District Quality Review Report

Mountain View Whisman School District

November, 2015

Cambridge Education

District Quality Review Report

District Name:	Mt. View Whisman School District
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Review Date(s):	November 2nd-6th, 2015
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Issue and revision record

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1 The District Context

1.1 Introduction

On July 1st 2015 Dr. Ayinde Rudolph officially began his post as Mountain View Whisman School District's Superintendent. As part of his 100-day superintendent plan for MVWSD, Dr. Rudolph requested that Cambridge Education deliver a district-wide, comprehensive Quality Review (QR) program that will set a benchmark for improvement. The QR program includes the following:

- a School Quality Review (SQR) orientation for principals
- SQR training for up to 20 district personnel
- a two-day SQR for each school in the district (8 elementary and 2 middle schools)
- a meta-analysis report of the school findings
- focused improvement planning for all 10 schools
- a District Quality Review (DQR)

The DQR was completed over a period of five days by a team of four Cambridge Education Reviewers. The resultant report contained herein was completed by the Lead Reviewer, with input from the Team Reviewers, based on the evidence collected and assessments made by the entire team. Evidence was collected via interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders, including the Superintendent, Central Office staff, Board of Trustee members, Community Partners, as well as administration, teachers and students from Mt. View High School, where many students go on to attend school after leaving Mt. View Whisman School District.

1.2 Background information about the District

Mountain View Whisman School District (MVWSD) is located in Mountain View, CA in the heart of Silicon Valley, where some of the world's leading technology companies are headquartered. The district operates eight elementary schools and two middle schools, and serves approximately 5000 students. After graduating from middle school, students transition to the Mountain View Los Altos High School District. MVWSD serves a diverse student population, representing a wide range of ethnicities, languages, cultures, and economic status.

1.3 District demographic and performance data

		Academic Year 2013-14		Academic Year 2014-15	
Grades:	ES-	MS-		ES-	MS-
Number of students enrolled:	3640	1412		3674	1391
Number of general education students:	3321	1236		3362	1218
Percentage of special education students:	9%	12%		8%	12%
Percentage of English language learner students:	40%	25%		37%	19%
Percentage of students identified as gifted/talented	5%*	23%*		2%*	22%*
Latest attendance percentage:	96.79	96.82		96.36	96.63
Number of suspensions:	18	154		32	117
Ethnic make-up of the students (percentages):	See below				

The last year the District tested for GATE was spring of 2013. The percentages indicate students who were tested in 2013 or before and are still enrolled in the District.

Grade_Level_Code	(Multiple Items)			
K5				
Count of LocalID2	Column Labels			
Special Ed	1213	1314	1415	Grand Total
Am Indian/Alskn Nat	0%	0%	0%	0%
Asian	15%	15%	16%	15%
Black/African Am	2%	2%	2%	2%
Hispanic	44%	43%	41%	43%
Missing	1%	0%	0%	0%
Multiple	8%	9%	10%	9%
Nat Hwiin/Othr Pac Islndr	1%	1%	1%	1%
White	30%	30%	30%	30%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Grade_Level_Code	(Multiple Items)			
MS				
Count of LocalID2	Column Labels			
Special Ed	1213	1314	1415	Grand Total
Am Indian/Alskn Nat	0%	0%	0%	0%
Asian	14%	14%	14%	14%
Black/African Am	2%	2%	1%	2%
Hispanic	49%	50%	49%	49%
Missing	2%	2%	1%	2%
Multiple	5%	5%	7%	6%
Nat Hwiin/Othr Pac Islndr	1%	1%	1%	1%
White	27%	27%	27%	27%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

2   Main Findings

In this section of the report, the DQR team has identified the factors that are most significantly supporting and limiting district effectiveness. *Recommendations* **to address these high impact areas are included below.**

2.1   Factors that support district effectiveness:

i.   There is a culture of dedication and commitment to serving the students in the district at all levels. The district community is open and eager for positive change. They are willing to do what is required to improve students' learning experiences and outcomes.

ii.   The new Superintendent brings a positive energy to the district office and school communities. His thoughtful and methodical approach of seeking stakeholders' input and comprehensively analyzing the current situation of the whole district before developing and revising structures and systems is appreciated by teachers, parents, staff and community members. These efforts contribute to a sense of hope and are laying the foundation for positive change within the district.

iii.   Community partnerships provide a wide range of support and enrichment for student learning. For example, after-school activities, field trips, technology and other supports provide students with varied academic opportunities outside of the traditional classroom environment.

iv.   The district provides a broad curriculum that includes art, music, physical education and specialized programs at some schools such as Dual Immersion and Performing Arts.

v.   A large percentage of parents are engaged in supporting schools as volunteers, committee members, decision-makers and advocates for their children.

vi.   Parent engagement facilitators are providing a bridge between parents and the schools. They are having an immediate impact on addressing the needs of many English Language Learner (ELL) parents and students.

vii.   Students and staff have access to technology to enhance and support student learning as well as make teachers, principals and district level staff work more efficient when effectively utilized.

2.2   Factors that limit district effectiveness:

i.   Two-way communications are lacking throughout the district. This permeates all levels of district work and creates unnecessary barriers to improving student outcomes. As a result, the district functions as a system of schools rather than a school system. Communications, both inside the district office as well as communication between the district and the schools, are insufficient and often unclear. There are no consistent systems that ensure schools across the district can reinforce a coherent message and that communication flows both ways so that strengths are leveraged and needs are met in a timely manner.

ii.   The district does not have a clear and relevant strategic vision or plan to guide its work at all levels. As a result, stakeholder groups are unclear on how their work contributes to the realization of the district vision. The organizational structure is not strategic and does not meet the needs of the employees to enable them to be successful or effective in their roles toward supporting student success. For example,

most district office personnel work in silos, carry overwhelming or poorly aligned workloads, and, although they are working hard, they are not as effective as they could be. Roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined to match the current needs of the district and to ensure that the skill sets of those in district office roles match the responsibilities they are entrusted to do. This also impacts the work of the Board of Trustees. Without a clear and relevant plan, the focus of their work is not always aligned to improving the learning outcomes for all students. There are several areas of work that lack the personnel to effectively conduct the work of the district.

iii. There are no formal systems in place for monitoring, accountability or supporting professional growth of staff at any level. As a result, district employees are not clear of the expectations for their job performance, whether they are meeting expectations or how they can improve and grow as professionals. For example, induction procedures are not thorough enough to ensure new employees are prepared for their jobs. Systems for ensuring expenditures are approved and accounted for are not established, such that people are signing for expenditures without going through appropriate protocols for accountability and sound financial decision making. There are no systems in place for effectively monitoring the learning and teaching by administrators at any level. As a result, the quality of learning and teaching is inconsistent and teachers are not being provided with the consistent feedback they need to align and improve their practice.

iv. The Special Education program is not as effective as it needs to be to adequately serve the students in its care. Students with Disabilities (SWD) are not showing levels of progress to ensure they have the skills necessary for their next level of education. Some of the challenges are due to the lack of effective systems to ensure students are correctly identified, assessed and served appropriately. An effective Response to Intervention (RTI) program is not established in the district in order to support students prior to being identified for Special Education (SPED) services. Parental concerns are not always addressed in a timely manner. The quality of instruction provided to SWD varies from school to school because there are no specific expectations or curriculum to support SPED teachers. General education teachers and instructional assistants are not provided with the training they need in order to provide the level of support for the SPED students they serve. The district struggles with finding appropriately certified and experienced SPED teachers and leaders. The district office staffing to support SPED is insufficient to handle the wide range of work load, including identification, compliance, instruction, materials, and other areas of the work unique to SPED.

v. The provision for English Language Learners across the district is ineffective, inconsistent, and, in many cases, counterproductive. Expectations and practices across the district are too varied. The criteria for reclassification is poorly understood and implemented, and there is a clear gap between the district's intention of what should happen through the ELL program and what is actually happening in schools. The implications and process of being classified as an ELL student are rarely clear to families, students, and other groups of stakeholders. There is a general recognition across the district that the English Language Development (ELD) program is not working effectively, however, there are no clear plans to address the multiple challenges. The district level staffing does not have enough capacity to lead, plan, and support the ELL program.

vi. There are insufficient structures in place to systematically address the widening achievement gap. This is evident in the low expectations and lack of access to curriculum that affect some groups of students. For example, when ELD and SWD students reach middle school, they do not have access to electives such as music or art like their peers. Instead, they receive additional core coursework. ELD students

who are not reclassified by ninth grade are tracked into a separate high school in which their classes are different from their peers in the other high school, and which may limit their opportunities to graduate with a high school diploma. Systems to ensure vertical alignment and the communication of and support for high expectations to ensure all students are achieving at their highest possible levels are not in place, resulting in a widening academic and social-emotional gap for many students.

2.3   Recommendations:

i. Create a clear and relevant strategic plan, based on data, to drive the work of the district. The plan should include long, short and interim goals, which should focus directly on improving the outcomes for all students. The organizational structure at the district office and job descriptions should be revised to address the needs of the district and to ensure people with the appropriate skills sets are in the right roles, and to consider expanding areas that are understaffed.

ii. Improve two way communications by establishing systems of effective communication within and across departments at the district level, to and from schools, among leadership at school and district levels, and with parents and the broader community. For example, establish clear pathways of communication to school staff, ensuring that principals are part of the track, rather than bypassing them, so that they are well informed of directives, instructional practices, etc. that are being shared from the district level.

iii. Develop and implement processes across the district for personal and professional growth. Make sure that these have all the components of a growth cycle (self-assessment, needs analysis, planning, monitoring, support, evaluation). Ensure that this process is aligned to job-related expectations and district goals as well as providing opportunities for professional growth. Ensure that the professional growth plans are balanced, celebrating accomplishments as well as providing accountability.

iv. Create and implement a plan to address the needs of the special education program. Ensure appropriately certified and experienced people are in leadership, teaching and instructional assistant roles. The plan should include ways to ensure general education teachers and instructional assistants are properly trained to support special education students. Consider implementing a district wide RTI process that supports students earlier and with consistency. Establish efficient systems of communication with parents, teachers and the district to ensure all involved are aware of qualification processes, modifications and accommodations, and the exit plan. District and school level leaders should closely monitor the quality of learning and teaching in special education classes and general education classes to ensure students receive high quality instruction and to support teachers in the improvement of their instructional practices. School and district leadership should closely track student progress and address issues as needed. The district should identify best practices for special education and share those with teachers, with the expectation of consistent implementation of those practices. Monitor implementation and progress so that modifications can be made as needed.

v. Ensure that capacity is built at the district level and that the right people are in the right place to ensure a comprehensive revision of the provision for English Language Learners. Enact a comprehensive, clear and strategic plan of action for ELD that goes beyond the ELD time and includes language development skills and strategies across the curriculum. All general education teachers should receive training in strategies that promote access to the curriculum for ELD students. Ensure the plan includes clear monitoring criteria and that the district office is involved in its implementation and monitoring at both the district as well as the school level.

vi. Close achievement gaps for all students by creating systems that ensure all students have access to a broad and rigorous curriculum that will prepare them for success in high school and beyond. Establish district wide expectations that all students will be prepared for grade level or higher level course work upon entering high school. Ensure grading and homework practices are aligned district wide and with the high school so that the quality of expected student work is consistent. Ensure vertical alignment across the district so that the curriculum and skills build upon a foundation each year. For example, reading strategies and skills taught in one grade should be continued and built upon in the next grade. Common language and strategies should be used district wide for implementing strategies and successful instructional practices.

3   Individual Domains

In the sections below, each domain received a rating based on the evidence collected during the DQR. The judgments have been broken down into *Factors that Support District Effectiveness and Factors that Limit District Effectiveness. Recommendations* **are included to address those areas of need.**

3.1   Domain 1: Student Learning and Development Outcomes

Rating: Limited Effectiveness

Factors that support district effectiveness:

i. In comparison to State averages, Mountain View Whisman students performed better as a whole on the new CAASPP Test in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, as many students met or exceeded state standards. In ELA, the district outscored the state average by 24 percentage points and in math scored 21 percentage points higher than the state average.

ii. District leaders encourage and support the schools in creating learning environments that promote and support personal, social and emotional development of students. For example, the District Office partners with the Mountain View Police Department who not only support a safe environment but work diligently to establish positive relationships with students. There are few crimes or significant discipline issues within the school district. Other programs are in place to support social and emotional well-being at school-sites.

iii. Schools in the Mountain View Whisman School District have effectively attracted and engaged students as reflected in the consistently high attendance rate of over 95% in each school.

Factors that limit district effectiveness:

i. In comparison to five neighboring districts, Mountain View Whisman is performing lower than four of those districts in ELA and math. There is a 27 percentage point difference in ELA between the highest performing district and Mountain View Whisman, and 34 percentage point difference in math. As a result, some students attending Mountain View Whisman are not mastering the necessary skills to be as successful on the state assessment as their peers in neighboring districts.

ii. There are significant variations in the levels of student achievement across the schools in the district. While schools like Huff and Stevenson clearly outperformed the other schools with many students achieving "Standard Exceeded", other schools such as Castro and Theuerkauf have more students who do not meet standard requirements. The remaining schools have a mixture of results. Therefore, the quality of learning varies greatly from school to school.

iii. Students with Disabilities (SWD) and English Language Learners (ELL) consistently and significantly underperform their peers on statewide assessments, thus widening the achievement gap. The most current CAASPP Test results (2014-2015) indicate that over half of each of these student subgroups did not "meet standard".

iv. The level of support from the district for SWD and ELL students is inconsistent. The district does not have an aggressive and comprehensive strategic plan or approach to address the needs of SWD and ELL students in order to ensure all students are successful. As a result, the quality of learning and teaching of SWD and ELL students varies from school to school, and student achievement is not significantly improving.

v. Students in the district are not provided with regular access to personal or academic advisement. There are only a few counselors in the district and they share schools. The district primarily depends on outside agencies for support. However, students must qualify for some of those services, which may not be timely or meet the needs of the students. Administrators or the Parent Engagement Facilitators often find themselves filling in this gap, although they do not have the proper training to do so. The district does not systematically track students beyond middle school to measure their success or learn how to provide better learning experiences for the students. Middle school students who are transitioning to high school receive little guidance. Some students are advised to take lower level classes by their middle school teachers, thus not positioning them to take higher level classes in high school.

Recommendations:

i. Develop an aggressive strategic plan for improving the learning outcomes for SWD and ELL students. Frequently monitor student progress to ensure each student is showing good progress toward meeting/exceeding state standards. Align support systems and successful research-based strategies to ensure students are receiving the best possible learning experiences.

ii. Create a plan to raise the level of achievement in all schools so there is not such a wide range in the levels of success on state assessments from school to school. Use the findings of the School Quality Reviews, the meta-analysis of schools from the SQRs, and other relevant data to determine common issues and develop district wide goals and strategic objectives that will accelerate student learning.

iii. Develop a comprehensive district wide school counseling program that supports students at all levels. Ensure students receive immediate counseling as needed and ongoing sessions that develop social and emotional well-being. Implement a system of academic advisement for middle school students beginning in sixth grade with the goal of preparing them for high school. This should include developing organizational skills, selecting classes to support potential career paths, career and college selection research, setting personal goals, time management and other skills unique to middle school students as they prepare for transitioning to high school.

3.2   Domain 2: Leadership & Management

Rating: Limited Effectiveness

Factors that support district effectiveness:

i.   The new superintendent is leading the way to move the district forward in a very strategic and purposeful manner. His 100-Day plan includes in-depth fact finding and root cause analysis of issues that are keeping the district from being as successful as it could be. All stakeholders agree that his approach is a good start to identifying the changes that are needed and acknowledges and builds upon the strengths of the district. He is seen as very approachable and eager to listen to staff, students, parents and community members.

ii. District office leaders promote a shared value that all students can achieve academic and social success.   District office leaders are aware of the challenges the district faces, especially with struggling students, and firmly believe that all students can achieve. They are in the process of investigating reasons why all students are not as successful as they could be and how the district can better support schools, students and families to improve learning outcomes for all students.

iii. The superintendent has established some basic district achievement goals for schools to meet this year, specifically related to ELA and math. This is the first time in several years the district has set a minimum goal for schools to work toward.

iv. Some district leaders demonstrate a wealth of knowledge, experience and skill sets to provide support to schools.

v.   The superintendent is beginning to meet with district leaders to set job related goals. District leaders report this is a very positive step toward focusing their work and better understanding their roles and responsibilities.

vi. District office staff generally gets along well and interact with each other in professional and respectful ways. Most school administrators feel they have someone at the district level they can contact when they have questions or concerns.

Factors that limit district effectiveness:

i.   The district does not have a recently revised vision, mission, core values or goals to drive the district's work. People are working very hard in schools and at the district level, but they are not all working toward the same goals, limiting the quality of the outcomes. The Board of Trustees, for example, is focused on building construction rather than focusing on the instructional core and improving the learning of students, especially ELL and SWD students. The consistent lack of Board leadership and focus on improving student achievement for all students is proving detrimental to the culture of the district and reinforces low expectations for learning. As a result, resources, time and energy are not being focused and directed to improve the learning of all students.

ii. The district functions as a system of individual schools rather than a school system. Schools work in isolation and have excessive autonomy, without appropriate checks and balances/accountability, because there are no specific district goals and no guidance from the Board for schools to align their

work. As a result, each school focuses on different topics that may or may not be the appropriate areas to target, and student achievement significantly varies.

iii. The use of data to drive decisions is not yet established at the school, district level, or Board level. The district is beginning to develop benchmarks to align with the SBAC assessments. However, these are new this year and schools have yet to embrace and use the data to make instructional decisions. District level and school level decisions are not sufficiently informed by data, and systems for collecting data are not well organized.

iv. The Board of Trustees has not established improving learning outcomes of all students as the primary focus of their work. They have been spending much of their recent meetings focused on construction issues and the potential re-opening of a school. The construction budget has been significantly overdrawn due to delayed decision making by board members. The Board is not functioning successfully as a team of leaders who focus on improving the learning outcomes of all students and, as a result, district leaders are hindered in their abilities to make decisions and take the necessary actions to ensure that all students are highly successful in the district.

v. The board's inability to function as a group of leaders and to work collaboratively with the District office has established barriers that directly impact the students, employees and families in Mt. View Whisman School District. District office personnel are often caught in the middle of trying to focus on improving student learning while mediating between individual board members, schools and the community. District leaders spend a great deal of time responding to arbitrary requests by board members. Relationships between board members and the district office are strained to the point that progress is difficult to achieve because district office leaders are focused on planning and preparing to improve student outcomes while the board continues to focus on things such as construction and delay in making decisions that impact learning and teaching. Also, communication and relationships between board members are strained, which also impedes progress. When debates about any issue arise, they often descend into prolonged arguments that ultimately arrive at no consensus.

vi. Parents, community members, and district employees are especially distressed by the behaviors displayed during board meetings, which they deem as unprofessional and unproductive. Many parents feel that they must be very vocal and advocate intensely for their children and schools because they cannot depend on the board to make sound educational decisions for the students in the district. Parents are disheartened and have lost faith in the ability of the board to lead the district to be high performing. Parents have described board meetings as "an absolute circus where nothing gets done". One educator shared how she wanted to bring her students to see a board meeting as part of learning about government but decided it did not serve as a good example, considering the actions and behaviors of board members.

vii. Some Board of Trustees members have participated in training to prepare to serve as board members. However, other board members readily admit that they are unfamiliar with the by-laws and that the board is not united and focused on improving the learning of all students. Each board member is focused on what they individually perceive to be the most important issue rather than working collaboratively with stakeholders, especially district and school leaders, to analyze data and consider the current and future needs of students, employees and families. The board does not have processes in place to ensure that policies, procedures, and practices are aligned with laws and regulations.

viii. Systems of accountability for all departments, teams and schools are not well established. Information about the impact of policies and initiatives is inconsistently collected for analysis. Systems for ensuring departments' work is aligned to district goals and that their work is impactful are not established. As a result, many schools and the district continue to invest time, energy and resources into initiatives without knowing what impact they are having.

ix. There are no systems in place for evaluating the work of district office staff. They do not receive regular feedback on their job performance or guidance of what they need to improve upon or what they are doing well. Any additional professional learning is generally self-initiated.

Recommendations:

i. The District School Leaders and Board members should work together to develop a compact that includes the vision and mission of the district and sets out the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the district leaders and board members, in relation to a commitment to work together in the common cause of providing high quality education for all students, and in relation to professional and personal behavior. The compact would then be signed by all Board of Trustees and school district leaders.

ii. The Board of Trustees should refocus their energy and purpose so that what's best for all students becomes the focus of all their work. Board members should make decisions within expected/required timelines to ensure time, money and energy are efficiently and effectively utilized to improve student outcomes.

iii. The Board members should immediately seek to build parents', employees' and community members' confidence and faith in their ability to improve student outcomes. The board should work closely with the superintendent and the district office to set a new direction for the district with an intense focus on improving learning outcomes for every student in their care.

iv. District leaders and the Board of Trustees should actively engage with all stakeholders to collaboratively develop and implement a district improvement plan that ensures the wellbeing and academic and social success for all students in the district. District leaders should immediately develop a vision, mission, core values and strategic plan to use to determine priorities, align work and resources and to guide decision making at all levels of work in the district, including the Board of Trustees. The strategic plan should include short, medium and long-term goals along with check points for progress monitoring. Establish a system to ensure annual review against intended outcomes.

v. Board members should look for guidance from school district leaders as to how they can most effectively support the goal of improving student achievement for all students and provide the necessary support to ensure goals are met.

vi. Decisions should be made using current and relevant data as well as the expertise, knowledge and experience of some district leaders. The district should:
  ▪ develop data driven systems that focus the operations of the district to ensure higher levels of student learning and staff effectiveness
  ▪ establish systems to collect relevant information and data regarding the impact of initiatives, policies and the work of each department to ensure that district goals are being met and work is aligned to be effective and efficient.

vii. Continue to build upon initial steps of goal setting of district office staff by providing regular feedback and support and professional development (PD) as needed.

3.3   Domain 3: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Rating: Limited Effectiveness

Factors that support district effectiveness:

i. The district recently adopted a math curriculum called Eureka Math that is aligned to state standards. The selection process included a representative group of teachers who evaluated the options and came to consensus in the selection of the program. Professional development was provided and schools are in the beginning phases of implementation.

ii. The district provides a broad curriculum to expand learning opportunities for students. All schools offer music and physical education. Some schools offer unique curriculums such as Dual Immersion, a Performing Arts program or focus on Project Based Learning.

iii. The district recently moved to a new data management system so that schools can have quick access to student data. This is a good first step in moving the district toward a data driven culture.

iv. District leaders are beginning to meet with schools to provide professional development on data driven instruction and how to use the benchmark data more effectively.

v. The district provides instructional coaches to most schools. The instructional coaches provide direct support to some teachers on how to improve instructional practices.

vi. The district provides some opportunities for staff to develop as leaders and participate in various leadership roles. Examples of leadership opportunities include instructional coaching jobs, Leadership Academy, and various district level committees.

Factors that limit district effectiveness:

i. The district has not set a vision that focuses on an instructional core that supports high levels of learning and teaching so that every child is taught a rigorous and relevant core curriculum, so that all students achieve high academic standards. There are some examples of good strategies within the district, however they are inconsistently implemented and therefore do not have the level of impact they could have if shared across the district.

ii. Support systems for SWD and ELL students are inconsistent across the district. The quality of instruction and the instructional practices for these students vary significantly. Classroom teachers are struggling with differentiation in order to meet students' needs. RTI is not implemented consistently or with fidelity across the district. Instructional assistants struggle with knowing how to best support SWD in the general education classes. The district does not have an aggressive plan in place to address the learning needs of these two groups of students.

iii. The district does not have an adopted ELA curriculum. As a result, schools are inconsistently using effective instructional strategies and materials to teach ELA. However, students are not able to build upon skills using this method.

iv. Some teachers and administrators acknowledge limited understanding of how to access available data and how to use it to improve student learning. There are no systems in place to ensure teachers and administrators are effectively using data to make instructional decisions.

v. Many schools are overloaded with initiatives and programs but have no way of knowing if they are having an impact. Systems for collecting data on district wide programs are inconsistent. As a result, neither schools nor the district have clear and consistent evidence to identify what is working effectively to improve student learning.

vi. The district provides inconsistent support to schools to determine professional development needs. Most schools determine PD needs independently and often provide PD using in-house staff, thus limiting their exposure to experts in the field. The district calendar also limits the number of PD days.

Recommendations:

i. The district should develop a strategic plan that prioritizes ensuring every student experiences a rigorous curriculum so that each student maximizes his/her potential and is actively engaged in high quality levels of learning in every class. Establish and communicate clear expectations and a common understanding of what constitutes good learning and teaching, conduct regular classroom observations, provide constructive feedback to teachers and provide professional development as needed to address needs of students and teachers. Ensure consistency in implementation of highly effective instructional strategies through monitoring and tracking student progress.

ii. District leaders should develop a very focused and aggressive plan for addressing the learning needs of the SWD and ELL students. The plan should initially focus on improving instructional support to general education teachers, especially in differentiation, providing support to instructional assistants on how to best work with their student population, and working closely with schools to revise and improve the RTI process so that students are identified for IEPs only when absolutely necessary.

iii. Use a similar process for selecting an ELA curriculum as was used for selecting the math program now that the state has identified the ELA options.

iv. Create a data driven culture in the district office and in each school. Identify data that is available and gaps in data, and then create systems for collecting the necessary data. Use protocols to guide data driven meetings about student achievement and how to improve learning and teaching for all students. Provide professional development and support as needed to ensure all teachers, administrators and district office personnel can access and use the data effectively to drive their work.

v. Create a system for evaluating programs and initiatives to ensure outcomes are as they should be for each program. Monitor the impact and make appropriate decisions of whether to keep or discard programs or initiatives or if additional resources should be aligned to support the program.

vi. Once a strategic plan is created and priorities established, evaluate the need and level of professional development to ensure that teachers have the required skills to implement strategies consistently across the district. Provide PD through a variety of mediums such as webinars, whole staff, and during professional learning communities and team meetings. Monitor implementation and impact of PD.

3.4 Domain 4: Engagement of Families, the Community and Other Stakeholders

Rating: Effective

Factors that support district effectiveness:

i. The district has established and communicates a set of expectations for schools to engage families and their communities. District leaders and staff are open and articulate about the importance of parents and emphasize their importance in their communications with the schools' leadership teams and staff. Parents feel welcomed by schools and are encouraged to participate in the daily lives of their schools, including decision-making, volunteering, acting as advocates for students, participating in enrichment activities, and more. Volunteers are part of the daily lives of schools across the district and their impact is evident in classrooms, on school campuses, and in the community. Most parents also feel welcomed at the district office and trust that the Mountain View District Office staff is committed to the wellbeing and learning of their children. Many share that when they have reached out to both school and district staff, they have been treated fairly, professionally, and made to feel welcomed.

ii. Groups of parent leaders, parent-teacher organizations, foundations, and advisory committees contribute directly and meaningfully to the lives, development, and learning of students across Mountain View. The fundraising by families provides the school community with opportunities to come together to celebrate school events. The work with the ELL families and their leadership development has begun to strengthen their voice and it is beginning to influence what happens at schools, especially through the English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC). Outreach work is being done at schools and supported by the School and Community Engagement Facilitators and the district office. Programs like Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) are also showing a positive impact on the lives of parents that participate and are welcomed by participating families. In some schools, parent organizations are also beginning to collaborate with the ELAC, creating synergy and infusing a sense of inclusive and representative parent leadership within the community.

iii. The district and its schools have enabled productive and impactful partnerships with the business, philanthropic, higher education and non-profit communities. All schools benefit daily from the contributions and partnerships of external organizations, which support access to a comprehensive curriculum, enhance opportunities for learning and personal growth, and provide further support and wrap-around services for students and families. Examples include partnerships that provide students with a music curriculum, after school support and enrichment, health services, technology, and much more. Partner organizations confidently share that they have a productive relationship that is well attended and continues to grow with the Mountain View Whisman School District. Partners also feel welcome, valued, and believe the district is responsive when needs arise.

iv. The work of the School and Community Engagement Facilitators has begun to build a bridge between English Language Learner families (primarily Latino) and schools. Parents give multiple examples of how this initiative has made significant differences to their experiences, interactions, and participation in schools. Their leadership and support of at-risk students and families has made them feel welcome at schools and has begun to connect students and their families with resources, skills, and information that have supported their learning and development. As a group, they have also been able to rely and learn from each other, meeting periodically to share resources, lessons and strategies.

v. The district is well aware of state and local political issues and is able to effectively respond to these issues. Most stakeholder groups at the district understand the implications of both social and economic discourse and the impact these have on the work that needs to be done by the district office. Some of these issues include the rising cost of living, the movement of their low-socio-economic population and the rapid shift with the discourse of their school communities. These changes have a profound impact on the work of the district. The district office is currently seeking ways to effectively respond to these changes. Examples include teacher retention and job satisfaction, the English Language Development program, and the dynamics of the staff in schools and the district office.

Factors that limit district effectiveness:

i. The district has not established effective and consistent processes for gathering sufficient information from families and the community, nor are there any consistent mechanisms to understand their needs, assets, and current situation, leading to an insufficient capacity to be responsive and strategic. Many stakeholders believe that, while the district is welcoming and open to listening, their concerns are not necessarily taken seriously and most often there is a lack of follow-through. Families share multiple examples of when feedback was provided to the district and no positive change occurred, especially with families of special education and English language learner families. Many parents that participate in district meetings share that these are "cold and unresponsive" and that, while a lot of feedback is gathered, it feels more like compliance rather than a sincere effort to empower them and involve them in the decision making processes.

ii. There is little guidance and clarity coming from the district office in terms of how to communicate and engage with families to ensure consistency in the messaging across the district, especially regarding special education and English language development. While some schools have better communication tools and have achieved greater clarity within their school communities, this is very inconsistent across the district and lacks leadership from the district office. Many parents with children with special needs have little understanding of the program or know how to most effectively support their children and their learning, and share that the messaging from both district and school staffs is unclear. English language learner parents' perception of what being an ELL means is inconsistent to a point where there is debate whether it is productive, counterproductive or, as one parent phrased it, "a form of segregation". The criteria for reclassification is unclear, leaving many parents and students unable to make decisions, advocate, or have a clear plan for success. Parents are also unaware of the consequences of being a long-term ELL, which include a lack of electives in middle school and a much lower probability of finishing high school with complete A-G requirements. Many parents also share that they are often told that things are "OK" until they discover that their child is achieving much lower than s/he should be, at which point it is often too late. The quality of translations from the district office serves as another barrier to parents' ability to understand the education of their children.

iii. There is no district strategic plan to leverage external partners and to maximize the benefits of these partnerships. Strategic conversations most often occur at the school site-level. Most partner organizations believe they could really benefit from a comprehensive and strategic approach to leveraging what they bring to the schools so that it maximizes the impact they have on students. Several organizations voice that while they bring a lot to schools and the district, both could do more in giving back, participating in community events, and enabling reciprocal relationships that could benefit both sides. Many families are unclear about the wide array of resources available to them, limiting their capacity to utilize and benefit from these to support their needs and the needs of their children.

iv. While the work of the Family and Community Engagement Facilitators is having a positive and tangible impact in school communities, there is a lack of clarity of what their actual role in school is, especially in how it translates into their day-to-day work. There is a lack of understanding between district and school leadership about their role, which leads to both inconsistency in roles and effectiveness and to a feeling of "having two bosses". While they are clear about their three overarching goals--improving attendance, closing the achievement gap, and increasing parent engagement--these are very comprehensive and how to translate these into a concrete action plan that can guide their daily work is still unclear. Many facilitators have also assumed roles in schools that may not be the most effective or in alignment with their goals.

Recommendations:

i. Implement and establish a comprehensive, consistent set of mechanisms and processes to gather information from families and the community. Create priority indicators that can be tracked, monitored and enable the district to plan strategically to support the needs and context of the school community. Revise meeting structures for district parent meetings and build strong parent leadership and participation at the district level to support change and improvement, especially in the Special Education and English Language Learner programs. Use information received to guide a responsive and effective utilization of community resources, external partners, and other services. Create structures that ensure parental voice is engrained and built into decision-making at the district level.

ii. Ensure consistency and clarity in messaging across the district. Ensure stakeholders and leaders at schools are clear on the district vision and its plans so that cohesion is built and that schools and parent communities across the district can work together and support each other. Clarify the plan regarding English Language Development and ensure a clear message to all parents regarding reclassification, the consequences of being a long term ELL, and the necessary steps and ways in which they can support their children.

iii. Engage community partners and school and district leaders in strategic conversations for the effective use and leverage of resources and services to maximize their impact on student learning and development. Establish periodic meetings in which partners and district leaders can think strategically on how to support each other, respond to district needs, track impact indicators and align their resources so that they work most effectively. Encourage schools and district staff to be more active in initiating, contributing, and giving back to their partners, developing the civic lives of students through the interaction with external partners, growing the schools presence in their communities, and ultimately strengthening the ties between the school community and the bigger Mountain View community. This may include attending and volunteering in community events, partner-organized activities, and more.

iv. Clarify the roles and responsibilities for the Family and Community Engagement Facilitators and how that looks for their day-to-day work in order to maximize effectiveness and ensure consistency across all schools. Ensure that both school and district leadership contribute to this process and are clear and in alignment while supporting and collaborating with the facilitators. Support the facilitators in building plans with clear indicators that can be measured to ensure progress. Utilize their team meetings as an effective professional learning community and continuously identify gaps in skills, knowledge and needs across the district to provide the necessary training and build the capacity for the team to be successful in their roles.

3.5   Domain 5: Human & Fiscal Resources

Rating: Limited Effectiveness

Factors that support district effectiveness:

i.   The Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources has worked hard to begin to streamline the work of the department and to introduce better use of computer based systems.

ii. The Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources has established good working relationships with the representatives from the classified and non-classified staff unions. They report that their questions and concerns are listened to and that time is regularly set aside to ensure ongoing positive working relationships.

iii. The Maintenance Operations and Transportation (MOT) department works hard to ensure that the schools and district buildings are safe, clean and welcoming, externally and internally creating an environment that is conducive to learning and teaching. Building structural issues are quickly addressed to ensure safety at all times.

iv. The new Chief Business Officer (CBO) is beginning to develop processes and protocols to ensure financial resources are being accounted for and align with school and district goals. He is also pursuing ways of updating the current systems of storing important documents and streamlining the work to create an efficient and effective management system.

Factors that limit district effectiveness:

i.   Evaluation systems are mostly either outdated or have lapsed. The new superintendent has recognized the lack of individual performance evaluation and goal setting at district level and has started the process with the executive team, some of whom have extended the process to their team members. Most staff report that they have had a form of evaluation in the past but the criteria were generic and related to attendance, time keeping and appearance rather than being specific to job performance. School administrators have not had an evaluation in recent years. The teacher evaluation system is based on only a small number of observations and allows for experienced teachers to not be formally observed/evaluated for two or more years. As a result there is no structure through which to hold staff accountable for implementing district policies and fulfilling their roles and responsibilities, measuring success, or planning for professional growth.

ii. Many job descriptions have not been reviewed since employees took up their position with the district which, could be over twenty years ago in a few cases.   They do not reflect the specific responsibilities of the job the employee undertakes. Some district employees are carrying a very broad and heavy work load. As a result, they must often select among competing priorities rather than being able to focus upon specific job aligned responsibilities to its successful completion.

iii. Although vacant positions are advertised externally, the district has not recently researched how to best reach the personnel they wish to attract. Anecdotal reports of past practices suggest that some appointments have been made without ensuring that the appointee has the requisite skill set for the post. For example, staff members talk of having to teach new employees basic-level IT tasks before they can even begin to master the requirements of their role, leading to a loss of time as the current

employee is diverted from their task and the new employee is delayed in being able to make their contribution to the work of the team.

iv. The lack of systematic induction training and limited monitoring and evaluation of employee performance in recent years has resulted in inconsistencies in many practices. The new CBO has identified that while there is complete transparency in all transactions, departments do not always follow expected protocols. For example, in payroll and the MOT department, decisions about spending have historically been made without the correct levels of authorization. The CBO is in the process of identifying where revisions are needed to ensure that systems have all the necessary checks and balances.

v. The district has an annual audit of the fiscal department. However, the reports demonstrate that the audits are too narrow in their scope. Therefore the district leaders do not know how efficiently and effectively the department is functioning.

vi. The IT team department carefully maintains the asset register for all electronic equipment but there have been limited checks of other equipment in schools.

vii. The narrow audits do not investigate spending in any depth and so there is no monitoring of departmental spending or checks to ensure that they meet value-for-money criteria and that there is a positive impact on student learning as a result. This particularly relates to Special Education and support for English Language Learners in the district's schools. There are inequities in the way that some resources are distributed to schools – for example, a large school may have the same number of office staff as a much smaller school, leading to a sense of unfairness.

viii. There are no clear systems in place to ensure accountability in the Fiscal department. There is no clearly defined, Board-approved policy for signing contracts with outside agencies for work that is being done throughout the district. The CBO, although working diligently to put protocols in place, is clearly overworked, as he supervises the Fiscal department, Food Services, MOT, Business Services and the Bond program.

Recommendations:
i. Review the organizational structure and work practices of the Human Resources (HR) department to ensure that they align with the overall district mission and strategic plan. Set out an organized plan for making any necessary changes so that the department is continuously improving, building on the strengths and commitment of the current team. Create weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual management plans to demonstrate the workflow of the department and to create a basis from which to evaluate staffing needs to ensure that there are sufficient, suitably experienced staff in place to be able to fully address all the functions of HR. Set out a challenging but manageable timeline of the review and revision of:
- All district job descriptions
- Induction procedures
- Performance evaluation systems for all staff
- Communication within HR, to other district teams and to and from schools
- Cross functional activities (e.g., IT and Fiscal Resources)

ii. Create and distribute a high quality publication that explains the roles and responsibilities of the HR team and how members of other departments can support and facilitate their work.

iii. Ensure that vacancies are publicized widely enough to attract candidates with the requisite skills and practices.

iv. Review and update the asset register for each district site and determine the most efficient and reliable method for annual revisions. Establish processes for school personnel to immediately register new technology and other equipment they expect to be maintained by the district.

v. Appoint an alternative auditor to carry out a thorough audit of all aspects of the district financial services to ensure that all current systems, policies and checks and balances are in place.

vi. Consider realigning job responsibilities and expanding the Business Department, ensuring that qualified people are in place to support the work of this area. Continue to implement new protocols and processes that require accountability of financial resources to align with school and district goals.

3.6   Domain 6: Operational Systems

Rating: Limited Effectiveness

Factors that support district effectiveness:

i.   District and school level personnel can access most any data they deem necessary.   The new data management system contains basic information and, as teachers and administrators become more familiar with it, they are finding it informative.

ii.   The district recently hired a technology coach to provide support to teachers. Those who have received her support report they are more competent in the use of technology.

iii. Schools use technology in a variety of ways to support student learning. Schools have a sufficient amount of technology and students are often engaged in using the technology to enhance their learning.

iv.   The district recently hired a public information officer (PIO) to begin improving communication from district level to schools and the public.

Factors that limit district effectiveness:

i.   Some teachers are not well trained in using the new data management system or they do not use it effectively to collect and analyze student data.

ii.   The lack of communication at the district level and school levels impedes the effectiveness and potential use of technology to streamline work and to make informed decisions.

iii. Two-way communication across the district is not as effective as it could be in collecting and relaying relevant information in a timely and transparent way.

iv.   The district's lack of vision, goals and values directly impacts the operational systems of the district. There are no systems in place to promote or support cross-functional work or any other standards to monitor operational systems.

v.   The district does not have a process for checking the effectiveness of its operational and infrastructure systems within schools and the district.

Recommendations:

i.   Ensure all teachers have professional development on the new data management system and use it to inform some instructional decisions.

ii.   Create communication systems at district level that include the technology department at the beginning phases of potential work rather than as the afterthought. Include technology representatives in all levels of decision making so that they can contribute to ways to most effectively use data and technology. Ensure communication is effective and respectful within the technology department as well as across other departments.

iii. Create systems in which all stakeholders can receive and provide relevant information in a timely manner to the district.   Ensure messaging is easy to understand, translated as needed, and the

appropriate audiences are reached. Maintain the district's website so that it is user friendly and kept current so that parents and the public can easily access district information.

iv. Once goals and a strategic plan are developed, ensure operational systems support and are in alignment.

v. Create systems to ensure all operations and infrastructure systems are aligned to support district goals.