

AFRICAN-CENTERED COLLEGE PREPARATORY ACADEMY LOWER CAMPUS: School Readiness Assessment Final Report

Kansas City Public Schools Secondary and Signature School Reviews

Site Visit Date: January 16, 2020

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School Readiness Assessment Introduction

School Readiness Assessment Purpose

Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS) has partnered with Mass Insight Education & Research, a national non-profit, to conduct school reviews of all secondary and signature schools. The purpose of these reviews is to:

- Surface individual school successes, challenges, and opportunities to inform continuous improvement efforts; and
- Surface trends across secondary and signature schools to:
 - understand how secondary and signature options contribute to the overall experience and expectation of the KCPS community and help achieve KCPS' 5-Year Strategic Plan goals; and
 - inform the identification of systems-level changes and school supports.

Mass Insight's research-based School Readiness Assessment (SRA) supports and accelerates school improvement by informing the development of strong school improvement plans that address a school's highest needs, as well as informing district-level improvement to better meet the needs of students and schools. In alignment with the Mass Insight theory of action (described on page 4) and based on more than 10 years of national experience and research in the field of school improvement, Mass Insight has identified seven elements that we observe to drive school improvement and school readiness and ensure the success of all students. The SRA is structured to analyze the extent to which these elements are in place.

School Readiness Assessment Process

The school review process follows three phases, including a comprehensive data/document review conducted prior to a campus visit; the on-site campus visit; and finally, analysis and report of findings.

Phase	Potential Activities
Pre-Site Visit <i>(December 2019)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Collect and review campus data and related documents to understand campus context, including principal, staff and student surveys.● Coordinate visit logistics to ensure a successful site visit.
Site Visit <i>(January 2020)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Conduct interviews and focus groups with a variety of campus stakeholders (e.g. teachers, students, administrators, counselors, instructional coaches, families, etc.).● Classroom, hallway, and common space walkthroughs (observations may not occur on the same date as your site-visit interviews and focus groups).
Post-Site Visit <i>(January- February 2020)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The site visit team synthesizes and analyzes visit findings that surface priority focus area recommendations.

Overview of the Findings Report

This report begins with a **Data Profile** - a high level quantitative overview of the school's current demographics, culture and climate indicators, and recent academic performance. Next is a summary of **Strengths and Challenges** - the most salient and resounding headlines from Mass Insight's time on campus. These are not arranged by any particular element and may represent a confluence of factors that can help the school begin to prioritize strengths and challenges to focus on following the site visit. Mass Insight will also provide action-oriented **Recommendations** for how the school can improve and where they might prioritize efforts first. This might also be used to inform the revision or creation of a School Improvement Plan. Finally, the Appendix contains the **School Readiness Assessment Tool**, which provides specific evidence gathered during the review process and a rating (described in the next section) for each feature of each element. This section can be useful for delving into more specific and granular details. Mass Insight does not suggest attempting to tackle every feature all at once.

School Readiness Assessment Evidence and Rating System

Mass Insight's SRA Tool (included in Appendix) is designed to analyze the extent to which a school has elements of our theory of action in place, in relation to an exemplar description of each element (and the features that make up that element) at the highest performing schools. The Mass Insight team will use the SRA Tool to document evidence based on information gathered during the SRA activities to assign a rating for each feature. Ratings are designed to describe the extent to which evidence aligns to the exemplar descriptions at the highest performing schools. The features rated lowest do not necessarily mean that those features are in the most urgent need of attention; the recommendations describe what Mass Insight suggests addressing first.

Rating Level Key:
0: Not Meeting (no, or extremely limited, evidence of this feature; work on this feature has not yet started)
1: Somewhat Meets (some evidence of implementation of this feature)
2: Mostly Meets (considerable evidence of implementation of this feature)
3: Meets (robust evidence of implementation of this feature)

About Mass Insight and Our Theory of Action

Mass Insight is a national non-profit organization committed to transforming public schools into high-performing organizations and closing achievement gaps. Since 2007, Mass Insight has worked with schools, districts, and state education agencies to redesign systems and establish the conditions and capacity for district and school improvement. As part of this work, Mass Insight has conducted numerous School Readiness Assessments (SRAs) across the country.

In 2007, Mass Insight published *The Turnaround Challenge*¹, a nationally-recognized research report and call to action that highlighted the need for intervention in America's lowest-performing schools. Since 2009, Mass Insight has worked with schools, districts, and state education agencies in Massachusetts and across the country to redesign the systems that support chronically underperforming schools and to drive gains in student achievement. Building from our research and more than ten years of experience in turnaround, we recently revisited Mass Insight's theory of action and identified seven theory of action elements that we believe must be in place to ensure schools are successful.

Mass Insight's SRA is structured to analyze the extent to which elements of our theory of action are in place in schools. We seek to understand what student outcome data reveals, analyze evidence and hypothesize why challenges and successes exist, and help schools prioritize where to focus next.

We believe that if schools have:

Conditions: Sufficient school-level control over people, time, money, and program to address the root causes of low performance;

Planning: Evidence-based, actionable improvement plans that address the root causes of low performance informed by a review of existing conditions and input from school, district, and community stakeholders;

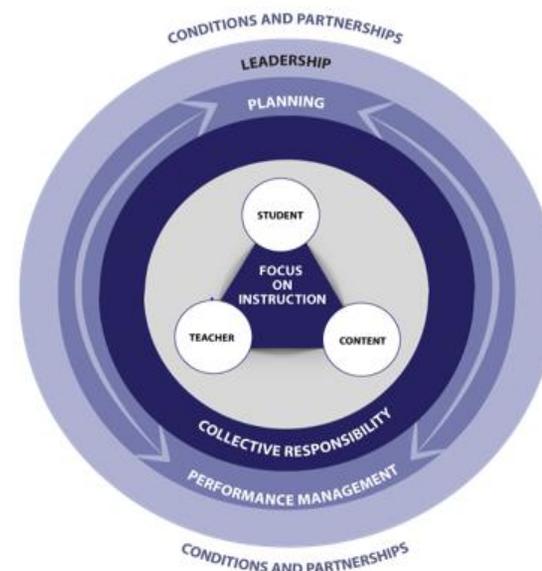
Leadership: A principal who can manage and communicate complexity while maintaining focus on the school's vision and key priorities;

Focus on Instruction: Processes and supports that help teachers work together to constantly improve and refine standards-based instructional practice so that students can engage in deep learning tasks;

Collective Responsibility: The school faculty and staff ensure there is collective responsibility for both the quality of instruction and student learning and success;

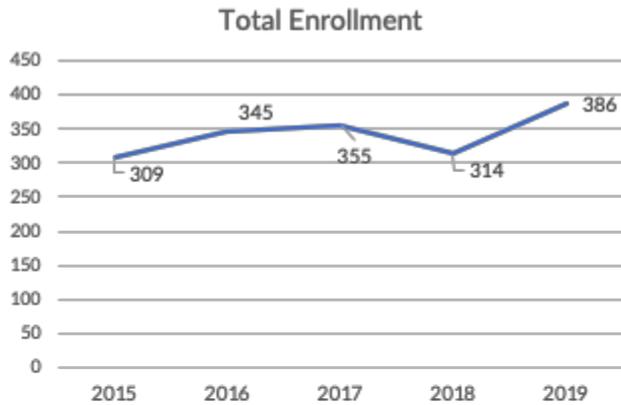
Performance Management: Consistent processes for using data to measure both implementation and outcomes to determine what's working and inform efforts to improve; and

Partnerships: Partnerships that help the school meet the multiple needs of teachers and students, *THEN schools will dramatically improve and student learning will increase.*



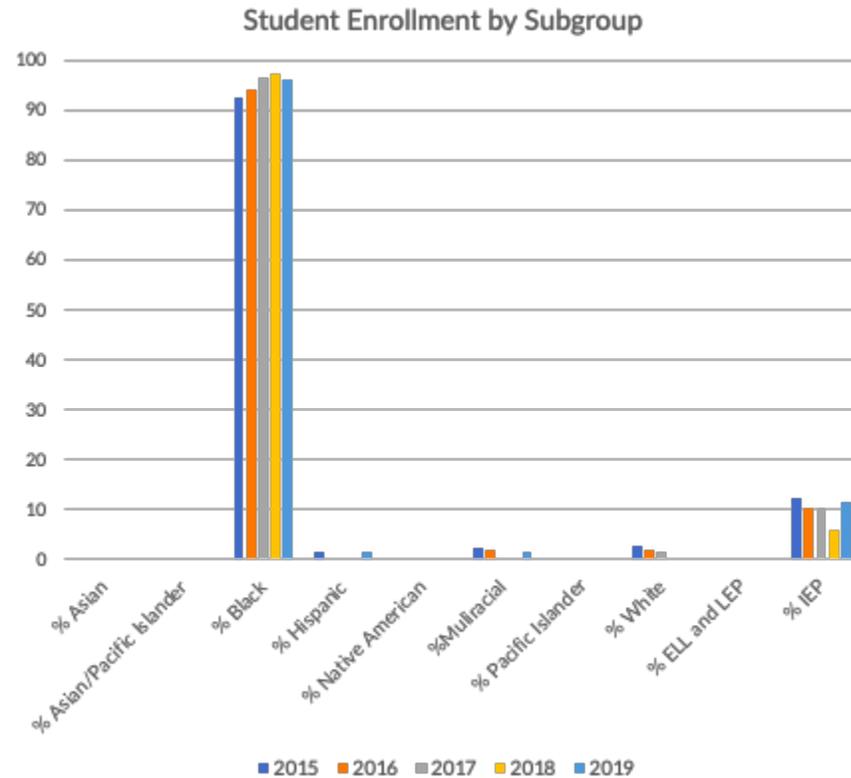
¹ *Mass Insight Education and Research*. Mass Insight Education and Research Institute, Inc., 2007, www.massinsight.org/resources/the-turnaround-challenge/

Student Enrollment and Attendance



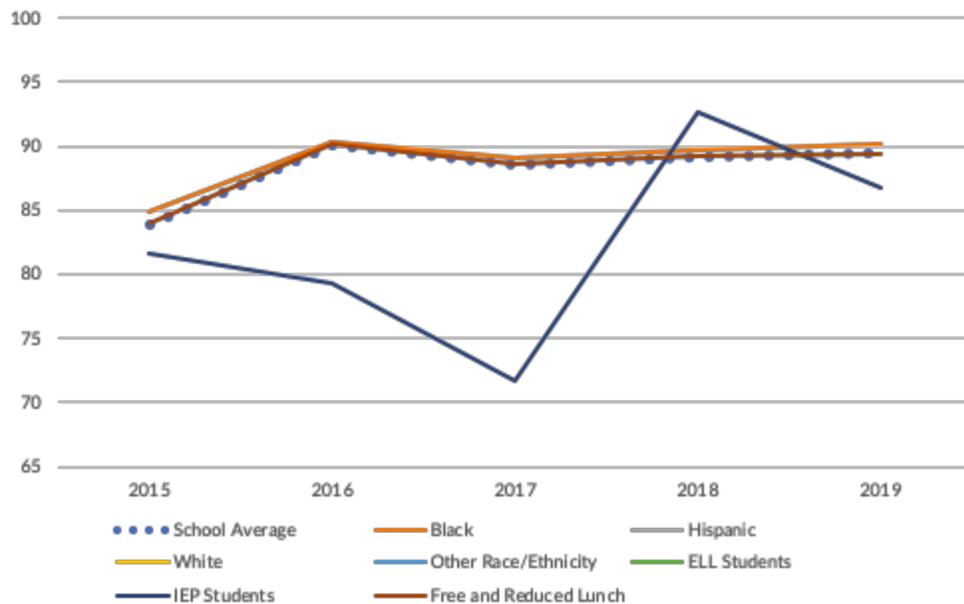
Student enrollment at African-Centered Preparatory Academy Lower Campus over the last 5 years has increased and was 77 students higher in 2019 than in 2015.

The majority of the student population is Black.



² Data contained within this data profile was publicly available on the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's website: <https://dese.mo.gov/school-data>

Student Attendance Trend 2015-2019



The proportional attendance rate for students at or above 90% (displayed in the graph to the left) at African-Centered Preparatory Academy Lower Campus over the last 5 years has increased by 5% in 2019. The attendance rate for students with IEPs has historically varied more than the school-wide average and other subgroup attendance rates.

The total proportional attendance rate for the last 3 school years at AC Prep Academy Lower Campus was:

- 2017 – 91.7%
- 2018 – 92.4%
- 2019 – 92%

which demonstrates a 0.3% increase in student attendance over the last 3 years.

STUDENT MOBILITY	Fall Enrollment	Additional Enrollment	Transfers	Mobility Rate
2017	355	18	124	33.2
2018	314	10	65	20.1
2019	386	14	114	28.5

Student enrollment at the African-Centered Preparatory Academy Lower Campus has increased by 31 students over the last 3 years. While some additional students enroll throughout the year, the number of transfers has fluctuated, resulting in mobility rates between 20-30% for the last 3 years.

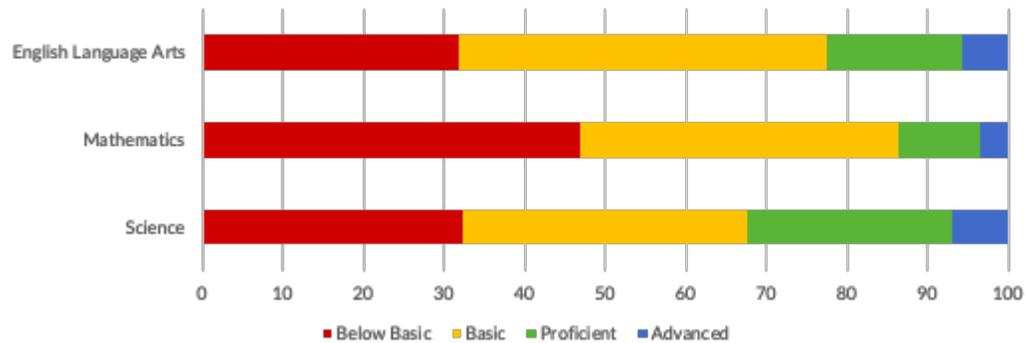
Student Discipline

DISCIPLINE RATES	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Enrollment	309	345	355	314	386
Total Number of Incidents	2	0	2	1	2
Incident Rate (per 100 students)	0.6	0	0.6	0.3	0.5
Type of Removal					
In-School Suspension (number rate)	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0
Out of School Suspension (number rate)	2 0.6	0 0.0	2 0.6	1 0.3	2 0.5
Expulsion (number rate)	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0
Length of Removal					
10 Consecutive Days (number rate)	0 0.0	0 0.0	2 0.6	1 0.3	1 0.3
More than 10 Consecutive Days (number rate)	2 0.6	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	1 0.3

The incident rate has remained steady over the last 5 years. The out of school suspension rate has also remained steady in the last 5 years, as well as the rate of students removed for 10 or more days.

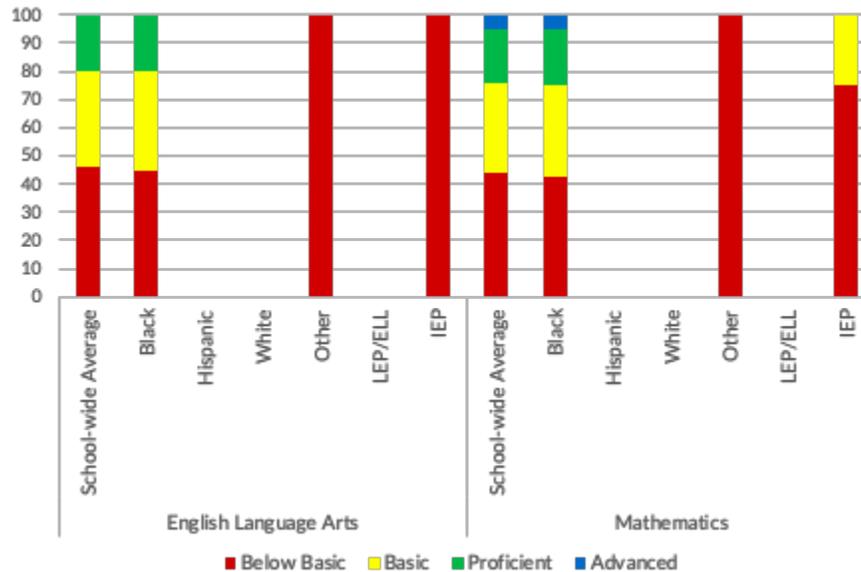
Student Academic Performance

2019 School-wide MAP Results



School-wide performance on MAP tests in 2019 showed 22.5% of students were proficient/advanced in English Language Arts, 13.6% were proficient/advanced in Mathematics, and 32.4% were advanced/proficient in Science.

3rd Grade 2019 MAP Proficiency Rates

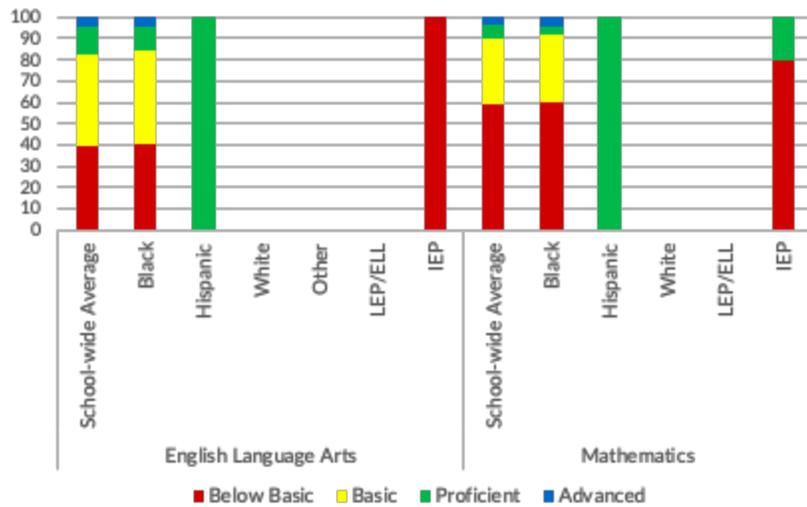


3rd grade ELA MAP exams in 2019 showed 19.5% of 3rd grade students were proficient/advanced. 20% of Black students were proficient, while no other students or students with IEPs were proficient.

3rd grade mathematics MAP exams in 2019 showed 24.4% of 3rd grade students were proficient/advanced. 20% of Black students were proficient, while no other students or students with IEPs were proficient.

Note: the "other" descriptor refers to a racial or ethnic subgroup or combined subgroup of fewer than 10 students.

4th Grade 2019 MAP Proficiency Rates

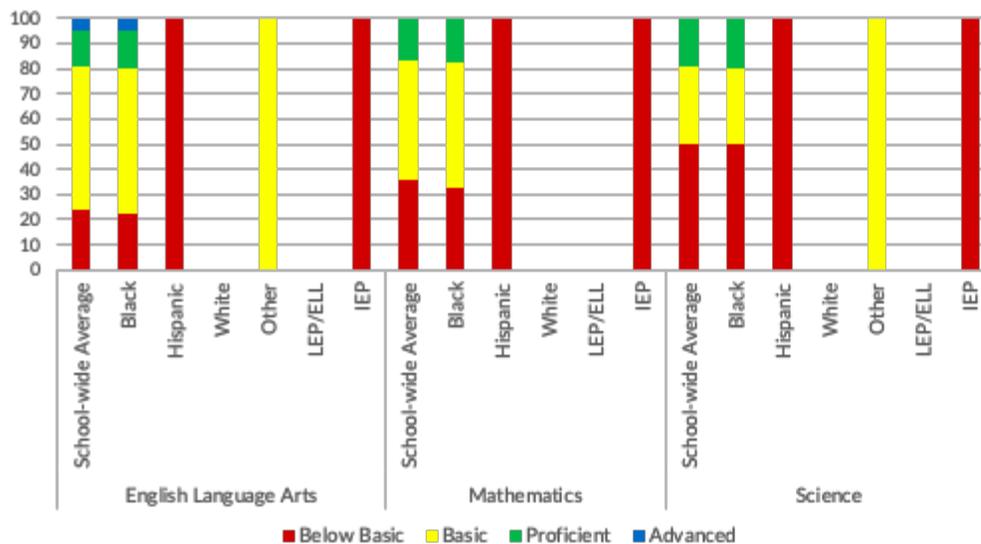


4th grade ELA MAP exams in 2019 showed 17.6% of 4th grade students were proficient/advanced. 16% of Black students and 100% of Hispanic students were proficient, while no students with IEPs were proficient.

4th grade Mathematics MAP exams in 2019 showed 9.8% of 4th grade students were proficient/advanced. 8% of Black students, 100% of Hispanic students, and 20% of students with IEPs were proficient.

Note: the "other" descriptor refers to a racial or ethnic subgroup or combined subgroup of fewer than 10 students.

5th Grade MAP Proficiency Rates



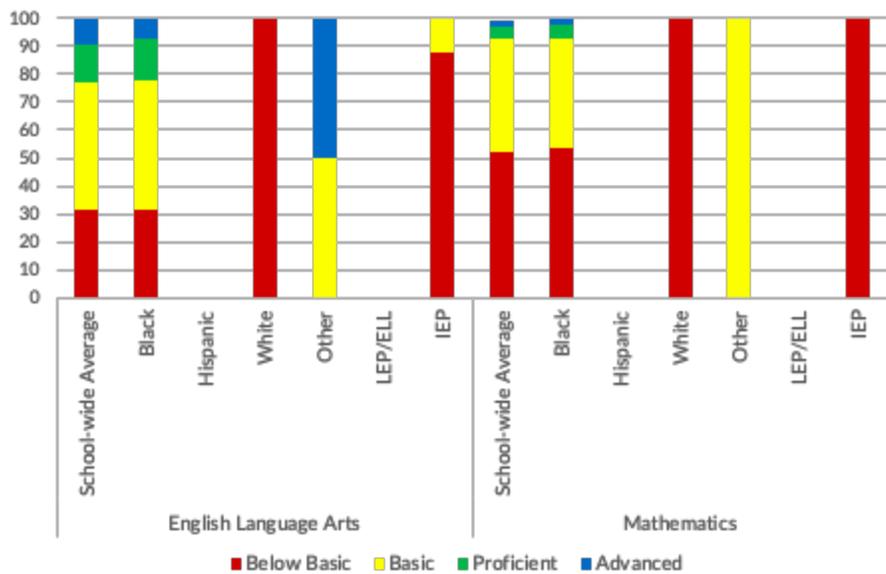
5th grade ELA MAP exams in 2019 showed 19.1% of 5th grade students were proficient/advanced. 20% of Black students were proficient, while no Hispanic students, other students, or students with IEPs were proficient.

5th grade Mathematics MAP exams in 2019 showed 16.7% of 5th grade students were proficient/advanced. 17.5% of Black students were proficient, while no Hispanic students or students with IEPs were proficient.

5th grade Science MAP exams in 2019 showed 19% of 5th grade students were proficient/advanced. 20% of Black students were proficient, while no Hispanic students, other students, or students with IEPs were proficient.

Note: the "other" descriptor refers to a racial or ethnic subgroup or combined subgroup of fewer than 10 students.

6th Grade 2019 MAP Proficiency Rates

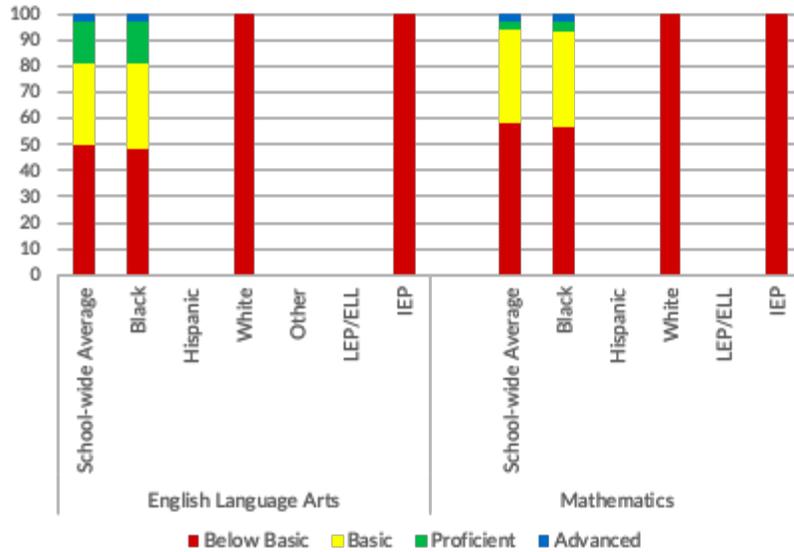


6th grade ELA MAP exams in 2019 showed 22.7% of students were proficient/advanced. 21.9% of Black students and 50% of other students were proficient, while no White students or students with IEPs were proficient.

6th grade Mathematics MAP exams in 2019 showed 6.8% of students were proficient/advanced. 7.3% of Black students were proficient, while no White students, other students, or students with IEPs were proficient.

Note: the "other" descriptor refers to a racial or ethnic subgroup or combined subgroup of fewer than 10 students.

7th Grade 2019 MAP Proficiency Rates

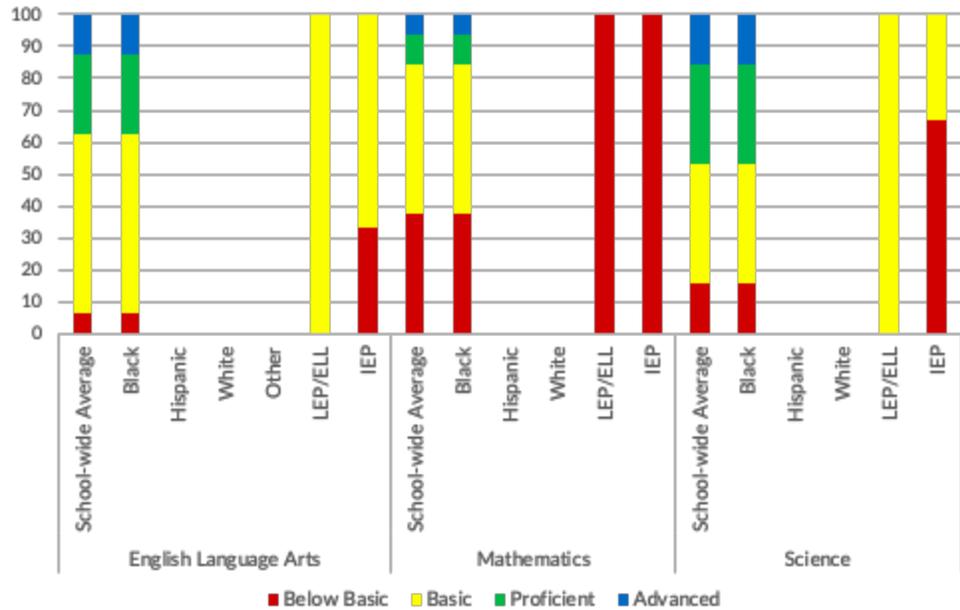


7th grade ELA MAP exams in 2019 showed 18.7% of students were proficient/advanced. 19.3% of Black students were proficient, while no White students or students with IEPs were proficient.

7th grade Mathematics MAP exams in 2019 showed 6.4% of students were proficient/advanced. 6.6% of Black students were proficient, while no White students or students with IEPs were proficient.

Note: the "other" descriptor refers to a racial or ethnic subgroup or combined subgroup of fewer than 10 students.

8th Grade 2019 MAP Proficiency Rates



8th grade ELA MAP exams in 2019 showed 37.5% of students were proficient/advanced. 37.5% of Black students were proficient, while no LEP/ELL students or students with IEPs were proficient.

8th grade Mathematics MAP exams in 2019 showed 15.7% of students were proficient/advanced. 15.7% of Black students were proficient, while no LEP/ELL students or students with IEPs were proficient.

8th grade Science MAP exams in 2019 showed 46.9% of students were proficient/advanced. 46.9% of Black students were proficient, while no LEP/ELL students or students with IEPs were proficient.

Note: the "other" descriptor refers to a racial or ethnic subgroup or combined subgroup of fewer than 10 students.

Strengths

- **Students, staff, and families highly value the African-centered programming.** There is widespread appreciation for the AC Prep school model. Students feel celebrated, and teachers enjoy celebrating students. The school exposes students to culturally responsive curricular content that they may not otherwise experience at another school. There are signs, markers, and decorations throughout the school that reinforce the theme. As one parent explains, AC Prep “is not a theme; it’s us. It’s honest education.”
- **Teachers and staff report a supportive, nurturing environment.** School leaders endeavor to create an environment where students are excited about learning who they are and improving their learning practices, and staff signal that the work is made lighter with the support of their colleagues. New teachers note that they don’t actually feel like new teachers here, and veteran teachers report that they enjoy each other, even during non-work hours.
- **There is clear and commonly understood language around school improvement priorities.** Aside from the instructional priorities, all staff share a deep desire to instill cultural awareness and pride in students and to build students’ self-esteem. Derived from the principles of the Nguzo Saba, this strategic focus on the social and emotional wellbeing of students helps lay the foundation for an effective learning environment. As a result, students report feeling supported and challenged by their teachers and their peers. Observations show—and discussions with students confirm— that they are more willing to take risks now than they were when they entered AC Prep.

Challenges

- **Although there is a school improvement plan (SIP) in place, there is a lack of formal structures to monitor progress toward SIP goals.** There are several teams at AC Prep with clear roles and responsibilities; however, there is no one team that dedicates adequate capacity to monitoring implementation of the strategies outlined in the SIP. As a result, the ability of staff to gauge plan impact is limited.
- **While student data is discussed, it is not clear how data informs daily classroom instruction.** Staff articulate how they look at data to identify gaps, but do not share examples of how instruction, intervention, and enrichment are differentiated as a result. Additionally, staff share that assessments are not consistently rigorous enough to provide useful and accurate data on student progress.
- **Limited ability to align resources to meet school goals.** A root cause analysis found that there was a need to improve the growth and achievement rate of “bubble” students at the below basic level, approaching the basic level. As a result, the Leadership Team developed a plan to address this subgroup. However, the financial resources needed to provide intervention support were redirected, which makes the goal of increasing student achievement in this area all the more difficult. Additionally, staff do not feel they have the flexibility to use district resources differently to meet school needs and goals,

- **The application and enrollment process is not clear to all stakeholders.** Parents report uncertainty in several areas related to the process for getting their children into AC Prep. For some, there is confusion around the application timeline; for others, there is confusion about the application requirements (e.g., whether there is an essay, an interview, or another evaluation process). It is also unclear to staff how and why admission requirement exemptions are made. These exceptions, or students who are “placed” at the school, sometimes reportedly find it difficult to adjust to the AC Prep environment.

- 1. Establish a team focused on assessing the fidelity of SIP implementation and monitoring plan impact.** The current SIP process begins with the principal writing the majority of the plan with input from the Leadership Team. After the plan is reviewed by the Title I coordinator and is back in the hands of the school, responsibilities for tracking plan progress are spread across operational teams in a way that does not foster collective responsibility. There is an opportunity to leverage already established team structures or create new structures so that there is one group responsible for communicating where the school is in plan implementation and what the school might need to do differently. Such a team has the potential to channel resources to the areas of highest need for the school.
- 2. Strengthen the use of data to inform instruction through data-inquiry cycles.** Teachers and students discuss data and progress, but stakeholders do not articulate how classroom instruction, interventions, and enrichment opportunities are adjusted based on regular data review. There is an opportunity to build on foundational data conversations already in place to implement robust data inquiry cycles, that result in clear decisions about differentiating instruction based on student strengths and needs. To support this effort, the school may consider new/additional approaches to assessing students and reviewing student work on a more frequent formative basis.
- 3. Clarify the application and enrollment process, and share the message with all stakeholders.** Parents currently report having to navigate a system of social media, word of mouth information, external school review websites, and confusing district portals in order to understand how the school pathways work. This may lead to parents receiving conflicting and erroneous information about the processes needed to enroll their children at AC Prep. Since the application process for AC Prep begins earlier than most other schools in KCSP, there may be instances in which a select group of informed parents has the inequitable opportunity to get a head start on the process over other parents. Clarifying this process and dedicating adequate marketing capacity could limit the spread of misinformation and create more equitable opportunities to access high quality educational programming.

Appendix: School Readiness Assessment Tool

Mass Insight’s SRA Tool is designed to analyze the extent to which a school has elements of our research-based theory of action in place, in relation to an exemplar description of each element (and the features that make up that element) at the highest performing schools. The Mass Insight team uses this SRA Tool to document evidence and analysis based on information gathered during the SRA activities to assign a rating for each feature. Ratings are designed to describe the extent to which evidence aligns to the exemplar descriptions at the highest performing schools.

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Element	At Highest Performing Schools	Rating	Discussion of Evidence
<p>Focus on Instruction: Processes and systems help teachers work together to constantly improve and refine standards-based instructional practice, ensuring students engage in deep learning tasks.</p>	<p>School Model and Instructional Vision <i>Signature schools:</i> The school implements a clearly defined and observable school model that meets student interests and demand.</p> <p><i>Secondary schools:</i> The school implements clear pathways for student progression through high school to college and careers.</p> <p>There is a clear instructional vision that aligns with the district-wide framework for critical thinking, problem-solving and cultural responsiveness for 21st Century learning, and the school model. It focuses on the success of all students, aligns with standards, and helps build an understanding of the actions that educators must take to accelerate student learning. The vision is widely understood and drives school decision-making. All teachers and administrators can describe how their work moves the school closer to meeting the vision.</p>	3: Meets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The AC Prep Lower Campus model is based on the principles of Ma’at and the Nguzo Saba, focusing on self-esteem, empowerment, and responsible citizenship. Teachers and support staff confirm that the Nguzo Saba principles are infused into everything that the school does. ● Every wall in every classroom and hall reflects the theme/model of AC Prep. ● School leaders and staff endeavor to create an environment where students are excited about learning who they are and improving their learning practices. ● Teachers (referred to as professors) exude an African-centered approach that supports students' understanding of their culture (or culture of others, for the non-African American students). Teachers treat students with the utmost respect, and it is given in return, which represents a deeper and more personal connection than most teacher-student relationships. ● The school has a museum, which portrays a monthly tribute to Africans (Americans and others) who have impacted US and world history.

<p>Focus on Instruction, continued.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parents express that AC Prep “is not a theme; it’s us. It’s honest education.” All school stakeholders confirm that the school model meets the interests and needs of the community. ● Some parents report choosing this school specifically for its African-centered curriculum; whereas others report visiting other schools and finding that AC Prep was the only place where they felt celebrated. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As one parent recalls, “I was literally standing there in tears on the tour” after learning more about the school model. ● Parents note that the school helps them learn more about themselves. Some comments include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “There’s so much pride in being here. We come from kings and queens.” ○ “We are learning about African American history before slavery here.” ○ “You don’t have to hide your pride here. This school is about self and culture and spirit and smarts.” ○ “If a piece of this school was in every school, all students would be better off.”
	<p>Readiness to Learn The school implements consistent, equitable, and asset-based policies, procedures, and practices that foster positive learning school experiences that validate all students’ social-emotional and cultural identities. As a result, students feel safe, valued, cared for, challenged, and supported at school. Student and family needs are identified and connected with resources and services to ensure all students can self-regulate and engage in learning with agency. The school has programs, structures, and extracurricular activities (such as looping, advisory, morning meetings, intramurals, clubs) to expand and nurture students’ sense of belonging and ensure that</p>	<p>3: Meets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parents indicate that the teaching staff at AC Prep (Lower) is reflective of the student population. ● All students report feeling safe, included, and supported at school; all parents concur. These reports are confirmed through classroom observations, as all students (100%) are observed to be physically and emotionally safe in their classroom. ● Teachers report that they help students feel safe, included, and supported by building students’ self-esteem, by encouraging students not to approach issues in a fearful way, and by “knowing who one’s self is” and using that self-reflection to guide interactions. ● Teachers and students report that teacher-student relationships are overwhelmingly positive and that respect for teachers is high among students.

<p>Focus on Instruction, continued.</p>	<p>every student has enriching experiences and strong relationships with adults.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teachers report that the focus on cultural awareness throughout the school fosters an environment in which students feel valued. ● Meditation sessions have been implemented to improve student-student interactions. Teachers report that this practice leads students to feel less anxious; students and parents report that the practice helps center students. ● Every Tuesday, morning Harambees take place schoolwide to recognize students in the categories of academics, social, and behavioral. ● Students who may not be performing as well as others are added to the STARS list as a way to motivate them. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Every nine weeks, students are awarded a red, black, green, purple, or gold ribbon. ○ Students have the opportunity to go on field trips. ● Parents, students, and teachers report that several maintenance issues interfere with the school's positive learning environment, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sewage problems, which has led to flooding in the school, ○ A lack of lighting in the parking lot, which creates safety issues for students who participate in evening events after school, and ○ A lack of adequate heat during winter months. ● Sports and activity offerings include track, cross-country, volleyball, cheerleading, baseball African dance, African drumming, flag football, wrestling, and soccer. There is also an after school cultural arts program available for middle school students.
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<p>Focus on Instruction, continued.</p>	<p>Teacher Development & Feedback There are systems, structures, and practices that prioritize teacher development based on data and district priorities including trauma sensitive strategies. There are feedback cycles and follow-up. All teachers describe receiving frequent, consistent, coherent, and coordinated high-quality feedback on teaching that is grounded in an instructional vision and that will lead to accelerated learning for all students.</p>	<p>2: Mostly Meets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PD sessions occur on Wednesdays; typical topics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reviewing articles that are related to the school model ○ Data cycles, which some staff report that the school was doing before it became a district requirement. ● Some teachers report that PD at the school is almost always relevant. ● Teachers report that outside experts sometimes present at PD sessions. ● Teachers report that feedback on classroom observations from school leadership is helpful. The extent to which observation and feedback is consistent, coherent, and coordinated is unclear. ● The principal and VP conduct walkthroughs and provide feedback to teachers on instructional practice through My Learning Plan. ● Teachers report that they are able to get support from administrators when needed, and school leaders work to make sure that teachers have adequate access to resources to support their instruction. ● In addition to feedback from school leadership, teachers report providing and receiving feedback on instructional practice from each other.
	<p>Teacher Collaboration (PLCs) Teachers working in teams have time, systems and structures to maximize collaborative time in instructional teams (such as by grade level or content area). Teachers work towards commonly set and motivating goals that help all students progress towards the highest priority academic standards and improve critical thinking skills; these teams receive high-quality feedback and enjoy a trusting culture that includes open and constructive dialogue.</p>	<p>3: Meets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff share that the principal set the vision for PLCs and the vice principal (VP) is responsible for overseeing the work of PLCs at the school. ● The Leadership Team has established several schoolwide norms and expectations for PLCs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Getting data review work done before entering the meeting ○ Being on time ○ Being engaged ○ Meeting weekly during teaching planning time ○ Focusing on how aspects of the curriculum is implemented

<p>Focus on Instruction, continued.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Although PLC norms have been established, school leaders and teachers report that there is no standard format for PLC meetings. ● PLCs meet by grade level weekly, on Wednesdays. ● PLCs are organized as opportunities for teachers to develop, refine, and review formative assessments and resulting data; discuss innovative teaching methods and techniques; and receive training on differentiation strategies. ● Teachers report that PLC work is guided by curricular needs. ● After each PLC meeting, teachers are required to submit a PLC form via Google Docs, which highlights what was discussed. ● Some teachers report that collaboration in PLCs has led to increased grade-level curricular alignment.
	<p>Curriculum, Standards & Assessment Instructional work is guided by curricula and instructional resources (including technology) aligned to standards and aligned across and between grade levels. It is responsive to students' cultures, experiences, needs, and interests. Formative and externally-developed summative assessments are aligned with both standards and the sequence of instruction. These assessments yield frequent, accurate, and actionable data about student progress towards the highest priority standards.</p>	<p>2: Mostly Meets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In July, school leaders develop a calendar of monthly themes that are infused into the curriculum. Example themes include African diaspora, African kingdoms/empires, Gullah Wars, and Kwanzaa. AC Prep teachers work to infuse African-centered themes into the district curriculum. ● Some teachers in the lower grades report that the district curriculum is too easy, watered down, and broad. ● Teachers report that some PLC time is dedicated to ensuring curricular alignment across grade levels; however, it is not clear if these discussions occur in all PLCs. ● In addition to teacher-developed formative assessments, students take i-Ready tests along with the Achievement Series and MAP tests. The Problem Solving Team (PST) reportedly reviews this data twice weekly. ● Teachers report that students feel like they take too many tests; some teachers perceive that attendance might increase if there was less testing. ● Staff note that although the Achievement Series may be helpful for informing district level leadership, it does not provide useful data for the school.

<p>Focus on Instruction, continued.</p>	<p>Data-Driven Decision-Making for Classroom Instruction The academic progress of all students is monitored by teachers and students. Systems, structures, and processes support teachers—individually and in teams (such as the Problem Solving Team (PST))—to frequently and routinely use a variety of student data, including disaggregated academic data, to pinpoint class and student needs. Data inquiry cycles drive on-going instructional decisions, including grouping, differentiation, enrichment, intervention, and personalized plans for meeting graduation requirements.</p>	<p>1: Somewhat Meets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some teachers report that the level of rigor on science assessments is too low, which leads to students overwhelmingly scoring 100% on the pre-test; thus, the resulting student performance data is not viewed as helpful. ● The PST meets on Mondays to address academic and behavioral issues with students. The team consists of a counselor and a resource teacher, but it is not clear how academic data is shared with teachers ● Teachers can refer students to the PST by completing a referral form. ● Although there is evidence that data inquiry cycles are discussed, the extent to which this data is used to differentiate instruction and drive decisions about intervention and enrichment remains unclear.
	<p>Rigorous Classroom Practice All students describe, and are observed, learning high-level and grade-level appropriate knowledge and skills in classrooms where each student is challenged; teachers are observed bringing the school’s instructional vision to life in their classrooms. All students demonstrate progress toward stated learning objectives through their work or responses.</p>	<p>3: Meets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student learning objectives were clear and grade-level appropriate in all instructional sessions observed. All observed classrooms had objectives posted that also included the statement “I’ll know I have it when...” ● In most classrooms observed, learning tasks are grade-level appropriate and standards-aligned. ● Students are observed clearly doing the “lift” of the lesson, as they articulated when asked about their work and what they had learned. ● Students report that although not all students are always engaged, they routinely feel challenged by their coursework. ● During a classroom observation, as students were leaving, the teacher asked questions to review student content knowledge related to the Civil Rights Movement. ● Students in the African dance class were engaged and connected to the music and choreography; all students were eager to fully participate and take risks; moreover, to try and fail at new moves and embrace the learning process. ● In all classrooms observed, 75%-100% of students are engaged with the learning process, tasks, and materials.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In all classrooms observed, 75%-100% of students interact with each other and their teacher. ● Teachers and school leaders cite a push for vigor in the classroom, as opposed to rigor. There is evidence of common language around what vigor means, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pushing students to their full potential ○ Making excellence the standard ○ Differentiating instruction through the use of centers ○ Project-based learning (PBL)
	<p><i>Supports for Special Populations</i> There is a strategy in action for ensuring that special populations of students—including students with disabilities and ELLs— are accurately identified, and receive integrated, inclusive, and high-quality instructional support. Students’ progress is monitored to ensure that they are moving expediently towards success in an inclusion environment. A variety of models and supports, including interventions, ensure students are adequately challenged and ultimately successful.</p>	<p>2: Mostly Meets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The ELL population is low at the school; however, translation services are provided to students and parents who need it. This support is provided through Google Translate or a contracted translator who comes onsite. ● Autism support is available in three classes; there is a district coordinator who oversees this work. ● Teachers note that a majority of the students with IEPs come to the school with these plans already in place; however, there is not a set of processes that is clear to teachers and support staff to coordinate efforts to support these students to ensure that they receive high-quality instructional support. ● Staff report that support for exceptional education teachers from all staff and administrators is meaningful. ● Teachers report that in some instances, a student may have a language-based IEP. In these cases, external support is typically contracted for two days per week. ● Teachers report that external behavioral supports for students with disabilities that were in place have been terminated as of December 2019. There is not a clear plan to provide additional support in this area. ● Whereas the LINC program is reviewed highly by most teachers, some report that LINC does not have SPED staff; so some students are not able to access that support.

Element	At Highest Performing Schools	Rating	Discussion of Evidence
<p>Collective Responsibility: The school faculty and staff ensure there is collective responsibility for both the quality of instruction and student learning and success.</p>	<p>Systems and Structures for School-wide Continuous Improvement Leadership effectively implements systems and structures to cultivate shared ownership for school-wide continuous improvement for both the quality of instruction and each students' learning. A representative group of building leaders, teachers, and staff (e.g., ILT) takes ownership for implementation and progress monitoring of school improvement.</p>	2: Mostly Meets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is an attendance committee in place to monitor attendance data. The team consists of the parent liaison, nurse, secretary, and counselor. ● There is a curriculum team responsible for creating materials and ensuring that lessons correlate to state standards and the school's monthly themes. ● There is a cross-functional Dream Team that meets weekly on Mondays and oversees general school operations. The team consists of two instructional paraprofessionals, the mentoring coordinator, cultural arts director, and parent liaison. ● The Leadership Team is made up of the principal, the VP, and a group of teachers who volunteered to participate. This team meets monthly to discuss general topics around improving instruction; yet it is not clear how this team translates its work to change teacher practice.
	<p>School-wide Beliefs and Trust Staff have, and inculcate in students, the belief that all students can and will learn. This motivates all to continuously improve teaching and learning. Staff demonstrate individual and collective responsibility for student learning and behavior that extends beyond individual classrooms or departments and permeates the school. Staff intentionally promote the success for all students, which results in all students feeling valued, supported, and challenged to learn in and out of school.</p> <p>Interactions between adults in the building are positive and supportive, resulting in a sense of trust and partnership among staff. Staff own the success of all students. And there is a shared culture of continuous improvement for all students, staff, and schoolwide success.</p>	3: Meets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff note that the school leader is understanding and has an open-door policy. ● All staff highlight building self-esteem and recognizing student gifts, abilities, and talents as core work. ● Staff and students report that the school is a validating environment. ● Staff report that their colleagues are supportive and encouraging. ● The majority of staff share a belief that all students can learn and be successful when provided with the appropriate support. ● Students overwhelmingly feel proud to attend the school and would recruit others to come, if given the opportunity. ● Teachers share a common focus on helping students become their best selves and being prepared for the next stage in life.

Element	At Highest Performing Schools	Rating	Discussion of Evidence
<p>Planning: Evidence-based, actionable improvement plans that address the root causes of low performance, informed by a review of existing conditions with input from school, district, and community stakeholders.</p>	<p>Planning Processes School stakeholders are actively engaged in evidence-based processes to identify and analyze root causes of low performance. These processes include honest conversations about how the school works and an examination of data, including disaggregated data. The processes produce no more than four major improvement strategies that planning participants believe can be implemented and will lead to substantial improvement.</p>	2: Mostly Meets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Leadership Team develops the SIP in May/June for the following school year, with the principal taking the lead writing role. The SIP is shared with the Title I director and refined as the new school year approaches. ● MAP Test data is used to develop the SIP. ● The SIP for this school year focuses on three major improvement areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Greater focus on and implementation of instructional improvement strategies, methods, topics and consistent professional collaboration ○ Greater use of data to drive instructional design and approaches, including frequent and consistent monitoring of student progress ○ Instructional Interventionists should focus on below basic bubble students and IEP students ● Although there is evidence that a team of school leaders, teachers, support staff, parents, and district personnel participated in the needs assessment that led to the development of SIP priorities, the extent to which parents and teachers are able to provide input into the development of the plan itself is unclear.
	<p>The School Improvement Plan The school has one evidence-based, equity-focused actionable school improvement plan that addresses the root causes of low performance. The school plan focuses the school's energy and resources on no more than four strategies that will impact the instructional core and increase student learning. The plan identifies a set of action steps for each strategy, and, for each action step, assigns responsibility, provides a timeline, and identifies critical milestones. Teachers in the school can describe the school</p>	2: Mostly Meets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is one SIP that highlights prioritized needs for three specific student subgroups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students with IEPs, who receive services from a resource teacher ○ Students in the Exceptional Education classrooms, who will be taking the MAP Test ○ Bubble students at the below basic level, approaching the basic level ● The SIP focuses on three strategies to increase student learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meeting in PLCs to review data and discuss ways to improve scores on the ELA, Math and Science MAP Test and on the i-Ready test

<p>Planning, continued.</p>	<p>improvement strategies and explain how they expect the strategies to lead to improvement.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creating formative assessments for Communication Arts, Mathematics and Science ○ Improving student attendance ● For each action step, there are assigned responsibilities, timelines, and critical milestones that have been identified. ● Some teachers are able to name focusing on Tier 3/"bubble" students, improving attendance, and developing formative assessments as improvement priorities; however, most teacher highlight a range of other priorities, including: instilling pride and building student self-esteem
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Element	At Highest Performing Schools	Rating	Discussion of Evidence
<p>Performance Management: Consistent processes for using data to measure both implementation and outcomes to determine what's working and inform efforts to improve.</p>	<p>Plan Implementation & Management A team of school leaders meets frequently and regularly to manage plan implementation and impact with a focus on the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Have we done what we said we would do in the plan? If not, why not?</i> ● <i>Is it making a difference? What's the evidence?</i> ● <i>What do we have to do differently?</i> 	<p>0: Not Meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Although there are several school teams that review data, there is currently no group organized to monitor SIP strategy implementation and impact. ● Staff note that since the budget needed for some SIP priorities became unavailable, attendance is the primary component of the plan that is monitored regularly.
	<p>Monitors Key Indicators to Inform Decisions and Actions The school identifies and monitors a limited number of leading and lagging indicators to measure schoolwide progress, early warning signs, and/or plan next steps. Data is relevant, timely, accessible, accurate, and disaggregated by subgroup. There are clear roles and responsibilities for data collection and reporting. Teams regularly analyze data to identify disproportionality, identify root causes, establish key actions, and track progress of action items for continuous improvement.</p>	<p>1: Somewhat Meets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The PST monitors student behavior and academic performance on an ongoing basis. ● The attendance team monitors student attendance on an ongoing basis. ● It is not evident that disaggregated student data is reviewed by any established team. It is not clear how the school monitors schoolwide at-risk/early warning sign indicators to determine next steps.

Element	At Highest Performing Schools	Rating	Discussion of Evidence
<p>Partnering: <i>Partnerships that help the school meet the multiple needs of teachers and students.</i></p>	<p>Family and Community Engagement The school operates with the understanding that students' most important influencer and advocate are their families. The school intentionally builds community and family partnerships that honor and recognize families' existing knowledge and skills. The school connects with and engages families through intentional programming (e.g series of family nights), regular two-way dialogue in family accessible languages, and capacity building (e.g. Parent Liaisons and Parents-as-Teachers program) designed to strengthen family-school partnership and further student learning including in the creation of student academic, college, and career plans. Staff have respect and knowledge of cultural norms and act in ways that are welcoming and responsive to students and their families.</p>	3: Meets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Families view AC Prep teachers as innovative and caring, and the majority of families report feeling welcome in the school. ● The parent liaison works to ensure that teachers, students, and families all have deep connections in the building. ● Weekly Harambee sessions are opportunities for families to engage with the school and to expand school culture and pride. ● Families are invited to participate along with students in monthly themed projects, such as the Harlem Bridge and the Kwanzaa Village. ● There is a school advisory committee (SAC) that meets monthly to raise concerns and voice opinions about the school. The SAC is composed of families, the parent liaison, and the Local Investment Commission (LINC) coordinator. ● Families and students report receiving school communications from a variety of sources, including parent-teacher conferences, Tyler SIS, SeeSaw, Class Dojo, Google Classroom, and flyers, emails, and robocalls.
	<p>Strategic Partnerships The school has a limited number of community and business partnerships that support specific school and student needs, such as providing students with real-world application opportunities, college and career exploration, and rewards for positive student behavior. Students have equitable access to resources and partnerships. The school regularly reviews the effectiveness of partnership programs and makes changes as needed to meet student needs. Partnerships are actively managed to streamline efforts and impact.</p>	2: Mostly Meets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Available partnerships include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), with programming for students in grades 3-5 ○ Local churches ○ Boy Scouts ○ The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art ○ Jackson County Links ○ STEM Alliance ○ Individual community members; for example, one who works with students to develop community gardens ● There is a lack of clarity around how the school evaluates the impact of partnerships. Staff report that some partners drift away on their own, while other staff suggest that students and families provide informal feedback on partnerships. ● Not all students have access to LINC services, as there are no SPED teachers.

Element	At Highest Performing Schools	Rating	Discussion of Evidence
<p>Conditions: Sufficient school-level control over people, time, money and program to address the root causes of low performance to ensure all students can succeed.</p>	<p>Larger systems, structures, and practices (e.g. district, union, state, etc.) enable school-level control of conditions necessary to implement the plan and address the root causes of low performance: The district recognizes that the school is the unit of improvement and allows for flexibility in the use of people, time, funding, and program so that the school can meet the needs of all students. Systems and structures are clear and aligned so that principals can focus on the success of all students. The district provides school leaders with the necessary support and ongoing capacity-building to achieve school priorities.</p>	<p>1: Somewhat Meets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff report that district leadership and staff do not have a clear understanding of what all is involved in providing an African-centered education. Staff describe the district perspective on the AC Prep model as “just an area of interest” rather than “a way of doing things” with a methodological approach. ● Staff note that although signature schools get signature school funding (\$124K per year), the level of funding has been the same for the past several years; meanwhile, staff salaries have increased; this, programming, and funding for materials has gone down to cover increased salary and benefits costs. ● Staff note that some components of the school improvement plan are not able to be implemented due to promised funding not being allocated. For example, funding for tutoring/interventionists for “bubble”/below basic was reportedly redirected for unknown reasons.
	<p>Sufficient school leader authority over conditions to implement the plan and address the root causes of low performance: The principal has the authority to create staff configurations and work assignments in alignment with the school’s instructional model, design the right positions, and fill positions with the right people to do their most effective work. The principal has the authority to make changes to the school schedule such as PLCs, interventions, and/or other school-based professional development activities so that the school can meet the needs of all students. The principal has the authority to align the school’s financial resources with school plan priorities. The principal has sufficient authority to shape teaching approaches and related services around the school’s mission and the needs of all students.</p>	<p>1: Somewhat Meets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff believe that leaders are able to hire personnel that best meet school and student needs. ● Staff note that areas of focus for SIP strategies are prescribed by district personnel. ● Staff indicate that while the school receives a total budget, there is no space to advocate for things that the school needs. ● Current interventionists are only able to provide support for grades K-2. ● School leadership develops the school calendar based on the district calendar, with consultation from the school counselor. This calendar is driven by monthly African-centered themes. ● Staff indicate having sufficient authority to arrange the school schedule to meet school needs, with the exception of school start and stop times.

<p>Conditions, continued.</p>	<p>Enrollment and Configuration: School configuration and/or application and student enrollment processes enable equitable access to a complete feeder. Families have data and access to make informed choices regarding the school/program that best meets their students' needs and interests. Principals have the ability to recruit students to their school and recruitment processes are equitable. The district and school principal cultivate a distinct, consistent brand presence for the school, resulting in positive stakeholder perceptions.</p>	<p>1: Somewhat Meets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students apply to AC Prep from all over the KC area. The application process is as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is a district application (through the central office) for AC Prep. This process starts in December, which is earlier than other schools in the district. ○ As of mid-January 2020, parents were still applying for admission for their children. ○ Students must meet a residency requirement. ○ Over the summer, school personnel set up interviews with Families and students. ● Families report—and staff confirm—that the application process looks different depending on when students enter the school (e.g., some requirements are age/grade-specific, essay requirements for older students). ● For K students, there is an in-depth screening process. Points of inquiry include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How far can the student count? ○ Can the student write his or her name? ○ Does the student know uppercase and lowercase letters? ○ Does the student know colors? ● There is reportedly some preference in place for siblings of students at AC Prep; however, staff note that there have been some instances in which siblings were not admitted. ● Staff and families note that the enrollment is not always fair and equitable to all students and families. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some students are reportedly placed in the school, despite not meeting the stated requirements; it is not always clear to staff how these assignments are made. Moreover, families and teachers suggest that such students are often disruptive to the learning environment. ○ While most families are happy their children enrolled at AC Prep, some families note their children were placed there despite different preferences selected during the application process. ● Families in focus groups agree that the application process starts in December, but there is uncertainty about when the
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<p>Conditions, continued.</p>			<p>application process closes (e.g., some name February and others name March 20th as the cutoff date).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some families perceive that the late cutoff date limits the school's time/capacity to prepare for the following year and hinders budget preparation. ● A majority of families perceive that the district does not adequately support AC Prep and its stakeholders as it does for other schools (like Lincoln), suggesting that the school is treated differently because a majority of the students are African American. This perception is driven, in part, by a reported move to remove signature programming from the school in recent years. ● Families express a desire for increased school marketing/recruiting efforts and report learning about grade configurations and school options in a variety of ways, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Going directly to the KCPS central office to inquire ○ Word of mouth (from other parents, teachers, and community members) ○ Individual parent research online ○ Great Schools, an organization that sets up school tours for parents ● Families report that there is a lack of district-level cohesiveness in the grade/theme pathways for students, and a majority of families perceive that there are no great school options available to them when their children leave AC Prep. ● The school participates in all district-required school fairs and participates in the Kindergarten Roundup in order to recruit students. AC Prep reportedly attracts students from Pre-K centers/schools. ● Staff note that the district has done some radio broadcasts for this school in particular to help increase enrollment.
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Element	At Highest Performing Schools	Rating	Discussion of Evidence
<p>Leadership: Principal who can manage and communicate complexity while maintaining focus on the school's vision and key priorities.</p>	<p>Stakeholder Investment and Mobilization Principal effectively constructs and adapts communication and actions to inspire and invest diverse stakeholders in a clear, compelling, and inclusive vision for change. Staff receive timely and transparent updates on progress toward the vision. Staff understand the vision, their role in the vision, and rationale for changes. Principal builds a culture of collective responsibility for the success of every student by mobilizing and empowering teams that support and sustain the vision over time.</p>	2: Mostly Meets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff share that school leadership has built collective responsibility around focusing on vigor, rather than rigor, in the classroom. ● Staff report that they often rely on members of the Dream Team to stay informed about what is going on in the school. ● Staff report that the principal encourages a positive pressure to buy into the school theme; that is, there is an acknowledgement that if staff don't participate in the theme, then students don't feel as connected to the school. ● School leaders provide opportunities for staff to build fellowship and eat together; staff report connecting independently outside of work hours. ● It is not evident that there are structures in place to bring staff along the journey as the school makes progress toward the vision.
	<p>Sustained Focus on Results Principal models and sets clear expectations for all staff, creating a culture of accountability for the learning of all students. Principal prioritizes efforts that advance the progress of all students and school goals. Principal effectively advocates for the school needs with the district and reaches beyond the building to pursue needed resources and bring in best practices in order to meet the needs of all students.</p>	2: Mostly Meets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff report that school leadership expects the academic bar to be set high for students; thus, there is an expectation for staff to aspire to continuously improve their instructional practices. ● Teachers report that school leadership models how to infuse themes into the curriculum. ● Staff report that although school leadership is willing to advocate for them, there are perceived limits on that advocacy due to a lack of district support.

Leadership, continued.	<p>Talent Management Principal works with the district to forecast staffing needs and recruit quality, diverse candidates. Principal implements formal and rigorous staff selection, hiring, and induction processes. Hiring and assignment processes match staff to specific positions based on skill. Positions have clear roles, responsibilities, and performance expectations that align with the school's mission and plan, and hold staff to the success of all students. All teachers receive accurate and specific feedback through the evaluation process. Principal is intentional about retaining high-performing staff and designing and implementing staff succession plans.</p>	2: Mostly Meets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School leadership uses the same job pool that is accessible to all other schools (TalentED). ● During the interview process, school leadership explains what all is involved in the AC Prep model to potential candidates and gauges their interest and investment in the theme. ● The principal and VP each conduct 15 walkthroughs per month (down from 30 per month) and provide actionable feedback to teachers through My Learning Plan; teachers report that this feedback is useful in improving instructional practice. ● The majority of teachers report receiving accurate and specific feedback through the evaluation process. ● It is unclear how school leadership works to retain high-performing staff; however, the majority of staff share that they enjoy working at AC Prep. ● Roles and responsibilities of school leaders and support staff are reportedly clear to the majority of teachers; however, not all teachers have a clear understanding of all the supports that are available.
	<p>Resource Maximization Principal is adept at maximizing resources to meet the needs of all students and accomplish school goals. Principal demonstrates persistence, ingenuity, and resourcefulness in identifying untapped resources in the areas of time, money, programs, and partnerships. Those resources advance outcomes for every student.</p>	2: Mostly Meets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The majority of staff report that the principal is creative and resourceful in aligning resources to meet student needs. ● Families perceive that the principal is a strong advocate for students and the school and is limited only by district shortcomings. Some families point to a late student enrollment count as a factor that limited the principal's ability to budget effectively. ● The school provides financial incentives to both high-performing and lower-performing students through teacher-led fundraising efforts approved by school leadership.