum and instructional methods between the elementary and secondary level.
 

“Kids are confused when they get to junior high math. It is so different from the Everyday Math they used in elementary.” – *Goodland teacher*
- The Southwest Plains curriculum tool has limited value. The district utilized the tool provided by the Southwest Plains Service Center to support the initial curriculum alignment work. While the tool was helpful initially, there is now frustration with the tool and a feeling that it is now time to move beyond use of the tool.
- The district does not appear to have college readiness expectations for all students. While there are many college readiness opportunities for students at the high school, not all students participate—approximately half the students in the graduating class do not take part in either the dual enrollment classes or NWKTC’s College Option. The expectation should be to prepare all students for the option to attend and be successful in college. Current expectations for students are limited to being successful on the state assessments. Proficiency on state assessments needs to be seen as a minimal expectation for students, not the ultimate goal.
- Expectations for advanced math at the secondary level are low. Algebra I is a necessary steppingstone to success in college and higher-level math. Many districts across the country are aligning their curriculum to support success in Algebra I for all 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Currently, only 15-20% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Goodland take Algebra I. This puts the rest of the students at a disadvantage in mathematics and limits their options for advanced math in high school. In addition, some students are able to take lower level math (below Algebra I) classes for two of the three required math credits in high school.

## Assessment

The Goodland school district has many strengths in the area of assessment:

- The new elementary literacy curriculum has embedded assessments as part of the materials package. These assessments support district efforts to tier instruction using the MTSS model. Teachers were enthusiastic about the assessments and their support of differentiated instructional approaches.
- The district has developed a standards-based report card for grades K-4. This new reporting format supports the district’s implementation of a standards-based curriculum.
- There is a K-12 district framework and calendar for quarterly formative assessments. The assessments are aligned with the standards, benchmarks, and indicators that have been developed. Many of the quarterly assessments use the Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation CETE bank of formative assessments that mimic the state assessment format.
- The district has instituted a weekly late start schedule in order to support common PLC time on a regular basis. A stated goal of the PLC time is to review assessment data and discuss differentiated instructional approaches.

“The time we have together in PLCs is very valuable. It gives us a chance to talk about our kids and what we are teaching.” – *Goodland teacher*

In addition to the strengths exhibited by Goodland, the following assessment challenges were identified:

- While the district has a formative assessment calendar, school sites interpret the calendar differently. Each site assesses students using different types of assessments at different intervals, and there is a good deal of variability in how assessment results are used by the PLCs. The variability in assessments creates a lack of coherence in the system around monitoring student performance and makes formative assessment conversations across sites difficult.
- The time created by the district for PLCs is a true strength of the system. However, the purpose of PLCs—as a time to focus on data analysis and instructional decision making based on data—is unclear. There has also been a limited amount of professional development for the PLCs around data analysis.
- There is little cross-grade (i.e., 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade) conversation and collaboration around formative assessments results, leading to a lack of curricular and instructional continuity from level to level. Receiving teachers don’t understand what was taught at the previous level, or how each student

progressed toward the expected learning standards. Conversely, the sending teachers don't understand what is expected of their students at the next level.

## ***Instruction***

Table 1 presents the results from a survey of teachers (response rate 57%) and principals (response rate 80%) administered online by Cross & Joftus. 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 a number of sound instructional strategies as strongly evident. The sound instructional strategies that *principals* believe are most ***strongly evident*** in their schools include:

- creating safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments (cited by 75% of principals as strongly evident and 0% as not evident or minimally evident)
- empowering students to participate in research-based instructional practices that assist them in learning the curriculum, meeting rigorous academic standards, and preparing for assessments (cited by 75% of principals as strongly evident and 0% as not evident or minimally evident).

The sound instructional strategies that *principals* indicated were ***least evident*** include:

- empowering students to use data to monitor their own progress (cited by 0% of principals as strongly evident and 75% as not evident or minimally evident)
- administrators, academic coaches, or teacher leaders monitor instructional practices and provide meaningful feedback to teachers (cited by 25% of principals as strongly evident and 50% as not evident or minimally evident).

In general, teachers were optimistic about the use of sound instructional strategies. Like principals, the sound instructional strategies that *teachers* believe are most ***strongly evident*** in their schools include:

- creating safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments (cited by 77% of teachers as strongly evident and 2% as not evident or minimally evident)
- empowering students to participate in research-based instructional practices that assist them in learning the curriculum, meeting rigorous academic standards, and preparing for assessments (cited by 56% of teachers as strongly evident and 4% as not evident or minimally evident).

The sound instructional strategy that *teachers* indicated was ***least evident*** was:

- empowering students to use data to monitor their own progress (cited by 18% of principals as strongly evident and 47% as not evident or minimally evident).

**Table 1. 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^
Educators create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments.	75%	0%	77%	2%
Students participate in research-based instructional practices that assist them in learning the curriculum, meeting rigorous academic standards, and preparing for assessments.	75%	0%	56%	4%
Teachers and administrators use data from class, school, districts, and state assessments to determine results-based staff development.	50%	0%	53%	0%
Educators provide equitable opportunities to learn that are based on respect for high expectations, development levels, and adaptations for diverse learners.	50%	0%	53%	7%
Subject matter is delivered to students at an appropriately rigorous level.	50%	0%	47%	4%
Educators meet regularly on school-based learning teams to plan instruction and assessment.	50%	0%	46%	7%
Students who are struggling to master content are identified by educators and provided with support individually or in small flexible groups using differentiated instruction.	50%	0%	44%	7%
Educators meet regularly on school-based learning teams to examine student work and identify effective teaching practices that address learning priorities.	25%	0%	47%	16%
Educators participate in staff development designs that provide opportunities for practice, feedback, and support for implementation.	25%	0%	33%	7%
Adequate resources (human, fiscal, and physical), incentives, and interventions are provided to support student learning.	25%	25%	23%	9%
Educators collaboratively function as a community of learners focused on improving student learning using appropriately allocated time and resources.	0%	0%	53%	11%

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^
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.	0%	0%	44%	7%
School or district leaders facilitate, monitor, and guide the continuous improvement of instruction.	0%	0%	40%	7%
Adequate resources (human, fiscal, and physical), incentives, and interventions are provided to support teacher and administrator learning.	0%	0%	28%	5%
Educators apply research to decision-making to develop instructional practices related to diverse learning needs of students.	0%	0%	28%	14%
Educators foster collegial relationships with families, school personnel, and the larger community to support students' learning and well being.	0%	25%	30%	14%
The effectiveness of staff development is measured by the level of classroom application and the impact of those practices on student learning.	0%	25%	28%	17%
Administrators, academic coaches, or teacher leaders monitor instructional practices and provide meaningful feedback to teachers.	25%	50%	26%	21%
Students are empowered to use data to monitor their own progress.	0%	75%	18%	47%

Teacher Response Rate = 43/75

Principal Response Rate = 4/5

Source: Cross & Jofus survey of Goodland principals and teachers September 2009.

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

^The response option "No Opinion" was deleted from this presentation. No teachers or principals selected this option on any response.

Survey responses only tell part of the story. Classroom observations, reviews of assessment data, and conversations with focus group participants suggest several existing and emerging instructional strengths in Goodland:

- In observations of 40 classrooms in Goodland using Cross & Jofus' K-PALSS (Kansas Process for Advancing Learning Strategies for Success), 100% of

classrooms at all levels of schooling demonstrated “orderly, well-managed environments which were conducive to learning.” Additionally, at all levels, the majority of students were actively involved in classwork. (See Appendix for specific percentages of these and other practices that contribute to accelerating student learning.)

- Teachers and administrators throughout the district discuss standards-based instruction. It is also evident from classroom observations that standards help guide instructional decisions.
- Teachers and administrators at the elementary schools have embraced the delivery of a consistent curriculum in reading/literacy and math. From classroom to classroom, teachers are using instructional practices that are guided by the district’s commitment to consistency in instruction.
- Instructional technology was in use in 43% of the classroom observed during the site visit. In addition, teachers indicated that they have the instructional technology they need and are well supported by the district in using the technology. Almost all teachers have district provided laptops. The district also provides laptops to high school seniors who take the 21<sup>st</sup> Century class. Over 50% of the seniors are participating in the class.
 

“When it comes to technology, our district is ahead of the curve.” -  
*Goodland Teacher*
- MTSS is a part of the instructional language in the schools, and teachers are making efforts to provide students instruction based on groupings by tiers. At the elementary level, implementation of MTSS was most evident in reading.
- Special education paraprofessionals support instruction in the classroom. Both building leaders and teachers have made this a priority. Paraprofessionals were observed working effectively with groups of students in the regular education classrooms.

The district is also facing a number of instructional challenges as it works to improve student outcomes:

- The district has not yet clearly defined effective instruction. Goodland needs to answer the following, “What are the key instructional practices that we universally believe will move achievement ahead?”
- The instructional program at the elementary level differs significantly from that at the secondary level. Everyday Math (in its third year) and Reading Street (in its first year) provide instructional consistency at the elementary level, and the math and reading curricula appear to be implemented consistently by teachers at elementary schools across grade levels. Consistency was not observed at the secondary level, however.

- Additionally the elementary, junior high, and high school seem to be instructionally isolated from each other. Elementary teachers and junior high teachers are not engaged in conversation about instruction, nor are junior high and high school teachers. The lack of vertical communication by teachers in various schools has resulted in instructional practices that vary widely from one level to the next.
- K-PALSS observations identified the need to increase the following teaching practices, which were “minimally evident” in the classrooms visited (see Appendix for specific percentages related to these and other strategies):
  - Designing lessons based upon data from formal and informal assessments.
  - Adjusting presentations of information to accommodate kinesthetic learning styles and the language needs of English language learners.
  - Providing culturally responsive readings/perspectives.
  - Providing instruction and opportunities for learning at higher-levels of thinking—application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
  - Increasing the percent of classes using a variety of research-based instructional strategies, strategies that are predictably linked to increased student achievement (e.g., Marzano’s, Bloom’s, and Gardner’s. See Appendix for specific percentages).
- MTSS is in its early stages of implementation and needs to become a more system-wide practice.
- Some teachers noted the challenges of routinely differentiating instruction. They expressed the need for greater efficiency in instructional decision-making, with better integration of technology.

## ***PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT***

Overall the Goodland School District culture values professional development. This is experienced throughout the district, starting with the superintendent who made it a point to be involved in classroom observations throughout the three-day visit. The value of professional development was also a key part of the conversation with teachers at all levels.

Because of a culture that values and promotes professional development the findings revealed the following strengths:

- Time for professional development is built into the calendar throughout the school year. Currently, there are seven professional development days each school year. In addition, schools start 40 minutes late every Wednesday, providing time for professional learning communities to conduct their business.

- Additional days for training on Reading Street were offered during the summer. This was highly valued by teachers and provided an effective launch for the implementation of the program.
- The district has begun MTSS training. This has been supported at the elementary level by the new reading program. In addition, the district paid for 12 staff members to attend a conference on MTSS, RTI, and differentiated instruction.
- The district provides all probationary teachers a mentor during their beginning years in the district.
- Professional development in the area of technology is effective and ongoing. This system-wide effort is collaboratively driven by teachers and the administration. To ensure appropriate and effective use of technology, teachers are required to participate in the professional development before they receive equipment and software.

Many of the challenges related to professional development are connected to the need for the district to fully implement a consistent approach to improvement:

- Time is needed for professionals to plan together during the school day. Even though the district has identified professional development time in the school calendar, there is very limited time for teachers to plan and collaborate during the school day. Ideally, this should be in the form of common planning time by grade level or discipline.
- Paraprofessionals in the district are providing valuable instructional time for students in small groups, but they need professional development on differentiated instructional strategies and opportunities to meet with the teacher(s) they are supporting to discuss the plans for the day/week.
- Professional development around curriculum alignment issues is needed throughout the district. Reading and math alignment has improved at the elementary level between schools. However, there are significant curricular differences from elementary to junior high, and from junior high to high school.
- Teachers receive a limited amount of feedback about their instruction. Currently, there is no systemic approach to providing feedback to teachers.
- There is a lack of clarity concerning PLCs in the district. Presently, PLCs are defined by each school. PLC implementation ranges from faculty meetings to unstructured time for teachers to talk. Additional training and support are needed at the system level to clarify the purpose, goals, and processes of PLCs.
- Paraprofessionals do not participate in PLCs. This is a concern because paraprofessionals

“Special education teachers are trying to figure out what their role is with PLCs and MTSS.”  
- *Special education teacher*

play a significant role in the district, but do not actively participate in instructional planning in the schools.

- The system lacks a consistent process for the Student Improvement Teams. As a result, implementation varies across schools.
- The purpose and goals of the teacher advisory period at the junior high school appear to be ill defined.
- The district has had a focus on ensuring that as many teachers as possible are receiving their ESL endorsement. Instruction of ELL students, however, continues to be a challenge that will require additional professional development and a coordinated approach that will be embraced by the entire system.

### **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 and to design that technical assistance in a way that will have the greatest impact on the district's school quality and student achievement. Based on this needs assessment, Cross & Joftus, LLC recommends that the technical assistance provided to Goodland address one or more of the following general recommendations:

- 1) Update the strategic plan to sharpen the focus on improving instruction and learning. The plan needs to include progress milestones, measures for assessing progress, and a framework for aligning priorities with resource use.
- 2) Continue to build toward an aligned K-12 curriculum and assessment system. Initially, focus on literacy and math. Use the lessons learned from the successful K-6 literacy initiative and integrate the MTSS framework into the curriculum and assessment system. This would increase district wide curriculum and assessment coherence along with supporting the need for curriculum and assessment continuity across key transitional levels.
- 3) As part of the math curriculum and assessment alignment process, move toward the expectation that all students are prepared to take Algebra I at grade 8.
- 4) Move beyond the Southwest Plains curriculum tool. While this tool was helpful in taking the initial steps toward aligning the curriculum, it now appears to be inhibiting the level of curriculum coherence and support desired by the district.
- 5) Develop professional development and classroom observation systems around the instructional strategies.

- 6) Develop a strategic approach for supporting principals as instructional leaders, including professional development for principals and other administrators to conduct, and use data from, structured classroom observations.
- 7) Build in additional common planning time. All sites in the district should begin looking at master schedules for the 2010-2011 school year and draft possible schedules that significantly increase the amount of common planning time beyond Wednesday mornings.
- 8) Utilize a portion of the district's collaborative time to bring teachers from transitional grade levels (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>) together to discuss curriculum alignment, assessment results, and instructional practices. Identify key instructional strategies, including full implementation of MTSS and a systemic approach to educating ELL students, which will consistently improve student achievement.
- 9) Provide staff development for the PLCs on data analysis and differentiating instruction based on the data analysis.
- 10) Consider reallocating funds to hire instructional coaches who will work with teachers to analyze and interpret data, implement and evaluate instructional strategies, and model lessons.
- 11) Increase the collaboration with NWKTC to increase the number of students who are college-ready upon high school graduation.
- 12) Review opportunities to help students extend learning through extra-curricular activities that include civic participation.

Once district leadership has had an opportunity to review this report, a representative from Cross & Jofthus will contact the Goodland superintendent to finalize a technical assistance plan that includes 24 days of external support for the time period January through September of 2010. This plan, developed in collaboration between the senior leadership of the district and Cross & Jofthus will describe in detail the goals, objectives, activities, service provider, and timeline of the technical assistance.

**APPENDIX**  
**Findings from Classroom Observations**  
**GOODLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Using the K-PALSS (Kansas Process for Advancing Learning Strategies for Success) process, Cross & Jofus staff in collaboration with representatives from the Kansas State Department of Education and 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 below 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.

Elementary Schools (27 Classrooms)

OBSERVED PRACTICES +	TEACHING	PD RECOMMENDATIONS Δ
<p><b>Learning Environment</b></p> <p>100% Orderly/Clean/Well-Managed 100% Safe/Conducive to Learning 74% Evidence of Learning/Displays student work</p>		
<p><b>Instructional Design</b></p> <p>67% Standards-based lesson 15% Data-based instruction is explicit 44% Modeling 48% Checking understanding 44% Guided Practice 48% Independent Practice 15% Teacher/Student Evaluation/Summary</p>		<p>Using formal and informal assessments of standards to drive instruction should be a priority in lesson development.</p> <p>Formal and informal evaluations by both teachers and students should be used to enhance instruction.</p>
<p><b>Strategies Used</b></p> <p>Adjust for multiple learning styles:</p> <p>48% visual 81% auditory 26% kinesthetic 11% Incorporate culturally responsive readings/perspectives 15% Address diverse language needs 26% Identify similarities &amp; differences 26% Summarize &amp; take notes 89% Reinforce efforts &amp; provide recognition 70% Use homework &amp; practice opportunities 15% Represent knowledge in multiple ways 41% Organize learning in groups 44% Set objectives &amp; provide immediate/continuous feedback 15% Generate &amp; test hypotheses 44% Use cues, questions &amp; advance organizers</p>		<p>Increase the use of strategies that appeal to kinesthetic learning styles.</p> <p>A larger repertoire of instructional strategies is necessary to provide educators with the skills to differentiating teaching to address culturally and diverse language learning needs.</p> <p>Increase the use of strategies for identifying similarities and differences; summarizing and taking notes; representing knowledge in multiple ways; learning in groups; providing continuous and immediate feedback; and generating and testing hypotheses.</p>

Elementary Schools (27 Classrooms)

OBSERVED PRACTICES +	LEARNING	PD RECOMMENDATIONS Δ
<b>Cognitive Level</b> 15% Knowledge 22% Comprehension 44% Application 11% Analysis 4% Synthesis 4% Evaluation		Need to provide opportunities for students to practice the higher level thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
<b>Environment/Resources</b> 59% Textbooks 33% Supplemental materials 26% Manipulatives 41% Technology 0% Materials reflect diversity 19% Worksheets: Open-ended/Fill-in/Multiple choice		Student use of all types of materials and resources needs to be extended beyond textbooks.
<b>Interactive Behaviors</b> 81% Active involvement in classwork 44% Asks/answers questions 59% Receives feedback on performance 11% Demonstrates reflection (meta-cognition)		Students need to have the opportunity to engage in reflection of their own learning.
<b>Strategies Demonstrated</b> Demonstrates knowledge in multiple ways: 19% interpersonal 11% intrapersonal 96% verbal-linguistic 33% logistical-mathematical 85% visual-spatial 26% bodily-kinesthetic 4% musical-rhythmic		Students need to be provided opportunities to demonstrate their learning using multiple intelligences, especially those that were not evident in at least 50% of the classes visited.

Middle Schools (7 Classrooms)

OBSERVED PRACTICES +	TEACHING	PD RECOMMENDATIONS Δ
<p><b>Learning Environment</b></p> <p>100% Orderly/Clean/Well-Managed 100% Safe/Conducive to Learning 71% Evidence of Learning/Displays student work</p> <p><b>Instructional Design</b></p> <p>14% Standards-based lesson</p> <p>0% Data-based instruction is explicit</p> <p>71% Modeling 43% Checking understanding 43% Guided Practice 43% Independent Practice</p> <p>14% Teacher/Student Evaluation/Summary</p> <p><b>Strategies Used</b></p> <p>Adjust for multiple learning styles:</p> <p>29% visual 71% auditory 0% kinesthetic</p> <p>0% Incorporate culturally responsive readings/perspectives</p> <p>0% Address diverse language needs</p> <p>14% Identify similarities &amp; differences</p> <p>14% Summarize &amp; take notes</p> <p>43% Reinforce efforts &amp; provide recognition</p> <p>86% Use homework &amp; practice opportunities</p> <p>0% Represent knowledge in multiple ways</p> <p>0% Organize learning in groups</p> <p>43% Set objectives &amp; provide immediate/continuous feedback</p> <p>0% Generate &amp; test hypotheses</p> <p>43% Use cues, questions &amp; advance organizers</p>		<p>Purposeful communication of the standard increases relevance of learning for the students. Using formal and informal assessments of standards to drive instruction should be a priority in lesson development.</p> <p>Formal and informal evaluations by teachers and students should be used to enhance instruction.</p> <p>A larger repertoire of instructional strategies is needed to meet the diverse learning needs of all students and address diverse language needs.</p> <p>Use of kinesthetic strategies should be a focus.</p> <p>Increase the use of strategies for identifying similarities and differences; summarizing and taking notes; representing knowledge in multiple ways; learning in groups; providing continuous and immediate feedback; and generating and testing hypotheses.</p>

Middle School (7 Classrooms)

OBSERVED PRACTICES +	LEARNING	PD RECOMMENDATIONS Δ
<b>Cognitive Level</b> 14% Knowledge 29% Comprehension 43% Application 14% Analysis 0% Synthesis 0% Evaluation		Need to provide opportunities for students to practice the higher level thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
<b>Environment/Resources</b> 43% Textbooks 14% Supplemental materials 0% Manipulatives 29% Technology 0% Materials reflect diversity 43% Worksheets: Open-ended/Fill-in/Multiple choice		Student use of supplemental materials, manipulatives, technology, and materials that reflect diversity needs to be expanded.
<b>Interactive Behaviors</b> 71% Active involvement in classwork 57% Asks/answers questions 57% Receives feedback on performance 0% Demonstrates reflection (meta-cognition)		Students need to have the opportunity to engage in reflection of their own learning.
<b>Strategies Demonstrated</b> Demonstrates knowledge in multiple ways: 0% interpersonal 0% intrapersonal 100% verbal-linguistic 43% logistical-mathematical 86% visual-spatial 0% bodily-kinesthetic 0% musical-rhythmic		Students need to be provided opportunities to demonstrate their learning using multiple intelligences, especially those that were not evident in at least 50% of the classes visited.

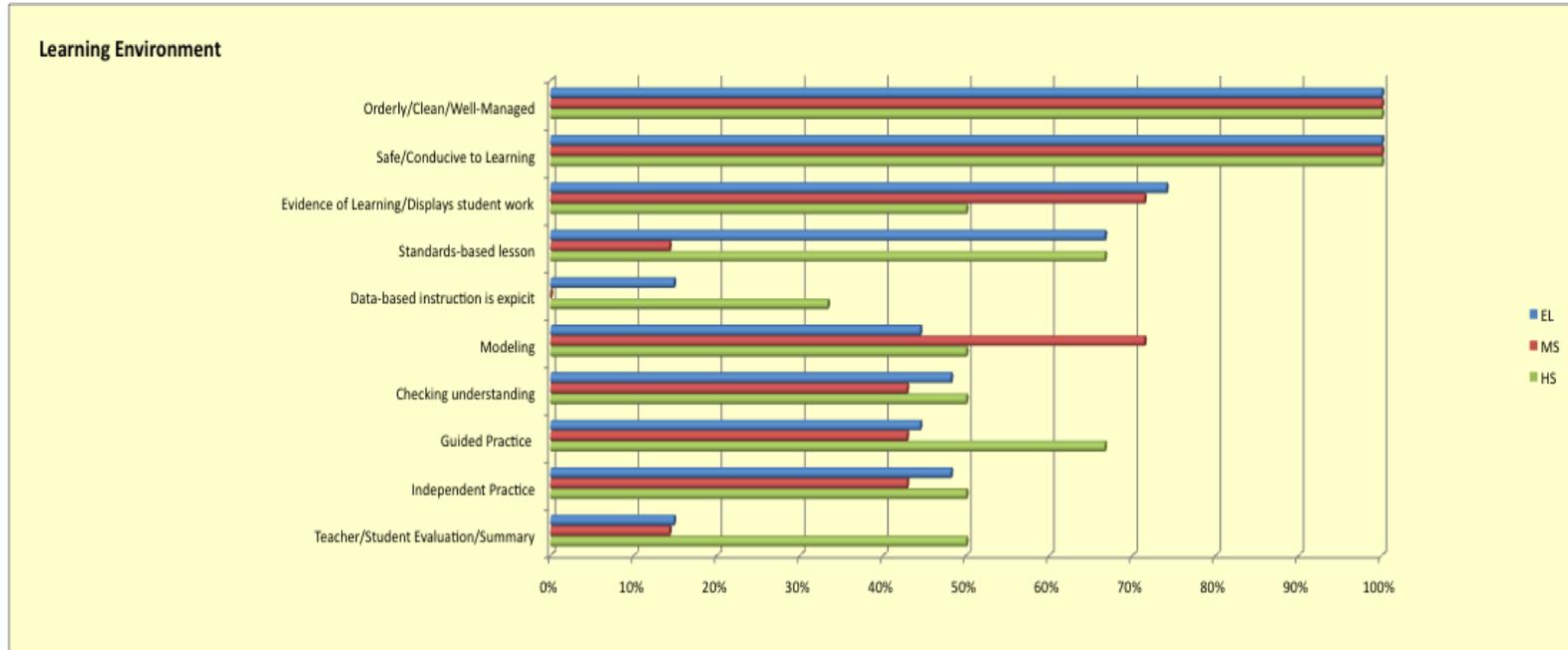
High Schools (6 Classrooms)

OBSERVED PRACTICES +	TEACHING	PD RECOMMENDATIONS Δ
<p><b>Learning Environment</b></p> <p>100% Orderly/Clean/Well-Managed 100% Safe/Conducive to Learning 50% Evidence of Learning/Displays student work</p>		
<p><b>Instructional Design</b></p> <p>67% Standards-based lesson 33% Data-based instruction is explicit 50% Modeling 50% Checking understanding 67% Guided Practice 50% Independent Practice 50% Teacher/Student Evaluation/Summary</p>		<p>Using formal and informal assessments of standards to drive instruction should be a priority in lesson development.</p>
<p><b>Strategies Used</b></p> <p>Adjust for multiple learning styles:</p> <p>33% visual 67% auditory 17% kinesthetic 33% Incorporate culturally responsive readings/perspectives 17% Address diverse language needs 33% Identify similarities &amp; differences 33% Summarize &amp; take notes 83% Reinforce efforts &amp; provide recognition 17% Use homework &amp; practice opportunities 0% Represent knowledge in multiple ways 0% Organize learning in groups 50% Set objectives &amp; provide immediate/continuous feedback 0% Generate &amp; test hypotheses 33% Use cues, questions &amp; advance organizers</p>		<p>A larger repertoire of instructional strategies is needed to meet the diverse learning needs of all students and to address diverse language needs..</p> <p>Use of kinesthetic strategies should be a focus</p> <p>Increase the use of strategies including: use of homework and practice opportunities; representing knowledge in multiple ways; learning in groups; and generating and testing hypotheses.</p>

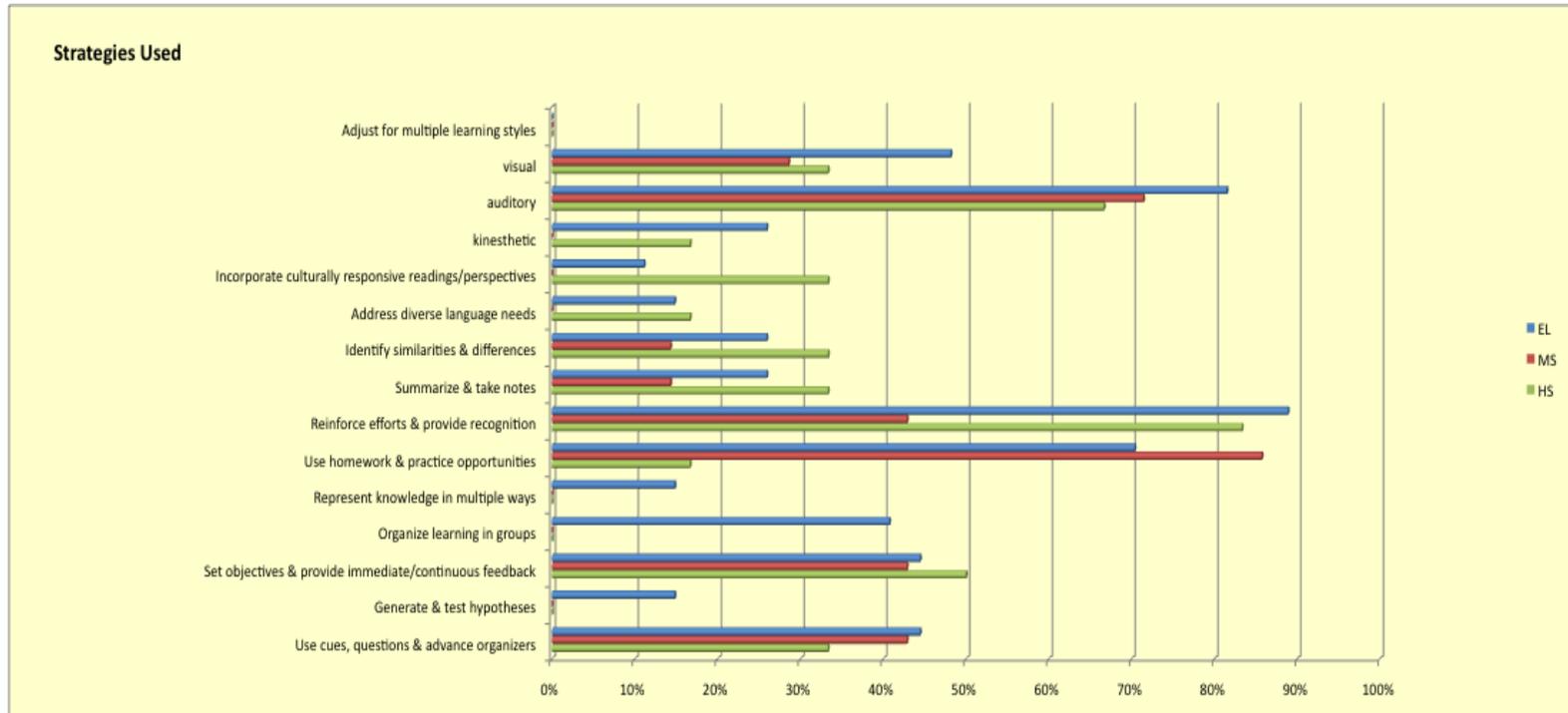
High Schools (6 Classrooms)

OBSERVED PRACTICES +	LEARNING	PD RECOMMENDATIONS Δ
<b>Cognitive Level</b> 33% Knowledge 33% Comprehension 17% Application 0% Analysis 17% Synthesis 0% Evaluation		Need to provide opportunities for students to practice the higher level thinking skills of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
<b>Environment/Resources</b> 17% Textbooks 67% Supplemental materials 17% Manipulatives 67% Technology 0% Materials reflect diversity 33% Worksheets: Open-ended/Fill-in/Multiple choice		Student use of manipulatives and materials that reflect diversity should be increased.
<b>Interactive Behaviors</b> 83% Active involvement in classwork 50% Asks/answers questions 67% Receives feedback on performance 17% Demonstrates reflection (meta-cognition)		Students need to have the opportunity to engage in reflection of their own learning.
<b>Strategies Demonstrated</b> Demonstrates knowledge in multiple ways: 33% interpersonal 17% intrapersonal 67% verbal-linguistic 50% logistical-mathematical 67% visual-spatial 17% bodily-kinesthetic 0% musical-rhythmic		Students need to be provided opportunities to demonstrate their learning using multiple intelligences, especially those that were not evident in at least 50% of the classes visited.

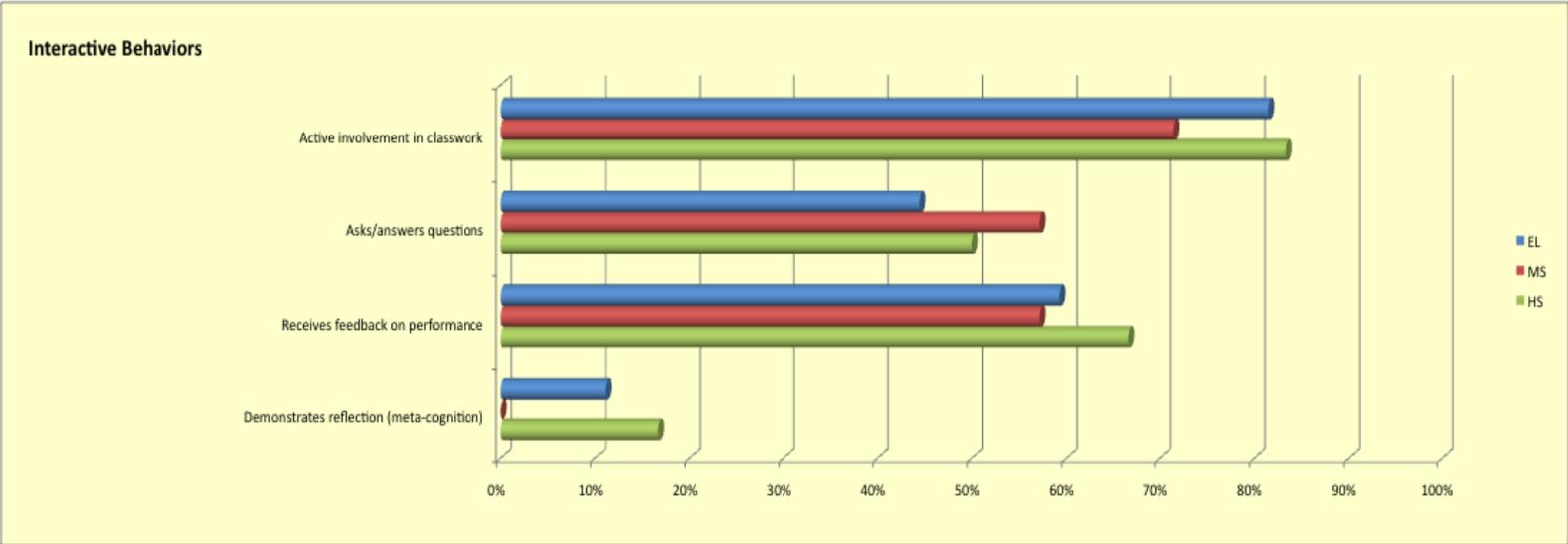
## TEACHING PRACTICES OBSERVED IN GOODLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT



## TEACHING PRACTICES OBSERVED IN GOODLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT (continued)



# LEARNING PRACTICES OBSERVED IN GOODLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT



**LEARNING PRACTICES OBSERVED IN GOODLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT (continued)**

