NEW YORK STATE TEACHER CERTIFICATION EXAMINATIONS™

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENTS

NYSTCE®

PREPARATION GUIDE

School District Leader (103/104)

NEW YORK STATE TEACHER CERTIFICATION EXAMINATIONS™

School Leadership Assessments

NYSTCE®

SCHOOL DISTRICT LEADER

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Preparing for the Test

The purpose of the New York State Teacher Certification Examinations™ (NYSTCE®) School Leadership Assessments is to help ensure that certified school- and district-level leaders have the essential knowledge and skills necessary to provide effective educational leadership in New York State public schools. These assessments have been developed by the New York State Education Department (NYSED), New York State educational leaders, and the Evaluation Systems group of Pearson in response to new regulations that became effective in 2006 for preparing, testing, and certifying educational leaders in New York State. The assessments are based on the principles of Essential Knowledge and Skills for Effective School Leadership developed by the New York State Board of Regents' Blue Ribbon Panel on School Leadership.

This preparation guide provides information to help you prepare to take the NYSTCE School Leadership Assessments as follows:

➢ This section includes information about available resources and their use in understanding the design and content of the assessment, and strategies for success on the day of the test.

➢ The following sections contain sample test questions and additional test materials to assist you in your preparation.

UNDERSTANDING THE DESIGN AND CONTENT OF THE TEST

The content knowledge assessed by the NYSTCE School Leadership Assessments is described in the test design and assessment framework for each assessment. You may view, print, or download the test design and assessment framework for any of the School Leadership Assessments by selecting "School Leadership Assessments" on the NYSTCE Web site at **www.nystce.nesinc.com**. This section describes how to use the test design and assessment framework to understand both the design and content of the School Leadership Assessments.

■ Test Design

Read the test design to familiarize yourself with the structure of the **assessment**. The test design outlines the following assessment components:

➢ the **content areas covered on each test** within the assessment

➢ the **approximate number of questions** for each content area

➢ the **types of questions** (multiple-choice questions and written assignments) contained on each test

➢ the **percentage of your total test score** derived from each content area and question type

Preparing for the Test

The following example illustrates the information provided by the test design.

Test

Types of questions

Part One (Test Code xxx)

Subarea	Range of Objectives	Multiple-Choice Section		Written Assignment Section	
		Approximate Number of Questions	Approximate Percentage of Test Score	Number of Assignments	Approximate Percentage of Test Score
Subarea I Title	0001–0004	30	25%	1	17%
Subarea II Title	0005–0008	30	25%	1	33%
TOTAL		**60**	**50%**	**2**	**50%**

Content areas covered on each test

Approximate number of questions

Percentage of test score derived from content area and question type

Test

Part Two (Test Code xxx)

Subarea	Range of Objectives	Multiple-Choice Section		Written Assignment Section	
		Approximate Number of Questions	Approximate Percentage of Test Score	Number of Assignments	Approximate Percentage of Test Score
Subarea I Title	0001–0005	37	31%	1	33%
Subarea II Title	0006–0008	23	19%	1	17%
TOTAL		**60**	**50%**	**2**	**50%**

■ **Assessment Framework**

Read the assessment framework to understand the content covered by the assessment and to determine your preparedness to test. The framework for each **assessment** is divided into two parts, each of which is measured by its own test. Each test is organized into subareas, objectives, and focus statements as follows:
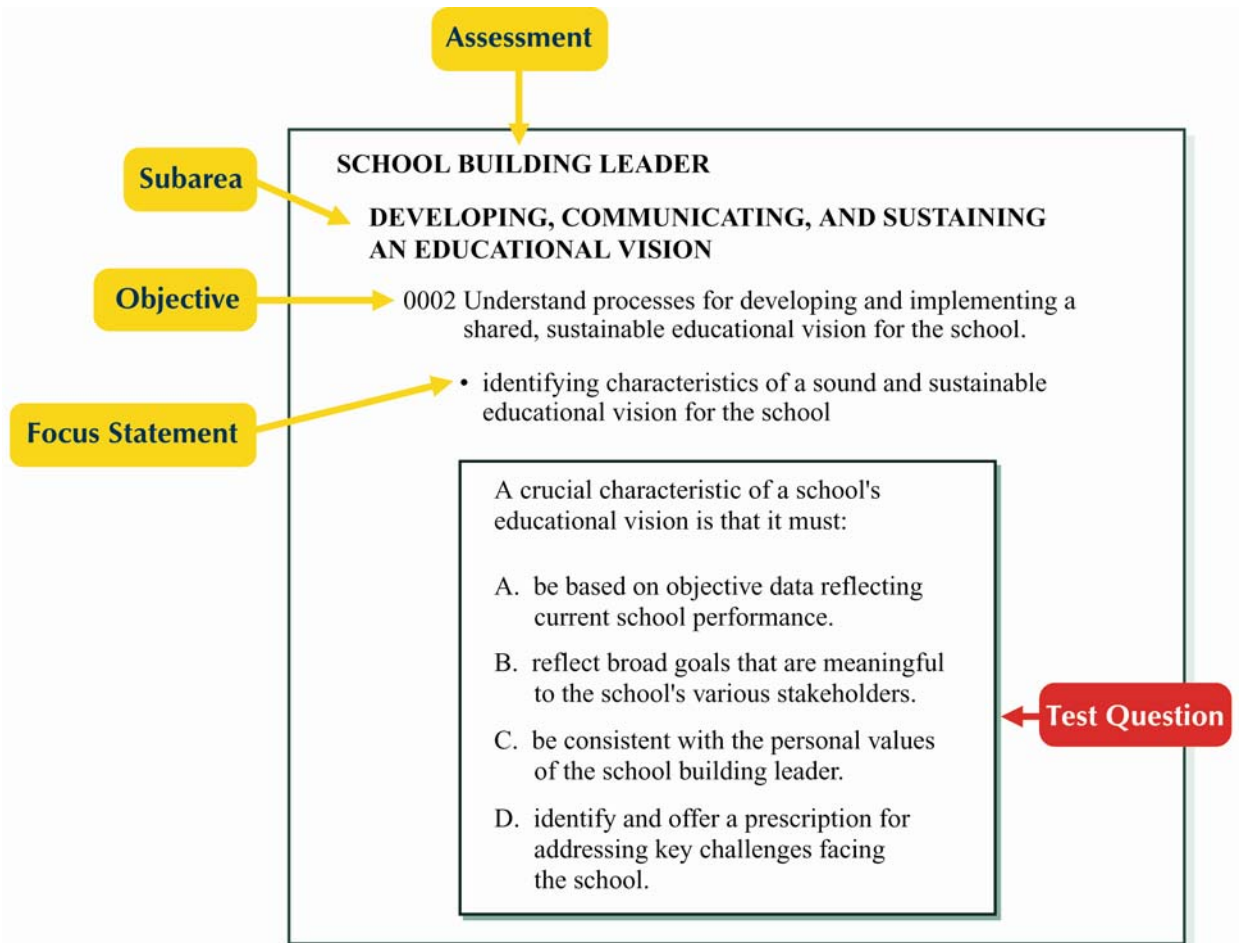
➢ **Subareas** define the major content domains of the assessment. Each test contains two subareas. Subareas typically consist of several objectives. The number of objectives may vary, depending on the breadth of content contained in the subarea.

➢ **Objectives** define the knowledge and skills that New York State educational leaders have determined to be important for educational leaders to possess. Each objective is expanded upon by focus statements.

➢ **Focus statements** provide examples of the range, type, and level of content that may appear on the test for questions measuring the objective.

Test questions are designed to measure specific content within each test. Each written assignment measures the content defined by a specific subarea of the test.

Each multiple-choice question measures the content defined by a specific subarea of the test. The number of objectives within a subarea generally determines the number of multiple-choice test questions that will address that subarea's content on the test. Subareas that consist of more objectives will receive more emphasis on the test than subareas that consist of fewer objectives.

The following example from the School Building Leader assessment framework illustrates the relationship of a multiple-choice test question to the test, subarea, objective, and focus statement in the framework to which it corresponds. This same direct relationship between multiple-choice test questions and their corresponding objectives applies to all NYSTCE assessments.

Assessment

Subarea

Objective

Focus Statement

SCHOOL BUILDING LEADER

DEVELOPING, COMMUNICATING, AND SUSTAINING AN EDUCATIONAL VISION

0002 Understand processes for developing and implementing a shared, sustainable educational vision for the school.

- identifying characteristics of a sound and sustainable educational vision for the school

A crucial characteristic of a school's educational vision is that it must:

A. be based on objective data reflecting current school performance.

B. reflect broad goals that are meaningful to the school's various stakeholders.

C. be consistent with the personal values of the school building leader.

D. identify and offer a prescription for addressing key challenges facing the school.

Test Question

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS ON THE DAY OF THE TEST

Review the following strategies to help you do your best when taking the NYSTCE School Leadership Assessments.

Follow directions	Follow all directions. This includes directions given to you by test center staff and all written directions.
Take the tutorial	Before beginning the test, you will be given an on-screen tutorial that will show you how to navigate through the test, how to indicate your answers, and how to use the features of the computer-based test. To prepare for the computer-based testing experience, you can also take a tutorial ahead of time at **www.pearsonvue.com/nystce**. You can also access this tutorial from the NYSTCE Web site at **www.nystce.nesinc.com**.
Pace your work	The test schedule is designed to allow sufficient time for you to complete your test. To assist you in pacing your work, a clock icon is visible in the upper right-hand corner of the test screens. This clock indicates the test time that remains. At any time, you may check which questions you have answered and how many remain, to help you determine whether you are progressing through the test at an appropriate speed. Remember to leave enough time to respond to the written assignments.
Read carefully	Do not try to save time by skimming directions or by reading the test questions quickly. You may miss important information and instructions.
Determine the "best answer"	Your response to each multiple-choice question should be the best answer of the alternatives provided. Read and evaluate all four answer choices before deciding which one is best.
Guess wisely	Your results on the multiple-choice section of the test will be based on the number of questions you answer correctly. You will not be penalized for guessing. If you are unsure about a question, use your knowledge of the content area to eliminate as many of the alternatives as you can. Then select among the remaining choices.
Respond to the written assignments fully and clearly	Be sure to read and respond to each part of the written assignments. Note the word count range suggested in the test directions for the length of your responses. A word count feature is provided for the written assignments so that you can see the length of your response as you write it.
Check your answers	If you have time remaining at the end of the test session, use that time to check your answers. Also, reread your responses to the written assignments and make any changes that you think will improve your responses.

Part One Sample Questions and Written Assignments

This section is designed to assist you in responding to the multiple-choice questions and written assignments on Part One of the assessment.

Included in this section are:

➢ Sample multiple-choice questions

➢ Annotated answer key for the sample multiple-choice questions

➢ Sample directions for the written assignments

➢ Sample written assignments

➢ An example of a strong response to each sample assignment

➢ An evaluation of the strong response to each sample assignment

➢ Scoring criteria that will be used in evaluating your response to each assignment

The sample multiple-choice questions are designed to illustrate the nature of the test questions. Work through the questions carefully before referring to the annotated answer key, which follows the sample multiple-choice questions. The answer key provides the correct response to each question, describes why each correct response is the best answer, and lists the objective within the assessment framework to which each question is linked.

For each sample assignment, you may want to take the following steps to prepare for the test:

☑ Review the directions for the written assignments.

☑ Read the assignment.

☑ Prepare your response to the assignment. It is suggested that you type your response to the assignment without using editorial tools, such as spell check and grammar check, in order to simulate the actual testing experience. These tools will not be available to you during the test session.

☑ After you complete the assignment, review the sample strong response, your response, the scoring criteria, and the evaluation of the sample strong response.

QUESTIONS

1. A school district leader makes it a practice to attend extracurricular events, such as athletic events, debates, science fairs, and plays, at each school on a regular basis. Which of the following is likely to be the most important benefit of this practice?

   A. providing the district leader with information and insight about how aspects of the broader community relate to district functioning

   B. contributing to an atmosphere of appreciation and support for district students and staff

   C. offering families and other constituents multiple opportunities to talk to the district leader about issues of concern

   D. promoting a district culture that emphasizes high standards and expectations for all students

2. Which of the following describes the most important purpose of a school district's educational vision?

   A. garnering public support by defining the primary functions of the school district, including identifying its constituencies and the benefits it provides key stakeholder groups

   B. providing a strategic road map for reaching educational goals and objectives that is aligned with the school district's philosophy of education and K–12 standards

   C. establishing a specific set of goals and expectations regarding the nature and extent of interaction and collaboration among members of the district's educational community

   D. guiding and directing district improvement by articulating a clear image of the future of the school community based on stakeholders' ideals and beliefs

Use the information below to answer the two questions that follow.

A school district leader in Northgate School District is reviewing a draft version of a letter intended to provide parents/guardians with background information about the district budget. Below are the opening paragraphs of the draft letter.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Following is an expenditure forecast document, per recent board decisions regarding Northgate School District's fiscal commitments going forward. This document is intended to familiarize district residents with expenditure projections for several major categories in our school budgets over the next five years. A history of expenditures for the past five years is also presented for comparative purposes.

It should be noted that school budgets are driven by personnel costs and personnel costs are driven by student enrollment. Fortunately, the significant enrollment increases that have occurred in the district during the past several years are beginning to diminish.

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3. Which of the following changes would most improve the effectiveness of this letter for the intended audience?

    A. using simpler language and a less bureaucratic tone

    B. replacing vague references to enrollments and costs with actual figures

    C. using a friendlier, more welcoming introductory sentence

    D. inserting definitions of technical terms with which some readers may be unfamiliar

4. The district leader considers using the district Web site to transmit the contents of the letter to parents/guardians. In considering this option, it is most important for the district leader to be aware that:

    A. many individuals other than those in the intended audience will be able to access the information included in the letter.

    B. most people place greater trust in information received by mail or other traditional modes of communication.

    C. some members of the intended audience may not have ready access to the Internet or may not regularly check the district Web site.

    D. information posted on the Internet can be easily modified or deleted by individuals who are not authorized to make such changes.

5. A district governing body has been discussing how to address a sensitive matter. The school district leader has offered the members of the group advice on how to proceed and feels strongly that his approach is the best one to use. Although several members agree with the district leader, the majority of the members vote to use a different approach instead. The district leader's best response would be to:

   A. prepare to advise the members about both the costs and the benefits likely to be associated with the approach they have selected.

   B. work with those members who agreed with him to determine if a compromise solution can be crafted that will be acceptable to all.

   C. communicate support for the decision made by the majority of the members and determine how best to implement it.

   D. urge those members who had agreed with his approach to accept and support the decision made by the majority.

6. A recently appointed school district leader wants to take steps to promote broad support for various change initiatives that will affect district schools. Before making a case for the initiatives, the district leader can best help ensure such support by:

   A. using face-to-face interactions to learn about the priorities, attitudes, and concerns of relevant interest groups within the district.

   B. developing a concrete action plan detailing how changes are expected to be implemented.

   C. contacting local media outlets to provide a preview of the changes and to assure ongoing cooperation from and access to district staff.

   D. disseminating a comprehensive analysis of data used to determine the need for change in the district.

7. Before making a decision about an issue affecting district schools, a district-level management team wishes to assess stakeholder views on the issue. The team considers various options, such as distributing a questionnaire or conducting interviews. The interview approach is likely to be most appropriate if an important goal of the team is to:

   A. minimize the costs associated with gathering information.

   B. collect information that can be easily and efficiently interpreted.

   C. ensure participation by a large representative sample of stakeholders.

   D. elicit detailed, in-depth responses from stakeholders.

Use the information below to answer the two questions that follow.

A district's comprehensive education planning team has used various types of data to evaluate the effectiveness of the district's instructional programs. Analysis of the data indicates that the English language arts (ELA) program needs significant modification, including changes in assessment strategies, to meet the learning needs of district students at all levels.

8. Working with language arts specialists and others, the team identifies several options for modifying the ELA program. When considering each of the options for change, which of the following is the most important question for the team to consider *first*?

   A. Has this option worked well in other districts in the state or elsewhere?

   B. Would this option be effective in addressing key causes of students' lagging achievement?

   C. Are most teachers in the district likely to be inclined to support this option?

   D. How long after implementation of this option begins could we expect to see positive results?

9. The team recommends major modifications to the ELA program and develops a plan for implementing the new program. School district leaders can best use the implementation process to reinforce district efforts to promote a culture of educational accountability by doing which of the following?

   A. using a variety of media outlets to explain how the new ELA program is expected to benefit the educational community

   B. setting up a library of support materials for school administrators and teachers to use as they adjust to the new ELA program

   C. offering ongoing, differentiated professional development to support school staff as they strive to implement the new ELA program

   D. specifying a date by which the new ELA program will be expected to be fully implemented in schools throughout the district

ANNOTATED ANSWER KEY

For question	The correct response is	Reason	Test Objective
1	B	A school district leader has many instructional and operational responsibilities that require a significant amount of time and energy. A district leader's willingness to invest the time, often beyond the regular school day, to attend activities and events at each school on a regular basis demonstrates to students and staff that they are an important priority. Maintaining a visible presence at school activities and events is an effective way for the district leader to build positive relationships with students and staff and to communicate appreciation for their efforts.	0001
2	D	A school district's educational vision presents an image of the future that reflects stakeholders' shared under-standings, values, and goals regarding student learning. Once a vision has been defined, it helps focus attention on what is important, motivates staff and students, and promotes a sense of shared responsibility for student learning and achievement. The vision thus becomes a reference point for identifying areas for educational change and for guiding district improvement efforts.	0002
3	A	An important role of school district leaders is to communicate various types of information, including budget information, to constituents. One way for a district leader to help ensure effective communication is to keep the intended audience in mind while crafting each message. In the excerpt shown, the district leader uses language and concepts with which some parents/ guardians are likely to be unfamiliar (e.g., expenditure forecast document, fiscal commitments), as well as a bureaucratic tone that can be a barrier to understanding. Simplification of the language in the district leader's letter and a more straightforward, everyday tone would make the information more accessible to all parents/guardians.	0003

For question	The correct response is	Reason	Test Objective
4	C	When making decisions about how to disseminate information to families, a school district leader should ensure that the selected method(s) will be effective in reaching everyone in the intended audience. In the situation described, the district leader should recognize that some individuals may not have ready access to the Internet in their homes or workplaces, while others who have access may not typically use the Internet to check the district Web site for school-related information. Although placing information on the district Web site may be effective in reaching some families, it should be viewed as only one part of a more comprehensive approach that incorporates multiple means of communication.	0003
5	C	School district leaders must develop and maintain an effective working relationship with the district's governing body and must adhere to any decisions made by that body. Although district leaders are often called upon to provide the members of a governing body with information and judgments, ultimately the district leader is responsible for implementing whatever decisions are made by the governing body. They should not be driven by a personal agenda that conflicts with such decisions. Therefore, in the situation described, the district leader is obligated to support the governing body's decision and move forward in facilitating its implementation, even though he personally may not have agreed with the decision.	0004
6	A	District leaders frequently have to make the case for changes in their district that will affect different interest groups. By taking time to engage in personal interactions with the members of various groups in a district, a new district leader will be in a better position to know how to introduce change in a way that will be perceived as positive and nonthreatening to the groups involved. These personal interactions will also allow the district leader to assess informally where resistance is likely to arise and to help those who may be resistant understand how the planned changes relate to their priorities, interests, and concerns.	0005

For question	The correct response is	Reason	Test Objective
7	D	There are many ways for district decision makers to gather information about stakeholder views on an issue. The best methodology to use in a given situation depends on many factors, including for example the number and location of individuals from whom information will be solicited and the specific types of information desired. One key benefit of interviews is that because they involve speaking rather than writing, they make it easier for respondents to provide detailed, thoughtful answers that include relevant anecdotes and insights. Moreover, the interactive nature of the interview approach allows the interviewer to seek clarification of or elaboration on responses as needed.	0007
8	B	In the situation described, a district's ELA program needs to be modified because the current program is failing to meet the learning needs of all district students. Therefore, in evaluating alternative options for change, stakeholders must first ensure that any option selected will address whatever is responsible for the students' current achievement problems in English language arts. By ensuring that the option(s) selected will be responsive to the particular learning needs of the district's student population, stakeholders can feel confident that the modifications will lead to positive change in student achievement.	0006
9	C	A culture of educational accountability is one in which administrators, teachers, and staff continuously strive to improve teaching and learning and accept responsibility for the outcomes of their efforts. In implementing a new or modified instructional program, the availability of ongoing professional development that is differentiated for teachers and staff with varying needs helps establish an atmosphere in which continuous learning and improvement by teachers and staff is valued and expected. Offering this type of support to teachers and staff communicates high expectations regarding their responsibility for implementing program changes as prescribed, and reinforces the idea that everyone is accountable for participating actively and effectively in the change process.	0008

DIRECTIONS FOR THE WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

A sample of the directions for the written assignments is shown in the box below.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

This section of the test consists of two written assignments. Assignment One is a Work Product assignment and Assignment Two is a Case Study assignment. You are to prepare a written response of about 150–300 words to Assignment One and a written response of about 300–600 words to Assignment Two. Approximately 50% of your total test score is derived from the written assignments—approximately 17% from Assignment One, and approximately 33% from Assignment Two. You may complete the assignments in either order, and you may return to either assignment as time permits.

Read each assignment carefully before you type. Each written assignment appears on the screen with an answer box immediately below the assignment. Type your response in this answer box. For some written assignments, you may need to use the scroll bar to view the entire assignment. As with the multiple-choice questions, you may select written assignments for review later during the testing time.

Your response to each assignment will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- **PURPOSE:** Fulfill the charge of the assignment.

- **APPLICATION OF CONTENT:** Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.

- **SUPPORT:** Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

Your responses will be evaluated on the criteria above, not on writing ability. However, your responses must be communicated clearly enough to permit valid judgment of your knowledge and skills. Your responses should conform to the conventions of edited American English. This should be your original work, written in your own words, and not copied or paraphrased from some other work.

Be sure to write about the assigned topics. You may not use any reference materials during the test. In order to maintain your anonymity during the scoring process, do not type your name in any portion of the answer box. Remember to review what you have written and make any changes that you think will improve your responses.

SAMPLE WORK PRODUCT ASSIGNMENT

Subarea: Developing, Communicating, and Sustaining an Educational Vision

<u>Assignment One: Work Product</u>

Use the information below to complete the task that follows.

You are the new superintendent of a school district. As you become acquainted with the district, you learn that there has been a significant increase in the number of students from families that have recently immigrated to the United States. This demographic shift, which began with a few families ten years ago, has gradually increased each year, so that now the immigrant student population is nearing 15 percent.

The schools have welcomed the newcomers, employed language tutors, and, in general, provided adequate support. Families have been invited to participate in school activities, and translators have been provided whenever possible. One school was able to find a bilingual volunteer to facilitate school-to-home communication for a few years.

You want to make sure that all district schools communicate effectively with immigrant families and foster appreciation for the diverse cultures that are represented. You believe it is time for a proactive, districtwide approach to promoting active engagement of immigrant families in the schools.

You identify a broadly representative team of stakeholders to develop a plan for actively engaging immigrant families in the schools. You will chair meetings of the team. Team members include district administrators, faculty/staff representatives from each school, parents/guardians, and community members, including immigrant parents/guardians and other representatives of the immigrant community.

<u>Task</u>

Write a memo of about 150–300 words to the members of the team in which you:

- explain why it is important for the district to develop a plan for actively engaging immigrant families in the schools at this time;

- describe two key issues for the team to consider in developing a plan for actively engaging immigrant families in the schools, and explain why each issue is important; and

- describe the appropriate role for you, as superintendent, to play in helping develop and implement the team's plan for actively engaging immigrant families in the schools.

■ Strong Response to the Sample Work Product Assignment

Re: A plan for engaging immigrant families in our schools

Parental participation in education is a critical aspect of children's academic success. With a large immigrant student population, we must ensure that all district schools are effectively communicating with and involving immigrant families. A districtwide plan can help ensure that the needs of all immigrant families will be met. Reciprocal communication between school staff and families indicates a commitment to all students' learning and an interest in all families' perspectives. Some, but not all, district schools have already provided interpreters/translators and language tutors for immigrant families. A districtwide plan would help ensure that all parental communication needs, including those of immigrant families, are met consistently and effectively.

Two key issues to consider when devising such a plan:

First, what strategies have district schools used to disseminate information to immigrant families, and which have been most effective? For example, if we know that immigrant families who received copies of notices in both their native language and English were more likely to attend school functions, then we may decide that translating more communications may be an effective first step to take across district schools.

Second, what types of relevant resources are available or could be developed? By gathering data regarding financial parameters, relevant community organizations, and untapped resources, we may better define our options. For example, surveying the school and business communities regarding employees' proficiency in other languages may help us develop a pool of translators for school communications.

I am committed to supporting the team's development of a plan for involving immigrant families in the school community. As chairperson, I will facilitate the problem-solving process, promote consensus, and present the plan to our school board and local community. I will listen to and ensure the incorporation of ideas of immigrant families, and I will identify and provide resources both for the team during the planning process and for staff during the implementation phase. By working together, we can support the involvement of immigrant families in their children's education.

■ **Evaluation of the Strong Response to the Sample Work Product Assignment**

This response is considered a strong response because it reflects a thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills.

PURPOSE: Fulfill the charge of the assignment.

The response completely fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding fully to the given task.

All parts of the charge are completed within the response. The response explains why it is important for the district to develop a district-level plan for increasing engagement of immigrant families (e.g., the value of parental participation, strategies in place at only some schools). The response describes two key issues for the team to consider (i.e., strategies that have proven to be effective, and relevant resources) and explains why each issue is important (i.e., an effective first step to take and to define our options). The response describes the appropriate role for the superintendent to play (e.g., facilitating the problem-solving process, promoting consensus, presenting the plan, ensuring input of immigrant families, providing resources) in helping develop and implement the team's plan for actively engaging immigrant families in the schools.

APPLICATION OF CONTENT: Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates an accurate and highly effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates an understanding of leadership concepts and principles and their applications. The response provides context for the goal of the team and lists relevant issues for their consideration when developing a plan to actively engage immigrant families (i.e., effective strategies for communication and involvement, and identification of relevant resources). The response demonstrates knowledge of how to effectively communicate with a team of stakeholders in writing. Understanding of the processes of collaboration and problem solving, as well as the importance of administrative support is evident in the description of the role of the superintendent. There is a plan to use consensus building and an understanding of the need to communicate information to the community and district governing body.

SUPPORT: Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response provides strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning.

Both relevant examples and sound reasoning are present in this response. There is reasoning regarding the need to have a district-level plan focused on including all parents in their children's education (i.e., parental participation is a critical aspect of children's academic success, and reciprocal communication . . . indicates . . . an interest in all families' perspectives). Support is also provided through examples of types of potential strategies (i.e., notices in their native language yielding increased participation) and resources (i.e., language proficiency of employees of local businesses) in the discussion of key issues for the team to consider when developing the plan.

SAMPLE CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Subarea: Supervising Districtwide Change and Accountability

Assignment Two: Case Study

Read the case study that follows; then write a response. The case study provides information about all relevant activities that occurred in the situation described. Citing specific examples from the information provided, write a response of about 300–600 words in which you:

- describe what the superintendent did well in this situation;

- describe what the superintendent did poorly or failed to do in this situation; and

- identify and discuss three important actions that the superintendent should take to resolve this situation, and explain why each of these actions is likely to be effective.

Case Study

Dr. Rene Jacobson is the new superintendent of the Carson School District. In early November, a middle school teacher, Mr. Kowalski, asks to speak to her. Mr. Kowalski had been a math teacher at the Leonard Middle School for a number of years. The previous year, he had taken a one-year leave of absence, and when he returned was reassigned to the Clayton Middle School, another middle school in the district.

When the assignment was first made, Mr. Kowalski was happy about changing schools since the Clayton location was more convenient to his after-school coaching position. His unhappiness developed as he realized that the rules and expectations at Clayton were different from what he was used to at Leonard. As he explained to Dr. Jacobson, "In my opinion, teachers at Leonard were treated as trusted professionals. We covered for one another's classes if we needed to leave school early, and we were able to use our prep periods for personal business, even if it meant leaving school. We were not required to request permission or notify the office."

Mr. Kowalski went on to state that he was very unhappy with the rules at Clayton. The principal has a sign-in/sign-out system for all staff, computerized attendance records, and forms that teachers must use to request any and all absences. The principal makes it clear that staff members are expected to be working during all school hours. Teacher preparation periods are scheduled in such a way that teams of teachers can work together to develop curriculum, plan classroom events, analyze test results, and discuss strategies for improving instruction. Missing these meetings is not an option since the principal considers them an important component of his plan to improve education at the school.

As the superintendent investigates the teacher's description of differences between the two schools, she realizes how different the two schools' cultures are. Staff members at both schools talk freely about the procedures, expectations, and cultures at their schools. The Clayton principal tells Dr. Jacobson, "I not only require monthly professional development sessions after school, but I expect every teacher to participate." In contrast, the long-time Leonard principal informs her, "I don't require any additional professional development beyond what is necessary to satisfy legal mandates. I know that my teachers spend countless hours of their own time preparing lessons and grading assignments. I'm not about to place additional unnecessary demands on their time."

Dr. Jacobson realizes that expectations for participation in professional development are lax at Leonard. In addition, she learns that at Leonard, two teachers routinely leave school early to coach sports at the high school, and the principal occasionally leaves early on Fridays to referee.

When Dr. Jacobson raises the issue individually with the two principals, each principal explains and defends his own leadership style and communicates a firm belief in the success of his approach. When she asks them to review their students' scores on standardized tests with her, she is not surprised to learn that the scores at Leonard are lower than those at Clayton. She concludes that the Clayton principal takes the academic achievement of students more seriously than his colleague at Leonard, and she praises the Clayton principal for his focus on professional development in the areas of curriculum development and effective teaching strategies.

Dr. Jacobson believes that effective professional development is a crucial key to student achievement. The Clayton principal has a dynamic professional development committee, a professional development plan for the year, and a comprehensive three-year plan, and he monitors the individual professional development plans of each teacher.

Dr. Jacobson concludes that the Leonard principal should take more seriously the need to use focused professional development to improve students' academic achievement. Although Dr. Jacobson has concerns about the Leonard principal's receptivity to change, she decides to go ahead and take a proactive role in forcing change at Leonard Middle School, including increasing the focus on raising test scores and implementing a more formal approach to professional development.

Dr. Jacobson meets such resistance from the Leonard principal that, in frustration, she considers the option of reassigning the middle school principals and exchanging schools. She informs them that she is considering this approach on the afternoon before a meeting of the district governing body. The news travels quickly, and by the time of the meeting, dozens of staff members and parents/guardians from both schools have heard the news and are angry enough to ask the governing body to intervene.

■ Strong Response to the Sample Case Study Assignment

Dr. Jacobson engaged in several appropriate actions in the situation described. First, she made herself available to meet with Mr. Kowalski, the math teacher, and listened attentively to his concerns. A superintendent's accessibility and approachability to faculty members is a key element of successful employee management. Dr. Jacobson also exhibited good judgment in deciding to investigate the situation further to learn more about the two middle schools before taking action. In addition, she conducted the meetings with the principals appropriately by choosing to meet with them individually. Individual meetings offered the principals opportunities to candidly discuss their perspectives regarding professional development and school leadership without feeling the need to defend themselves to a peer. Finally, Dr. Jacobson showed a strong commitment to promoting academic excellence in all district schools. For example, she began an investigation of the current climate, professional development practices, and student performance in the two middle schools. She also commended Clayton's principal on his effectiveness as a leader and initiated discussions with the principal of Leonard to encourage the development of effective policies and practices to achieve similar goals.

Dr. Jacobson also exhibited several problematic behaviors. One problem was to focus primarily on individual building-level policies and their results. In the absence of established district-level procedures and expectations, personnel at each building had established their own. To implement changes and minimize resentment, Dr. Jacobson should have considered the value of creating and implementing new districtwide policies rather than targeting one building for change. Dr. Jacobson was also impulsive and acted out of frustration when she told the principals that she was considering switching their school assignments, and her approach to forcing change created a hostile situation. She failed to remain objective and establish a plan that invited all schools to analyze their own functioning with respect to promoting the highest level of student achievement. She would have had greater success if she had used strategies that encouraged schools to identify and build on their own strengths to overcome weaknesses in the areas of professional development and student achievement.

Dr. Jacobson should take a number of actions to resolve this situation. First, she should communicate with the district governing body about the need to develop a set of standards, expectations, and policies for ongoing professional development for faculty in all district schools. This will help secure the support of the governing body for steps that need to be taken and will communicate to all stakeholders the importance the superintendent places on staff development. It may also help reduce the Leonard principal's sense of being singled out for criticism.

Second, Dr. Jacobson should issue a clarifying statement indicating that the principals of Clayton and Leonard will remain at their current posts and communicating a commitment to developing broad, district-wide goals and policies regarding professional development and perhaps other faculty policies as well. This action will dispel rumors and offer general information about the need to implement change in current policies and practices. At the same time, the superintendent could briefly outline plans to assemble a district-wide committee composed of stakeholders from each school to develop a standard, district-level protocol regarding professional development. The use of this type of collaborative approach could enhance problem solving, increase acceptance of change, and promote a general sense of commitment to the larger goal of student achievement.

Finally, once districtwide policies and procedures are developed, Dr. Jacobson should request that each principal develop a plan for faculty professional development within his or her building that is aligned with district guidelines. This will give principals an opportunity to demonstrate building-level commitment to districtwide changes and will help establish accountability for results. It will also help the superintendent monitor progress, ensure adherence to district policies, and communicate progress to the district governing body and other constituents.

■ **Evaluation of the Strong Response to the Sample Case Study Assignment**

This response is considered a strong response because it reflects a thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills.

PURPOSE: Fulfill the charge of the assignment.

The response completely fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding fully to the given task.

All parts of the charge are addressed within the response. The response describes four examples of what the superintendent did well (i.e., being accessible to a faculty member, deciding to investigate the situation further, conducting meetings with the principal appropriately, and showing a strong commitment to promoting academic excellence in all district schools). The response also includes a description of what the superintendent did poorly or failed to do (e.g., impulsiveness in sharing, thinking about switching principals, targeting one building for improvement rather than developing a districtwide policy). Finally, the response includes a discussion of three suggested actions (i.e., communicating with the district governing body, issuing a clarifying statement to dispel rumors and outline a plan for creating districtwide policies and procedures, and requesting that principals develop school-level plans aligned with district guidelines) and their potential efficacy.

APPLICATION OF CONTENT: Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates an accurate and highly effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates a strong understanding of leadership principles and their applications in relation to solving problems, making decisions, and promoting positive change. For example, the response reflects an understanding of effective methods for addressing problems (e.g., begin by gathering relevant information, promote stakeholder commitment to working toward solutions) and for implementing change (e.g., recognizing that a top-down decision to change positions of principals is not an effective way to initiate change, recognizing the importance of involving stakeholders in the change process, understanding of the role of stakeholder attitudes and participation, the value of establishing districtwide policies and procedures to facilitate change and help establish accountability).

SUPPORT: Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response provides strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning.

The response contains both sound reasoning and relevant examples. Reasons are provided for the evaluation of the superintendent's good and poor choices. For example, an explanation is given as to why meeting with the principals individually was appropriate (i.e., offered . . . opportunities to candidly discuss their perspectives . . .). In the discussion of three important actions for the superintendent to take, relevant examples are given, for example in regard to what should be included in the clarifying statement (e.g., keeping the principals at their current posts, commitment to developing broad goals and policies, outlining plans for a districtwide committee). Several examples are given regarding what the district leader's role should be in implementing the new policies and procedures (e.g., monitor progress, ensure adherence to district policies, communicate progress).

CRITERIA FOR SCORING THE RESPONSE

Each response will be evaluated based on the following criteria.

PURPOSE:	Fulfill the charge of the assignment.
APPLICATION OF CONTENT:	Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.
SUPPORT:	Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

Each response is rated on a four-point scale. The four score points of the score scale correspond to varying degrees of performance that are related to the above criteria.

Score Point	Score Point Description
4	**The "4" response reflects a thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills.** • The response completely fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding fully to the given task. • The response demonstrates an accurate and highly effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning.
3	**The "3" response reflects a general command of the relevant knowledge and skills.** • The response generally fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding to the given task. • The response demonstrates a generally accurate and effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides support with some relevant examples and/or generally sound reasoning.
2	**The "2" response reflects a partial command of the relevant knowledge and skills.** • The response partially fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding in a limited way to the given task. • The response demonstrates a limited, partially accurate and partially effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides limited support with few examples and/or some flawed reasoning.
1	**The "1" response reflects little or no command of the relevant knowledge and skills.** • The response fails to fulfill the purpose of the assignment. • The response demonstrates a largely inaccurate and/or ineffective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides little or no support with few, if any, examples and/or seriously flawed reasoning.

Please note: A response that is unrelated to the assigned topic, unreadable, written in a language other than English, or lacking a sufficient amount of original work to score will be considered **unscorable**. If there is no response to the assignment, then the response will be considered **blank**.

Part Two Sample Questions and Written Assignments

This section is designed to assist you in responding to the multiple-choice questions and written assignments on Part Two of the assessment.

Included in this section are:

➢ Sample multiple-choice questions

➢ Annotated answer key for the sample multiple-choice questions

➢ Sample directions for the written assignments

➢ Sample written assignments

➢ An example of a strong response to each sample assignment

➢ An evaluation of the strong response to each sample assignment

➢ Scoring criteria that will be used in evaluating your response to each assignment

The sample multiple-choice questions are designed to illustrate the nature of the test questions. Work through the questions carefully before referring to the annotated answer key, which follows the sample multiple-choice questions. The answer key provides the correct response to each question, describes why each correct response is the best answer, and lists the objective within the assessment framework to which each question is linked.

For each sample assignment, you may want to take the following steps to prepare for the test:

☑ Review the directions for the written assignments.

☑ Read the assignment.

☑ Prepare your response to the assignment. It is suggested that you type your response to the assignment without using editorial tools, such as spell check and grammar check, in order to simulate the actual testing experience. These tools will not be available to you during the test session.

☑ After you complete the assignment, review the sample strong response, your response, the scoring criteria, and the evaluation of the sample strong response.

QUESTIONS

1. A school district leader is overseeing the development of a plan for enhancing the use of classroom assessment to improve student learning outcomes. The plan is most likely to achieve the intended goal if it includes provisions for:

   A.   establishing mandated testing dates for each grade level and curriculum area based on the scope and sequence of the district's curriculum.

   B.   ensuring that assessment is used as an integral tool for making instructional decisions on an ongoing basis.

   C.   establishing a districtwide system of grading in which student grades are based on standard assessment practices and grading criteria.

   D.   ensuring that district schools allow students to choose from a variety of assessment formats to demonstrate their learning.

2. A school district leader is committed to significantly reducing the incidence of bullying and harassing at district schools. As part of this effort, all staff will be held accountable for taking direct action in any situation involving student bullying or harassing that they witness or that is reported to them. The district leader can best help ensure the desired staff behavior by using which of the following strategies?

   A.   communicating clearly to staff the reasons why direct action on their part is needed in responding to the problem of student bullying and harassing

   B.   revising the criteria used for staff performance evaluations to include behavior and attitudes related to student bullying and harassing

   C.   initiating a campaign to publicize the problem of student bullying and harassing and to urge staff and others to take appropriate action against this problem

   D.   providing all staff with explicit training in how to identify and respond to incidents involving student bullying and harassing

3. A building leader asks a school district leader to support him in beginning proceedings to terminate a tenured teacher for unsatisfactory performance in various aspects of his job and an overall inability to play a positive role in helping achieve the district's vision for student learning. Before agreeing to support the building leader, it is most important for the district leader to receive which of the following?

   A. student records that illustrate the teacher's inability to provide adequate instruction

   B. documentation of actions taken in an effort to remediate the teacher's weaknesses

   C. a record of all disciplinary actions taken against the teacher by the building leader

   D. evidence of one or more actions by the teacher that are in conflict with the district's code of conduct

4. The leader of a district's Shared-Decision-Making Team is concerned that the team is not functioning effectively. Team members agree to complete a questionnaire designed to evaluate the functioning of the team. Each team member, including the leader, completes the questionnaire independently. As a *next* step, which of the following strategies is likely to be most effective in improving the team's functioning?

   A. The team leader and the district's human resources director analyze the questionnaire results and prepare recommendations for the team.

   B. The team reviews and analyzes the results of the questionnaire in order to identify perceived areas of strength in team functioning.

   C. The team leader analyzes the results of the questionnaire, then introduces appropriate changes to improve team functioning.

   D. The team analyzes and discusses the results of the questionnaire, then plans action steps to improve weak areas of team functioning.

5. Six of the 15 schools in a district are over 50 years old and in need of significant renovation and updating. The school district leader can best initiate action on this problem by:

   A. directing district staff to investigate and identify the specific needs and inadequacies of each building.

   B. arranging for stakeholder groups to tour new and remodeled school buildings similar to those in the district that require repair.

   C. submitting an initial request to the district governing body seeking fiscal support for a construction proposal.

   D. forming a broad-based committee of stakeholders to begin the process of selecting a knowledgeable and experienced construction consultant.

6. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), school districts are required to provide a "free appropriate public education" to children with disabilities. This means that school districts must provide every eligible student who has an identified disability with:

   A. an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that enables the student to achieve to his or her maximum potential.

   B. special education and related services that match or surpass a federally mandated array of services defined for the student's disability.

   C. an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that is tailored to meet the student's unique needs.

   D. special education and related services that will be of at least minimal educational benefit to the student.

Use the information below to answer the three questions that follow.

Residents of Rockridge School District are concerned about a number of recent trends in the local schools, including increased student violence and drug use, increased student absenteeism, declining graduation rates for some student groups, and decreased job placement rates for students graduating from the career and technology education programs. Dr. Owens, the recently hired school district leader of Rockridge, has made it a priority to address these problems. She has reviewed relevant data and has spoken to many individuals and groups in the schools and in the community about the problems.

7. At this point, which of the following steps would be most appropriate for Dr. Owens to take *first* to address the identified problems?

   A. initiating a districtwide campaign to alert students' families to the issues and challenge them to take personal action

   B. seeking guidance from school and community stakeholder groups in defining ways in which school programs and services can better address current needs

   C. creating a resource center to provide additional assistance to students in job- and career-related skills such as résumé building and interviewing strategies

   D. requesting the cooperation of the district governing body in expanding funding for the various student support services offered in the schools

8. As she visits district schools, Dr. Owens finds that many school personnel, including long-time teachers and administrative staff, appear to be focusing their energies more on complaining about the changes that have occurred in the district than on seeking ways to address them. Dr. Owens' best response under these circumstances would be to:

   A. begin an ongoing dialogue with district administrators and faculty to support innovation and leadership at the building level to meet the new challenges.

   B. send an open letter to administrators and faculty acknowledging the problems the district is facing and outlining her plans for addressing these problems.

   C. convene a meeting of senior faculty and staff members for the purpose of clarifying the attitudes and behavior she expects from them as leaders within the district.

   D. arrange for district faculty and staff members to attend a series of professional development seminars on how to achieve a sense of empowerment in the workplace.

9. A school building leader confides to Dr. Owens that the growing number and types of problems he encounters daily are causing him unprecedented levels of stress. He adds that other building leaders in the district are under similar pressure. Which of the following strategies would be most effective for Dr. Owens to use to address this issue?

    A. taking steps to protect building leaders from extraneous demands and to ensure that they do not feel isolated

    B. instituting districtwide policies to limit the amount of overtime put in by building leaders

    C. finding ways to encourage building leaders to keep sight of the district vision and to renew their commitment to it

    D. frequently expressing gratitude, both in public and in private, for the work done by individual building leaders

ANNOTATED ANSWER KEY

For question	The correct response is	Reason	Test Objective
1	B	Classroom assessments have the greatest positive effect on student learning outcomes when teachers use assessment results to guide their instructional planning. Student performance on classroom assessments gives teachers valuable information about their students' current strengths and needs and therefore helps teachers adjust the pace of instruction and the methods used in ways that are responsive to particular learning needs.	0001
2	D	When implementing a districtwide initiative such as the one described, district leaders would be best advised to provide explicit training aimed at clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all staff who are expected to partici-pate. Such training would help ensure that all staff members have a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying or harassing behavior as defined by the district. Furthermore, it would promote greater consistency in how staff members respond to instances of bullying or harassing behavior.	0002
3	B	In the situation described, the school district leader must understand and apply appropriate procedures for terminating a tenured teacher whose performance is detrimental to the achievement of educational goals. Tenured teachers have a right to be protected from arbitrary dismissal. Therefore, it is important for the district leader to obtain evidence showing that the teacher has been informed about areas of weakness and has had ample opportunity to improve his performance through access to appropriate support and guidance. If documentation provided by the building leader shows that a good faith effort has been made to help the teacher improve performance, then the district leader can be confident about moving forward with the termination request.	0005

For question	The correct response is	Reason	Test Objective
4	D	Involving team members in analyzing and discussing the questionnaire results serves several purposes. Engaging in the process should help all team members recognize the need for improvement and will offer all team members an opportunity to participate in generating solutions to solve identified problems. This in turn can be expected to bring a wide range of ideas and strategies to the table, increase team members' acceptance of adopted solutions, and enhance all members' sense of responsibility for contributing to the development of a well-functioning team.	0006
5	A	In the situation described, the school district leader's first step should be to assess the particular needs that currently exist at each of the six schools requiring renovation. This will allow district staff to begin defining the precise nature and scope of the problems that must be addressed and identifying potential priorities for future action. Only then will the district leader be ready to put together a coherent and comprehensive case for district decision makers who will want information about the severity of needs, likely project costs, and other issues related to work that needs to be done.	0007
6	C	According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), every student with an identified disability who qualifies for special education services must be provided with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that reflects the student's specific needs and assists the student in achieving defined educational goals. The IEP is a legal document that specifies the supports, modifications, and services that the student is entitled to receive and serves as a road map for providing instruction and learning opportunities in the least restrictive environment consistent with the student's educational needs.	0008

For question	The correct response is	Reason	Test Objective
7	B	Based on the information provided, Dr. Owens has taken steps to define the nature of and perceptions about the problems in Rockridge. Her next step should be to determine what the schools can and should do in terms of providing programs and services to solve these problems and meet student needs. By involving stakeholder groups in the school and community in the initial stages of this process, Dr. Owens can help ensure that the ideas generated will be responsive to perceived needs and the solutions ultimately adopted will be broadly supported. Only after promising solutions have been identified and explored will Dr. Owens be in a position to take specific actions aimed at effecting positive change.	0003
8	A	In responding to school staff who have become bogged down in complaining and being negative about current problems, Dr. Owens's primary goal should be to promote a more positive outlook and a commitment to implementing new approaches for school improvement. She can best help achieve this goal by engaging school staff in ongoing interactions aimed at encouraging leadership and innovative solutions and providing reassurance that the district is committed to supporting positive action at the school level. In this way, Dr. Owens can help motivate and energize staff to meet the challenges that lie ahead.	0004
9	A	Although Dr. Owens cannot eliminate many of the daily challenges faced by school building leaders, she can control the number and nature of the demands placed on building leaders by the district. Reducing district demands on building leaders' time will make it easier for them to focus their energies on responding promptly and effectively to building-level challenges. Dr. Owens can also put in place procedures for reducing the building leaders' sense of isolation during a stressful time. For example, checking in regularly with individual building leaders and/or small groups of building leaders would provide support that could help the building leaders reduce stress and solve problems that are confronting them.	0004

DIRECTIONS FOR THE WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

A sample of the directions for the written assignments is shown in the box below.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

This section of the test consists of two written assignments. Assignment One is a Management Problem Solving assignment and Assignment Two is an Educational Program Analysis assignment. You are to prepare a written response of about 150–300 words to Assignment One and a written response of about 300–600 words to Assignment Two. Approximately 50% of your total test score is derived from the written assignments—approximately 17% from Assignment One, and approximately 33% from Assignment Two. You may complete the assignments in either order, and you may return to either assignment as time permits.

Read each assignment carefully before you type. Each written assignment appears on the screen with an answer box immediately below the assignment. Type your response in this answer box. For some written assignments, you may need to use the scroll bar to view the entire assignment. To view all parts of Assignment Two, you will need to click on buttons at the top of the screen labeled "Document 1," "Document 2," etc. As with the multiple-choice questions, you may select written assignments for review later during the testing time.

Your response to each assignment will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- **PURPOSE:** Fulfill the charge of the assignment.

- **APPLICATION OF CONTENT:** Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.

- **SUPPORT:** Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

Your responses will be evaluated on the criteria above, not on writing ability. However, your responses must be communicated clearly enough to permit valid judgment of your knowledge and skills. Your responses should conform to the conventions of edited American English. This should be your original work, written in your own words, and not copied or paraphrased from some other work.

Be sure to write about the assigned topics. You may not use any reference materials during the test. In order to maintain your anonymity during the scoring process, do not type your name in any portion of the answer box. Remember to review what you have written and make any changes that you think will improve your responses.

SAMPLE MANAGEMENT PROBLEM SOLVING ASSIGNMENT

Subarea: Managing District Resources and Compliance

Assignment One: Management Problem Solving

Use the information below to complete the task that follows.

Dr. Freed is a new school superintendent. During the previous five-year period, budgets in his district were limited, and district leaders made concerted efforts to identify supplementary funds. Administrators and teachers were very successful in finding grant funds to support specific programs. Some grants were a few hundred dollars, enough to take a group of students to a concert or play, and some were many thousands of dollars and large enough to provide significant professional development for teachers.

During the school year, a notification arrives informing Dr. Freed that a payment of grant funds is being withheld due to improper use. The funds, which were earmarked for professional development for math teachers, were instead used for a student field trip. This competitive grant was one of three grants that had been written and administered by Mr. Haigh, one of the middle school principals.

Mr. Haigh quickly acknowledges that a mistake had been made. Explaining that he had inadvertently charged the field trip to the wrong grant, he volunteers to prepare and submit the necessary amendment. Mr. Haigh tells Dr. Freed that grant writing increases the workload and bookkeeping for his staff, but he is pleased with the supplementary revenue and programs he has been able to generate for the school.

After looking into the issue, Dr. Freed learns that Mr. Haigh is not the only principal who has been administering several grants. The district business manager says that she has not been monitoring the grants, since they are being administered all over the district. Dr. Freed's concern grows as he discovers inconsistent fiscal account-ability and disregard of program protocol regarding grants. However, he does not want to dampen the enthusiasm of grant writers or eliminate this significant source of revenue. Dr. Freed decides that the district needs to develop a system to improve management of school grant funds.

Task

Write a response of about 150–300 words in which you:

• describe two important issues that Dr. Freed should consider when planning development of a system to improve management of school grant funds in this district;

• describe one strategy for improving management of school grant funds in this district; and

• explain why this strategy is likely to be effective.

■ Strong Response to the Sample Management Problem Solving Assignment

One important issue Dr. Freed would need to consider when developing a plan for managing the school grant funding program is the need to create a comprehensive system of oversight and management of the district's entire grant system. This system should be headed by a knowledgeable program administrator and should include a well-organized program handbook that is given to every participating staff member.

A second, related issue is the need to provide all involved staff with training in the management of grant funds. This training should include such areas as compliance with restrictions on specific funds and the importance of fulfilling reporting requirements. The apparently widespread popularity of the grant program, along with the fact that more than one principal is administering several grants, makes it increasingly likely that errors like Mr. Haigh's will recur without a management system that includes comprehensive oversight and systematic training for personnel at all levels who are involved in the program.

One strategy for improving the management of school grant funds in this district would be to ask the local Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) director or assistant director to collaborate with the district business leader to develop and implement a series of training sessions. One session should address the purpose and intent of the various types of grant funded initiatives within the district and would be mandatory for all personnel involved. Another would focus on management and compliance, explicitly identifying allowable expenditures, budget and object codes pertinent to the grant, and fiscal accounting. Another session should focus on the reporting of funding use and outcomes, contacts for technical assistance, and organization of documentation, both for reporting to the district business leader and in case of an audit.

This strategy would be effective because it would help ensure that staff members involved in the program have the necessary information (including where to direct questions) to write and manage grants appropriately. It would also communicate that compliance with system requirements is taken very seriously and that individuals who demonstrate noncompliance will be held accountable.

■ **Evaluation of the Strong Response to the Sample Management Problem Solving Assignment**

This response is considered a strong response because it reflects a thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills.

PURPOSE: Fulfill the charge of the assignment.

The response completely fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding fully to the given task.

All parts of the charge are addressed within the response. There is a description of two important issues to consider when planning development of a system to improve management of school grant funds (i.e., the creation of a comprehensive system of oversight, including a program administrator, and the establishment of a training program). A strategy is described that involves the collaboration between a BOCES director and the school district business leader to develop and implement a series of training sessions. There is an explanation of why the strategy described is likely to be effective (i.e., provides the necessary information and communicates that compliance with system requirements is taken very seriously and that individuals who demonstrate noncompliance will be held accountable).

APPLICATION OF CONTENT: Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates an accurate and highly effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates an understanding of leadership concepts and principles in relation to district financial management. There is evidence of understanding of the management and compliance issues involved in grant funding, as well as knowledge of appropriate contacts related to this concept (e.g., BOCES). The discussion of the strategy for improving the management of grant funds demonstrates an understanding of the elements of training that will be required and the responsibilities of all involved (e.g., use of appropriate codes, documentation).

SUPPORT: Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response provides strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning.

Relevant examples and sound reasoning are present in this response. For example, there is reasoning for providing a comprehensive system of management and training for personnel at all levels (i.e., to help prevent errors such as Mr. Haigh's). Examples of components of training for grant compliance and management are provided (e.g., contacts for technical assistance, documentation for auditing).

SAMPLE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT

Subarea: Leading the District Educational Program

<u>Assignment Two: Educational Program Analysis</u>

You are the new superintendent of Fowler School District. Read the five district documents on the pages that follow. Citing specific evidence from the information provided, write a response of about 300–600 words in which you:

- identify one significant strength of the district's educational program, and describe a strategy for building on this strength to improve the district's educational program;

- identify two significant weaknesses of the district's educational program;

- for *each* of the weaknesses you have identified, describe one strategy to address that weakness; and

- explain why each of these strategies is likely to be effective in improving the district's educational program.

Document #1: Excerpt from a memo written by the assistant superintendent to the new superintendent (current year)

M e m o r a n d u m

TO: [Superintendent]

FROM: [Assistant Superintendent]

DATE: [Current year]

SUBJECT: Background Information

Welcome to the district! I have enjoyed meeting and talking with you, and I look forward to working with you in the coming school year.
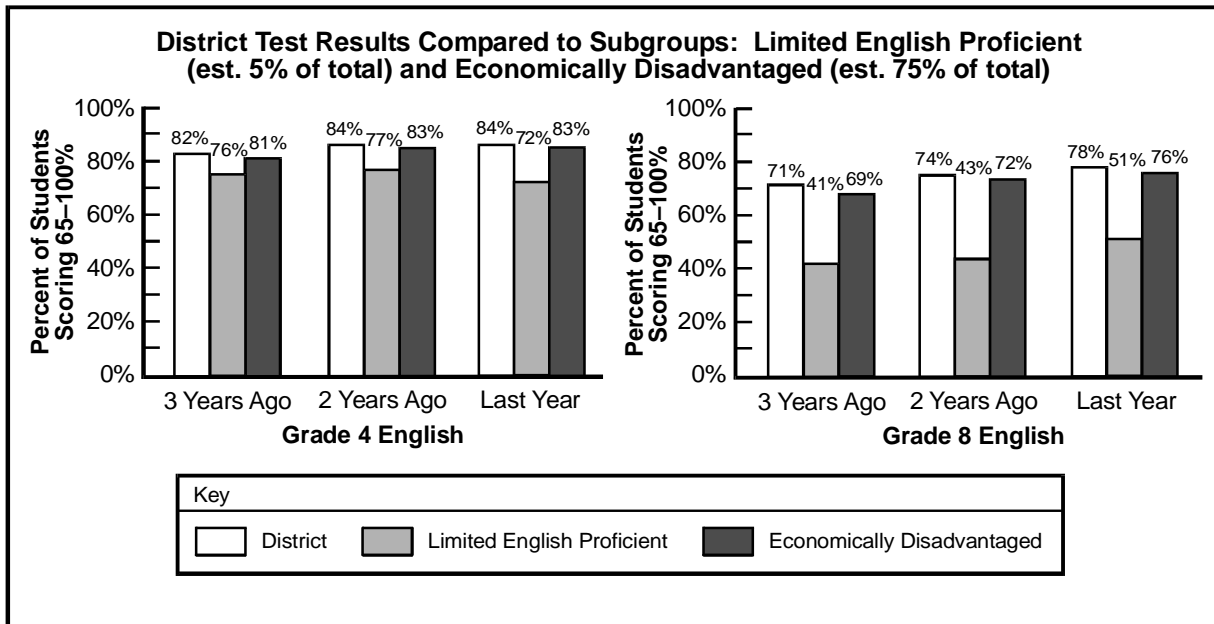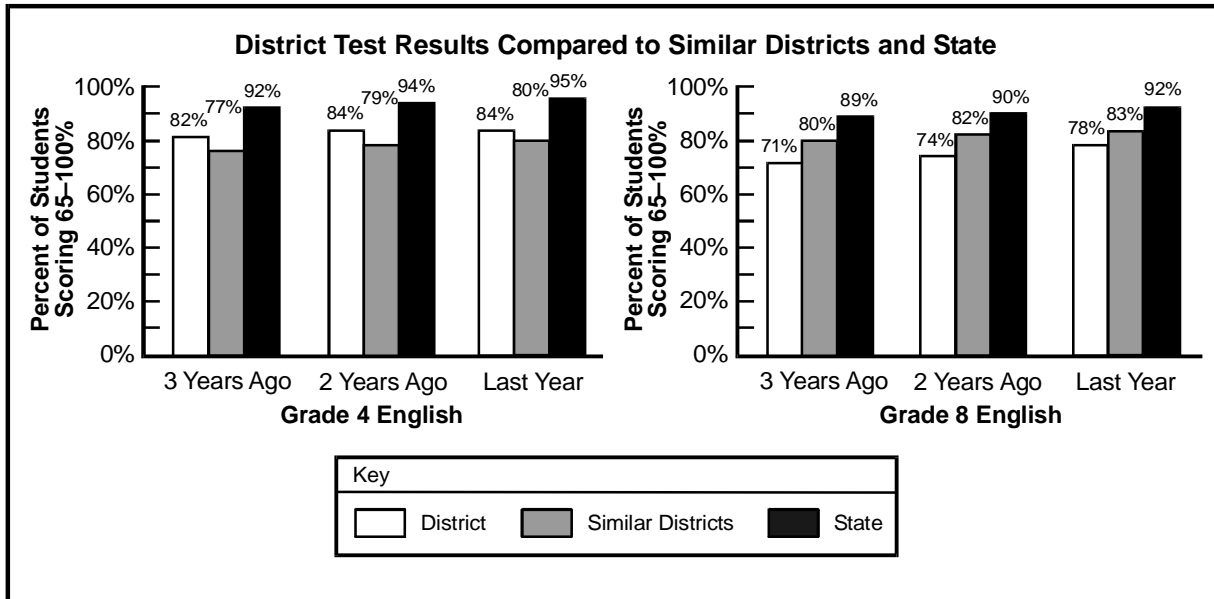
You have asked me to pass along some background information about our district. As you know, Fowler School District is a large district in which the schools enjoy strong community and parent/guardian support.

Eleven years ago, with the renovation of three buildings, the district governing body voted to move the sixth graders from the elementary schools to the middle schools. Initially, these students followed the junior high model of a seven-period schedule. They began their day in homeroom and then had content-area instruction in different classrooms on a rotating schedule.

Five years ago, the middle school principals' advisory group of teachers and parents/guardians reported that the sixth graders were having trouble transitioning from the nurturing elementary school environment of a self-contained fifth-grade classroom to the middle schools' multiple-class system, which required students to interact with a different teacher for each subject. The decision was made to designate a "transition year" for sixth graders. The sixth-grade students were assigned to two-teacher teams: one teacher taught mathematics and science, and the other teacher taught English and social studies. This model is still in place, with students changing classrooms midday.

Document #2: Fowler School District state test results

District Test Results Compared to Similar Districts and State

Grade 4 English

3 Years Ago: 82%, 77%, 92%
2 Years Ago: 84%, 79%, 94%
Last Year: 84%, 80%, 95%

Y-axis: Percent of Students Scoring 65–100%

Grade 8 English

3 Years Ago: 71%, 80%, 89%
2 Years Ago: 74%, 82%, 90%
Last Year: 78%, 83%, 92%

Y-axis: Percent of Students Scoring 65–100%

Key: District | Similar Districts | State

District Test Results Compared to Subgroups: Limited English Proficient (est. 5% of total) and Economically Disadvantaged (est. 75% of total)

Grade 4 English

3 Years Ago: 82%, 76%, 81%
2 Years Ago: 84%, 77%, 83%
Last Year: 84%, 72%, 83%

Y-axis: Percent of Students Scoring 65–100%

Grade 8 English

3 Years Ago: 71%, 41%, 69%
2 Years Ago: 74%, 43%, 72%
Last Year: 78%, 51%, 76%

Y-axis: Percent of Students Scoring 65–100%

Key: District | Limited English Proficient | Economically Disadvantaged

Document #3: Newspaper article (last spring)

Middle School Study Committee Reports Concerns

[CITY]—Eleven years after moving sixth graders to the middle schools, and five years after major changes in the delivery of instruction, middle school student achievement levels are still below expectations. The District Middle School Study Committee, composed of parents/guardians and educators, has made public the results of its in-depth review of test scores and its survey of parents/guardians, designed to provide information about parent/guardian concerns and levels of satisfaction.

Although district elementary students over the past decade have generally performed at high levels, middle school performance drops significantly on state-mandated tests, according to the district's curriculum director.

Several parents/guardians on the committee recognized and expressed appreciation for staff attempts to design strategies to meet the unique needs of middle school students. But committee consensus is that although district middle schools are progressing, the teachers, curriculum, and instructional strategies are still not fully meeting the needs of middle school learners.

The committee presented concerns about teacher turnover and the frequent transfer of more experienced teachers from middle school to high school. As noted in the report, "A stable, experienced staff, committed to middle school teaching, continues as a high-priority need. The middle school environment is still not as nurturing and supportive as it needs to be in transitioning students entering from the elementary schools."

The committee identified inadequate recruiting, hiring, and training of middle school staff to meet the needs of this unique age group as key problems. Funding cuts and other mandated professional development requirements were cited as reasons why district professional development plans have not focused more on preparing teachers for middle school teaching. The administration has recognized this need and plans to provide increased professional development funds in the next budget.

The Middle School Study Committee will meet the second Tuesday of each month and is open to the public. Parents/guardians who are interested in serving on this committee are asked to contact the chair.

Document #4: Fowler School District faculty data

Fowler School District Teachers:
Years of Teaching Experience and Average Salaries

Years of Teaching Experience	High School Teachers	Middle School Teachers	Elementary Teachers	Districtwide Itinerant Teachers
Beginning	25	47	13	7
2–5 years	49	180	122	29
6–10 years	156	110	157	35
11–19 years	192	73	337	50
More than 20 years	183	48	276	42
Average Salaries	$54,000	$36,000	$47,000	$49,000

Fowler School District: Faculty Count

Level	Number of Teachers
High School (9–12)	605
Middle School (6–8)	458
Elementary (K–5)	905
Districtwide Itinerant	163
District Total (K–12)	2,131

Document #5: Preliminary schedule of professional development sessions for all teachers in the district (last year)

Preliminary Professional Development Schedule

Month	Topic	Presenter(s)
October	Restraint Training and CPR (Demonstration)	Special Education Director and School Nurses
November	Differentiated Instruction (Lecture and Video)	Professor Henry McGill
March	Collaborative Learning (Lecture)	TBA
April	Early Retirement: "Making It Work For You"	Union Panel Discussion
May	Review procedures for new data-processing system	Vendor

■ Strong Response to the Sample Educational Program Analysis Assignment

One of Fowler School District's strengths is community, educator, and parent/guardian support and involvement (Documents #1 and #3). For example, staff members are open to developing new strategies to help students adjust to the middle school (Document #1), and parents/guardians are actively involved on the District Middle School Study Committee (Document #3).

One strategy for building on this strength is to expand the role of the Middle School Study Committee. The committee's successful use of shared decision-making strategies and use of significant data to identify strengths and weaknesses in the middle school program is critical and should be further applied to the process of exploring, identifying, and implementing solutions to address problems the committee has identified. Given a new and broader mandate, the committee would likely benefit from increased membership, and perhaps reorganization into various subcommittees, each with its own area to address (e.g., teacher retention, enhancing professional development, meeting the needs of English language learners).

One weakness in the district is high teacher turnover at the middle school level and its likely effect on student achievement (Documents #3 and #4). Approximately half of the middle school staff have five or fewer years of experience (Document #4). One way to encourage staff stability would be to establish an effective mentoring program. Volunteer mentors (i.e., experienced middle school teachers) would be paired with new middle school teachers to provide support, feedback, and coaching. Administrators would provide release time for additional, relevant staff development opportunities (e.g., weekly meetings between new teachers and their mentors, observations by new teachers and their mentors within one another's classrooms).

Mentoring programs target the development of specific teacher behaviors, which can ultimately affect student achievement and result in improved test scores. Teachers who are supported and provided with relevant skill development and who see that their students are achieving are likely to be more successful and may experience greater job satisfaction. Increased job satisfaction among middle school teachers may reduce the turnover rate.

A second area of weakness is low student achievement on the eighth-grade state tests in English. The scores on the English test reflect consistent low performance (i.e., 71–78% passing) over a three-year period (Document #2). These scores are lower than both statewide scores and scores of similar school districts. In contrast, the fourth-grade English scores are better than the scores of similar school districts during the same three-year period. To address this weakness, the district should conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of the educational program at the middle schools. The Middle School Study Committee (or another similarly constituted committee) could be charged with conducting this assessment, which would include using state test data and data from other sources (e.g., questionnaires, interviews) to determine specific weaknesses in curriculum and instruction and to investigate other factors (e.g., leadership, resources, climate) that may be affecting student achievement.

This strategy would be effective because it involves major stakeholder groups in a collaborative process driven by data. Analyzing data will help stakeholders understand the needs of middle school students and determine causes of student underachievement. For example, state test data may indicate that eighth graders had difficulty with particular concepts on the tests. Using this information, the committee could examine the middle school curriculum and instruction to determine whether those concepts are being covered and if they are, whether they should be covered differently or in greater depth. Stakeholders could then use the data to make decisions regarding curriculum and instruction and to develop a plan for improving student achievement. For example, the middle schools may wish to purchase new textbooks that are more aligned with state standards, or they may decide to provide teachers with professional development on research-based instructional strategies in English language arts. The effectiveness of plans for improvement can then be measured by analyzing future performance on state tests for eighth graders.

■ Evaluation of the Strong Response to the Sample Educational Program Analysis Assignment

This response is considered a strong response because it reflects a thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills.

PURPOSE: Fulfill the charge of the assignment.

The response completely fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding fully to the given task.

All parts of the charge are addressed within the response. The response includes an identification of a significant district strength (i.e., community, educator, and parent/guardian support and involvement) and a description of a strategy for building on that strength (i.e., expanding the role of the Middle School Study Committee . . . to the process of exploring, identifying, and implementing solutions to address identified problems). Two significant weaknesses are identified (i.e., high teacher turnover at the middle school level and low student achievement on the eighth-grade state tests in English). A strategy to address each weakness is described (i.e., a mentoring program for inexperienced middle school teachers and a comprehensive needs assessment of the educational program at the middle schools). An explanation is provided about how a mentoring program would be effective in enhancing teacher support, effectiveness, and job satisfaction and in reducing teacher turnover. An explanation is also provided for why a comprehensive needs assessment would be effective (e.g., helping stakeholders understand the needs of middle school students and determine causes of student underachievement, providing information to help stakeholders develop a plan for improvement).

APPLICATION OF CONTENT: Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates an accurate and highly effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response demonstrates the ability to distinguish between areas of strength and weakness within a district and to suggest effective interventions based on information provided and knowledge of the field. There is evidence of content knowledge within the field related to proper interpretation of data provided in documents (e.g., staff turnover and possible causes, comparative test results and their meaning) and the importance of data-driven planning. The response also includes knowledge of components of effective instructional change (e.g., involvement of stakeholders, use of data) and the need to align curriculum with state standards. In addition, there is an understanding of the importance of providing teachers with support and of the relationships among job satisfaction, staff development, student achievement, and teacher retention.

SUPPORT: Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

The response provides strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning.

The response includes ample evidence of both sound reasoning and support through examples. For example, there is sound reasoning present in the discussion of the potential impact of mentoring programs on student achievement and teachers' job satisfaction. The response includes many relevant, high-quality examples, including what an analysis of the state test data may reveal (e.g., inadequate coverage of curriculum concepts), how the analysis of results can be used to develop an improvement plan, and types of interactions required for a successful mentoring program (e.g., weekly meetings between new teachers and their mentors, classroom observations).

CRITERIA FOR SCORING THE RESPONSE

Each response will be evaluated based on the following criteria.

PURPOSE:	Fulfill the charge of the assignment.
APPLICATION OF CONTENT:	Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.
SUPPORT:	Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.

Each response is rated on a four-point scale. The four score points of the score scale correspond to varying degrees of performance that are related to the above criteria.

Score Point	Score Point Description
4	**The "4" response reflects a thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills.** • The response completely fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding fully to the given task. • The response demonstrates an accurate and highly effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning.
3	**The "3" response reflects a general command of the relevant knowledge and skills.** • The response generally fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding to the given task. • The response demonstrates a generally accurate and effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides support with some relevant examples and/or generally sound reasoning.
2	**The "2" response reflects a partial command of the relevant knowledge and skills.** • The response partially fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding in a limited way to the given task. • The response demonstrates a limited, partially accurate and partially effective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides limited support with few examples and/or some flawed reasoning.
1	**The "1" response reflects little or no command of the relevant knowledge and skills.** • The response fails to fulfill the purpose of the assignment. • The response demonstrates a largely inaccurate and/or ineffective application of the relevant knowledge and skills. • The response provides little or no support with few, if any, examples and/or seriously flawed reasoning.

Please note: A response that is unrelated to the assigned topic, unreadable, written in a language other than English, or lacking a sufficient amount of original work to score will be considered **unscorable**. If there is no response to the assignment, then the response will be considered **blank**.