

Office of the Legislative Auditor General
Report to the UTAH LEGISLATURE





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AUGUST 20, 2024

TO: THE UTAH STATE LEGISLATURE

Transmitted herewith is our report:

"A Systematic Performance Audit of Rich School District" [Report #2024-10].

An audit summary is found at the front of the report. The scope and objectives of the audit are included in the audit summary. In addition, each chapter has a corresponding chapter summary found at its beginning.

This audit was requested by the Legislative Audit Subcommittee.

Utah Code 36-12-15.3(2) requires the Office of the Legislative Auditor General to designate an audited entity's chief executive officer (CEO). Therefore, the designated CEO for Rich School District is Superintendent Dale Lamborn. Superintendent Lamborn has been notified that they must comply with the audit response and reporting requirements as outlined in this section of *Utah Code*.

We will be happy to meet with appropriate legislative committees, individual legislators, and other state officials to discuss any item contained in the report in order to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations.

Sincerely,

Kade R. Minchey, CIA, CFE

Auditor General

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AUDIT SUMMARY

REPORT 2024-10 | AUGUST 2024

Office of the Legislative Auditor General | Kade R. Minchey, Auditor General



SYSTEMATIC PERFORMANCE AUDIT

AUDIT REQUEST

The Legislative Audit
Subcommittee requested
and prioritized a systemic
performance audit of Rich
School District. This is the
fifth audit of Local
Education Agencies (LEAs).
This type of audit has an
initially large scope that is
reduced as risks are
identified.

BACKGROUND

Rich School District (SD) is a rural district in northern Utah made up of four schools and 522 students. Overall, the district performs well on assessments compared to its peer districts and state performance targets. Adjustments in areas such as strategic planning, instructional coaching, and professional learning communities (PLCs) will help improve student outcomes.

RICH SCHOOL DISTRICT

S KEY FINDINGS

- 1.1 Rich SD is Exceeding Statewide Targets for Acadience but Can Improve on RISE and ACT Assessments.
- ✓ 1.2 Lower Proficiency Students Are Not Sufficiently Advancing in Rich School District.
- **1.3** Lack of Advancement for Lower Proficiency Students is Also a Statewide Concern.
- 2.1 Additions to the Strategic Plan Can Help Rich SD Better Achieve Its Specific Goals.
- **3.1** Rich SD Can Benefit from a Systematic Coaching and Evaluation Framework.
- **3.2** Rich SD Should Monitor Progress Within Instructional Coaching Frameworks, Specifically the Impact Cycle Model.
- **4.1** Rich SD Would Benefit from Coordinating Professional Learning Among its Educators.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend Rich SD:

- ✓ 1.1 Assess the reasons why low proficiency student are not progressing.
- **✓ 1.2** Track progress of low proficiency students.
- **2.1** Redesign the strategic plan to incorporate missing elements.
- **✓ 3.1** Develop and implement an instructional coaching playbook.
- **✓ 3.2** Formally implement and document the coaching impact cycle.
- ✓ 3.3 Document evaluations of instructional coaching.
- ✓ 3.4 Conduct a need assessment for additional coachign staff.
- **✓ 4.1** Coordinate and schedule subject level PLCs across district.
- **4.2** Assign substitute teachers for PLC time.
- **4.3** Require instructional coaches to facilitate PLCs.

LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR GENERAL

AUDIT SUMMARY

CONTINUED



Lower Proficiency Students Can Better Progress in Rich School District

Overall Rich SD performs fairly well on assessments compared to peer districts and state performance targets but can improve the movement of lower proficiency students. A large share of those students who test as 'Below Proficient,' remain 'Below Proficient' in the following year. This is concerning, but is also a statewide problem.

Rich School District Can Benefit from Strategic Plan Updates

Rich SD could advance its goals of collective efficacy, student advancement, and student outcomes by adding essential elements to its strategic plan. The district's strategic plan is underdeveloped because its administration and board created the plan as a mission statement, rather than a more complete strategic plan.

Percent of Rich School District Students Remaining 'Below Proficient'

We acknowledge that Rich SD is a high performing district. However, as shown in the graph to the right, the majority of students with a status of 'Below Proficient' in 2022 maintained that status in 2023. Interventions for lower proficiency students are not resulting in better student advancement.

Rich School District Can Improve Its Instructional Coaching Strategic Framework and Guidance

Rich SD could better create district wide alignment of instructional coaching and centralize the highest-impact teaching strategies by creating an instructional coaching playbook. The school district does not have a cohesive understanding of instructional coaching and has not prioritized a formal framework for the role.

Rich School District Would Benefit from Coordinating Professional Learning Among Its Educators

More fully implementing professional learning communities within the district could increase data-driven decisions and provide a more strategic approach to district-wide goals, thereby increasing educational excellence. This is one area where the district's administration and teachers can align the goals and mission established in its strategic plan with practice.

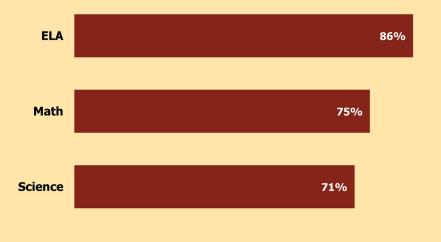


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CHAPTER 1 Summary

Lower Proficiency Students Can Better Progress in Rich School District



BACKGROUND

Rich School District is a rural district made up of four schools and 522 students. This chapter provides an overview of Rich School District's assessment performance compared to state performance targets established in HB 1 Public Education Base Budget Amendments (2024), as well as the performance of the district's lower proficiency students.

FINDING 1.1

Rich School District Is Exceeding Statewide Targets for Acadience but Can Improve on RISE and ACT Assessments.

NO RECOMMENDATION

FINDING 1.2

Lower Proficiency Students Are Not Sufficiently Advancing in Rich School District.

RECOMMENDATION 1.1

Rich School District should assess the reasons why there is a high percentage of lowest proficiency level students not progressing towards proficiency.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2

Rich School District should track the progress of the lowest proficiency level students.

FINDING 1.3

Lack of Advancement for Lower Proficiency Students is Also a Statewide Concern.

NO RECOMMENDATION



CONCLUSION

Adjustments in areas such as strategic planning, instructional coaching, and professional learning communities (as recommended in chapters 2, 3, and 4 of this report) could streamline data analysis and district-wide goals with the result of improving student outcomes.





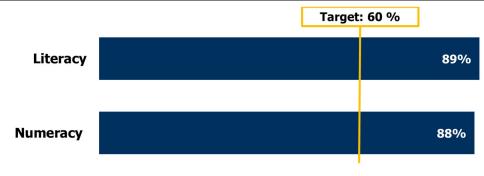
Chapter 1 Lower Proficiency Students Can Better Progress in Rich School District

Rich School District is a rural district in northern Utah made up of four schools and 522 students. This chapter provides an overview of Rich School District's assessment performance compared to state performance targets and focuses on how the district's lower proficiency students are performing. Overall, the district performs fairly well on assessments compared to its peer districts and state performance targets but can improve the movement of lower proficiency students. The remainder of the report shows that adjustments in strategic planning, instructional coaching, and professional learning communities could develop a greater focus on data analysis and meeting district-wide goals, resulting in improved student outcomes.

1.1 Rich School District Is Exceeding Statewide Targets for Acadience but Can Improve on RISE and ACT Assessments

HB 1 Public Education Base Budget Amendments (2024) established state assessment performance targets for all major student assessments. The state target for the Acadience assessment, an assessment for grades 1-3, is set at 60 percent of students should be 'Typical' or higher. Rich School District exceeded this statewide target for Acadience assessments in the 2023 school year. This data is shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Rich School District Exceeded Targets for Acadience Assessment (Grades 1-3) for School Year 2023. Rich School District exceeded the legislatively mandated target of 60% of students who should be at 'Typical' or higher for Acadience testing in Literacy by 29 percentage points and Numeracy by 28 percentage points.

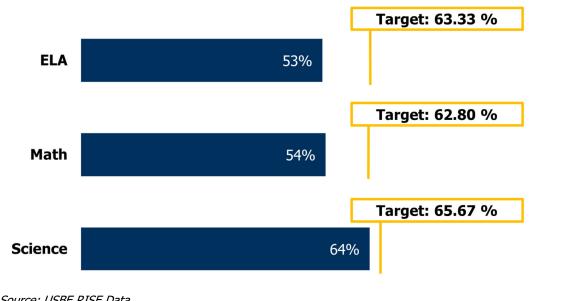


Source: USBE Acadience Data.



HB 1 (2024) also set percentage targets of 'Proficient' or higher for the Readiness Improvement Success Empowerment (RISE) assessment, an assessment for grades 3-8 for all subjects. Rich School District performed well on the RISE assessments in 2023 but had some areas for improvement toward the new state target. Rich School District also performed well compared to the state averages, which were 45 percent for English Language Arts (ELA), 45 percent for Math, and 50 percent for Science. This data is shown in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2 Rich School District RISE Assessment (Grades 3-8*) for School Year 2023 Exceeds State Averages but Falls Short of Statewide Targets. Rich School District is about 10 percentage points behind statewide targets for ELA, 9 percentage points behind targets for Math, and 2 percentage points behind statewide targets for Science.





The state target for the American College Testing (ACT), an assessment for grade 11, is set at 74 percent of students testing above a score of 18. Rich School District needs to improve as students are 15 percentage points below the state target. Rich School District also performed below the state average of 61 percent for ACT. This data is shown in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3 Rich School District ACT (Grade 11) Assessment for School Year 2023 Falls Short of the State Average and Statewide Targets. Scores are 15 percentage points below the statewide target.



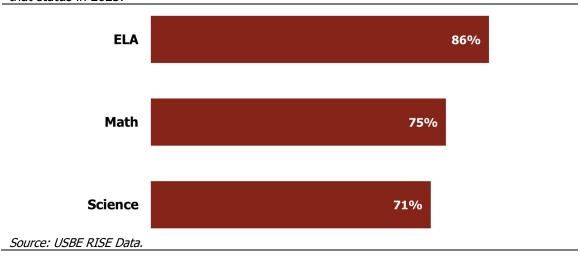
Source: USBE ACT Data.



1.2 Lower Proficiency Students Are Not Sufficiently Advancing in Rich School District

While Rich School District performs fairly well on statewide assessments, there is a significant percentage of lower proficiency students not advancing in proficiency. Interventions for lower proficiency students are not resulting in better student advancement. A majority of Rich School District students who were below proficiency in the 2022 school year continued to maintain a low proficiency status in the 2023 school year. This majority ranged from 71 to 86 percent in each subject. This data follows a precedent: from 2019 to 2023, Rich School District students who maintained a low proficiency status from one year to the next ranged from 71 to 86 percent for ELA, 73 to 80 percent for Math, and 49 to 71 percent for Science. This indicates that the non-progression of lower proficiency students is a persistent issue pre- and post-COVID. Figure 1.4 illustrates the percent of Rich School District's 'Below Proficient' students in 2022 that maintained the same status in 2023 (see Appendix A for 2022 to 2023 proficiency movement for Rich School District).

Figure 1.4 Percent of Rich School District Students Remaining 'Below Proficient' Standards. The Majority of students with a status of 'Below Proficient' in 2022 maintained that status in 2023.

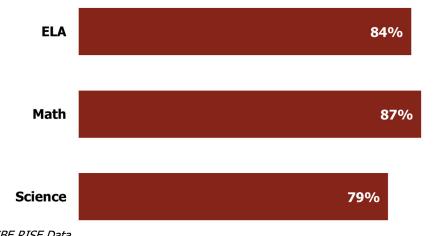




1.3 Lack of Advancement for Lower Proficiency Students is Also a Statewide Concern

The lack of advancement for 'Below Proficient' students is also a statewide concern. Interventions for lower proficiency students are not resulting in better student advancement across the state. In the 2023 school year, the percentage of statewide students who maintained a low proficiency status from one year to the next ranged from 79 to 84 percent in each subject. In April 2024, the Legislative Audit Subcommittee prioritized an audit on *Student Performance on Statewide Tests*, which will provide a more thorough review of Utah students' statewide assessment performance. Figure 1.5 illustrates the percent of Utah's 'Below Proficient' students in 2022 that maintained the same status in 2023 (see Appendix B for 2022 to 2023 proficiency movement for Rich School District).

Figure 1.5 Percent of Statewide Students Remaining Below Proficient Standards. The majority of Utah students with a status of 'Below Proficient' in 2022 maintained that status in 2023.



Source: USBE RISE Data.

The audit team was not able to fully determine why such a high percentage of lower proficiency students within Rich School District and the state are not advancing towards proficiency from year to year. Overall, we believe that making improvements within the district's strategic planning, instructional coaching, and professional learning communities, as recommended in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of this report, will likely have positive effects on student outcomes. Rich School District should focus efforts on identifying the cause along with other improvements suggested in the audit. Furthermore, Rich School District should track changes in the data outlined in this chapter to ensure progress.



RECOMMENDATION 1.1

Rich School District should assess the reasons why there is a high percentage of lowest proficiency level students not progressing towards proficiency.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2

Rich School District should track the progress of the lowest proficiency level students.



CHAPTER 2 Summary

Rich School District Can Benefit from Strategic Plan Updates



BACKGROUND

Rich School District developed a strategic plan with identified goals in 2020. The district participated in a collective efficacy training which motivated the current strategic plan and mission statement.

FINDING 2.1

Additions to the Strategic Plan Can Help Rich School District Better Achieve Its Goals.

RECOMMENDATION 2.1

Rich School District should redesign its strategic plan to incorporate measurable outcomes/objectives, data and metrics, monitoring and evaluation, a timeline, and professional development.

How does the organization achieve its goals?



OBJECTIVES

Rich School District should incorporate measurable objectives and clear goals that could make tracking progress and assessing the plan's success easier.



PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Rich School District should incorporate measurable data and key performance indicators that could help to assess the plan's effectiveness.



STRATEGIES

Rich School District should establish a system of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the plan that could help with accountability and stakeholder communication.



ANNUAL WORK PLAN

Rich School District should develop a timeline that could create a sense of urgency and accountability.



PREOFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Although not a specified strategic plan element, Rich School District should include professional development into its plan which it could help equip staff and teachers to better implement the goals in the plan.



CONCLUSION

The strategic plan's elements are underdeveloped because the district's administration and board created the plan as a mission statement rather than a more complete strategic plan and objectives and other essential accountability factors. Including the elements mentioned above can further the value and utility of the plan by providing clear and measurable goals related to professional learning communities and instructional coaching, with the overall purpose of advancing student education and outcomes.





Chapter 2 Rich School District Can Benefit from Strategic Plan Updates

2.1 Additions to the Strategic Plan Can Help Rich School District Better Achieve Its Specific Goals

Rich School District could advance its goals of collective efficacy, student advancement, and student outcomes by adding essential elements to its strategic plan. Strategic planning is a long-term and future-oriented process of assessment, goal setting, and decision-making with accompanying strategies and performance measures. The district developed the strategic plan more as a mission statement with goals but should incorporate additional elements of a strategic plan. Rich School District has established goals, but its plan is missing essential elements for effective planning, such as measurable outcomes/objectives, a timeline, and data and metrics. The omission of these elements may have resulted in a less strategic use of tools for ensuring every student has access to quality educators, including instructional coaching and professional learning communities (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 of this report). Therefore, Rich School District should redesign its strategic plan to incorporate these crucial missing elements.

Rich School District Should Add Several Strategic Plan Elements that Would Provide Better Strategies for Achieving Education Goals

Effective strategic plans shape the vision of an organization and direct actions to accountability. The Office of the Legislative Auditor General (LAG) has developed a *Best Practice Handbook* that includes strategic plan development. This handbook can be used as a resource for Rich School District to define, develop, and implement a more thorough strategic plan. The following graphic presents the eight elements of a strategic plan as discussed in LAG's *Best Practice Handbook*:



What is the organization?



VISION

What we aspire to: motivates and inspires change from "here" to "there."



MISSION

What we do and how we do it: identifies our reason for being and how



CORE VALUES

Enduring, non-negotiable principles that we are truly committed: provides a purpose-driven foundation to guide our attitudes and behaviors.

What does the organization want to accomplish?



GOALS

Long-term outcomes that lead to the fulfillment of the vision: aligns efforts towards a worthy end.

How does the organization achieve its goals?



OBJECTIVES

A mid-range target that connects high-level goals and tactical strategies: highlights focus areas to assist in prioritizing resources to achieve the goal.



STRATEGIES

Short-term tactics to implement our goals: provides a plan of action.



PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Quantifiable representation of a result or goal: coordinates strategy resources, responsibilities, and timeline.



ANNUAL WORK PLAN

Map for strategic plan: outlines strategies to be accomplished, budget and resources needed, timeline, and champions for the strategy.

Sources: Auditor generated from <u>LAG Best Practices Handbook</u> and GOPB Guide to Strategic Planning.



Together, these components can make an actionable plan that guides decision-making at every level of an organization. An organization's direction and focus may be less clear without a fully developed strategic plan that includes these eight essential components. While the effort required to develop such a plan is substantial, it is well worth it. This exercise can also help to promote effective work, facilitate quality performance measures, and improve strategic budgeting.

Rich School District could advance its goals of improving collective efficacy, student advancement, and student outcomes by adding several essential elements to its strategic plan. The motivation for Rich School District's current strategic plan was a 2020 collective teacher efficacy training. Collective teacher efficacy is the collective belief of faculty staff in their shared ability to positively affect students. Rich School District has made strides towards improving collective teacher efficacy with the current strategic plan and the meaningful goals it has identified. However, the district's plan is missing many crucial elements. The following graphic takes Rich School District's initial strategic plan elements and places them within the template suggested by the *Best Practices Handbook*. Areas in red highlight elements that are currently missing and emphasize their importance towards further progress for the district.



What is the organization?



VISION

In partnership with the entire community, Rich School District will accept the responsibility to empower learners to attain excellence through citizenship, wellness, collaborative teamwork, and academic excellence.



MISSION

Empower learners to attain excellence.



CORE VALUES

The core values are citizenship, wellness, collaborative teamwork, and academic excellence.

What does the organization want to accomplish?



GOALS

Academic Excellence: Cultivate foundational academic skills of literacy and numeracy that will enable learners to think critically, problem-solve, and make a positive contribution to

Collaboration and Teamwork: We value all stakeholders as we work together to bring positive synergy to our community.

Wellness: Develop self-awareness, self-regulation, self-advocacy skills, and knowledge necessary to maintain healthy lifestyles that provide balance in life and improve physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being.

Citizenship: commitment to make our community a better place.

How does the organization achieve its goals?



OBJECTIVES

Rich School District should incorporate measurable objectives and clear goals that could make tracking progress and assessing the plan's success easier.



PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Rich School District should incorporate measurable data and key performance indicators that could help to assess the plan's effectiveness.



STRATEGIES

Rich School District should establish a system of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the plan that could help with accountability and stakeholder communication.



ANNUAL WORK PLAN

Rich School District should develop a timeline that could create a sense of urgency and accountability.



PREOFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Although not a specified strategic plan element, Rich School District should include professional development into its plan which it could help equip staff and teachers to better implement the goals in the plan.

Source: Auditor generated.



Rich School District's Strategic Plan Should Be More Developed and Have Greater Stakeholder Involvement

The strategic plan elements are underdeveloped because the district's administration and board created the plan as a mission statement, rather than a more complete strategic plan with objectives and other essential accountability factors shown in the previous graphic. Making further adjustments to the plan could allow for progress monitoring which would better advance Rich School District's goal to increase collective efficacy. Including the elements mentioned above could elevate the value and utility of the document by providing clear and measurable goals related to professional learning communities and instructional coaching, with the overall purpose of advancing student education and outcomes. For example, in our Office's audit on Weber School District it was recommended to revise Weber School District's strategic plan to include measurable objectives and a process for monitoring and evaluating, similar to a strategic plan at Roy High School that was successful at improving graduation rates. The Weber School District board approved the incorporation of those elements into the district strategic plan to better align the district and board priorities.

Rich School District may also benefit from increased accountability surrounding its mission and strategic plan by incorporating greater stakeholder involvement. Specifically, Rich School District teachers have not had meaningful exposure to the strategic plan's goals, which may have contributed to the underdevelopment of the plan. With more attention and more frequent review, the strategic plan would likely be sharpened and improved periodically.

Rich School
District teachers
have not had
meaningful
exposure the
strategic plan's
goals, which may
have contributed
to the
underdevelopment
of the plan.

Rich School District can have a more robust strategic plan by having clearer milestones for progress and using relevant data in measuring progress towards identified goals. As will be discussed in the following Chapters 3 and 4, the impact of omissions in the current strategic plan may have resulted in not strategically using essential resources. These resources include instructional coaching and professional learning communities, both of which are tools for ensuring every student has access to quality educators. A renewed strategic plan has the potential to be the foundation to strengthen such practices.



RECOMMENDATION 2.1

Rich School District should redesign its strategic plan to incorporate measurable outcomes/objectives, data and metrics, monitoring and evaluation, a timeline, and professional development.



CHAPTER 3 Summary

Rich School District Can Improve Its Instructional Coaching Strategic Framework and Guidance



BACKGROUND

Instructional coaches play a crucial role in helping teachers develop professional skills, set meaningful goals, and ultimately improve learning for their students. For instructional coaches to thrive they need a strong system of support with established practices and leadership in place to support their professional development.

FINDING 3.1

Rich School District Can Benefit from a Systematic Coaching and Evaluation Framework.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1

Rich School District should develop an instructional coaching playbook to ensure a systematic approach and use of coaching within each of the district's schools.

FINDING 3.2

Rich School District Should Monitor Progress Within Instructional Coaching Frameworks, Specifically the Impact Cycle.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2

Rich School District instructional coaching services should implement the impact cycle in a formal manner and adequately document instructional coaching work.

RECOMMENDATION 3.3

After developing an instructional coaching playbook (addressed in Recommendation 3.1) and formally implementing the impact cycle (addressed in Recommendation 3.2), Rich School District should document evaluations of the instructional coaching services in relation to the playbook and progress monitoring from the use of the impact cycle.

RECOMMENDATION 3.4

After developing an instructional coaching framework (addressed in Recommendation 3.1), Rich School District should conduct a needs assessment (documented findings and implementation plan) to determine whether the district should develop more subject based coaching and whether the district would benefit from hiring an additional instructional coach.



CONCLUSION

Creating an instructional coaching playbook for Rich School District would create district-wide alignment of instructional coaching and centralize the highest-impact teaching strategies. Additionally, instructional coaching documentation and progress monitoring, specifically of the impact cycle would not only help Rich School District to establish goal setting and strategy implementation for teachers, but also to evaluate instructional coaching.





Chapter 3 Rich School District Can Improve Its Instructional Coaching Strategic Framework and Guidance

3.1 Rich School District Can Benefit from a **Systematic Coaching and Evaluation Framework**

Rich School District (the district) could better create district-wide alignment of instructional coaching and centralize the highest-impact teaching strategies by creating an instructional coaching playbook. Instructional coaching helps teachers develop professional skills, set meaningful goals, and ultimately improve learning for their students. Instructional playbooks are organizational tools used to (1) identify high-impact teaching strategies and (2) explain those strategies so teachers and students can meet goals and outcomes. Rich School District does not currently utilize an instructional coaching playbook. The district does not have a cohesive understanding of instructional coaching and has not prioritized a formal framework for the role. Therefore, we recommend the district develop an instructional coaching framework to ensure a systematic approach and use of coaching within each of the district's schools.

Rich School District's Instructional Coaching Framework Is Not Systematic

Instructional Coaches play a crucial role in helping teachers develop professional skills, set meaningful goals, and ultimately improve learning for their students. For instructional coaches to thrive they need a strong system of support with established practices and leadership in place to support their professional development. Rich School District could maximize instructional coaching goals and objectives by:

- Updating the strategic plan as mentioned in Chapter 2 of this report.
- Defining clearly the role of the instructional coach in the district.
- Implementing a coaching framework and instructional playbook.

The infographic on the following page identifies seven key factors¹ that contribute to the success of instructional coaches. The seven success factors reveal the essential skills that a coach must develop and the various roles a coach has within the district.

¹ These success factors were created by Jim Knight and the Instructional Coaching Group, the leading experts in instructional coaching.



To further improve instructional coaching, school districts should implement an instructional playbook, which also serves to define the coaches' role.

Instructional coaches who understand their purpose increase the impact on educators and students. Consequently, there must be a shared, districtwide understanding of the role coaches play. Instructional playbooks are organizational tools that:

(1) identify high-impact teaching strategies, and (2) explain those strategies to teachers so they and their students can achieve meaningful goals.

One of the most important features of the instructional playbook is that it forces coaches and leaders to identify the highest-impact strategies among the many they are often confronted with. Within principal-led







THE SEVEN SUCCESS FACTORS

FOR INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING



IMPACT CYCLE

measurable and focused on

Source: Auditor generated from The Definitive Guide to Instructional Coaching: Seven Factors for Success, Jim Knight.

instructional teams, an instructional coach is expected to engage in tasks that directly impact teachers in improving student learning outcomes. A playbook is used to improve the coaching impact cycle,² which will be discussed in more detail in Finding 3.2 of this chapter.

² The impact cycle is an instructional coaching framework designed to guide educator's professional growth and development, aimed at improving teacher practice and student outcomes.



Rich School District's teachers frequently use and find value in instructional coaching. Coaching could be made even more valuable with a formal framework. The audit team observed 11 instructional coaching collaborations and interviewed 24 teachers from the district's four schools. About 58 percent of the interviewed teachers fully use the instructional coaching services provided by the district, while the others stated they informally use the coaching (stopping by the coach's office to ask a question) or not at all. Most of those teachers that use the coaching informally or not at all are secondary teachers.

Additionally, the audit team asked whether teachers review student data with the instructional coach. About 50 percent of the interviewed teachers stated they review data with the instructional coach, while the rest do not or did not comment on the topic. The majority of those teachers who do not review data with the instructional coach are teaching in secondary education. So, from our observations and interviews, the audit team concluded that the coaching is valuable to the district with most of the interviewed teachers using coaching. However, the schools' inconsistent use of data review and

coaching highlights the need for a playbook.

Rich School District has no playbook or formal framework for coaching, which has led to a lack of data-driven and streamlined coaching.

As previously mentioned, Rich School District does not currently utilize an instructional coaching playbook. The audit team interviewed four districts that are either peers or have a structured instructional coaching program. All the interviewed districts have some degree of guiding documents, ranging from guidance on the impact cycle to complete instructional playbooks, that help to facilitate the instructional coaching process.

We believe Rich School District has not implemented a playbook because leadership has not prioritized the alignment of coaching strategies with datadriven decisions and district-wide goals. While Rich School District acknowledges the importance of instructional coaching, the administration has not prioritized resources towards developing a coaching playbook, which has impacted the varying use of coaching in the district.

Without a playbook and a strong framework that clearly articulates the role of instructional coaching, coaches are more likely to be asked to act in ways that are inconsistent with coaching best practices. They may also encounter educators who are hesitant to work with them because they do not know what coaches do. Instructional coaches increase the impact on educators and students when coaches fully understand their purpose. Developing comprehensive instructional coaching materials requires intentional allocation of resources and consistent understanding and use of the coaching by leadership. Therefore, we recommend



that the Rich School District develop an instructional coaching framework to ensure a systematic approach and use of coaching within each of the district's schools.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1

Rich School District should develop and implement an instructional coaching playbook to ensure a systematic approach and use of coaching within each of the district's schools.

3.2 Rich School District Should Monitor **Progress Within Instructional Coaching Frameworks, Specifically the Impact Cycle Model**

Rich School District could better establish instructional coaching goals, strategies, and evaluations by documenting instructional coaching processes and monitoring progress, specifically with the impact cycle.³ The impact cycle is an instructional coaching framework designed to guide educator's professional growth and development, aimed at improving teacher practice and student outcomes. In using this cycle, coaches support teachers in creating and accomplishing goals aligned with the vision and expectations of the school and district. It is a systematic approach to fostering continuous improvement in teacher effectiveness. Rich School District instructional coaching does not fully utilize the impact cycle or deep data analysis when collaborating with teachers. The school district's instructional coaching capacity is limited due to the number of teachers it supports as well as the processes being less data-driven. Therefore, we recommend that Rich School District formally implement the impact cycle, evaluate the coaching services based on an instructional coaching playbook, and conduct a needs assessment of coaching services.

³ Both the coaching cycle and impact cycle are similar tools used nationally and with USBE. For this report we will use the term "impact cycle".



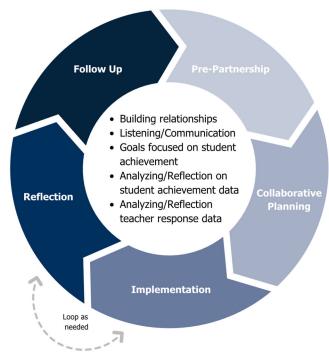
Implementation and Documentation of the Impact Cycle Would Help **Rich School District Progress Towards Strategic Goals**

Instructional coaching should follow the steps of the impact cycle illustrated to the right:

Instructional coaching documentation and progress monitoring—specifically monitoring of the impact cycle—not only helps to establish goals and strategy implementation through data review but also goals and strategy for evaluating instructional coaches. Coaches should strive to professionally support teachers in creating and accomplishing goals aligned with the vision and expectations of the school and district.

USBE has an instructional coaching program to ensure quality coaching in all Utah School Districts. Notably, Rich School District's instructional coach is endorsed through the USBE Instructional Coaching Program. This endorsement is intended to recognize the development of specific competencies required for an effective instructional coach to provide the needed

Instructional Coaching Impact Cycle



Source: Auditor generated from USBE.

support in charters, schools, and districts. Potential instructional coaches are trained on the foundations of instructional coaching, design (impact cycle), and assessment, as well as adult learning theory.

Rich School District instructional coaching services do not fully utilize the impact cycle or deep data analysis when collaborating with teachers. The audit team observed 11 instructional coaching collaborations. The collaborations ranged from data analysis, language essentials training, and the development of specific lesson plans. The coaching appeared to be used correctly, but there was no use of the impact cycle or any form of documentation during or after the collaborations. The lack of any documentation or use of the impact cycle is concerning because without it progress monitoring, strategic planning, and data-driven decisions are unlikely to occur. The audit team concluded from observations and documentation of scheduling that the instructional coach does not have sufficient time to complete the necessary documentation of the impact cycle.



Recommendation 3.4 states how Rich School District should address the instructional coaches' time constraints. However, we also recommend that the Rich School District instructional coaching services utilize the impact cycle in a formal way.

Data Analysis and Coaching Evaluations Would Help Rich School District Develop Strategies Towards Progress

Teachers and coaches need the feedback from frequently gathered student achievement data because teachers usually need to adjust their teaching strategies until they move students closer to district-wide goals. Teachers are more likely to change behavior as needed when they themselves have collected and analyzed the data on which the change is based. When possible, data should be:

- Chosen and gathered by the teacher
- Objective
- Gathered frequently
- Valid
- Reliable and mutually understood

As discussed in Finding 3.1 of this report, about 55 percent of Rich School District teachers stated that they review data with the instructional coach, while 45 percent said they do not. 4

Instructional coach evaluations should focus on how effectively coaches are implementing the impact cycle. However, to evaluate performance, leadership needs quality data through documentation and record-keeping. The lack of impact cycle use and any form of documentation can result in poor evaluation practices of coaches. Effective evaluations of instructional coaches are specific and grounded mostly in the use of the impact cycle. The impact cycle provides documentation, not only for better goal setting and strategy implementation by teachers, but also for evaluating the instructional coaches'

- Professional knowledge
- Instructional planning
- Instructional delivery
- Assessment of student learning
- Learning environment
- Professionalism

Rich School District does not effectively evaluate instructional coaching because it does not formally use the impact cycle.

⁴ Eight percent of teachers did not discuss the review of data with the instructional coach.



Student academic progress

Rich School District does not effectively evaluate instructional coaching because it does not formally use the impact cycle. Therefore, we recommend that after the district develops an instructional coaching playbook (addressed in Recommendation 3.1) and formally implement the impact cycle (addressed in Recommendation 3.2), that it should conduct formal evaluations of the instructional coaching services.

Needs Assessment Should Be Performed Due to Time Constraint

Instructional coaching plays a crucial role in ensuring that every student has access to a highly skilled teacher capable of meeting their unique needs. Rich School District has one instructional coach providing coaching to 41 teachers in four schools. The district's instructional coaching capacity is limited due to the number of teachers it is supporting. Currently, there is not a national standard on coach-to-teacher ratio, but two coaching leaders we spoke with in Utah's educational community suggest a successful ratio is one coach per school. While that exact coach to teacher ratio may vary depending on the district's size, the number of instructional coaches within Rich School District is narrow.



Rich School Districts instructional coach lacks adequate time to perform the necessary documentation of the impact cycle.

Time seems to be the biggest constraint preventing documentation for any of the instructional coaching collaborations. Specifically, the audit team concluded from observations and documentation of scheduling that the instructional coach does not have sufficient time to complete the documentation of collaborations that the audit team recommends. Therefore, we recommend that, after developing an instructional

coaching framework as discussed in Finding 3.1 of this report, Rich School District should determine a needs assessment for whether the district should develop more subject-based coaching and would benefit from an additional instructional coach.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2

Rich School District instructional coaching services should implement the impact cycle in a formal manner and adequately document instructional coaching work.



RECOMMENDATION 3.3

After developing an instructional coaching playbook (addressed in Recommendation 3.1) and formally implementing the impact cycle (addressed in Recommendation 3.2), Rich School District should document evaluations of the instructional coaching services in relation to the playbook and progress monitoring from the use of the impact cycle.

RECOMMENDATION 3.4

After developing an instructional coaching framework (addressed in Recommendation 3.1), Rich School District should conduct a needs assessment (documented findings and implementation plan) to determine whether the district should develop more subject based coaching and whether the district would benefit from hiring an additional instructional coach.



CHAPTER 4 Summary

Rich School District Would Benefit from Coordinating Professional Learning Among Its Educators



BACKGROUND

Collaboration among teachers encourages creativity, improves teaching capacity, and instills confidence in teachers. The goal of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) is to provide teachers and administrators opportunities to improve professionally to better serve students. More formal PLCs occurred in Rich School District but stopped due to the district not prioritizing and coordinating resources towards this tool.

FINDING 4.1

Formal Professional Learning Communities Are Limited, Which Does Not Fully Allow for Collective Benefits Among Rich School District Educators.

RECOMMENDATION 4.1

Rich School District should more formally support and coordinate grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities across the district, by scheduling schedule specific times for those grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities to meet.

RECOMMENDATION 4.2

Rich School District should more formally support and coordinate grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities across the district, by coordinating the assigning of substitute teachers for the designated professional learning community time.

RECOMMENDATION 4.3

Rich School District should require instructional coaches to facilitate grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities across the district, specifically to ensure the professional learning community meetings are:

- data-driven
- collaborative
- mutually accountable for all participants



CONCLUSION

Further implementing PLCs within Rich School District can increase continuous improvement, to increase educational excellence. A lack of PLCs presents a risk of misalignment between goals, strategies, and district-wide standards. This is one area where the school district's administration and teachers can align the goals and mission established in its strategic plan with practice. Aligning plan and practice would give the district dedicated time to promote collective responsibility, cultivate accountability, as well as become more data and goal-oriented. These research-based standards, if implemented, could increase the impact of educator effectiveness, and ensure that this growth would reach the Utah students, increasing their achievement.





Chapter 4 Rich School District Would Benefit From Coordinating Professional Learning Among Its Educators

4.1 Formal Professional Learning Communities Are Limited, **Which Does Not Fully Allow for Collective Benefits** Among Rich School District Educators

More fully implementing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within Rich School District could increase data-driven decisions and provide a more strategic approach to district-wide goals, thereby increasing educational excellence. A PLC is a tool that schools use to promote collaborative learning within a supportive group of educators. PLCs can give the district dedicated time to promote collective responsibility, cultivate accountability, as well as become more data and goal-driven. We found that Rich School District's PLCs are informal and irregular, as they sometimes occur during staff meetings and lunches. Rich School District reports its informal PLCs are because the standard PLC model does not function for small, rural schools. However, we believe they can benefit from more formal PLCs. Currently, data-driven strategies, peer-topeer learning, and instructional alignment are limited in Rich School District's PLCs. Therefore, Rich School District should organize and facilitate PLCs that are supported by district leadership and facilitated by the district's instructional coaching team.

Professional Learning Communities Are a Valuable Education Tool

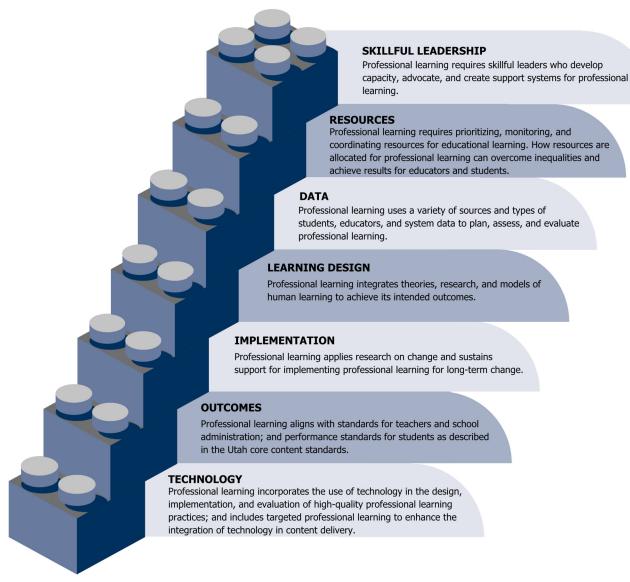
PLCs are a useful tool for schools to improve teachers' skills and abilities, ensuring that every student has access to quality educators. This tool promotes learning within a supportive and engaged community of educators. Professional learning emphasizes continuous improvement by supporting the alignment of educators, schools, and districts' student learning goals. According to the Utah State Board of Education's (USBE) professional learning toolkit, the essential attributes of a learning community include:

- Promoting collective responsibility and shared purpose
- Cultivating mutual accountability and trust among members
- Incorporating a sense of belonging with supportive conditions
- Focusing on learning



USBE also emphasizes that communication and collaboration are crucial for the success of PLCs, and therefore PLCs happen as teachers are provided space and time to communicate and plan for further integration of professional learning into their teaching.

Our research suggests that successful professional learning is achieved through the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) professional learning standards. The following graphic highlights those professional learning standards.



Source: Auditor generated from USBE Professional Learning Standards.

USBE suggests these research-based standards, if implemented, will increase the impact of educator's effectiveness and ensure that this increase will raise Utah students' achievement.



The primary goal of PLCs is collaborative problem-solving, so the structure of a PLC is not rigid and may vary depending on school needs. The arrangements of PLCs may include teachers from different or the same grade, subject, or school. The variety of PLC arrangements allows urban and rural schools to adopt a structure and model that fits their individual needs. Ultimately, while individual districts may adapt PLCs to their unique needs and circumstances, the purpose is the same: provide teachers and administrators with opportunities to improve their professional learning to better serve students.

Rich School District Could Have More Formal PLCs **By Improving District Coordination**

We found that Rich School District's PLCs are informal and irregular, as they sometimes occur during staff meetings and lunch breaks. Several Rich School District educators believe that the common PLC model does not function for a small. rural school district like Rich, where most educators are the school's only grade or subject teacher. The district believes it is meeting the PLC standards, but that the PLCs are occurring informally in staff meetings and lunch breaks. However, Rich School District's PLCs are limited in incorporating the important PLC elements and standards of promoting data analysis, prioritizing resources, implementing learning design, and peer-to-peer learning.



Rich School District's PLCs are limited in incorporating the important PLC elements and standards of promoting data analysis, prioritizing resources, implementing learning design, and peer-to-peer learning.

The audit team found that the arrangement of a PLC is flexible, and it could be utilized with more intentional effort on the part of Rich School District's administration. The audit team observed 10 staff meetings and the majority did not meet the standards of professional learning. Staff meetings included conversations about student misbehavior, budgets, schedule coordination, etc. In one school, no formal staff meetings took place beyond a faculty lunch. The audit team observed a few of the instructional coaches' training sessions, which lasted a few minutes and included the use of technology in the classroom but did not include data analysis or peer-to-peer learning.

In previous years, Rich School District's administration facilitated more

Several teachers found value in the **PLCs that Rich's** administration used to facilitate in previous years.

structured PLCs. These PLCs consisted of teachers meeting for half a day with their subject counterparts from each school. Based on several teacher interviews, teachers believe there was value in these formal PLCs. The superintendent agrees that the PLCs stopped occurring because the district stopped



facilitating these learning communities and believed they would naturally continue with teachers facilitating them.

Prioritizing and coordinating resources towards PLCs within Rich School District can increase continuous improvement, thereby increasing educational excellence. Collaboration among teachers encourages creativity, improves teacher's capacity, and instills confidence in teachers. Chapter 1 discusses Rich School District's assessment data. The audit team believes an adjustment to the district's PLCs should result in a positive impact on the student's assessment outcomes.

The goal of PLCs is to provide teachers and administrators with opportunities to improve professional learning to better serve students. A lack of PLCs presents a risk of misalignment between goals, strategies, and district-wide standards. PLCs are one area where Rich administration and teachers can align the goals and mission established in its strategic plan. This would give the district dedicated time to promote collective responsibility, cultivate accountability and responsibility, as well as become more data and goal oriented.

Professional learning requires intentional effort and the effective leveraging of tools like PLCs, instructional coaches, and a well-developed strategic plan. Each of these areas for improvement is intended to better serve students in Rich School District, as shown in the recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 4.1

Rich School District should more formally support and coordinate grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities across the district, by scheduling schedule specific times for those grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities to meet.

RECOMMENDATION 4.2

Rich School District should more formally support and coordinate grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities across the district, by coordinating the assigning of substitute teachers for the designated professional learning community time.



RECOMMENDATION 4.3

Rich School District should require instructional coaches to facilitate grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities across the district, specifically to ensure the professional learning community meetings are:

- data-driven
- collaborative
- mutually accountable for all participants







Complete List of Audit Recommendations







Complete List of Audit Recommendations

This report made the following ten recommendations. The numbering convention assigned to each recommendation consists of its chapter followed by a period and recommendation number within that chapter.

Recommendation 1.1

We recommend that Rich School District assess the reasons why there is a high percentage of lowest proficiency level students not progressing towards proficiency.

Recommendation 1.2

We recommend that Rich School District should track the progress of the lowest proficiency level students.

Recommendation 2.1

We recommend that Rich School District should redesign its strategic plan to incorporate measurable outcomes/objectives, data and metrics, monitoring and evaluation, a timeline, and professional development.

Recommendation 3.1

We recommend that Rich School District should develop an instructional coaching playbook that ensures a systematic approach and use of coaching within each of the district's schools.

Recommendation 3.2

We recommend that Rich School District instructional coaching services should formally use the impact cycle.

Recommendation 3.3

We recommend that after developing an instructional coaching playbook (addressed in Recommendation 3.1) and formally implementing the impact cycle (addressed in Recommendation 3.2), Rich School District should conduct a formal evaluation of the instructional coaching services in relation to the playbook and progress monitoring from the use of the impact cycle.

Recommendation 3.4

We recommend that, after developing an instructional coaching playbook (addressed in Recommendation 3.1), Rich School District should conduct a needs assessment (documented findings and implementation plan) to determine whether the district



should develop more subject-based coaching and whether the district would benefit from hiring an additional instructional coach.

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We recommend that Rich School District should more formally support and coordinate grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities across the district, by scheduling specific times for those grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities to meet.

Recommendation 4.2

We recommend that Rich School District should more formally support and coordinate grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities across the district, by coordinating the assigning of substitute teachers for the designated professional learning communities' time.

Recommendation 4.3

We recommend that Rich School District should require instructional coaches to facilitate grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities across the district, specifically to ensure the professional learning communities' meetings are:

- data-driven
- collaborative
- include mutual accountability of all participants



Appendices







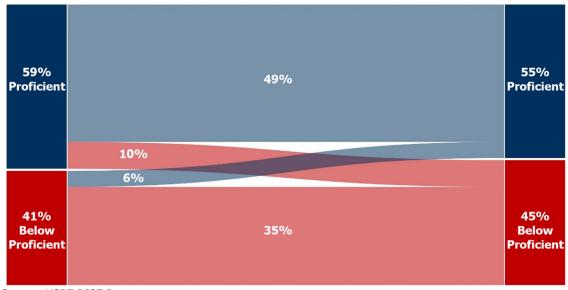
A. Proficiency Movement from 2022 to 2023 for Rich School District







Figure A.1 Rich School District English Language Arts (ELA) Percent Proficiency Movement from 2022 to 2023. Rich School District saw a decrease in proficiency for ELA. Majority of the 'Below Proficient' students in 2022 maintained that status in 2023.

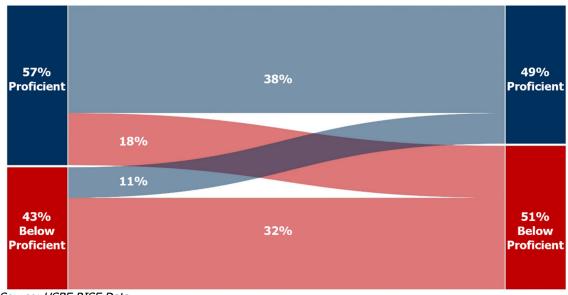


Source: USBE RISE Data.

Note: RISE represents grades 3-8.

Note: Population includes those students that took a test in both 2022 and 2023 school year.

Figure A.2 Rich School District Math Percent Proficiency Movement from 2022 to 2023. Rich School District saw a significant decrease in proficiency for Math. The majority of the 'Below Proficient' students in 2022 maintained that status in 2023. A significant amount, 18%, of 'Proficient' students decreased to 'Below Proficient'.



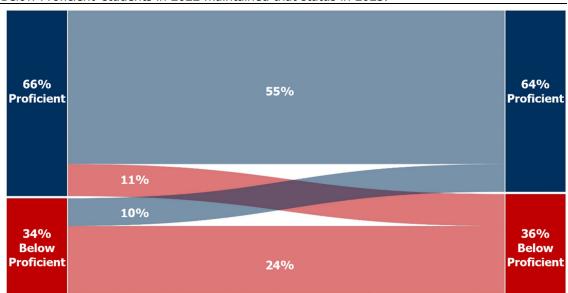
Source: USBE RISE Data.

Note: RISE represents grades 3-8.

Note: Population includes those students that took a test in both 2022 and 2023 school year.



Figure A.3 Rich School District Science Percent Proficiency Movement from 2022 to **2023.** Rich School District saw a small decrease in proficiency for Science. Majority of the 'Below Proficient' students in 2022 maintained that status in 2023.



Source: USBE RISE Data.

Note: RISE represents grades 4-8.

Note: Population includes those students that took a test in both 2022 and 2023 school year.



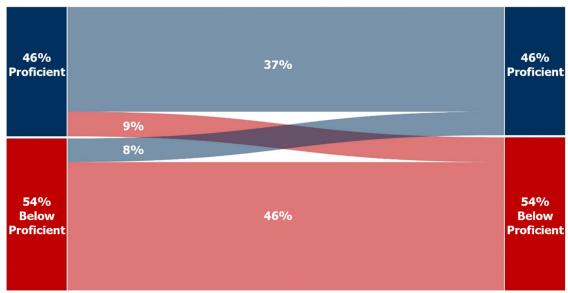
B. Proficiency Movement from 2022 to 2023 for the State of Utah







Figure B.1 Statewide English Language Arts Percent Proficiency Movement from 2022 to 2023. Utah saw no change in proficiency for ELA. Majority of the 'Below Proficient' students in 2022 maintained that status in 2023.

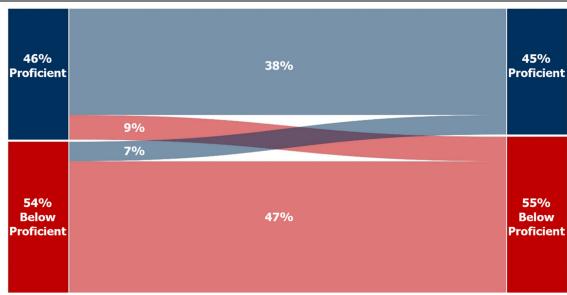


Source: USBE RISE Data.

Note: RISE represents grades 3-8.

Note: Population includes those students that took a test in both 2022 and 2023 school year.

Figure B.2 Statewide Math Percent Proficiency Movement from 2022 to 2023. Utah saw a small decrease in proficiency for Math. Majority of the 'Below Proficient' students in 2022 maintained that status in 2023.



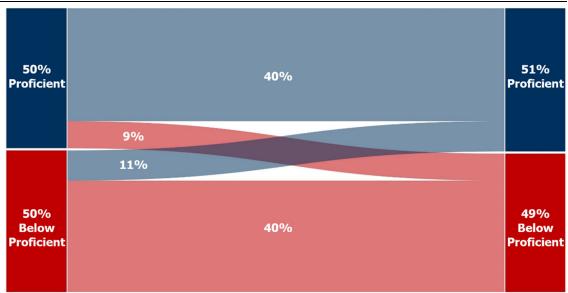
Source: USBE RISE Data.

Note: RISE represents grades 3-8.

Note: Population includes those students that took a test in both 2022 and 2023 school year.



Figure B.3 Statewide Science Percent Proficiency Movement from 2022 to 2023. Utah saw a small increase in proficiency for Science. Majority of the 'Below Proficient' students in 2022 maintained that status in 2023.



Source: USBE RISE Data.

Note: RISE represents grades 4-8.

Note: Population includes those students that took a test in both 2022 and 2023 school year.



Agency Response







August 7, 2024

Rich School District welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Systematic Review of our District. We are committed to excellence and trust that responding proactively to this audit's recommendations will enhance our effectiveness.

	Chapter 1: Lower Proficie	ncy Students Can Better Progress in Rich School District
	Recommendation	Rich SD Response
1.1	Rich School District should assess the reasons why there is a high percentage of lowest proficiency level students not progressing towards proficiency.	 We will work within our district and reach out to other districts in the State, who are experiencing the same issue, to see if we can find clear variables that are prohibiting students from reaching proficiency levels. We will then systematically try to address variables over which we can have influence. Taralyn Cornia, Director of Curriculum and Assessment, will continue to analyze current data from the last testing cycle and will intensively assess the upcoming 2024-2025 testing.
1.2	Rich School District should track the progress of the lowest proficiency level students.	 We will closely monitor individual students who are scoring below proficiency. Our primary goal will be to increase the percentage of low performing students reaching proficiency. Our secondary goal will be to chart the scores of students making improvements but still not reaching proficiency. Taralyn Cornia will not only evaluate RISE, but will also assess Acadience, Aspire+ and ACT.

Chapter 2: Rich School District Can Benefit from Strategic Plan Updates		
	Recommendation	Rich SD Response
2.1	Rich School District should redesign its strategic plan to incorporate measurable outcomes/objectives, a timeline, data and metrics, professional development, and monitoring and evaluation.	 As was mentioned in the audit, we have focused on our Mission, Vision and Core Values statements and feel they represent the desired direction for the District. As recommended, we will form committees from the respective stakeholders to address the other components of an effective strategic plan. Our goals will be measurable and built-in review will be part of our process. Superintendent Dale Lamborn will lead the committee, which will be selected from all stakeholders, assigned to redesign the strategic plan. We will have a product ready for board approval by or before the May 2025 school board meeting.

	Chapter 3: Rich School District Can Improve Its Instructional Coaching Strategic Framework and Guidance		
	Recommendation	Rich SD Response	
3.1	Rich School District should develop an instructional coaching playbook to ensure a systematic approach and use of coaching within each of the district's schools.	 The three recommendations regarding instructional coaching (3.1, 3.2 & 3.3) are significantly intertwined and we will address them comprehensively. Articulating/adopting a playbook, implementing the impact cycle, and developing a reliable evaluation, will be our focus moving forward. 	
3.2	Rich School District instructional coaching services should formally use the impact cycle.	➤ See Response 3.1	

		board on or before the May 2025 school board meeting.
3.3	After developing an instructional coaching playbook (addressed in Recommendation 3.1) and formally implementing the impact cycle (addressed in Recommendation 3.2), Rich School District should document evaluations of the instructional coaching services in relation to the playbook and progress monitoring from the use of the impact cycle.	> See Response 3.1
3.4	the impact cycle. After developing an instructional coaching framework (addressed in Recommendation 3.1), Rich School District should conduct a needs assessment (documented findings and implementation plan) to determine whether the district should develop more subject based coaching and whether the district would benefit from hiring an additional instructional coach.	 After we have addressed the recommendations made in 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 we will be in a more objective position to fully evaluate additional staffing. Based on the evaluation's outcomes and funding availability, a final decision will be made regarding hiring an additional coach. Superintendent Lamborn will work with his cabinet, the school board, and consultants from the regional service center and make a recommendation to the board prior to the adoption of the 2025-2026 budget.

	Chapter 4: Rich School District Would Benefit From Coordinating			
	Professional Learning Among Its Educators			
	Recommendation	Rich SD Response		
4.1	Rich School District should more formally support and coordinate grade-level and subject-level	➤ The three recommendations (4.1, 4.2 & 4.3) are again intertwined and will be addressed proactively to meet the specific recommendations.		
	professional learning communities across the district, by scheduling schedule specific times for those	As was noted in the audit, we had formerly implemented a more formal structure. When we removed the structure, ongoing P.L.C. meetings did not occur at the desired level. Under the instructional		

F	grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities to meet.	coach's direction, working with the building principals, grade level meetings will be scheduled at the elementary level. At the secondary level, subject level meetings will also be scheduled. Implementing these changes in conjunction with the changes implemented as a result of the recommendations made in chapter 3 will facilitate the desired outcome of P.L.C.'S; data driven, collaborative, and built-in accountability. Jacilyn Keetch will coordinate the scheduling of grade level meetings and will evaluate the effectiveness of those meetings. Taralyn Cornia and Jacilyn Keetch will co-chair the process of facilitating and evaluating the P.L.C. process. The first round of grade level/department level meetings will be completed before the end of October 2024. Another round will be completed prior to the testing window in the spring.
4.3 F	Rich School District should more formally support and coordinate grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities across the district, by coordinating the assigning of substitute teachers for the designated professional learning community time. Rich School District should require instructional coaches to facilitate grade-level and subject-level professional learning communities across the district, specifically to	➤ See Response 4.1 ➤ See Response 4.1

ensure the professional learning

community meetings are:

- data driven
- collaborative
- mutually accountable for all participants

Regards,

Dale Lamborn Superintendent

Rich School District

Richard Lamb

Board President

Sill M

Rich School District









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