

NYSTCE 103 · 104

SDL Answer Key

Correct answers and full rationales for all **99 practice items**, answers and citations for all **225 recall cards**, and a blank progress tracker. Item numbers and card codes match the **SDL Study Packet** exactly.

FRONT MATTER

How to use this key

Four parts: the answer grid for fast checking, the full rationales for real learning, the recall-card answers, and a tracker.

Three cautions

DO NOT CHECK ITEM BY ITEM

Work a whole block — a scenario, an objective, a timed set — before you open this book. Checking after every item teaches you to recognise answers, which is not the skill being tested.

READ THE RATIONALE ON ITEMS YOU GOT RIGHT

About a fifth of these rationales are NYSED's own, published with the official sample items, and they name the exact objective being tested. Getting an item right for the wrong reason is the most common way a practice score overstates a real one.

WHERE A RATIONALE HERE DISAGREES WITH AN OFFICIAL ONE

The official one wins. Items marked **official** carry NYSED's published rationale verbatim. Items marked **adapted** and **practice** carry practitioner-written rationales, verified against current New York sources in August 2026 but not NYSED-endorsed. Several items in this bank exist specifically to correct errors circulating in SDL study files — the rationale says so where that is the case.

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PART A

Answers at a Glance

All 99 correct answers, with the part, objective and source of each item. Full reasoning is in Part B.

Src: offi = official NYSTCE sample item · adap = adapted · prac = practitioner-written

#	Key	Part	Obj	Src	#	Key	Part	Obj	Src	#	Key	Part	Obj	Src	#	Key	Part	Obj	Src
1	B	103	0001	offi	26	A	103	0005	prac	51	B	104	0001	prac	76	A	104	0005	prac
2	B	103	0001	prac	27	A	103	0005	prac	52	D	104	0001	prac	77	D	104	0005	adap
3	A	103	0001	prac	28	D	103	0005	prac	53	B	104	0001	adap	78	D	104	0006	offi
4	C	103	0001	prac	29	B	103	0005	adap	54	D	104	0002	offi	79	B	104	0006	prac
5	B	103	0001	prac	30	A	103	0005	prac	55	A	104	0002	prac	80	D	104	0006	adap
6	C	103	0001	prac	31	B	103	0006	offi	56	D	104	0002	prac	81	B	104	0006	prac
7	D	103	0002	offi	32	B	103	0006	prac	57	D	104	0002	adap	82	A	104	0006	prac
8	A	103	0002	prac	33	D	103	0006	prac	58	A	104	0002	adap	83	C	104	0006	adap
9	A	103	0002	prac	34	A	103	0006	prac	59	C	104	0002	adap	84	A	104	0007	offi
10	B	103	0002	prac	35	C	103	0006	adap	60	B	104	0003	offi	85	C	104	0007	prac
11	D	103	0002	prac	36	D	103	0007	offi	61	C	104	0003	prac	86	A	104	0007	prac
12	C	103	0002	adap	37	D	103	0007	prac	62	B	104	0003	prac	87	A	104	0007	prac
13	A	103	0003	offi	38	B	103	0007	prac	63	D	104	0003	prac	88	B	104	0007	prac
14	C	103	0003	offi	39	A	103	0007	prac	64	C	104	0003	prac	89	D	104	0007	prac
15	B	103	0003	prac	40	C	103	0007	prac	65	C	104	0003	adap	90	A	104	0007	prac
16	A	103	0003	prac	41	B	103	0007	prac	66	A	104	0004	offi	91	C	104	0008	offi
17	B	103	0003	prac	42	C	103	0008	offi	67	A	104	0004	offi	92	C	104	0008	prac
18	B	103	0003	prac	43	D	103	0008	prac	68	B	104	0004	prac	93	A	104	0008	prac
19	C	103	0004	offi	44	D	103	0008	prac	69	D	104	0004	prac	94	D	104	0008	prac
20	C	103	0004	prac	45	D	103	0008	prac	70	B	104	0004	prac	95	A	104	0008	prac
21	D	103	0004	adap	46	C	103	0008	prac	71	A	104	0004	prac	96	A	104	0008	adap
22	B	103	0004	adap	47	B	104	0001	offi	72	B	104	0005	offi	97	C	104	0008	adap
23	D	103	0004	prac	48	D	104	0001	prac	73	D	104	0005	prac	98	A	104	0008	adap
24	C	103	0004	adap	49	C	104	0001	prac	74	B	104	0005	prac	99	C	104	0008	adap
25	A	103	0005	offi	50	C	104	0001	prac	75	C	104	0005	prac					

PART B

Full Rationales

Every item in packet order, with the correct answer and the reasoning. Scenario headings mark where a block of items shares a stimulus.

1. Correct answer: B · Part 103 · objective 0001 · official

Correct: B. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* “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.” *Added practitioner note:* The stem asks for the *most important* benefit of the practice itself, not for every good thing that could follow from it. A and C describe by-products — a superintendent can learn about the community and hear complaints far more systematically through advisory groups, surveys and forums. D overreaches: showing up at a play does not by itself establish academic standards.

Pattern: Pick the benefit that flows directly from the action, not the one you like best

Scenario – Quarry Hill Central School District – Board, BOCES, and the Line Between Policy and Administration

PART 103

2. Correct answer: B · Part 103 · objective 0001 · practice

Correct: B. A board of education has authority only when it acts as a body in properly convened session; an individual trustee has no authority to direct a district employee, and here the trustee also has a personal interest in the outcome. The superintendent protects the principal, the trustee and the board by routing the inquiry through the superintendent and by having the governance conversation with the board president rather than letting a pattern establish itself. A is wrong because a single trustee’s request is not board action and the request here is a directive, not an information request. D is wrong because a varsity roster is an administrative matter; putting it on a board agenda invites the board to substitute itself for administration and makes a private family matter public. C quietly complies with the improper contact and treats the trustee as the person owed an answer.

Pattern: The board acts only as a body; individual trustees have no authority

3. Correct answer: A · Part 103 · objective 0001 · practice

Correct: A. New York’s Open Meetings Law lets a board convene in executive session only for enumerated purposes, and only on a motion made in open session that identifies the general area of the subject to be considered. A bare motion “to discuss personnel” does not do that. More importantly, the enumerated personnel purpose concerns the medical, financial, credit or employment history of a *particular person* — it is not a general shelter for anything involving employees. Whether to remain in a BOCES program is a policy and budget question affecting 46 students and belongs in public. B states the opposite of the law: sensitivity is not a permitted ground. C invites exactly the error the minutes record. D is wrong because litigation and real property are only two of several permitted grounds.

Pattern: Executive session is a short list of purposes, not a mood

4. Correct answer: C · Part 103 · objective 0001 · practice

Correct: C. A BOCES is a cooperative educational services agency formed by component districts to provide services that no single district could economically provide alone; districts contract for the services they choose, and a share of the cost is reimbursed through BOCES aid. A is wrong: a BOCES is not a branch of the State Education Department and does not supervise its component districts — each component district's own board of education governs its schools. D is wrong: the State's largest city school districts are not BOCES components. B is wrong because BOCES participation is service-by-service; a component district may buy one service and provide another itself, which is precisely the analysis Trustee Amir has asked for.

Pattern: Know the New York structures by name: BOCES, board, superintendent, SED

5. Correct answer: B · Part 103 · objective 0001 · practice

Correct: B. The dividing line the SDL assessment returns to repeatedly is that the board of education makes policy and the superintendent, as chief executive officer, administers it — including the assignment and deployment of staff, and including the recommendation of appointments the board then acts on. A board that reassigns a named administrator by resolution has crossed from governance into administration. D is wrong and would compound the error: moving an improper action behind closed doors does not cure it, and this is not a permitted executive-session purpose. A misstates the issue — a lateral reassignment within tenure area generally does not trigger a hearing right, and the defect here is authority, not process. C imagines a contractual veto that would not resolve the governance problem either way.

Pattern: Board sets policy; superintendent administers — find which side the action falls on

6. Correct answer: C · Part 103 · objective 0001 · practice

Correct: C. The Code of Ethics for Educators is a Regents-adopted statement of the profession's guiding principles — commitment to students, to practice, to the profession, to colleagues, and to the community — written as aspirations that educators use to examine their own practice. A is the common misreading: certificate discipline in New York proceeds through separate moral-character and certification proceedings and through statutory discipline provisions, not through the Code itself. D is wrong because the Code applies to all educators, expressly including school leaders. B invents a posting mandate; districts commonly reference the Code in policy and in induction, but the Code is not a template policy each board must enact word for word.

Pattern: Know what a document is *for* before you decide what it requires

7. Correct answer: D · Part 103 · objective 0002 · official

Correct: D. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* "A school district's educational vision presents an image of the future that reflects stakeholders' shared understandings, 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." *Added practitioner note:* B is the most attractive distractor and the one to learn from: a strategic road map is a *plan*, which is what you build after you have a vision. A describes marketing and public relations; C describes norms for collaboration. Only D contains both required elements — an image of the future, and stakeholders' ideals and beliefs as its source.

Pattern: Vision is an image of the future owned by stakeholders; the plan comes after

Scenario – Crestline Central School District – A Vision Nobody Owns **PART 103**

8. Correct answer: A · Part 103 · objective 0002 · practice

Correct: A. The diagnosis in the scenario is not that the words are wrong — it is that no one owns them. The vision was written by three people over a summer and adopted with no public comment, and nothing in the district's plans, calendar or evaluation instruments refers to it. The remedy is participation: test the existing statement with the people who must live it. That also answers the trustee who fears a stalling tactic, because the work starts from what exists rather than from a blank page. B repeats the original mistake at higher speed and produces a second orphan statement. C mandates alignment to a vision no one shares, which yields compliance documents. D treats vision as a luxury item, when the board's goals and the budget are exactly the decisions a vision is supposed to discipline.

Pattern: A vision nobody helped build is a vision nobody uses — start with participation

9. Correct answer: A · Part 103 · objective 0002 · practice

Correct: A. A vision is sustained by the structures that carry it — goal setting, resource allocation, professional learning, and the instruments used to evaluate adults. When none of those reference the vision, the organization has no mechanism to keep it alive regardless of how sincerely people speak about it, and the next superintendent will find the same orphan statement. B is an opinion from one leader; it is a symptom, not the mechanism. C and D are real problems of alignment, but a district can have divergent building priorities and still be sustaining a vision if district structures continually pull them back. The absence of the vision from every recurring structure is the systemic finding.

Pattern: Look for the structures that carry the vision, not the sentiments about it

10. Correct answer: B · Part 103 · objective 0002 · practice

Correct: B. Alignment means each school can name how its distinctive work advances the shared district aim and can point to the evidence that will show it. That preserves the school's ownership of its own context — a high school with a strong CTE partnership and a K–2 building will pursue “college, career and community ready” differently — while creating a real accountability link to the district. A and C both achieve uniformity by erasing school ownership, which is what produced the current condition. D confuses authority with alignment: board adoption of five mission statements does not make any of them connected to the district's aim or measurable.

Pattern: Alignment is a stated relationship plus evidence, not identical wording

11. Correct answer: D · Part 103 · objective 0002 · practice

Correct: D. A vision earns its keep when it functions as a decision rule under scarcity. Ranking proposals against the vision forces the board and the community to argue about priorities in public and makes the eventual reductions defensible as something other than across-the-board trimming. A is presentation, not decision making. C is the same move reduced to a required sentence in a form, which trains staff to write the magic words rather than to think about priority. B is the most tempting trap: refusing to distinguish among programs is precisely the abdication that a vision exists to prevent, and no district facing a levy limit can hold everything harmless.

Pattern: A vision that never rules anything out is not doing any work

12. Correct answer: C · Part 103 · objective 0002 · adapted

Correct: C. A vision becomes shared only through the process used to develop and introduce it. Announcing a districtwide structural change by memorandum gives principals, teachers, the bargaining unit and the board no opportunity to shape it, raise implementation problems, or connect it to what they already believe about literacy — so the first thing they can do about it is resist. A and D attribute the resistance to a defect in the staff, which the scenario gives no evidence for and which is the least useful diagnosis available to a district leader because it points to no action. B is closer but incomplete: the problem is not that the superintendent has authority, it is that she used only authority. *Adapted from a locally authored New York district practice item; rationale rewritten.*

Pattern: Resistance is usually a report on your process, not on the people

Scenario – Northgate School District – Budget Letter to Families PART 103

13. Correct answer: A · Part 103 · objective 0003 · official

Correct: A. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* “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.” *Added practitioner note:* D is the near-miss: defining “expenditure forecast document” leaves the bureaucratic register in place and adds length. B and C fix real but minor defects — adding figures does not help a reader who cannot parse the sentences around them, and a warmer opening line does not make the body of the letter readable.

Pattern: Write for the audience you have, not the one that reads budget documents

14. Correct answer: C · Part 103 · objective 0003 · official

Correct: C. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* “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.” *Added practitioner note:* A is true of any public posting and is not a reason against it — budget information is public. B asserts a general claim about trust that the district leader has no basis for. D describes a security risk that is managed by controlling site access, not by choosing a different channel. Only C goes to whether the message reaches the audience.

Pattern: Choose the channel by who it reaches, and never rely on one channel

Scenario – Westbrook Central School District – Communicating in the First 24 Hours PART 103

15. Correct answer: B · Part 103 · objective 0003 · practice

Correct: B. Two separate errors in one paragraph. The district has no basis to declare its operator blameless — the police have made no determination, the insurer has not been notified, and a statement of fault by the district in the first hour can be quoted back at it for years. Closing the matter to further comment then guarantees that every subsequent development is reported by someone else. The rule in a crisis is to say what you know, say what you do not yet know, say what you are doing, and say when you will speak again. C is wrong: the approximate time is basic factual information families need. D would make the statement worse by identifying children more precisely in a public release. A treats volume as the measure of a crisis statement; accuracy and a next-update commitment are what matter.

Pattern: In a crisis: confirm facts, refuse to assign fault, promise the next update

16. Correct answer: A · Part 103 · objective 0003 · practice

Correct: A. The parent group’s email identifies the actual failure: families received a message they could not read and have no way to find out about their own child, so they are driving to the school and to the hospital. The first obligation in a crisis affecting children is to give every family, in a language they read, the specific information they need and a human being to reach. B waits 45 minutes for a communications specialist while the vacuum fills. D silences the people families already trust and leaves principals unable to help parents standing in their parking lots. C misunderstands the board’s role — the board sets communication policy; the superintendent executes it, and a crisis statement is not board business.

Pattern: Reach every family in a language they read, with a person they can call

17. Correct answer: B · Part 103 · objective 0003 · practice

Correct: B. The superintendent does not supervise trustees; the board president does, in the sense that the board governs its own conduct. Going to the president preserves the relationship, gets the message delivered by the person with standing to deliver it, and lets the district respond substantively by putting accurate information back in front of the community. C escalates to counsel a problem that has not yet been addressed collegially and will be read as a threat to a board member. A publicly contradicts a trustee, which turns a communications problem into a governance fight in front of the community. D is wrong because the public does not distinguish a trustee's personal page from the district, and the statement may prejudice the district's position.

Pattern: Handle board-member conduct through the board president, not directly or through counsel

Scenario – Flanders Central School District – Closing an Elementary School PART 104**18. Correct answer: B** · Part 103 · objective 0003 · practice

Correct: B. Nothing inflames a community faster than discovering that a decision affecting their children was analyzed privately and scheduled for a closed meeting. By the time families heard about the closing, the district's options had apparently narrowed to one, and every subsequent communication was received as damage control. D describes a statement that angered parents, but it angered them because they had no prior part in the deliberation — the process failure came first. C is not an error at all; enrollment by race and ethnicity is exactly what a board must weigh before consolidating schools. A is a format question, and a written memorandum with data is generally better practice than an oral briefing.

Pattern: Communication problems are usually process problems that surfaced late

19. Correct answer: C · Part 103 · objective 0004 · official

Correct: C. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* "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." *Added practitioner note:* B is the trap: organizing the minority into a bloc after the vote is continuing to campaign. A is not wrong as an ongoing duty but is offered here as a substitute for support — the timing makes it a way of relitigating. D outsources the superintendent's own obligation to the members who agreed with him.

Pattern: Advise before the vote; implement after it

20. Correct answer: C · Part 103 · objective 0004 · practice

Correct: C. The fatal move in the scenario was naming a solution before anyone had agreed on the criteria. A representative committee that first settles what matters — capacity, building condition, travel time, program continuity, the racial and economic composition of the remaining schools, and cost — converts an argument about whose school closes into a decision the community can follow. A shares data without sharing the deliberation, which invites five neighborhoods to run their own analyses in opposition. B buys expertise but repeats the original error, since a consultant naming a building lands the same way the superintendent naming a building did. D is not collaboration; it is advance notice of a settled conclusion, and it asserts "unavoidable" before alternatives have been tested.

Pattern: Agree on the criteria before you name the option

21. Correct answer: D · Part 103 · objective 0004 · adapted

Correct: D. A mid-year reduction touches instruction, supervision, operations and, in most districts, the terms under which employees work — so the people who can identify what a cut will actually cost are spread across every one of these groups, and the bargaining units must be engaged where a reduction implicates their agreements. The decision as described was made by two people and announced, which is why it will be fought rather than implemented. A, B and C each isolate one group and would leave the district blind to the consequences the other groups could have named; none of them is a defensible reading of a districtwide reduction. Reductions should be tested against the district's stated priorities, and even where input is not adopted, the parties have been heard. *Adapted from a locally authored New York district practice item; rationale rewritten.*

Pattern: Ask who can see the consequence you cannot see

22. Correct answer: B · Part 103 · objective 0004 · adapted

Correct: B. The request is legitimate and the superintendent should carry it forward — but adopting policy is the board's function, and a workable device policy has to be developed with the people who will implement it in classrooms and hallways. B respects both facts and tells the council exactly what will happen next. C promises what the superintendent cannot deliver and treats the parents' council as the approving body, which will create a serious problem when the board amends the draft. D pushes a districtwide policy question down to five buildings and guarantees five inconsistent practices. A is simply dismissive and forfeits an engaged constituency. *Adapted from a locally authored New York district practice item; rationale rewritten.*

Pattern: Route the request to the right body and name the consultation you will run

23. Correct answer: D · Part 103 · objective 0004 · practice

Correct: D. The mutual-benefit test is whether the partnership is designed jointly and whether it puts prepared adults where students need them. Selecting and preparing cooperating teachers is the single strongest lever on what a candidate learns, and a shared planning and debriefing calendar is what turns a placement into a relationship rather than a transaction. A protects candidates from the settings where they would learn the most and denies the district's highest-need schools the added capacity. B treats bodies as a benefit and ignores supervision capacity; unsupported candidates in classrooms cost teachers time. C delays clinical experience to the point where a candidate discovers in the final semester whether the profession fits.

Pattern: Design the partnership jointly and place capacity where the need is

24. Correct answer: C · Part 103 · objective 0004 · adapted

Correct: C. Positional conflicts are resolved by moving the parties from positions to interests — here, the student outcome each is pursuing — and then applying two external criteria the superintendent does not have to invent: what the grant permits and what the district has said it values. That produces a decision both departments can live with and a method they can reuse. B is the classic false compromise: splitting funds satisfies no interest and may violate the grant's terms. A resolves the dispute but teaches nothing and leaves the superintendent as the permanent tiebreaker. D misassigns an administrative decision to the board.

Pattern: Move from positions to interests, then apply an external criterion

25. Correct answer: A · Part 103 · objective 0005 · official

Correct: A. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* “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.”

Added practitioner note: Note the word *before* in the stem. B and D are things you do once you know what the case has to answer; a plan or a data analysis delivered into an unmapped political environment is an announcement. C hands the framing to the media before the district’s own constituencies have heard it.

Pattern: Map the ground before you make the case

Scenario – Mapleton Central School District – Year Two of the Math Adoption PART 103
26. Correct answer: A · Part 103 · objective 0005 · practice

Correct: A. The two buildings that received the pilot supports are implementing the program as designed; the three that lost the coach and two of three professional learning days are using the book without the practice. That is a resourcing variable, and it is the only variable the scenario actually distinguishes. B attributes the difference to teacher character with no supporting evidence, and the association president’s statement points the other way. C would have to be established with student evidence, and nothing in the scenario suggests the program failed with students. D inverts the finding: teachers report being *behind* the pacing guide because the lessons take longer, so pressing the pacing guide harder would push them further away from the lesson structure, not toward it.

Pattern: When implementation varies, look first at what varied in the support

27. Correct answer: A · Part 103 · objective 0005 · practice

Correct: A. The diagnosis is under-resourced implementation, so the plan must put the resources back and stop adding load until it does — which means restoring the coach and the professional learning time and giving the middle school a year it can use to prepare. B increases monitoring without increasing capacity, which is the fastest way to convert a support problem into a labor problem. C addresses an audience that is not the source of the difficulty; families are not the ones skipping the problem-based portion of the lesson. D outsources a professional judgment to a vote taken at the low point of an implementation dip, and a district that abandons a two-year adoption on a November survey will never complete anything.

Pattern: Fix the resourcing before you tighten the monitoring

28. Correct answer: D · Part 103 · objective 0005 · practice

Correct: D. Naming both the evidence and the shortfall is what makes the commitment credible; a district leader who reports only advances loses the standing to report anything. A recites process to people who are asking about their own children and will read it as a refusal to engage. B converts a parent comment into a live threat to the adoption and invites the board into an implementation decision it is not positioned to make midstream. C is wrong on the merits — curriculum adoption in a New York district is acted on by the board — and telling speakers that their concern is out of order at a public meeting is a reliable way to multiply them.

Pattern: Report advances and setbacks; then commit to a dated action

29. Correct answer: B · Part 103 · objective 0005 · adapted

Correct: B. Professional learning changes practice when it responds to a need the participants recognize in their own students and their own classrooms; a needs assessment involving building leaders and staff is what establishes that connection and, incidentally, what obligates principals to support the sessions afterward. A ignores that principals are accountable for instruction in their buildings and therefore have a direct stake in what their staff is trained to do. C names a real document but the existence of an adopted plan does not answer the question of who identified this year's needs. D is a scheduling irritation rather than the substantive objection, and a calendar conflict can be solved without changing anything about the quality of the learning. *Adapted from a locally authored New York district practice item; rationale rewritten.*

Pattern: Professional learning must start from an identified need, named by the people who have it

30. Correct answer: A · Part 103 · objective 0005 · practice

Correct: A. Analyzing community culture and power structures — who actually influences opinion, and what each group loses — is what lets a leader address objections before they harden and distinguishes a change effort from an announcement. B mistakes formal authority for support and spends the board's political capital before the community has been engaged, leaving trustees exposed. C is the announcement strategy the exam consistently rejects; the "whether" question does not disappear because a date was set. D is defensible as a sequencing tactic but here it avoids the organized group entirely, so the district reaches the hardest conversation later with less time and a precedent of having gone around them.

Pattern: Name what each group loses before they have to tell you

Scenario — Comprehensive Education Planning Team — ELA Program Review PART 103**31. Correct answer: B** · Part 103 · objective 0006 · official

Correct: B. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* "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." *Added practitioner note:* A is a real consideration but secondary — an option that worked elsewhere may address a cause this district does not have. C is a feasibility question that matters at implementation, not at selection; screening options by expected popularity is how districts adopt what is comfortable. D matters for planning the monitoring cycle, and only after fit has been established.

Pattern: Match the remedy to the diagnosed cause before anything else

32. Correct answer: B · Part 103 · objective 0006 · practice

Correct: B. Long-range planning is distinguished from annual goal setting by its horizon and by the number of systems it must reconcile: children arriving, buildings available, dollars projected, and adults employed. A plan built on any one data source will be overtaken by another within two years — which is exactly what C and D describe, useful inputs that are far too narrow to carry a five-year plan. Assessment results tell you nothing about the enrollment bulge arriving in kindergarten or the roof that fails in year three. A is the narrowest of all: it is a leadership agenda, not a data base, and a five-year plan tied to one superintendent's entry findings will not survive that superintendent.

Pattern: Long-range planning reconciles students, buildings, dollars and adults at once

33. Correct answer: D · Part 103 · objective 0006 · practice

Correct: D. Succession planning — identifying, developing, mentoring and promoting potential leaders — is named in the long-range planning objective precisely because leadership turnover is foreseeable and capacity takes years to build. Developing internal candidates while continuing to search externally gives the district both a bench and a market check. A treats a five-year structural problem as seven separate recruitment events and does nothing to expand the pool. B postpones the problem, depends on individual choices the district cannot control, and delays the advancement of the very people who should be preparing. C lets the organization chart be determined by who retires rather than by what students need.

Pattern: Foreseeable turnover is a planning problem, not a recruiting problem

34. Correct answer: A · Part 103 · objective 0006 · practice

Correct: A. A plan that survives only while its author is present was never institutionalized. Keeping goals, benchmarks and the public reporting cycle intact keeps the district's commitments visible to staff and community and gives the incoming permanent superintendent a factual record rather than a gap. B guarantees a lost year and signals that district commitments expire with individuals. D lets the interim's comfort determine the district's priorities. C creates a second, unaccountable authority alongside the interim and confuses staff about who leads.

Pattern: Institutionalize the plan so it outlives the leader

35. Correct answer: C · Part 103 · objective 0006 · adapted

Correct: C. Device initiatives fail on everything except the devices: bandwidth, support staffing, teacher learning, and the replacement cycle that arrives in year four when the first fleet is out of warranty. A long-range plan that does not budget the recurring costs commits the district to an obligation it has not funded. B optimizes the one variable that matters least and typically increases total cost by shortening useful life. A is worth doing after the requirements are settled, but preference is not a specification. D is a reasonable implementation tactic, not a substitute for infrastructure and sustainment planning — a pilot on an inadequate network simply fails in one building instead of five. *Adapted from a Pearson superintendent-assessment item type, rewritten for a New York district context.*

Pattern: Budget the recurring cost, not just the purchase

36. Correct answer: D · Part 103 · objective 0007 · official

Correct: D. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* “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.” *Added practitioner note:* A, B and C are all arguments for the questionnaire, not the interview: surveys are cheaper per respondent, produce data that tabulate cleanly, and reach far more people. The item rewards knowing what each method is *for* rather than which method is generally better.

Pattern: Match the data-collection method to the kind of information you need

Scenario — Harborview City School District — Reading the Districtwide Data **PART 103**

37. Correct answer: D · Part 103 · objective 0007 · practice

Correct: D. Document 1 shows Ridgeway differing from its peers on four variables at once. Attributing the achievement gap to leadership requires holding the others constant, and the district cannot even identify which students were enrolled for a full year. The honest reading is that Ridgeway's performance is a district problem with several plausible contributors, one of which — 31 percent teacher turnover against a 12 percent average — is itself something the district controls. A is false; the gap is 13 to 16 points and is substantial. B overstates the law: New York does not forbid the use of student data in supervision, though a personnel decision resting on one year of status results would be indefensible for other reasons. C names a genuine limitation but states it too absolutely, and subgroup data alone would not resolve the attribution problem either.

Pattern: When several variables differ at once, no single cause is isolated

38. Correct answer: B · Part 103 · objective 0007 · practice

Correct: B. Two things stand between the cabinet and a defensible recommendation. First, status results conflate the students a school serves with the effect the school has; growth measures on a stable enrolled population begin to separate them. Second, 31 percent turnover is both a probable cause of low performance and a diagnosable condition — exit interviews and stay interviews will say whether teachers are leaving because of working conditions, leadership, assignment, or compensation, and the answer determines the intervention. A and C are worth knowing but neither addresses attribution; more minutes on reading is not informative without knowing what happens in them. D measures perception, which will largely track the same confounds already in the data.

Pattern: Ask for the data that would change your recommendation

39. Correct answer: A · Part 103 · objective 0007 · practice

Correct: A. All students moved 41 to 43 in ELA and 36 to 39 in math — real but modest. Students with disabilities moved 13 to 14 and 11 to 12; English language learners moved 9 to 11 in ELA and went 10, 9, 9 in math. Those are flat, and in the case of ELL mathematics slightly negative, which makes C false on its face. B is false in the direction stated: economically disadvantaged students gained two points in ELA while their non-disadvantaged peers gained three, so the gap widened from 24 to 25 points. D is the conclusion the data most clearly refuse: an aggregate that moves while two groups stand still is a warning, not a clearance.

Pattern: Check whether the aggregate is hiding a group that did not move

40. Correct answer: C · Part 103 · objective 0007 · practice

Correct: C. Do the arithmetic. Total capacity is 1,980 and total enrollment is 1,520. Removing Flanders 3 removes 510 seats, leaving 1,470 — fifty fewer than the number of children the district must house. That is a decisive finding about one option. A is true as a calculation ($1,980 - 300 = 1,680$; $1,520 \div 1,680 \approx 90$ percent) but is a weaker conclusion than the one that eliminates an option outright, and the stem asks for the best supported conclusion. B is false: closing Flanders 1 leaves 1,560 seats for 1,520 students, about 97 percent, and closing Flanders 4 leaves about 97 percent as well. D is a recommendation, not a conclusion from the chart, and Chart 1 says nothing about building condition, program, travel time or the effects captured in Charts 3 and 4.

Pattern: Do the arithmetic; one option may be eliminated outright

41. Correct answer: B · Part 103 · objective 0007 · practice

Correct: B. The objective expressly contemplates taking a principled risk without unanimous support — but the discipline that makes it principled is naming the evidence, the costs, the risks, the monitoring, and the conditions for reversal, and then letting the board decide in public. C bypasses the board on a districtwide policy question and would be an abuse of administrative authority. D makes any single objector a veto and confuses consensus with unanimity. A concedes the decision to two departments before the evidence has been placed in front of the body that decides.

Pattern: Principled risk means naming the evidence, the monitoring and the reversal conditions

42. Correct answer: C · Part 103 · objective 0008 · official

Correct: C. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* “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.” *Added practitioner note:* D is the distractor most candidates choose, because a deadline feels like accountability — but a date without capacity produces compliance theater. B provides materials with no obligation attached to them, and A communicates outward to the public rather than building responsibility inside the organization.

Pattern: Accountability without capacity is just a deadline

Scenario — Clearwater Central School District — Identified for Support **PART 103****43. Correct answer: D** · Part 103 · objective 0008 · practice

Correct: D. “Teachers will use data to inform instruction” owned by “building administration” on a timeline of “ongoing” with evidence of “increased student achievement” cannot be monitored, cannot be supported, and cannot be evaluated at year’s end — which is why nothing in the plan changed. Accountability begins with statements specific enough to be false. B describes a real participation problem and is a contributing cause, but a broadly written plan with the same vagueness would fail identically. A counts steps, which is not the issue — eleven priorities and twenty-three vague steps is worse than three sharp ones. C would improve alignment but a plan can cite the vision in its first line and still be unmonitorable.

Pattern: If a goal cannot be shown to be false, it cannot be monitored

44. Correct answer: D · Part 103 · objective 0008 · practice

Correct: D. The graduation rate is a lagging indicator: by the time it moves, the students it describes have left. Ninth-grade course failure is measurable in October, is the district’s strongest predictor of non-graduation, and can still be changed for the students sitting in the building. C is a serious equity finding that must be addressed — but as an anchor it has the same lag problem as A, and the ninth-grade work is one of the levers that will move it. B describes a real crisis and is a strong second choice; note, though, that chronic absenteeism and course failure are tightly coupled here, and an accountability system organized around course completion will necessarily surface attendance. A is the indicator to report, not the one to manage by.

Pattern: Manage by leading indicators; report the lagging ones

45. Correct answer: D · Part 103 · objective 0008 · practice

Correct: D. The trustee’s instinct — regular, evidence-based review — is right; the mechanism is wrong. Monthly public scorecards convert a professional improvement conversation into a monthly performance appraisal in the newspaper, which is what the high school principal predicts will cost him his three strongest department chairs. Frequent internal review keeps the pressure and the support in the same room, while semiannual public reporting keeps the board and community informed and preserves the district’s obligation to report setbacks as well as gains. B overstates confidentiality and forfeits public accountability entirely. C is unworkable in a district where everyone knows which building is which, and it removes the public’s ability to understand the report.

Pattern: Separate the improvement cycle from the public report; keep both

46. Correct answer: C · Part 103 · objective 0008 · practice

Correct: C. Accepting responsibility for outcomes — including the outcomes that did not arrive — is what makes the reported gains believable and is explicitly part of promoting accountability. B is the most common evasion in district reporting: aggregating until the flat grades disappear into the strong ones. A defers the inconvenient half of the finding to an analysis with no completion date, which the audience will read correctly. D withholds information the board needs to make budget decisions for the coming year, and a district that reports only completed cycles cannot course-correct within them.

Pattern: Report the setback with the gain, then say what changes

47. Correct answer: B · Part 104 · objective 0001 · official

Correct: B. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* “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.” *Added practitioner note:* A and C are administrative standardization measures: common dates and common grading criteria may make results comparable across schools, but neither changes what a teacher does on Wednesday with the students who did not learn Tuesday’s content. D increases student choice, which serves a different purpose entirely. Only B connects assessment to the instructional decision.

Pattern: Assessment matters when it changes the next instructional decision

Scenario — Riverton Central School District — Two Middle Schools, One District **PART 104****48. Correct answer: D** · Part 104 · objective 0001 · practice

Correct: D. The two schools are nearly identical on enrollment, economic disadvantage and disability rate, and the differences are all on the access side: 61 percent versus 18 percent in Algebra I, 78 percent versus 44 percent of students with disabilities in general education most of the day, 91 percent versus 52 percent enrolled in an arts or technology course, and classrooms using texts two grade levels below the standard. A is the explanation Hollis Park itself offers, and the demographic data in Document 1 contradict it. B is not supported — no staffing shortage is described, and the principal frames the issue as readiness, not staffing. C is a possibility the scenario never evidences, and note that Hollis Park actually has the better staff attendance, which cuts against a simple effort explanation.

Pattern: When demographics match and outcomes differ, look at access and expectations

49. Correct answer: C · Part 104 · objective 0001 · practice

Correct: C. The principal’s belief — that his students are not ready — is the thing that has to change, and beliefs about capability are moved by seeing comparable students succeed, not by being told. Putting the data and the classrooms in front of him and asking him to name specific students converts an abstract argument into a list he cannot unsee, and it treats him as the professional he is. A mandates a number without addressing the belief or the supports, which produces enrollment on paper and failure in June. D delivers a message to 60 teachers that their principal has not accepted, and generic “high expectations” training changes little. B removes a respected fourteen-year leader before any attempt to develop him and leaves the school’s practices intact.

Pattern: Change beliefs with evidence and proximity before you change the numbers

50. Correct answer: C · Part 104 · objective 0001 · practice

Correct: C. Placement decisions for students with disabilities are individual determinations made by the committee on special education and recorded in each student's IEP; a master schedule that categorically excludes a group of students from art, music and technology is a program design decision being made by a scheduling grid, and Ash Grove's 91 percent participation shows it is not inevitable. A asserts inevitability that the companion school disproves. B offers a trade the law does not authorize — more reading minutes do not substitute for access to the general curriculum, and the arts are part of the required program. D is wrong on authority: a districtwide compliance and equity question is exactly what a district office exists to see across buildings.

Pattern: A schedule that excludes a group is a program decision, not a scheduling accident

51. Correct answer: B · Part 104 · objective 0001 · practice

Correct: B. The question is legitimate and deserves a real answer, but it cannot be allowed to function as a precondition, because that would make student access to grade-level mathematics depend on a budget cycle. Looking at how Ash Grove staffs the same work at the same enrollment and demographics is the fastest way to separate a genuine resource need from a resource argument. A shuts down a principal who has just asked a reasonable operational question. C writes a blank check before anyone knows what is needed and rewards the framing that resources come first. D concedes an entire year for students already enrolled and postpones the substantive conversation.

Pattern: Answer the resource question — but never let access wait on it

52. Correct answer: D · Part 104 · objective 0001 · practice

Correct: D. Language develops through content, not before it; the design that works pairs required language development instruction with access to the same grade-level curriculum, delivered by teachers who know how to make it comprehensible, and puts the two sets of teachers in the same planning conversation. A defers content for two years and produces a predictable two-year deficit. B provides translation rather than instruction, places professional responsibility on a paraprofessional, and does nothing to build the classroom teacher's capacity. C misstates the rules and, more importantly, treats participation as the problem — the assessment question is handled through defined participation and accommodation provisions, not by removing students from the accountability system.

Pattern: Language and content develop together; never trade access for language time

53. Correct answer: B · Part 104 · objective 0001 · adapted

Correct: B. The gap is instructional, not technical: teachers have devices and no shared image of what the devices are for in their subject. Defining that image with the people who teach it, then supporting and looking for it, is the only route that changes practice. A spends money on a problem hardware did not cause. C generates compliance paperwork that tells the district which applications were opened, not what students did. D removes tools without supplying a replacement practice, which reliably produces resentment and less technology use rather than better use. *Adapted from a Pearson superintendent-assessment item type, rewritten for a New York district context.*

Pattern: Tools do not carry pedagogy; define the practice you want to see

54. Correct answer: D · Part 104 · objective 0002 · official

Correct: D. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* “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 participate. 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.” *Added practitioner note:* A explains why but never supplies the how, and staff who cannot recognize the behavior cannot act on it consistently. B attaches a consequence to a behavior the district has not yet taught, and would also be a term-and-condition question for the bargaining units. C addresses awareness in the community rather than the specific staff capability the stem asks about. In New York, this training expectation also sits alongside the Dignity for All Students Act, which requires designated coordinators and staff training on identifying and responding to harassment, bullying and discrimination.

Pattern: If you want a behavior from every adult, teach it explicitly

55. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0002 · practice

Correct: A. Setting expectations means naming the standard plainly *and* giving the person a route to meeting it. Asking what evidence would change her mind is a serious professional question; seeing comparable students succeed is the evidence most likely to answer it. B lets the belief stand and, in front of colleagues, ratifies it. C converts a professional conversation into a documentation event, which teaches the faculty to stop saying what they think in front of central office. D makes the reason for high expectations compliance and consequences rather than the students, which is both unpersuasive and the wrong reason.

Pattern: State the expectation, then supply the evidence that makes it believable

56. Correct answer: D · Part 104 · objective 0002 · practice

Correct: D. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities are named in the objective for a reason: ambiguity about who decides is one of the most reliable sources of organizational friction, and it is fixed by writing it down for the decisions that actually recur — scheduling, hiring, curriculum, discipline, facilities requests, communications. A resolves ambiguity by centralizing everything, which paralyzes buildings and buries the superintendent. B handles cases one at a time and never produces a rule anyone can apply next month. C sounds like clean delegation but the categories are too coarse: master scheduling, curriculum selection and student placement all cross the line it draws.

Pattern: Write down who decides, who is consulted, who is informed

57. Correct answer: D · Part 104 · objective 0002 · adapted

Correct: D. The superintendent’s obligation is to keep the process clean and to say so directly — the candidate is not disqualified by the relationship, but she gets no advantage from it, and the trustee’s duty is disclosure and recusal on any vote touching the appointment. A accepts the favor framing; an interview granted as a favor is exactly the influence the process is meant to exclude. B punishes an applicant and the district to avoid an awkward conversation, and it leaves the vacancy unfilled. C asserts a legal prohibition that does not generally exist; districts commonly have nepotism and conflict policies, and New York’s municipal conflict-of-interest rules require disclosure and abstention rather than a blanket ban on all relatives. *Adapted from a locally authored New York district practice item; rationale rewritten.*

Pattern: Protect the process, name the disclosure, do not invent a prohibition

58. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0002 · adapted

Correct: A. Two obligations run at once: treat this applicant exactly as any other late applicant would be treated, and make sure the superintendent knows a trustee delivered an application in person, because that is information the superintendent needs whether or not anything improper follows. C converts the trustee's interest into a reason for special handling, which is the whole problem. B grants an exception that other applicants did not receive — and a civil service appointment must also proceed from the appropriate eligible list and procedures. D silently destroys a document and leaves the superintendent uninformed, which looks far worse if it surfaces later. *Adapted from a locally authored New York district practice item; rationale rewritten.*

Pattern: Same rule for everyone, plus tell your supervisor what happened

59. Correct answer: C · Part 104 · objective 0002 · adapted

Correct: C. The stem asks which response would *not* help. Writing the exemption into the code converts an inconsistency into official policy and tells every student that the rules depend on who you are — which is precisely the message that produced the current problem. A, B and D all attack the actual defect, which is uneven application: a review team surfaces where practice has drifted, consistent application plus monthly reporting to the superintendent creates both the practice and the visibility that sustains it, and quarterly administrator review keeps it from drifting again. Note also that a district code of conduct in New York is adopted by the board after public input and must be applied consistently. *Adapted from a locally authored New York district practice item; rationale rewritten.*

Pattern: Watch for EXCEPT and LEAST — then find the option that makes it worse

Scenario — Rockridge School District — Dr. Owens' First Months PART 104**60. Correct answer: B** · Part 104 · objective 0003 · official

Correct: B. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* “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.” *Added practitioner note:* C is the trap: it is a concrete, plausible service that addresses exactly one of the five problems listed, chosen before any solution has been examined. D asks for money before anyone has said what it would buy. A shifts responsibility to families and treats a set of program and service failures as a matter of public exhortation.

Pattern: Define the problem, then define solutions with stakeholders, then act

Scenario — Northpoint Central School District — Students the System Is Losing PART 104**61. Correct answer: C** · Part 104 · objective 0003 · practice

Correct: C. Northpoint does not have a shortage of programs; it has three programs that do not know about each other and no one who can say which students are falling between them. Until the district knows who is served, who is missed and who owns each function, any additional investment is bought blind. A may well be justified — the district is far off the comparable-district median — but a request for positions is far stronger after the mapping than before it. B expands the least effective existing practice: letters at 10, 15 and 20 absences arrive after a student is already chronically absent and are not, by themselves, an intervention. D purchases a curriculum for a coordination problem.

Pattern: Map what exists before you buy what is missing

62. Correct answer: B · Part 104 · objective 0003 · practice

Correct: B. The core McKinney-Vento protections are immediate enrollment without the documentation ordinarily required, the right to remain in the school of origin where that serves the student's best interest, transportation to make that right real, and a trained local liaison who makes the system work. C states the requirement backwards — documentation cannot be a condition of enrollment for these students, and this is one of the most common district violations. A subordinates the best-interest determination to cost and eliminates school-of-origin continuity. D disclaims a duty the district cannot delegate; interagency partnership is valuable, but identification, enrollment and transportation remain the district's obligations.

Pattern: Enroll first; documentation and transportation follow

63. Correct answer: D · Part 104 · objective 0003 · practice

Correct: D. Co-location is a genuine capacity gain at no cost, and the confidentiality question is handled the way districts always handle it — a written agreement drafted with counsel that defines the specific information, the specific purposes, the consent required, and who may see it. A misstates the law: federal and state student-records rules regulate disclosure, they do not forbid interagency collaboration. B accepts the person while withholding the mechanism that would let the collaboration function, and the caseworker would then work from whatever families tell her. C is the opposite error, granting broad system access without any agreement defining limits — convenient, and a records violation waiting to happen.

Pattern: Interagency work is a written agreement, not a handshake or a refusal

64. Correct answer: C · Part 104 · objective 0003 · practice

Correct: C. Early-grade absence is usually a set of logistical and health problems in the family's life rather than a discipline problem, and the response has to be built from the actual causes; districts that ask discover transportation, unstable housing, asthma and child-care conflicts, each with a different remedy. A gets the fact backwards in the way that matters: kindergarten absence is among the strongest early predictors of later reading difficulty, and a 12-point rise is a warning about the district's youngest cohort. B leads with a report to the county before anyone has spoken to the family, which damages the relationship the district most needs. D rewards classes with the fewest barriers and does nothing for the children who are missing.

Pattern: Diagnose the barrier before you choose the intervention

65. Correct answer: C · Part 104 · objective 0003 · adapted

Correct: C. A firearm on school grounds is a law enforcement matter first and a disciplinary matter second. Immediate notification of police, securing the scene, and accounting for students are the actions that reduce risk right now; New York's school safety statutes and every district emergency response plan are built on that sequence. B is necessary but not first, and calling a parent before police delays the response. A begins a disciplinary process before the scene is secure and before the required manifestation and due-process questions have even been framed. D is the most dangerous option on the list: moving a loaded firearm through a school and into a car destroys the chain of custody and puts adults at risk. As a general rule, staff should not handle a weapon at all. *Adapted from a locally authored New York district practice item; rationale rewritten.*

Pattern: Safety sequence first: police, secure, account for students — discipline later

66. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0004 · official

Correct: A. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* “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.” *Added practitioner note:* Note the word *ongoing*. B is a one-way communication event and, worse, announces her plans rather than inviting theirs. C addresses the complaining by instructing people to stop, which produces silence rather than initiative. D sends people to a seminar to acquire a feeling of empowerment instead of giving them actual authority to solve problems in their buildings.

Pattern: Answer low morale with real authority and ongoing dialogue, not exhortation

67. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0004 · official

Correct: A. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* “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.” *Added practitioner note:* The lesson is to change what you actually control. B legislates hours for exempt administrators, which is unenforceable and does not reduce the work. C asks people under strain to be more inspired. D is genuinely good practice and costs nothing — but gratitude does not remove a single district-generated demand from a principal’s week.

Pattern: Reduce the demands you generate; end the isolation you allow

Scenario — Granite Falls Central School District — A First-Year Principal in Trouble PART 104**68. Correct answer: B** · Part 104 · objective 0004 · practice

Correct: B. Granite Falls has lost two of four new principals in three years, both citing isolation — this is a retention pattern, not one person’s bad week, and the response has to be structural: a mentor, protected collegial time, and a hard look at what the district itself is putting on her calendar. A offers sympathy and no change, which is how the previous two departures went. D relieves her of the core instructional work that most needs improvement and would leave her weaker in June than in January. C adds a person without addressing isolation or district-generated load, and borrowing an administrator from another building creates a second problem to solve the first.

Pattern: Isolation and district-generated load are structural — fix them structurally

69. Correct answer: D · Part 104 · objective 0004 · practice

Correct: D. Copied narrative is a symptom of a supervisory skill that has not been taught: she has not yet learned to gather specific evidence and turn it into feedback a teacher can use. Co-observing and calibrating is the standard developmental move and it works, because the gap between what the two of them recorded is visible and discussable. A fixes the documents and leaves the skill untouched, so the sixth write-up will be no better. B removes the central responsibility of her role in her first year, which both stalls her development and signals to the staff that she is not the instructional leader. C documents a problem without attempting to solve it, which is the definition of evaluating instead of supervising.

Pattern: Supervise developmentally first; document only after support has been given

70. Correct answer: B · Part 104 · objective 0004 · practice

Correct: B. The superintendent owes the board a substantive answer about systems — how the district inducts, supports and supervises new principals — without conducting an individual employee's evaluation in a committee meeting. Offering a report on induction and retention takes the board's legitimate interest seriously and points it at the pattern that actually matters, which is four principals in three years. C discloses individual performance information to a body that has no role in the ongoing supervision of an employee and would reach the building within a week. A concedes a conclusion on secondhand hallway comment and abandons an employee the district is obligated to develop. D attacks the sources and tells the board nothing.

Pattern: Answer the board about systems; keep individual supervision where it belongs

71. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0004 · practice

Correct: A. Real delegation transfers decision-making within stated boundaries and keeps the superintendent answerable for the outcome; the reporting rhythm is what makes it possible to be accountable without taking the decisions back. B is abdication — by the time a problem is serious enough to report, the superintendent has lost the ability to help. C is delegation in name only and teaches the assistant superintendent to stop deciding, which is the opposite of building capacity. D consumes the superintendent's time on work that has been assigned to someone else and leaves that person without genuine authority in the eyes of the organization.

Pattern: Delegate the decision, keep the accountability, agree on the reporting rhythm

72. Correct answer: B · Part 104 · objective 0005 · official

Correct: B. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* "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." *Added practitioner note:* In New York, a tenured teacher may be disciplined or dismissed only through the statutory hearing process, and the record of notice plus meaningful support — in practice, the improvement plan and the supervision that accompanied it — is what makes a performance case survivable. A and C describe evidence of the problem rather than evidence that the district met its obligation to help. D describes misconduct, which is a different case from unsatisfactory performance.

Pattern: Before dismissal for performance: notice, support, opportunity to improve, documented

Scenario — Seneca Ridge Central School District — Professional Learning That Is Not Working**PART 104****73. Correct answer: D** · Part 104 · objective 0005 · practice

Correct: D. Read the two right-hand columns together. The coaching cycle changed practice for 76 percent of participants; the opening keynote reached every one of 340 staff and changed practice for 4 percent. The district is buying reach and getting almost no effect, while the format with real effect touches 48 people. B is contradicted by the table: out-of-district conferences cost \$1,480 per participant and changed practice for 22 percent, the worst ratio on the page. C is a plausible story but the survey did not ask about preference, and the voluntary summer institute differs from the keynote in duration and design as well as in whether people chose it. A draws a budget conclusion the data do not support — the problem is allocation, not amount.

Pattern: Judge professional learning by change in practice per participant, not by reach

74. Correct answer: B · Part 104 · objective 0005 · practice

Correct: B. The survey is an argument about allocation, and Lin should say so and then act on it — moving dollars into the formats with demonstrated effect and accepting the accountability of reporting results. That answers the committee's real concern without cutting the district's only working professional learning. A eliminates the summer institute, the second most effective format on the table, and keeps the keynote. D applies the cut proportionally, which protects the ineffective spending in exact proportion to the effective spending. C leans on a mandate rather than on evidence; districts are required to have a professional development plan, but that is not an argument for the current allocation.

Pattern: When the evidence indicts the allocation, move the money and report the result

75. Correct answer: C · Part 104 · objective 0005 · practice

Correct: C. Mentoring works when mentors know how to observe and give feedback, when the two people have scheduled time in each other's rooms, and when both know what the mentoring is for. New York requires districts to provide mentoring for new teachers holding initial certificates precisely because the first years determine both effectiveness and retention — but a program with untrained volunteers and no time is a mentoring program on paper. B is good practice and should happen, but proximity without training or time still yields hallway reassurance. A recruits more volunteers into the same unsupported structure. D monitors compliance and adds a task to the person with the least capacity to absorb it.

Pattern: Structure beats good intentions: train the mentor, schedule the time, name the purpose

76. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0005 · practice

Correct: A. Certificate maintenance is ultimately the individual's obligation, but a district that lets nine teachers lapse loses nine teachers — and the district already runs most of the learning those hours would come from. A tracking and notification system, plus making sure district offerings actually qualify and are documented, protects the staff and the district at almost no cost. B is technically accurate and operationally negligent. C imposes a cost on employees for a system failure and is likely to raise a contractual question as well. D is the error to avoid: hours count only when they are provided by an approved CTLE sponsor and meet the requirements, so declaring that all district days count would leave teachers holding invalid records.

Pattern: Personal obligations still need district systems behind them

77. Correct answer: D · Part 104 · objective 0005 · adapted

Correct: D. A probationary teacher serves at the board's pleasure on the superintendent's recommendation and may be discontinued during probation without the statutory hearing that protects tenured teachers, subject to required notice and to the rule that the reason may not be constitutionally or statutorily impermissible. A invents a union concurrence requirement that does not exist, though a district must observe any notice or procedural terms its agreement contains. B imports the tenured teacher's hearing rights into probationary status, which is the central distinction the item tests. C states an outdated rule and is the reason this item was rewritten: for teachers and building administrators appointed on or after July 1, 2015, the probationary period in New York is **four** years, not three, and the tenure decision also turns on the required pattern of annual professional performance review ratings. *Adapted from a locally authored New York district practice item whose original stem was incomplete and whose rationale stated the pre-2015 three-year probationary period; stem supplied and rule corrected here.*

Pattern: Probationary is not tenured — and New York probation is four years since 2015

78. Correct answer: D · Part 104 · objective 0006 · official

Correct: D. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* “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.” *Added practitioner note:* B is the near-miss and worth studying: the team does the analysis, but stops at strengths, which leaves the problem that prompted the survey untouched. A and C both take the data away from the group that generated it and return a solution, which is precisely the top-down pattern a shared decision-making team exists to replace.

Pattern: The group that generated the data should analyze it and plan the response

Scenario – Bayfield Union Free School District – Operating Without a Contract PART 104**79. Correct answer: B** · Part 104 · objective 0006 · practice

Correct: B. Under New York’s public employee relations statute, the terms of an expired agreement continue until a successor is negotiated, so telling the community that salaries are frozen would be inaccurate and would poison the negotiation; the district also may not unilaterally change wages, hours or other terms and conditions of employment while bargaining continues. A describes private-sector practice and is wrong on both halves. D confuses the board’s authority to ratify an agreement with authority to create one unilaterally. C is doubly wrong: public employees in New York have no right to strike, and a strike would not unlock any imposition power.

Pattern: Expired agreement, continued terms, no unilateral change, no strike

80. Correct answer: D · Part 104 · objective 0006 · adapted

Correct: D. Telling the parent organization the truth — plainly, without asking them to blame the teachers — is both accurate and the only response that keeps the district out of an improper practice charge. It also leaves room for the district to do something useful, such as reshaping the events for the year or staffing them with administrators. A singles out the employees with the least job security to do what the district cannot require of anyone, which is coercive and would be an unlawful reprisal. B asserts a past-practice obligation over voluntary, uncompensated activity and invites exactly the charge the district should avoid. C punishes families for a labor dispute and hands both sides a grievance about it.

Pattern: Say plainly what the district can and cannot require — then solve the family-facing problem

81. Correct answer: B · Part 104 · objective 0006 · practice

Correct: B. Teaching load is a classic term and condition of employment, and the district is in negotiations, so a unilateral change is exactly the action that turns a staffing problem into an improper practice charge. Checking the agreement first is quick, and if the answer is not clear the district talks to the association — which is often willing to agree to a specific, temporary arrangement. A treats staff assignment as unconstrained; it is constrained by the agreement. C reverses the sequence and converts a conversation into a fait accompli. D is not wrong in principle but is far too slow and heavy for a single staffing problem, and it wrongly implies nothing can be done outside formal bargaining.

Pattern: Check the agreement before you change a term and condition of employment

82. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0006 · practice

Correct: A. A grievance is a contractual dispute-resolution process; the district's first obligation is to run the process properly and to establish the facts — what the agreement says, what the eleven-year history actually consists of, and what the cost comparison really shows. Subcontracting bargaining-unit work is a genuinely contested area, which is exactly why counsel is involved before a position is taken. B surrenders on the merits before knowing them and sets a precedent for every future decision. C asserts a management right the district may or may not have here and skips the process the district agreed to follow. D is a plausible settlement option, but offering it before the facts are developed is negotiating against an unknown position.

Pattern: Run the process, establish the facts, take advice — then take a position

83. Correct answer: C · Part 104 · objective 0006 · adapted

Correct: C. The stem asks what does *not* belong. Shared decision-making exists so that the stakeholders in a school community share genuine responsibility for decisions within a defined scope; training teams to await direction from the principal reinstalls the top-down structure the process is meant to replace and would leave every defect the superintendent found in place. A, B and D are the three things the review actually identified as missing: members who do not know their responsibilities, teams unclear about their purpose, and teams with no goals and no self-assessment. Note that the scope question in B is essential — a shared decision-making team operates within its defined role and does not displace the board's authority or the superintendent's. *Adapted from a locally authored New York district practice item; rationale rewritten.*

Pattern: Shared decision making means real scope, not consultation on the principal's agenda

84. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0007 · official

Correct: A. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* "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." *Added practitioner note:* C asks for money before anyone can say what it buys, and a board asked to fund an undefined project will ask the questions the assessment was supposed to answer. D and B both start the political and procurement work before the technical facts exist — a committee selecting a consultant, or a tour of attractive buildings, will generate appetite unanchored to need. New York districts also have a recurring building condition survey and annual inspection cycle whose results are the natural starting point for exactly this assessment.

Pattern: Define the need precisely before you cost it or campaign for it

Scenario — Lakeview Union Free School District — Building a Budget Against the Levy Limit PART 104**85. Correct answer: C** · Part 104 · objective 0007 · practice

Correct: C. New York's tax levy limit does not cap what a district may propose; it changes the threshold for approval. A levy at or below the limit passes on a simple majority, and a levy above it requires a supermajority of at least 60 percent of the votes cast, with the required disclosure to voters. A is the most common misunderstanding of the law — it is a vote threshold, not a hard ceiling. B invents an emergency override that does not exist for school districts. D combines the wrong threshold with an invented reserve requirement, and note that a district may not simply set aside levy proceeds outside the reserve structure the law provides.

Pattern: The levy limit sets the vote threshold, not a hard ceiling

86. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0007 · practice

Correct: A. New York limits a school district's unrestricted general fund balance to 4 percent of the ensuing school year's budget. Four percent of \$76,915,000 is \$3,076,600, so \$3,600,000 is roughly half a million dollars over — a finding an external auditor or the State Comptroller will raise, and one that has an obvious use here given the levy problem on the same page. C states the opposite of the law. B recommends increasing an amount that is already above the limit. D is wrong on procedure: establishing a capital reserve requires voter authorization, and moving money there is not a way to sidestep the fund balance limit.

Pattern: Run the percentage; fund balance limits are arithmetic, not judgment

87. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0007 · practice

Correct: A. After a second defeat the board must adopt a contingency budget, and since the tax cap legislation the contingent levy may not exceed the prior year's levy — that is, zero levy growth — with the further restrictions the law places on ordinary contingent expenses, including most equipment purchases and non-essential items. B is wrong because a district may put a budget to the voters at most twice. C is the reverse of the rule: a defeated budget cannot be adopted by resolution. D invents an arbitrary reduction percentage; what the board must do is bring spending within the contingency requirements, which may be more or less than 10 percent depending on the district's revenue picture.

Pattern: Two defeats means contingency: zero levy growth and restricted spending

88. Correct answer: B · Part 104 · objective 0007 · practice

Correct: B. This is the structural deficit pattern, and naming it is the superintendent's job: the special education sections will exist next year, the fund balance will not, and the district will begin next year's process the same distance behind plus whatever growth occurs. C makes the problem larger and is also constrained by the fund balance limit. A is half true — appropriating fund balance is normal — but it omits the distinction between smoothing a one-time cost and financing a permanent one. D is inaccurate: reserve funds in New York are established for specified purposes and may be expended only for those purposes, with some requiring voter authorization.

Pattern: Never finance recurring costs with non-recurring revenue — and say so out loud

89. Correct answer: D · Part 104 · objective 0007 · practice

Correct: D. Chart 2 gives one number for closing “an” elementary school — the same figure whether the district closes the 200-student building or the 400-student building — and it counts only reductions. Real consolidation savings are net: teachers largely follow students, receiving schools may need classroom conversions, and transportation costs rise when attendance zones widen. That is why the answer is not merely incomplete but potentially misleading to a board being asked to close a school. B adds a speculative revenue that most districts do not realize, since a closed building is often retained or repurposed and disposal has its own legal steps. A accepts the categories without asking whether the amounts are building-specific or net. C is too passive: the chart's defect is visible without knowing the recommendation.

Pattern: Savings estimates must be building-specific and net of offsetting costs

90. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0007 · practice

Correct: A. Chart 3 exists because closing a school and redrawing attendance zones redistributes students, and a decision that increases racial or economic concentration in the remaining schools exposes the district to both an equity failure and a legal challenge — regardless of the district's intent. The board must see the projected composition of each receiving school under each option before it votes. C misunderstands the arithmetic: the district's overall composition is unchanged by a closing, since the same children remain enrolled; only their distribution changes. B is worth consulting on but is a preference question, not the equity question the chart raises. D concerns disposition of the building after the decision.

Pattern: Consolidation redistributes students — project the composition of every receiving school

91. Correct answer: C · Part 104 · objective 0008 · official

Correct: C. *Official NYSED rationale (reproduced from the preparation guide):* “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.” *Added practitioner note:* A is the maximization standard the Supreme Court rejected in *Board of Education v. Rowley*. B invents a federal service menu by disability category; IDEA is individualized, not categorical. D is the “merely more than de minimis” reading that the Court rejected in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* (2017), which requires an IEP reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child’s circumstances.

Pattern: FAPE is individualized and appropriately ambitious — not maximal, not minimal

Scenario – Port Hollis Central School District – The Compliance Review PART 104**92. Correct answer: C** · Part 104 · objective 0008 · practice

Correct: C. New York treats an allegation of child abuse in an educational setting — abuse of a student by an employee or volunteer — under its own statutory scheme: the administrator who receives a written report must forward it to the superintendent, and where there is reasonable suspicion the matter must be reported promptly to law enforcement. A week’s delay for an internal meeting is precisely the failure the statute was written to prevent, so A is wrong. D names the wrong system, and this is the distinction the item tests: the Statewide Central Register handles suspected abuse or maltreatment by a parent or other person legally responsible for the child, not allegations against school personnel. B is the most dangerous answer — a district cannot convert an abuse allegation into an athletics-code matter.

Pattern: Two reporting systems: educational-setting abuse goes to the superintendent and police

93. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0008 · practice

Correct: A. Teachers, administrators and other school officials are mandated reporters in New York, and the duty is personal: a mandated reporter who has reasonable cause to suspect abuse or maltreatment by a parent or person legally responsible must report to the Statewide Central Register, and no supervisor may prevent the report or take it over. B and D describe the internal routing practice that produces the most serious mandated-reporter failures. C would delay a report until the reporter has effectively investigated, which is not the standard — reasonable cause to suspect is the threshold, and confirming abuse is the job of child protective services. Reddick’s obligations here run in two directions: ensure the report is made now, and address the principal’s conduct.

Pattern: The mandated-reporter duty is personal and cannot be delegated upward

94. Correct answer: D · Part 104 · objective 0008 · practice

Correct: D. New York’s school safety statute deliberately separates the two documents: the districtwide school safety plan is developed with public participation, subject to a public hearing and comment period, and is a public document, while building-level emergency response plans — which contain floor plans, evacuation routes, staging areas and staff assignments — are confidential and exempt from public disclosure precisely because publishing them would assist an attacker. B offers a partial redaction that leaves the operationally sensitive content in place. A and C confuse transparency about the district’s safety approach, which is required, with publication of the tactical plan, which is not.

Pattern: Districtwide safety plan: public. Building-level response plan: confidential

95. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0008 · practice

Correct: A. The evaluation timeline is a legal requirement owed to each child, and staff vacancies are a district management problem, not a defense — so the answer is to buy capacity now while continuing to recruit, and to tell the board what it will cost and when compliance will be restored. D is the clearest error: a district cannot extend a timeline set in law by internal decision. B accepts non-compliance as a fact of life for the 18 percent of children whose evaluations are late. C rations compliance by parental assertiveness, which produces exactly the inequity that compliance timelines exist to prevent — and leaves the least-advocated-for children waiting longest.

Pattern: Staffing problems do not extend legal timelines — buy capacity and report

96. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0008 · adapted

Correct: A. This is *Pickering v. Board of Education* (1968). The Court reversed and held that a teacher does not surrender the right to speak as a citizen on matters of public concern, and it established the balancing test that still governs public-employee speech: the employee's interest in commenting on matters of public concern against the employer's interest in the efficient operation of public services. B states the outcome the Court rejected. C fails because the Court held that erroneous statements, absent knowing or reckless falsity, do not strip the speech of protection — and the letter's errors concerned matters of public record on which the board could respond. D invents a remedy the Court did not order. For a district leader, the practical rule is that public criticism of district decisions by an employee is generally protected; speech about a purely internal, personal grievance is treated differently. *Adapted from a locally authored New York practice item whose published rationale cited an unrelated case (Tinker); the case identification and rationale are corrected here.*

Pattern: Public concern plus balancing — that is the employee-speech test

97. Correct answer: C · Part 104 · objective 0008 · adapted

Correct: C. This is *Mt. Healthy City School District Board of Education v. Doyle* (1977). The Court agreed that the radio call was protected speech and that it played a substantial part in the decision, but held that protected conduct cannot place an employee in a better position than he would have occupied without it — so once the employee shows protected conduct was a substantial or motivating factor, the burden shifts to the employer to show it would have reached the same decision anyway. A is wrong because the absence of tenure does not permit a decision made *because of* protected speech. B states the outcome the Court declined to reach on that record. D is the mirror error: union office confers no immunity from non-renewal for legitimate reasons. The practical lesson for a district leader is documentation — the district prevails only if the independent, legitimate grounds were recorded contemporaneously. *Adapted from a locally authored New York practice item whose published key and rationale were both incorrect (the key stated the firing was simply upheld and the rationale cited Goss v. Lopez); corrected here.*

Pattern: Mixed-motive: the district must prove it would have decided the same anyway

98. Correct answer: A · Part 104 · objective 0008 · adapted

Correct: A. This is *Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley* (1982), the Supreme Court's first decision interpreting the federal special education statute. The Court held that the statute guarantees access to specialized instruction and related services individually designed to provide educational benefit, and expressly rejected the maximization standard stated in B. D confuses the merits with the stay-put provision, which preserves the current placement during proceedings rather than requiring every requested service. C is simply not what happened. District leaders should also know that *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* (2017) refined *Rowley*: an IEP must be reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances, which is a more demanding standard than merely more than trivial benefit. *Adapted from a locally authored New York practice item whose published key and rationale were both incorrect (the key said the suit was withdrawn and the rationale cited New Jersey v. T.L.O.); corrected here.*

Pattern: FAPE means educational benefit appropriately ambitious for the child, not maximization

99. Correct answer: C · Part 104 · objective 0008 · adapted

Correct: C. This is *Gebser v. Lago Vista Independent School District* (1998). The Court declined to impose damages liability on a district on ordinary agency principles and set a demanding standard: an official with authority to institute corrective measures must have had actual notice of, and been deliberately indifferent to, the teacher's misconduct. B is wrong on the Court's own terms — it held that failure to promulgate a grievance procedure did not itself constitute discrimination or provide a basis for damages, though districts remain obligated to have one. A applies a negligence theory the Court rejected as the measure of Title IX damages liability. D is legally irrelevant and factually offensive: a minor student cannot consent to a sexual relationship with a teacher, and consent is no part of the analysis. The management lesson runs the other way from the holding — notice to a responsible official triggers a duty to act, so districts should ensure every complaint reaches someone with authority. *Adapted from a locally authored New York practice item whose published key and rationale were both incorrect (the key awarded damages and the rationale cited Safford v. Redding); corrected here.*

Pattern: Title IX damages: actual notice to an official with authority, plus deliberate indifference

PART C

Recall-Card Answers

All 225 cards with the full answer, the short phrases that count as correct when you are self-checking, and the authority behind it.

Framework & Blueprint FW

FW-1

60 selected-response items on each part, carrying approximately 50% of that part's total test score. The two written assignments carry the other 50%.

Listen for: 60 items, 50% · 60 questions, 50 percent · 60 and 50/50
SDL Test Design (NYSED/Evaluation Systems, 2008)

FW-2

Subarea I: Developing, Communicating, and Sustaining an Educational Vision, objectives 0001-0004. Subarea II: Supervising Districtwide Change and Accountability, objectives 0005-0008.

Listen for: Vision (0001-0004); Change and Accountability (0005-0008)
· I vision, II change and accountability
SDL Test Design, Part One (103)

FW-3

Evenly: approximately 30 items from Subarea I and 30 from Subarea II, each worth about 25% of the total test score.

Listen for: 30 and 30 · 30/30, 25% each
SDL Test Design, Part One (103)

FW-4

Subarea I: Leading the District Educational Program, objectives 0001-0005. Subarea II: Managing District Resources and Compliance, objectives 0006-0008.

Listen for: Educational Program (0001-0005); Resources and Compliance (0006-0008)
SDL Test Design, Part Two (104)

FW-5

Unevenly: approximately 37 items from Subarea I, Leading the District Educational Program (about 31% of the test score), and 23 items from Subarea II, Managing District Resources and Compliance (about 19%).

Listen for: 37 and 23 · 37/23 · 37 program, 23 resources
SDL Test Design, Part Two (104)

FW-6

Two written assignments per part. Assignment One is worth approximately 17% of the total test score and Assignment Two approximately 33% - together about 50%.

Listen for: Two; 17% and 33% · 2 assignments, 17/33
SDL Preparation Guide, Directions for the Written Assignments

FW-7

Assignment One is about 150-300 words; Assignment Two is about 300-600 words. That holds on both Part One and Part Two.

Listen for: 150-300 and 300-600 · about 150-300 / 300-600
SDL Preparation Guide, Directions for the Written Assignments

FW-8

Assignment One is a Work Product assignment (short, about 17%); Assignment Two is a Case Study assignment (long, about 33%).

Listen for: Work Product then Case Study · Work Product, Case Study
SDL Preparation Guide, Part One sample assignments

FW-9

Assignment One is a Management Problem Solving assignment (short, about 17%); Assignment Two is an Educational Program Analysis assignment (long, about 33%).

Listen for: Management Problem Solving then Educational Program Analysis · MPS, EPA
SDL Preparation Guide, Part Two sample assignments

FW-10

The short 17% Management Problem Solving task comes from Subarea II (Managing District Resources and Compliance); the long 33% Educational Program Analysis task comes from Subarea I (Leading the District Educational Program). On 104 the long task is drawn from the first subarea, the reverse of Part One.

Listen for: Short from Subarea II, long from Subarea I · MPS = II, EPA = I
SDL Preparation Guide, Part Two sample assignments

FW-11

The Work Product assignment comes from Subarea I (Developing, Communicating, and Sustaining an Educational Vision); the Case Study assignment comes from Subarea II (Supervising Districtwide Change and Accountability).

Listen for: Work Product = Subarea I, Case Study = Subarea II
SDL Preparation Guide, Part One sample assignments

FW-12

0001 leadership concepts and principles and their application; 0002 processes for developing and implementing a shared, sustainable educational vision; 0003 principles and practices of clear and effective communication; 0004 processes of collaboration and cooperation.

Listen for: leadership, vision, communication, collaboration
SDL Assessment Framework, Part One Subarea I

FW-13

0005 the process of change and its management in the educational environment; 0006 comprehensive, long-range planning and implementation; 0007 data-driven decision-making and problem-solving skills and procedures; 0008 how to promote accountability.

Listen for: change, long-range planning, data-driven decision making, accountability
SDL Assessment Framework, Part One Subarea II

FW-14

0001 understand and support learning throughout the district; 0002 establishing and promoting standards and expectations; 0003 effective methods for providing support to students; 0004 effective methods for providing support to building leaders, teachers, and other staff; 0005 fostering ongoing staff development and sustaining personal professional growth.

Listen for: learning, standards and expectations, support to students, support to staff, staff development
SDL Assessment Framework, Part Two Subarea I

FW-15

0006 district-level operational management; 0007 district financial and facilities management; 0008 how to supervise compliance with federal, state, and local mandates.

Listen for: operational management, financial and facilities management, compliance
SDL Assessment Framework, Part Two Subarea II

FW-16

Part One objective 0001 - leadership concepts and principles - whose bullets include the professional and political environment of district leadership in New York State and the Code of Ethics.

Listen for: 103 objective 0001 · Part One 0001 · 0001
SDL framework, Part One objective 0001

FW-17

Part Two objective 0007, district financial and facilities management - including public school financing at federal, state and local levels, budget planning with stakeholders, reporting financial information, emergency management and crisis response, and physical plant operation.

Listen for: 104 objective 0007 · Part Two 0007 · 0007
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0007

FW-18

Part Two objective 0008, supervising compliance with federal, state and local mandates - it explicitly names knowledge of education case law and New York requirements for identifying and reporting suspected child abuse and maltreatment.

Listen for: 104 objective 0008 · Part Two 0008 · 0008
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0008

FW-19

Part Two objective 0006, district-level operational management - its bullets include processes of collective bargaining and contract management that support and extend the educational vision, group dynamics, systems theory, and supervision of school-level management.

Listen for: 104 objective 0006 · Part Two 0006 · 0006
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0006

FW-20

Part One objective 0006, comprehensive long-range planning and implementation. Succession planning is listed there as a planning function, not as a staffing or personnel function.

Listen for: 103 objective 0006 · Part One 0006 · 0006
SDL framework, Part One objective 0006

FW-21

Part Two objective 0003, effective methods for providing support to students - which also covers safe and supportive learning environments, collaboration with social and health service providers, and school violence prevention.

Listen for: 104 objective 0003 · Part Two 0003 · 0003
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0003

FW-22

220 on each part. Part One and Part Two are scored separately, so you pass each one on its own.

Listen for: 220 · 220 each part
NYSTCE School District Leader test page (retrieved August 2026)

FW-23

Four hours of testing time per part, plus 15 minutes for the CBT tutorial and the nondisclosure agreement. Taking both parts in one appointment runs 8 hours 40 minutes including a 40-minute lunch break.

Listen for: 4 hours plus 15 minutes · four hours, 15 min tutorial
NYSTCE School District Leader test page (retrieved August 2026)

FW-24

The Test Design and Assessment Framework is copyright 2008 NYSED and the Preparation Guide is copyright 2009-2010 Pearson. The framework cites no external standards set at all - not PSEL, not ISLLC. The blueprint is the 2008 subareas and objectives themselves. PSEL (NYS Version) was Regents-adopted in 2017 and is current NY practice vocabulary, but it is not what the test is built from.

Listen for: 2008 framework, no external standards · 2008, none - not PSEL

SDL Test Design and Assessment Framework (NYSED, 2008)

Governance & the Board

GV-1

17 members - one from each of the 13 judicial districts plus 4 at-large. They are elected by the Legislature in joint session and serve without salary.

Listen for: 17 · seventeen · 17, elected by the Legislature
Education Law §§201-207

GV-2

The Board of Regents appoints the Commissioner, who serves at their pleasure. The Commissioner is also President of the University of the State of New York and chief administrative officer of NYSED.

Listen for: The Board of Regents · the Regents
Education Law §§101, 305

GV-3

Title 8 of the New York Codes, Rules and Regulations holds both the Rules of the Board of Regents and the Commissioner's Regulations. Education Law is statute; 8 NYCRR is regulation - it has the force of law but cannot exceed the statute.

Listen for: The Regents Rules and the Commissioner's Regulations · education regulations
Title 8 NYCRR

GV-4

For a wilful violation or neglect of duty. It reaches any school officer, which includes both board members and the superintendent.

Listen for: wilful violation or neglect of duty · wilful neglect of duty
Education Law §306

GV-5

The board is a corporate body that can act only at a properly convened meeting. An individual member acting alone has no authority whatsoever - no power to direct staff, promise a parent an outcome, or bind the district.

Listen for: A corporate body acting only at a meeting; a member alone has none · none - it acts only as a body
Education Law §1709

GV-6

The superintendent is the district's chief executive officer, has the right to speak on all matters before the board, and does not vote.

Listen for: Speak on all matters but not vote · speaks, does not vote
Education Law §1711

GV-7

At least six hours of training in financial oversight, accountability and fiduciary responsibility, completed within the first year of the member's term. Districts typically arrange it through BOCES or NYSSBA.

Listen for: Six hours in the first year · 6 hours of fiscal oversight training
Education Law §2102-a

GV-8

Hear the member out, redirect the individual concern to the administrative channel that owns it, and put any genuine policy question in front of the full board. You do not quietly accommodate one member, and you do not embarrass the member publicly.

Listen for: Redirect to administration, take policy to the full board · route it administratively; policy goes to the whole board
SDL framework, Part One objective 0001; Education Law §1711

GV-9

Common, union free, central, central high school, and city districts. The Big 5 city districts - New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers - are fiscally dependent on their municipalities and hold no separate budget vote.

Listen for: common, union free, central, central high school, city · Big 5 are fiscally dependent, no budget vote
Education Law §§1709, 1804, 2503, 2554; Art. 52-A

GV-10

A BOCES is a shared-services entity - CTE, special education, itinerant services, professional development, data and technology through the RIC, cooperative purchasing and administrative services. It has no taxing authority; its component boards vote its administrative budget and it bills them.

Listen for: Shared services; it cannot levy taxes · no taxing authority
Education Law §1950 et seq. (Art. 40)

GV-11

Chief executive officer of the BOCES and field representative of the Commissioner of Education - which is why a district superintendent can act for the Commissioner in certain matters.

Listen for: BOCES chief executive and the Commissioner's field representative
Education Law §1950 et seq.

GV-12

The service must be cooperative in nature and approved by the Commissioner. BOCES aid is then paid on the prior year's expense at the district's aid ratio - which is why a service is often cheaper purchased through BOCES than run in-house. The Big 5 are not eligible.

Listen for: Cooperative in nature and Commissioner-approved · cooperative and approved; paid on prior-year expense
Education Law §1950; §3602

GV-13

An administrative appeal to the Commissioner by any person aggrieved by an official act or decision of a school officer or board. There is no fee and no lawyer is required; it is decided on the papers, and the petitioner bears the burden of proof.

Listen for: An appeal to the Commissioner; any aggrieved person; no fee
Education Law §310

GV-14

Within 30 days of the act complained of, though delay may be excused for good cause. The decision is final and reviewable only in an Article 78 proceeding on an arbitrary-and-capricious standard.

Listen for: 30 days; Article 78 review · thirty days
8 NYCRR Part 275; CPLR Art. 78

GV-15

It applies whenever a quorum of the board gathers to conduct public business. A work session, a retreat and a committee of the whole are all meetings, requiring notice to the media and public posting.

Listen for: Any gathering of a quorum to conduct public business · yes, they are meetings
Public Officers Law §§100-111

GV-16

Executive session is part of an open meeting, not an alternative to one. The board convenes in public, then passes a motion identifying the general area of the subject to be considered, carried by a majority of the total membership.

Listen for: Motion in public identifying the general subject area, majority of the total membership
Public Officers Law §105(1)

GV-17

Any four of: matters imperilling public safety if disclosed; the identity of a law enforcement agent or informer; a current or future criminal investigation or prosecution where disclosure would imperil law enforcement; proposed, pending or current litigation; collective negotiations under Civil Service Law Article 14; the medical, financial, credit or employment history of a particular person, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person; the preparation, grading or administration of examinations; and the proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property or securities where publicity would affect the value.

Listen for: litigation · collective negotiations · a particular person's employment history · real property acquisition
Public Officers Law §105(1)

GV-18

The statute permits discussion of the employment history or discipline of a particular person. 'Personnel' as a heading names no particular person, so the motion is defective - and no appropriation of public money may be voted in executive session in any event.

Listen for: It must concern a particular person · 'particular person' is required
Public Officers Law §105(1)(f)

GV-19

FERPA and student-records confidentiality, not the executive-session provisions of the Open Meetings Law. Know which authority you are invoking - citing the wrong one is a classic distractor.

Listen for: FERPA · student records confidentiality
20 U.S.C. §1232g; 34 C.F.R. Part 99

GV-20

Within 5 business days the district must grant the request, deny it in writing, or acknowledge it with an approximate response date - normally within 20 business days. A denial may be appealed within 30 days, and the appeal must be decided within 10 business days.

Listen for: 5 business days to respond · 20 business days · 30 days to appeal, 10 business days to decide
Public Officers Law §§84-90

GV-21

Records are presumptively open and the agency must prove an exemption applies. A requester need not state any purpose, and a commercial purpose is not a ground for denial. Each district designates a Records Access Officer.

Listen for: The agency must prove an exemption; no purpose required
Public Officers Law §§84-90

GV-22

When the officer's duties include the power or duty to negotiate, prepare, authorize or approve the contract, authorize or approve payment under it, audit claims under it, or appoint someone who does. The test is whether the office touches the contract, not whether the person actually benefits.

Listen for: When the officer may negotiate, approve, pay, audit or appoint
· if the office touches the contract
General Municipal Law §801

GV-23

Those of a spouse, minor child or dependent; a firm the officer belongs to or works for; and a corporation the officer serves as officer, director or employee, or controls through stock.

Listen for: spouse, minor child, dependent, the officer's firm or corporation
General Municipal Law §800

GV-24

Disclose the interest in writing, entered in the official record of the board. A contract entered in violation of the prohibition is void, and a wilful violation is a misdemeanor.

Listen for: Disclose in writing on the record; the contract is void
General Municipal Law §§803, 804, 805

GV-25

§805-a bars gifts of \$75 or more given under circumstances suggesting influence, disclosure of confidential information for private gain, receiving compensation for services on a matter before the board, and contingent fee arrangements. §806 requires every district to adopt, distribute and post a code of ethics.

Listen for: Gifts of \$75 or more; adopt and post a code of ethics
General Municipal Law §§805-a, 806

GV-26

A set of six aspirational principles adopted by the Board of Regents in 2002. It is not a disciplinary code and is not a basis for certificate revocation - revocation and moral-character proceedings run under 8 NYCRR Part 83. Objective 103-0001 names the Code by name, so know the six principles.

Listen for: Six aspirational principles, Regents 2002 · aspirational, not disciplinary
NYS Code of Ethics for Educators (Regents, 2002); 8 NYCRR Part 83

Finance & the Budget FN

FN-1

The third Tuesday in May. The Commissioner may certify a move to the second Tuesday in May where the third Tuesday conflicts with a religious observance.

Listen for: Third Tuesday in May · 3rd Tuesday in May
Education Law §2022(1)

FN-2

Not less than 7 and not more than 14 days before the vote. The budget statement must be available on request from 7 days before the hearing.

Listen for: 7 to 14 days before the vote · not less than 7 nor more than 14 days
Education Law §§1608, 1716, 2022

FN-3

Mailed to all qualified voters after the hearing and no later than 6 days before the vote. It compares proposed spending and the proposed levy to the prior year and to the tax levy limit, and it must state whether a 60% supermajority is required to adopt the budget.

Listen for: Within 6 days of the vote; states whether 60% is required
Education Law §2022(2-a)

FN-4

A report filed with NYSED and appended to public copies of the proposed budget, due no later than 24 days before the budget vote.

Listen for: 24 days before the vote · no later than 24 days
Education Law §1716

FN-5

By March 1, with the Office of the State Comptroller, the Commissioner of Education, and the Department of Taxation and Finance.

Listen for: March 1 · by March 1 with OSC, NYSED and Tax and Finance
Education Law §2023-a

FN-6

Once. The resubmission is voted on the third Tuesday in June.

Listen for: Once, third Tuesday in June · one resubmission
Education Law §2007

FN-7

Adopt a contingency budget, effective July 1.

Listen for: Adopt a contingency budget · contingency budget effective July 1
Education Law §2023

FN-8

Not at all - a contingency budget may levy no more than the prior year's levy, a zero percent increase. This replaced the pre-2011 approach and is the single most common error in older New York finance material.

Listen for: 0% · zero percent · no increase over the prior year levy
Education Law §2023

FN-9

The administrative component is capped, broadly at the lesser of the administrative portion of the last defeated budget or the administrative percentage of the prior year's adopted budget; and spending is limited to ordinary contingent expenses - legal obligations, expenditures specifically authorized by statute, and those necessary to maintain the educational program, preserve property and assure health and safety.

Listen for: Administrative component capped; only ordinary contingent expenses
Education Law §2023

FN-10

Most equipment, new capital work other than emergency repairs, non-essential maintenance, and free public use of school facilities - community groups must be charged at least cost. Contract salaries, debt service, student supplies, tuition and transportation obligations do remain payable.

Listen for: most equipment · new capital work · free community use of facilities
Education Law §2023

FN-11

Chapter 97 of the Laws of 2011, codified at Education Law §2023-a, effective with the 2012-13 school year and made permanent in 2019. It limits the tax levy - the total dollars raised - not the tax rate and not spending.

Listen for: Chapter 97 of the Laws of 2011 · Education Law §2023-a · the levy, not the rate
Education Law §2023-a (Ch. 97, L. 2011)

FN-12

The lesser of 2% or the annual increase in the Consumer Price Index. It is published annually, so never quote a specific year's figure from memory.

Listen for: The lesser of 2% or CPI · 2 percent or CPI, whichever is less
Education Law §2023-a

FN-13

The formula also runs through a tax base growth factor, adjustments for payments in lieu of taxes, and carryover of up to 1.5% of unused levy capacity, before the statutory exclusions are added on top.

Listen for: Tax base growth factor, PILOTs and carryover of up to 1.5%
Education Law §2023-a

FN-14

The local share of capital expenditures net of building aid; pension contributions attributable to a year-over-year rise in the system average actuarial contribution rate of more than two percentage points; and the levy for court orders and judgments in tort actions exceeding 5% of the prior year's levy.

Listen for: capital local share · pension contribution spike · tort judgments over 5% of the prior levy
Education Law §2023-a

FN-15

60% of the votes cast - and the budget notice mailed to voters must say that the supermajority is required.

Listen for: 60% · sixty percent · 60 percent of votes cast
Education Law §2023-a, 2022(2-a)

FN-16

Administrative, Program and Capital. The administrative share is the politically loaded one and is capped under a contingency budget.

Listen for: Administrative, Program, Capital · admin, program, capital
Education Law §1716

FN-17

Tax rate equals the levy divided by assessed valuation, times 100. Full (true) value equals assessed value divided by the equalization rate. A district spanning several towns grosses up with equalization rates and apportions the levy among them.

Listen for: Levy divided by assessed value · assessed value divided by the equalization rate
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0007; Real Property Tax Law

FN-18

Spending is driven by appropriations; the tax bill is driven by the levy, assessed value and equalization rates. A district can raise spending while holding or lowering the levy by using state aid, reserves or fund balance - and can raise the levy without raising the rate if the tax base grows. Communicating the two as one number is how budget presentations lose credibility.

Listen for: Spending and levy are different numbers
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0007

FN-19

The real property tax, state aid, and 'other' - federal aid, appropriated fund balance, tuition, interest, Medicaid reimbursement and rentals.

Listen for: property tax, state aid, other · local levy, state aid, federal and miscellaneous
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0007

FN-20

New York's principal general operating aid, enacted in 2007 following Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. State of New York. It applies a foundation amount adjusted by a regional cost index and a pupil need index (poverty, English language learners, sparsity), less an expected local contribution based on income and property wealth. Frozen for years, it was fully phased in as of 2023-24. Never state a foundation amount or aid total from memory.

Listen for: The main general operating aid, enacted 2007 after CFE · Foundation Aid

Education Law §3602; Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. State of New York, 100 N.Y.2d 893 (2003)

FN-21

An aid that reimburses a share of approved prior-year expenditure at a wealth-adjusted ratio. Transportation Aid, Building Aid, BOCES Aid, Special Education High Cost / Private Excess Cost Aid, and the instructional materials aids. The implication: today's spending generates later revenue at a known ratio, which is the arithmetic behind every buy, lease or BOCES decision.

Listen for: transportation · building · BOCES · special education high cost
Education Law §3602

FN-22

Equality is the same dollars per pupil; equity adjusts dollars so that comparable outcomes are reachable; adequacy is enough to meet the standard. Foundation Aid rests on adequacy logic - it starts from what it costs to educate a student to the standard and works back to the local share.

Listen for: equality, equity, adequacy - adequacy

SDL framework, Part Two objective 0007; Campaign for Fiscal Equity

FN-23

Unassigned general fund balance is limited to 4% of the ensuing year's budget; anything above that must be used to reduce the tax levy. It is the single most frequently cited finding in Comptroller audits of New York districts.

Listen for: 4% · four percent of the ensuing year's budget
Real Property Tax Law §1318(1)

FN-24

A capital reserve requires voter authorization both to establish it - stating purpose, maximum amount and probable term - and to expend from it. Most other reserves are established and used by board action.

Listen for: Voter authorization to establish and to expend
Education Law §3651

FN-25

Any four of: tax certiorari (judgments and refunds from assessment challenges); repair (repairs to capital improvements or equipment); workers' compensation; unemployment insurance; insurance (uninsured property loss and liability); employee benefit accrued liability, for accrued unused leave payable on separation; and retirement contribution. Each is created under a specific statute for a specific purpose - reserves are not a general-purpose cushion.

Listen for: tax certiorari · repair · workers' compensation · unemployment insurance · employee benefit accrued liability

Education Law §3651; General Municipal Law §§6-c-6-r

FN-26

It is one-time revenue applied to recurring costs. Repeating it builds a structural gap between recurring revenue and recurring expense - the classic pattern behind a fiscal stress designation. The answer is a multi-year plan with structural fixes.

Listen for: It is one-time revenue funding recurring costs · it creates a structural gap

Office of the State Comptroller, fiscal stress monitoring

FN-27

Need established from the building condition survey, the five-year capital facilities plan, enrollment projections and program requirements; voter approval of a proposition stating scope, maximum cost and financing; Commissioner's approval of plans and specifications through the NYSED Office of Facilities Planning; competitive bidding; then financing through serial bonds, usually preceded by bond anticipation notes.

Listen for: survey, plan, voter proposition, Commissioner approval, bid, bond

Education Law §408; 8 NYCRR Part 155; Local Finance Law

FN-28

Building Aid reimburses a wealth-adjusted share of approved costs on an assumed amortization schedule. Costs above the maximum cost allowance and any ineligible scope are 100% local - which is why change orders that expand scope without approval convert state-aided work into local dollars.

Listen for: A share of approved costs; anything above the maximum cost allowance is local

Education Law §3602(6)

FN-29

That state and local services in Title I schools are at least comparable to those in non-Title I schools, taken as a whole - typically shown through a district-wide salary schedule and policies ensuring equivalence in staffing, materials and supplies. Salary differentials for years of experience are excluded, which is why comparability can be met even where per-pupil spending differs between schools.

Listen for: Comparable state and local services; experience-based salary differentials are excluded

ESEA §1118(c)

FN-30

Under ESSA it is a methodology test: the district shows that the method it uses to allocate state and local funds gives each Title I school all the state and local funds it would receive if it were not a Title I school. The district does not have to identify individual costs as supplemental - a significant change from the older cost-by-cost demonstration.

Listen for: A methodology test under ESSA · show the allocation methodology
ESEA §1118(b)

Internal Controls & Audit

IC-1

The claims auditor is appointed by the board of education and reports directly to the board - not to the superintendent or the business office. That reporting line is the whole point: it puts an independent check between the people who spend money and the people who pay for it.

Listen for: The board appoints and receives the reports · board-appointed, reports to the board
Education Law §1709(20-a); §§2116-a, 2116-b, 2116-c

IC-2

Each claim, before payment: the purchase order, the authorization, the receiving report, the original invoice and a clear description - and a finding that the expenditure is actual, necessary and reasonable.

Listen for: actual, necessary and reasonable · each claim before payment
Education Law §1709(20-a); §§2116-a, 2116-b, 2116-c

IC-3

A board member, the district clerk, the treasurer, the superintendent, the purchasing agent, or an employee of any of them. Every one of those roles is on the spending side of the transaction.

Listen for: Board member, clerk, treasurer, superintendent or purchasing agent
Education Law §1709(20-a)

IC-4

Only against a warrant approved by the claims auditor. It means no one can move money without an independent review having happened first - and its absence was one of the failures at Roslyn.

Listen for: An approved warrant · only against a warrant
Education Law §1709(20-a); §§2116-a, 2116-b, 2116-c

IC-5

Risk assessment and testing of internal controls, reporting to the board through the audit committee rather than to the business office. Very small districts have a statutory exemption - verify the threshold before relying on it.

Listen for: Risk assessment and controls testing; reports to the board
Education Law §§2116-a, 2116-b, 2116-c; 8 NYCRR §170.12

IC-6

A board-appointed advisory body. It helps select the external auditor, reviews the draft audit report and management letter with the auditor, and receives internal audit reports and corrective action plans. Its power is that it gives the board a channel to the auditors that does not run through the administration being audited.

Listen for: Board-appointed and advisory · gives the board a direct line to the auditors
Education Law §§2116-a, 2116-b, 2116-c; 8 NYCRR §170.12

IC-7

A CPA firm selected by competitive RFP at least every five years. The auditor issues the audit report and a management letter; the board adopts a corrective action plan within 90 days and files it with NYSED.

Listen for: Every five years; corrective action plan within 90 days
Education Law §§2116-a, 2116-b, 2116-c; Ch. 263, L. 2005

IC-8

Timely detection of fraud and of innocent error. Most candidates name fraud only; controls exist just as much to catch honest mistakes before they compound.

Listen for: Detecting both fraud and innocent error · fraud and error
Office of the State Comptroller, internal control guidance

IC-9

The same person cannot accept the cash, record it, deposit it and reconcile the account - no single person performs a transaction from beginning to end.

Listen for: No one person accepts, records, deposits and reconciles
Office of the State Comptroller, internal control guidance

IC-10

Because self-approval removes the only independent check on necessity and price. Above a stated threshold, districts require a knowledgeable secondary approver at a higher level.

Listen for: Self-approval removes the check; add a secondary approver
Office of the State Comptroller, internal control guidance

IC-11

Someone with no cash receipt or disbursement duties, monthly. A reconciliation performed by the person who handles the money proves nothing.

Listen for: Someone with no cash handling duties · an independent person, monthly
Office of the State Comptroller, internal control guidance

IC-12

System access limited to job function, reviewed on role change and revoked at separation; vendor master file changes logged and reviewed by someone who cannot cut checks; and check stock and signature devices physically secured with an independently reconciled sequential check log.

Listen for: access limited by job function · vendor file changes reviewed · secured check stock and signature device
Office of the State Comptroller, IT and payroll audit guidance

IC-13

A payroll action notice traceable to board approval. A verbal instruction - including from the superintendent - is never sufficient authority to change what a person is paid.

Listen for: A payroll action notice traceable to board approval · never verbal
Office of the State Comptroller, payroll audit guidance

IC-14

Board-level review, rotation of duties, mandatory vacations, and independent reconciliation. Small size explains why duties cannot be split; it does not excuse the absence of a check.

Listen for: Board review, rotation, mandatory vacations, independent reconciliation
Office of the State Comptroller, internal control guidance

IC-15

Roslyn Union Free School District lost approximately \$11.2 million to embezzlement by district officials, uncovered in 2004. It is the case New York school finance is taught from, because every element of it maps to a missing internal control.

Listen for: \$11.2 million · about 11 million, uncovered in 2004
Office of the State Comptroller; Ch. 263, L. 2005

IC-16

Any four of: no segregation of duties, so an account clerk had access to the signature plate; the claims auditor bypassed, with large personal expenditures run on hand checks outside the normal process; no warrants passing between claims auditor and treasurer; no check log, so sequence gaps went undetected; no information-system security, so vendor names could be changed after checks were issued; no board oversight of the monthly budget status report; no cap on the superintendent's budget transfer authority; no travel policy limit and expense reports without backup; related-party consulting payments with nothing showing services rendered; and an external audit that caught none of it.

Listen for: no segregation of duties · claims auditor bypassed · no check log · no board review of budget status · no IT controls over the vendor file
Office of the State Comptroller, Roslyn investigation

IC-17

The School District Accountability Act, Chapter 263 of the Laws of 2005, together with the State Comptroller's five-point school accountability plan.

Listen for: The School District Accountability Act · Chapter 263 of the Laws of 2005
Ch. 263, L. 2005

IC-18

Mandatory board member training in financial oversight; an internal audit function; an audit committee; a competitive RFP for audit firms at least every five years; and stronger external audits with direct board involvement - plus annual audits of extraclassroom activity funds and required corrective action plans.

Listen for: board training, internal audit, audit committee, five-year RFP, stronger external audit
Ch. 263, L. 2005; OSC five-point plan

IC-19

OSC is headed by an independently elected State Comptroller - not part of the Executive and not part of NYSED. It audits districts and BOCES, publishes district-specific and statewide topical audits on reserves, purchasing, payroll, IT security and extraclassroom funds, and requires a corrective action plan that it then follows up on. Both the report and the district's response are public. Note that older prep decks name Alan Hevesi as sitting Comptroller; he resigned in December 2006 and Thomas P. DiNapoli has held the office since 2007.

Listen for: An independently elected office, outside NYSED and the Executive · OSC audits districts and BOCES
N.Y. Const. art. V; OSC Division of Local Government and School Accountability

IC-20

A system OSC launched in 2013 that scores districts on financial indicators - fund balance, operating deficits, cash position and short-term debt - alongside published environmental indicators. The classifications are Significant Fiscal Stress, Moderate Fiscal Stress, Susceptible to Fiscal Stress, and No Designation. A designation is a public, comparative, longitudinal signal that rating agencies and communities both read, and the answer to one is a multi-year structural plan, not a one-year fund balance appropriation.

Listen for: Significant, Moderate, Susceptible, No Designation · OSC fiscal stress monitoring, 2013

Office of the State Comptroller, Fiscal Stress Monitoring System (2013)

Personnel & Labor PS

PS-1

Four years for teachers and building principals appointed on or after July 1, 2015, under Chapter 56 of the Laws of 2015. Three years remains correct only for appointments made before that date. Circulating SDL prep material still says three - if an item gives you an appointment date, the date is the item.

Listen for: Four years · 4 years for appointments on or after July 1, 2015
Ch. 56, L. 2015; Education Law §§2509, 2573, 3012, 3014

PS-2

Composite ratings of Effective or Highly Effective in at least three of the four preceding years. An Ineffective rating in the final probationary year makes the person ineligible for tenure at that time.

Listen for: Effective or Highly Effective in 3 of the 4 preceding years
Education Law §3012-d; Ch. 56, L. 2015

PS-3

Credit toward the probationary period for prior regular substitute service in the same tenure area, shortening probation up to the statutory maximum. Miscounting it is a classic way a district discovers that a probationer's term expired earlier than the calendar said - and that tenure vested.

Listen for: Credit for prior regular substitute service in the same tenure area
Education Law §§2509, 2573, 3012

PS-4

Tenure vesting by operation of law because the district allowed a probationer to continue teaching past the end of the probationary term without acting. It is why the tenure calendar is a central office responsibility rather than a building one.

Listen for: Tenure vesting by operation of law when a probationer is allowed to continue
Education Law §§2509, 2573, 3012

PS-5

Tenure is granted in a tenure area, not in a job or a building. The areas - elementary, middle grades, academic secondary subjects, special subjects, special education and the administrative areas - are defined by 8 NYCRR Part 30.

Listen for: A tenure area, defined in 8 NYCRR Part 30
8 NYCRR Part 30

PS-6

A person who devotes 40% or more of their time to a special subject tenure area must be appointed in that area. Assigning staff without regard to tenure area is how districts create tenure rights they never intended to grant.

Listen for: 40 percent · 40% of time in a special subject area requires appointment in it
8 NYCRR Part 30

PS-7

The person with the least seniority within the tenure area of the abolished position - seniority within the tenure area, not district-wide seniority.

Listen for: Least seniority within the tenure area
Education Law §2510; 8 NYCRR Part 30

PS-8

Placement on a preferred eligible list for seven years. The excessed employee must be offered a vacancy in the same or a similar tenure area - judged on actual duties - before it is offered to anyone else.

Listen for: Preferred eligible list for seven years · 7 years
Education Law §2510

PS-9

All constitutional protections: no dismissal for union activity, for protected speech, or on a discriminatory basis. A stigmatizing accusation attached to a non-renewal can trigger the right to a name-clearing hearing.

Listen for: Constitutional protections - speech, union activity, non-discrimination

U.S. Const. amends. I, XIV; Education Law §3012

PS-10

The statutory disciplinary process for tenured teachers and administrators. Charges must be in writing and filed between the actual opening and closing of the school year; generally no charge may rest on misconduct more than three years old, except where the conduct would constitute a crime.

Listen for: The tenured discipline process; charges in writing during the school year

Education Law §3020-a

PS-11

The board of education, by a majority vote of the full board, within 5 days. A written statement of the charges, the maximum penalty sought and the employee's rights is then served on the employee.

Listen for: The board, by majority of the full board, within 5 days

Education Law §3020-a

PS-12

10 days from receipt of the charges. Failure to respond waives the right to a hearing.

Listen for: 10 days; failure to respond waives the hearing

Education Law §3020-a

PS-13

The parties have 15 days to agree on a hearing officer from a list; if they do not, the Commissioner appoints one.

Listen for: Agreement within 15 days, or the Commissioner appoints

Education Law §3020-a

PS-14

Reprimand, fine, suspension without pay for a fixed period, or dismissal - plus remedial measures such as leave, continuing education or counseling.

Listen for: reprimand, fine, suspension without pay, dismissal

Education Law §3020-a

PS-15

By application to State Supreme Court under CPLR §7511, within 10 days of receipt of the decision, on the narrow standard that applies to vacating an arbitration award. The employee is generally suspended with pay pending the hearing, which is a real budget line.

Listen for: CPLR §7511 in State Supreme Court within 10 days

Education Law §3020-a; CPLR §7511

PS-16

An expedited disciplinary procedure for charges based on a pattern of ineffective teaching or performance arising from consecutive Ineffective ratings, with shifted evidentiary burdens. Its triggers and burden allocations have been amended, so confirm the current text.

Listen for: Expedited process for a pattern of ineffective teaching

Education Law §3020-b

PS-17

The Public Employees' Fair Employment Act, Civil Service Law Article 14, enacted 1967. Public employees may organize and be represented; employers must negotiate in good faith; and strikes are prohibited. PERB administers representation, improper practices and impasse.

Listen for: Civil Service Law Article 14, 1967 · the Public Employees' Fair Employment Act

Civil Service Law §§200-214

PS-18

The 1982 amendment adding Civil Service Law §209-a.1(e): it is an improper practice for a public employer to refuse to continue the terms of an expired agreement until a new one is negotiated - so salary step increments continue after expiration. The union's status quo is therefore the expired contract plus steps, which means time does not pressure it as it would in the private sector. Combined with the tax levy limit, that is the central structural fact of a superintendent's bargaining position.

Listen for: Expired contract terms continue, including steps · Civil Service Law §209-a.1(e)

Civil Service Law §209-a.1(e) (1982)

PS-19

Forfeiture of two days' pay for each day on strike, loss of dues deduction for the employee organization, and exposure to contempt.

Listen for: Two days' pay per day on strike · loss of dues checkoff

Civil Service Law §210

PS-20

Terms and conditions of employment - salary, hours, benefits, evaluation procedure - are mandatory subjects. Core educational policy decisions, such as curriculum content or the creation or abolition of a program, are generally non-mandatory, although the impact of such a decision on unit members is negotiable. Getting the line wrong produces an improper practice charge.

Listen for: Terms and conditions are mandatory; educational policy is not, but impact is

Civil Service Law §§204, 209-a

PS-21

Mediation, then fact-finding with public, non-binding recommendations, then - for school districts - legislative determination: the board may hold a public hearing and take such action as it deems in the public interest. There is no binding interest arbitration for teachers in New York; that applies to police and fire.

Listen for: Mediation, fact-finding, legislative determination · no binding interest arbitration for teachers
Civil Service Law §209

PS-22

Collective negotiations under Civil Service Law Article 14 are a permissible executive session subject, so the board may set parameters privately. The ratification vote is taken in public and the executed agreement is a public record.

Listen for: Negotiations in executive session; ratification and the contract are public
Public Officers Law §105(1)(e)

PS-23

The board sets the parameters - range, priorities, non-starters - in executive session; the superintendent leads or supervises the negotiating team, keeps the board inside its own parameters, and costs every proposal accurately over the life of the agreement, including rollup, steps and benefit trend. The two modelled failures are a settlement the district cannot fund under the levy limit, and a board member holding side conversations with union leadership. The answer to both is one team, one cost-out, one channel.

Listen for: Board sets parameters; superintendent leads the team and costs it out
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0006

PS-24

Classroom teachers and building principals. The two categories are Student Performance - a required student learning objective plus an optional second measure - and Observations or school visits against a state-approved rubric. Ratings are Highly Effective, Effective, Developing and Ineffective, combined through a matrix into a composite rating. Plans are collectively bargained and Commissioner-approved.

Listen for: Teachers and building principals; student performance and observation; HEDI
Education Law §3012-d

PS-25

They shall not be required to be used in any manner in evaluating teachers or principals.

Listen for: They may not be required to be used · not required to be used in any manner
Education Law §3012-d

PS-26

Standards-based Educator Evaluation and Professional Support, created by Chapter 143 of the Laws of 2024 at Education Law §3012-e. Plans are locally designed, still bargained and Commissioner-approved, built on multiple measures of practice rather than a state-prescribed matrix; it decouples school leader evaluation from teacher evaluation, requires alignment to the NYS Teaching and Educational Leadership Standards including the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework, and produces a Level 1-4 rating per standard rather than one composite. Adoption was voluntary beginning 2024-25; all districts must adopt a STEPS plan by June 30, 2032.

Listen for: Standards-based Educator Evaluation and Professional Support · Education Law §3012-e, Ch. 143 L. 2024
Education Law §3012-e; Ch. 143, L. 2024

PS-27

Fingerprinting and clearance by NYSED. Prospective employees of school districts, BOCES and charter schools must be fingerprinted and cleared before employment; conditional and emergency conditional appointments are permitted in specified circumstances while clearance is pending.

Listen for: Fingerprint clearance through NYSED · fingerprinting before employment
Education Law §§3004-b, 3035; 8 NYCRR Part 87

PS-28

No more than five classroom hours a week, and only when no certified or otherwise qualified teacher is available after extensive and documented recruitment.

Listen for: Five classroom hours a week · 5 hours per week after documented recruitment
8 NYCRR §80-5.3

PS-29

The Regents approved regulations establishing a new Administrator certificate and a Superintendent Extension. NYSED stopped registering new SBL and SDL preparation programs on or after February 1, 2025; existing programs are discontinued on or after September 1, 2030; and individuals must apply and meet all requirements for the Initial SBL and/or the Professional SDL certificate by January 1, 2031. The SDL examination survives the certificate phase-out - the new Administrator certificate requires a passing score on both the SBL and SDL exams, or the Individual Evaluation Pathway.

Listen for: A new Administrator certificate and Superintendent Extension · the SDL exam survives - it is required for the Administrator certificate
Regents action of January 13, 2025; 8 NYCRR §§52.21, 80-1.2, 80-4.3, 80-5.20, Subpart 80-3

Students, Rights & Compliance CP

CP-1

A written board plan and policy for locating, identifying and evaluating all resident children with disabilities - including homeless children, wards of the state, migrant children and students parentally placed in nonpublic schools - plus a register of eligible children. It is a board-level obligation, not a building one.

Listen for: Child find · a written plan and register for locating and evaluating all resident children with disabilities
8 NYCRR §200.2(a); 34 C.F.R. §300.111

CP-2

The board appoints the CSE, its subcommittees and the CPSE, and enough of them to meet the timelines. Required membership: the parent; a regular education teacher of the student if the student is or may be in general education; a special education teacher; a school psychologist; a district representative qualified to provide or supervise special education who is knowledgeable about the general curriculum and about district resources; and someone who can interpret evaluation results.

Listen for: parent, regular ed teacher, special ed teacher, school psychologist, district representative, evaluation interpreter
Education Law §4402; 8 NYCRR §200.3

CP-3

Within 10 school days of receiving the referral: request parental consent to evaluate, or provide the parent with a copy of the referral together with notice of intent to decline it.

Listen for: 10 school days · ten school days - seek consent or give notice of intent to decline
8 NYCRR §200.4(a)

CP-4

60 days - plain calendar days, not school days.

Listen for: 60 days · sixty calendar days
8 NYCRR §200.4(b)

CP-5

60 school days. Two clocks run in this area: 60 days for the evaluation, 60 school days to arrange services. The exam exploits the difference.

Listen for: 60 school days · sixty school days
8 NYCRR §200.4(e)

CP-6

The IEP is reviewed at least annually; reevaluation occurs at least once every three years, and not more than once a year unless the parent and district agree otherwise.

Listen for: Annually; triennial reevaluation · annual review, reevaluation every three years
8 NYCRR §200.4(b), (f)

CP-7

Students with disabilities are educated with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate, and are removed only when education in the general setting with supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. The district-level failure mode is placement driven by which program the district happens to run in which building - the pattern state LRE data reviews are designed to detect.

Listen for: Education with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate
20 U.S.C. §1412(a)(5); 8 NYCRR §200.6

CP-8

It must reserve 15% of its IDEA Part B funds for comprehensive coordinated early intervening services and must review its policies, practices and procedures. Disproportionality is reviewed by race and ethnicity in identification, placement and discipline.

Listen for: A mandatory 15% CEIS reservation and policy review · 15 percent
34 C.F.R. §§300.226, 300.646

CP-9

Two. An IHO decision is appealed to a State Review Officer, and only then to court. Most states abolished the second tier; New York did not.

Listen for: Two - IHO then State Review Officer · IHO, SRO, then court
Education Law §4404; 8 NYCRR Part 279

CP-10

Pendency - stay-put - keeps the student in the then-current educational placement during proceedings. It is automatic; no showing of harm or likelihood of success is required.

Listen for: Stay-put in the current placement; it is automatic · pendency, no showing required
20 U.S.C. §1415(j); 8 NYCRR Part 200

CP-11

Removal beyond 10 consecutive school days, or a series of removals forming a pattern totalling more than 10 school days in a school year. A manifestation determination review must occur immediately if possible and no later than 10 school days after the decision to change placement. Services continue during any removal beyond 10 cumulative days in a year.

Listen for: Beyond 10 consecutive school days, or a pattern over 10 in a year
20 U.S.C. §1415(k); 8 NYCRR Part 201

CP-12

Was the conduct caused by, or directly and substantially related to, the student's disability? And was the conduct the direct result of the district's failure to implement the IEP? If either answer is yes, the district conducts a functional behavioral assessment, implements a behavioral intervention plan, and returns the student to the prior placement unless the parties agree otherwise - and a failure-to-implement finding obliges immediate remedy.

Listen for: Caused by or substantially related to the disability; or the result of failure to implement the IEP
20 U.S.C. §1415(k)(1)(E); 8 NYCRR Part 201

CP-13

For weapons, illegal drugs or controlled substances, or the infliction of serious bodily injury, a student may be placed in an interim alternative educational setting for up to 45 school days regardless of manifestation.

Listen for: 45 school days in an interim alternative educational setting · weapons, drugs, serious bodily injury - 45 school days
20 U.S.C. §1415(k)(1)(G); 8 NYCRR Part 201

CP-14

An impairment that substantially limits a major life activity; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having one. Section 504 reaches students, parents and employees, and covers program accessibility, athletics, field trips and district communications - considerably broader than IDEA.

Listen for: Substantially limits a major life activity; a record of; regarded as
29 U.S.C. §794; 34 C.F.R. Part 104

CP-15

Designate a 504 coordinator; publish a notice of nondiscrimination; and adopt grievance procedures providing for prompt and equitable resolution. These are the duties districts most often miss because they are recipient-level.

Listen for: 504 coordinator, notice of nondiscrimination, grievance procedures
34 C.F.R. Part 104

CP-16

Within 10 school days of initial enrollment, using the Home Language Questionnaire, an individual interview conducted in English and in the home language, and the NYSITELL.

Listen for: 10 school days; HLQ, individual interview, NYSITELL
8 NYCRR Part 154

CP-17

Entering, Emerging, Transitioning, Expanding and Commanding. Proficiency is measured annually by the NYSESLAT, and students who exit receive two years of Former ELL monitoring and support.

Listen for: Entering, Emerging, Transitioning, Expanding, Commanding · NYSESLAT
8 NYCRR Part 154

CP-18

Twenty or more English language learners at the same grade level who share a home language in a single building - or across two contiguous grades - requires the district to provide a bilingual education program. It is a staffing, certification and program-siting decision, which is why it belongs to district operational and financial management and not only to curriculum.

Listen for: 20 or more ELLs of the same grade and home language in a building · twenty
8 NYCRR Part 154

CP-19

Race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender including gender identity and expression, and sex. Weight is the one people leave out.

Listen for: race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, sex · weight
Education Law §§11, 12 (Art. 2)

CP-20

Oral notification to the principal, superintendent or designee no later than one school day after witnessing or receiving the report, followed by a written report within two school days of the oral notification. Each school also designates a trained Dignity Act Coordinator, publicized to staff, students and families.

Listen for: Oral within one school day, written within two school days
Education Law §13; 8 NYCRR §100.2(kk)

CP-21

A student lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence - including doubled up from loss of housing or economic hardship, in shelters, motels, cars, or places not designed for sleeping. The student may attend the school of origin or the school of current location, on a best-interest determination made with the parent, with immediate enrollment even without records, immunization records or proof of residency. The district pays for transportation to the school of origin, continuing for the rest of the year after permanent housing is obtained, and designates a liaison. Unaccompanied youth may enroll without parental consent or guardianship papers.

Listen for: Lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence · school of origin or school of current location
42 U.S.C. §11431 et seq.; Education Law §3209; 8 NYCRR §100.2(x)

CP-22

Rights transfer at age 18 or upon enrollment in a postsecondary institution, whichever comes first. Inspection must be allowed within a reasonable time, and in no case more than 45 days after the request.

Listen for: At 18 or postsecondary enrollment; 45 days · 45 days
20 U.S.C. §1232g; 34 C.F.R. Part 99

CP-23

A published Parents' Bill of Rights for Data Privacy and Security, appended to every third-party contract involving personally identifiable information; a designated Data Protection Officer; a data security and privacy policy aligned to the NIST Cybersecurity Framework; a data security and privacy plan and signed supplemental information in every third-party contract; annual training for employees with access to PII; and a complaint procedure. Selling PII or using it for marketing is prohibited.

Listen for: Parents' Bill of Rights, Data Protection Officer, NIST-aligned policy, contract requirements
Education Law §2-d; 8 NYCRR Part 121

CP-24

A third-party contractor must notify the educational agency no more than 7 calendar days after discovering a breach. The agency must notify affected parents, eligible students, teachers or principals no more than 60 calendar days from discovery, and must report to NYSED's Chief Privacy Officer.

Listen for: 7 calendar days for the contractor, 60 calendar days for the agency
Education Law §2-d; 8 NYCRR Part 121

CP-25

The 2020 Rule. The 2024 Title IX Rule was vacated nationwide on January 9, 2025 in *Tennessee v. Cardona*, and OCR enforces Title IX under the 2020 Rule. Districts designate a Title IX Coordinator, publish a notice of nondiscrimination and adopt grievance procedures.

Listen for: The 2020 Rule · the 2024 Rule was vacated in January 2025
20 U.S.C. §1681; 34 C.F.R. Part 106; *Tennessee v. Cardona* (E.D. Ky. Jan. 9, 2025)

CP-26

CSI - Comprehensive Support and Improvement - covers broadly the lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools, high schools with a graduation rate at or below 67%, and former targeted-support schools that fail to improve; it is identified by the state. TSI - Targeted Support and Improvement - is triggered by one or more consistently underperforming subgroups. ATSI - Additional Targeted Support and Improvement - applies where a subgroup performs at or below the level that would place the school among the lowest-performing if all students performed that way.

Listen for: Comprehensive, Targeted, and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement
ESEA §1111(c)-(d); 8 NYCRR §100.19

CP-27

Each identified school produces a School Comprehensive Education Plan from a needs assessment with stakeholder participation; a district with identified schools produces a District Comprehensive Improvement Plan. CSI plans require district and state approval and are state-monitored; TSI plans are district-approved and district-monitored.

Listen for: SCEP and DCIP; CSI plans are state-approved and monitored
ESEA §1111(d); 8 NYCRR §100.19

CP-28

Any person over 5 and under 21 who has not received a high school diploma may attend the public schools of the district in which they reside. Residency is the test - not immigration status, and not property ownership.

Listen for: Over 5 and under 21 without a diploma, resident in the district · residency
Education Law §3202

CP-29

Reasonable cause to suspect - not proof, and not certainty. The reporter does not investigate first; the report goes to the Statewide Central Register. Where several reporters share the information one may call for all, but one must call, and a supervisor may not prevent a report. Failure to report is a class A misdemeanor carrying civil liability.

Listen for: Reasonable cause to suspect; do not investigate first
Social Services Law §§413, 419

CP-30

Two separate systems. Suspected abuse or maltreatment by a parent or person legally responsible goes to the Statewide Central Register under Social Services Law §413. An allegation of abuse by an employee or volunteer in an educational setting runs under Education Law Article 23-B: the person receiving the allegation promptly completes a written report to the superintendent, who, on finding reasonable suspicion, promptly notifies law enforcement or the district attorney. Confusing the two is an easy distractor.

Listen for: Article 23-B runs through the superintendent to law enforcement; SCR is for parents or persons legally responsible
Education Law Art. 23-B, §§1125-1133; Social Services Law §413

Case Law CA

CA-1

Student expression is protected in school unless it would materially and substantially disrupt school operation or invade the rights of others; an undifferentiated fear of disturbance is not enough. Write your code of conduct so discipline rests on disruption, not on disagreement.

Listen for: Material and substantial disruption · students do not shed their rights at the schoolhouse gate

Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist., 393 U.S. 503 (1969)

CA-2

Schools may discipline lewd, vulgar or plainly offensive speech at a school event without showing any disruption. It is a narrow authority - about vulgarity, not about viewpoint.

Listen for: Schools may punish lewd or vulgar speech without showing disruption

Bethel Sch. Dist. No. 403 v. Fraser, 478 U.S. 675 (1986)

CA-3

Educators may exercise editorial control over school-sponsored expressive activities so long as their actions are reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns. It governs whenever the activity bears the school's imprimatur - the newspaper, the yearbook, the school play - and Tinker governs everywhere else.

Listen for: Reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns · school-sponsored speech

Hazelwood Sch. Dist. v. Kuhlmeier, 484 U.S. 260 (1988)

CA-4

Speech at a school-supervised event that is reasonably viewed as promoting illegal drug use may be restricted. It is narrow: it is not a license to punish speech administrators merely dislike.

Listen for: Schools may restrict speech promoting illegal drug use

Morse v. Frederick, 551 U.S. 393 (2007)

CA-5

A student's vulgar off-campus social media post could not be punished. Schools retain some interest in off-campus speech but that interest is diminished: parents have primary responsibility off campus, regulating both spheres would mean round-the-clock regulation, and schools have an interest in protecting unpopular expression. The Court declined to announce a bright-line rule. It answers the open question older SDL case notes leave hanging - districts retain authority over severe bullying and harassment, threats, test-security breaches and misuse of school systems, so write your code's off-campus reach to those categories.

Listen for: Off-campus speech - the school's interest is diminished, no bright-line rule

Mahanoy Area Sch. Dist. v. B.L., 594 U.S. 180 (2021)

CA-6

A suspension of up to 10 days requires notice of the charges, an explanation of the evidence if the student denies them, and an opportunity to respond. New York codifies this at Education Law §3214: a principal may suspend for 1 to 5 school days with an informal conference on request, and anything longer requires a superintendent's hearing with counsel and cross-examination.

Listen for: Notice, explanation of the evidence, and a chance to respond · due process for suspensions up to 10 days

Goss v. Lopez, 419 U.S. 565 (1975); Education Law §3214

CA-7

School officials need only reasonable suspicion, not probable cause and not a warrant. The search must be justified at its inception and reasonable in scope in light of the age and sex of the student and the nature of the infraction.

Listen for: Reasonable suspicion; justified at its inception and reasonable in scope

New Jersey v. T.L.O., 469 U.S. 325 (1985)

CA-8

Suspicionless random drug testing of student athletes is constitutional. Vernonia covers athletes - it did not by itself reach other extracurricular participants.

Listen for: Random suspicionless drug testing of athletes is permitted · student athletes

Vernonia Sch. Dist. 47J v. Acton, 515 U.S. 646 (1995)

CA-9

Earls extended Vernonia to all students participating in competitive extracurricular activities, relying on reduced privacy expectations, minimally intrusive collection, and confidential non-punitive use of results. Neither case authorizes drug testing the entire student body. Circulating case notes that call extracurricular testing unconstitutional are superseded by Earls.

Listen for: Extended random testing to all competitive extracurricular participants · it does not authorize testing the whole student body

Bd. of Educ. v. Earls, 536 U.S. 822 (2002)

CA-10

A strip search of a 13-year-old student for prescription-strength ibuprofen violated the Fourth Amendment because the suspicion did not support that degree of intrusion. Intrusiveness must match the level of suspicion and the danger. The rule most districts adopt in response: no strip searches, ever.

Listen for: The strip search was unreasonable - intrusiveness must match suspicion

Safford Unified Sch. Dist. No. 1 v. Redding, 557 U.S. 364 (2009)

CA-11

FAPE requires an IEP reasonably calculated to enable the child to receive educational benefit - not to maximize potential. The Court ruled for the district, which had declined to provide a sign-language interpreter to a deaf student who was progressing. Rowley also set the two-part inquiry: procedural compliance plus a substantively reasonable IEP. A circulating practice item keys this case as if the parents won; they did not.

Listen for: Educational benefit, not maximization; the district won
Bd. of Educ. v. Rowley, 458 U.S. 176 (1982)

CA-12

An IEP must be reasonably calculated to enable the child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances. The Court rejected a merely-more-than-de-minimis standard and required an appropriately ambitious program. This is the current FAPE standard - it raised the bar without overruling Rowley, and 'some progress' is no longer a defense.

Listen for: Progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances - appropriately ambitious

Endrew F. v. Douglas Cnty. Sch. Dist. RE-1, 580 U.S. 386 (2017)

CA-13

There is no dangerousness exception to IDEA's stay-put provision; removal beyond 10 school days is a change of placement requiring process, and a district that believes a student is dangerous may seek injunctive relief from a court. Today the framework is stay-put, a manifestation determination review, and up to 45 school days in an interim alternative educational setting for weapons, drugs or serious bodily injury. Notes saying removal is 'only permitted with the parent's permission' use pre-1997 framing and are wrong.

Listen for: No dangerousness exception to stay-put · stay-put, manifestation determination, 45-school-day IAES

Honig v. Doe, 484 U.S. 305 (1988); 20 U.S.C. §1415(k) as amended 1997 and 2004

CA-14

IDEA's exhaustion requirement does not bar an ADA suit seeking compensatory damages. A settled or abandoned due process case no longer necessarily forecloses ADA damages exposure - which is a reason to involve counsel earlier in special education disputes.

Listen for: IDEA exhaustion does not bar an ADA damages suit
Luna Perez v. Sturgis Pub. Schs., 598 U.S. 142 (2023)

CA-15

A contagious disease may constitute a disability under Section 504. The questions are whether the person is otherwise qualified and whether reasonable accommodation is possible, decided on medical evidence rather than on fear or public reaction. It is the template for every health-based exclusion decision, for students and employees alike.

Listen for: Contagious disease can be a disability under §504; decide on medical evidence

Sch. Bd. of Nassau Cnty. v. Arline, 480 U.S. 273 (1987)

CA-16

A teacher could not be dismissed for a letter to a newspaper criticizing the board's handling of school finances. Employee speech on a matter of public concern is protected, subject to balancing against the employer's interest in efficient public service. Before acting on public criticism, ask whether the speech was on a matter of public concern and whether it caused actual operational disruption - 'it embarrassed the district' is not the test.

Listen for: Speech on a matter of public concern is protected, subject to balancing · the Pickering balancing test

Pickering v. Bd. of Educ., 391 U.S. 563 (1968)

CA-17

The teacher's call to a radio station was protected speech, and the Court remanded rather than upholding the non-renewal. It established the burden-shifting test: even where protected conduct was a motivating factor, the employer avoids liability by proving it would have reached the same decision anyway. A circulating practice item keys this case as the Court upholding the firing - it did not. This is exactly why contemporaneous documentation of performance problems protects a district.

Listen for: Burden-shifting - the employer must show it would have acted anyway

Mt. Healthy City Sch. Dist. Bd. of Educ. v. Doyle, 429 U.S. 274 (1977)

CA-18

Statements made pursuant to official duties are not citizen speech and are not shielded by the First Amendment from employer discipline. New York's whistleblower and Taylor Law protections operate independently, so Garcetti is not a license to retaliate.

Listen for: Speech pursuant to official duties is not protected citizen speech

Garcetti v. Ceballos, 547 U.S. 410 (2006)

CA-19

Title IX damages are available only where an official with authority to institute corrective measures had actual knowledge of the harassment and was deliberately indifferent. The Court affirmed for the district. That is why every complaint must reach a person with authority and why the response must be prompt and documented.

Listen for: Actual knowledge by an official with corrective authority plus deliberate indifference

Gebser v. Lago Vista Indep. Sch. Dist., 524 U.S. 274 (1998)

CA-20

A district is liable where it is deliberately indifferent to known harassment that is so severe, pervasive and objectively offensive that it bars the victim's access to education, in a context the district substantially controls. Davis adds the severity and control elements that Gebser does not contain - and DASA obliges a New York district to act well below the Davis threshold.

Listen for: Severe, pervasive and objectively offensive harassment in a context the district controls

Davis v. Monroe Cnty. Bd. of Educ., 526 U.S. 629 (1999)

CA-21

The Court said it had long ago abandoned Lemon and its endorsement-test offshoot, directing that Establishment Clause questions be analyzed by reference to historical practices and understandings, and held that a coach's quiet post-game prayer was protected private religious expression. Nearly every circulating case-note file still teaches Lemon as current law. A district may not suppress an employee's personal religious expression merely to avoid the appearance of endorsement; the analysis turns on coercion.

Listen for: Lemon is no longer the framework - analyze by historical practices and coercion

Kennedy v. Bremerton Sch. Dist., 597 U.S. 507 (2022)

CA-22

Student-led, student-initiated prayer delivered over the public address system at football games under school policy violates the Establishment Clause. Together with Engel, Abington and Lee v. Weisman, it means school-sponsored and coerced religious exercise is prohibited while genuinely private expression is protected. Notes calling student-led prayer at athletic events 'a gray area' are twenty-five years out of date.

Listen for: Student-led prayer over the PA under school policy is unconstitutional

Santa Fe Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Doe, 530 U.S. 290 (2000)

CA-23

Providing identical instruction to students who do not understand English is not equal treatment. Under Title VI, districts must take affirmative steps to address the language barrier. With the Equal Educational Opportunities Act and the Castaneda test - sound educational theory, adequate resources and personnel, and demonstrated results - it is the foundation of ENL and bilingual obligations.

Listen for: Identical instruction is not equal treatment; districts must take affirmative steps

Lau v. Nichols, 414 U.S. 563 (1974); 20 U.S.C. §1703(f)

CA-24

A state may not deny a free public education to children because of their immigration status. In practice: verify residency and age, and do not require immigration documentation, ask about immigration status, or condition enrollment on a Social Security number.

Listen for: A state may not deny free public education based on immigration status

Plyler v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202 (1982)

Written Assignments WA

WA-1

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.

Listen for: Purpose, Application of Content, Support · purpose, application, support

SDL Preparation Guide, Criteria for Scoring the Response

WA-2

Four. The 4 response reflects a thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills; 3 a general command; 2 a partial command; 1 little or no command.

Listen for: Four: thorough, general, partial, little or no command · 4-3-2-1

SDL Preparation Guide, Criteria for Scoring the Response

WA-3

Unscorable and blank. A response is unscorable if it is unrelated to the assigned topic, unreadable, written in a language other than English, or lacking a sufficient amount of original work to score. If nothing is written, the response is blank.

Listen for: Unscorable and blank

SDL Preparation Guide, Criteria for Scoring the Response

WA-4

A 4 completely fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding fully to the given task; a 3 generally fulfills the purpose by responding to the given task. The difference is completeness against every obligation in the charge - which is why the count of required items matters more than the prose.

Listen for: Completely fulfills versus generally fulfills the purpose
SDL Preparation Guide, score point descriptions

WA-5

A 4 provides strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning; a 3 provides support with some relevant examples and/or generally sound reasoning. Every claim gets a reason and, where you can afford it, an example.

Listen for: Strong support with high-quality relevant examples versus some relevant examples

SDL Preparation Guide, score point descriptions

WA-6

Assignment Two is always the long one and is worth approximately 33% of the total test score; Assignment One is the short one at approximately 17%. Budget by weight rather than by order - roughly 35 minutes on the short task and 75 on the long one out of the four-hour block. The exam allocates nothing per task; that split is a study recommendation, not an official rule.

Listen for: Assignment Two, 33% versus 17% · the long one - roughly 35 and 75 minutes

SDL Preparation Guide, Directions for the Written Assignments

WA-7

Explain why the district needs to act at this time; describe two key issues for the team to consider and explain why each matters; and describe the appropriate role for you as superintendent in developing and implementing the plan. It is written as a memo of about 150-300 words to the team you chair - so it needs a subject line and a plural audience.

Listen for: Why now; two issues with reasons; the superintendent's role · 3 bullets, memo format

SDL Preparation Guide, Sample Work Product Assignment

WA-8

Describe what the superintendent did well; describe what the superintendent did poorly or failed to do; and identify and discuss three important actions the superintendent should take to resolve the situation, explaining why each is likely to be effective. About 300-600 words, citing specific examples from the information provided. Note the count: two evaluative sections and three forward actions with three justifications.

Listen for: Did well; did poorly; three actions with reasons · three actions

SDL Preparation Guide, Sample Case Study Assignment

WA-9

Describe two important issues the superintendent should consider in planning the solution; describe one strategy for addressing the problem in this district; and explain why that strategy is likely to be effective. About 150-300 words. Note the asymmetry - two issues but only one strategy.

Listen for: Two issues; one strategy; why it will work

SDL Preparation Guide, Sample Management Problem Solving Assignment

WA-10

Identify one significant strength of the district's educational program and describe a strategy for building on it; identify two significant weaknesses; describe one strategy to address each weakness; and explain why each strategy is likely to be effective. About 300-600 words, citing specific evidence from the documents provided. That is one strength, two weaknesses, three strategies and three justifications.

Listen for: One strength with a strategy; two weaknesses with a strategy each; why each works

SDL Preparation Guide, Sample Educational Program Analysis Assignment

WA-11

The assignment is spread across tabs at the top of the screen labelled Document 1, Document 2 and so on - the official sample carries five documents. If you write without clicking every tab you are writing a partial answer to a task whose entire point is cross-document synthesis. Some assignments also require the scroll bar; scroll to the bottom of the charge before you start counting obligations.

Listen for: The assignment is split across document tabs you must open · five documents in the official sample

SDL Preparation Guide, Part Two Directions for the Written Assignments

WA-12

In any action or strategy section, every verb points forward. 'Should have' belongs only where you are judging the past - which on this exam is one paragraph of one task type, the Case Study's 'did poorly' section. Check the auxiliary verb in every sentence of the action section and convert 'should have' to 'should'.

Listen for: Should have becomes should · actions must be prospective

SDL Preparation Guide, Case Study charge; scoring criterion PURPOSE

WA-13

Retrospective actions - the action section reads 'the superintendent should have consulted the principals first' and 'she should have built consensus'. Both statements may be true, but neither is an action to take now. The candidate has written the weakness section twice and answered the third bullet zero times, on a third of a task worth 33% of the test.

Listen for: Writing retrospective criticism instead of forward actions

SDL Preparation Guide, Case Study charge

WA-14

Giving two actions where three were asked for, three strategies where one was asked for, or two strengths where the charge said one strength and two weaknesses - usually the result of writing from a memorised template rather than from the prompt in front of you. Fix: write the required numbers down before you type, and signpost your paragraphs First, Second, Finally so you can count them in the review pass. Under-counting caps your PURPOSE score; over-counting eats the word budget.

Listen for: Answering with the wrong number of items; count from the prompt · write the counts down before typing
SDL Preparation Guide, Directions for the Written Assignments

WA-15

A claim with no mechanism attached - 'I would form a districtwide committee', full stop - or a circular reason that restates the goal: 'this will be effective because it will improve student achievement'. Replace it with the pattern that carries most of the weight: claim, because reason, for example instance from the prompt. Three clauses satisfying PURPOSE, APPLICATION OF CONTENT and SUPPORT at once.

Listen for: A claim with no reason or mechanism · claim, because reason, for example
SDL Preparation Guide, scoring criterion SUPPORT

WA-16

'Citing specific' - specific examples on the Case Study, specific evidence on the Educational Program Analysis. That obliges you to put a document number or a named fact from the prompt in your claims. A perfectly sensible analysis with no document numbers in it loses on SUPPORT and on APPLICATION OF CONTENT.

Listen for: Citing specific examples / citing specific evidence · cite the documents and named facts
SDL Preparation Guide, Case Study and Educational Program Analysis charges

WA-17

Writing recommendations a principal could execute alone - walkthroughs, a faculty meeting agenda, a grade-level team, a coaching cycle - or fixing the one bad building instead of the missing district policy. Catch it by asking what only a superintendent can do here: policy, protocol, engagement with the governing body, districtwide standards, resource allocation, cross-building structures, and accountability for building plans. If the sentence you just wrote could have been written by an assistant principal, it is not scoring APPLICATION OF CONTENT.

Listen for: Recommending things a principal could do alone · ask what only a superintendent can do
SDL framework, Part One objective 0001; scoring criterion APPLICATION OF CONTENT

WA-18

'I would terminate the principal', 'I would change the collective bargaining agreement', and 'I would adopt the policy at the next board meeting'. The superintendent recommends; the board of education adopts policy and acts on personnel; and unilateral changes to terms and conditions of employment are negotiated, not announced.

Listen for: Terminating staff, changing the contract unilaterally, adopting policy yourself
Education Law §§1709, 1711; Civil Service Law Art. 14

WA-19

Reread the verb in the charge. 'Write a memo of about 150-300 words to the members of the team' is an instruction about format and reader; 'write a response' is not. The Work Product task names an audience, so it opens with a subject line and closes in the plural. The Case Study, Management Problem Solving and Educational Program Analysis tasks name no recipient, so write those as analysis - and do not put a salutation on a task that did not ask for a document.

Listen for: Read the verb in the charge - memo means memo, response means analysis
SDL Preparation Guide, sample assignment charges

WA-20

You are not scored on writing ability. But the response must be communicated clearly enough to permit valid judgment of your knowledge and skills, must conform to the conventions of edited American English, and must be your original work in your own words. You may not use reference materials, and you must not type your name anywhere in the answer box - anonymity is part of the scoring process. You may complete the two assignments in either order and return to either as time permits.

Listen for: Not scored on writing ability, but it must be clear and in edited American English
SDL Preparation Guide, Directions for the Written Assignments

Answer Patterns PA

PA-1

The vision is a shared image of the future that steers improvement decisions across the district. It is not a marketing document, not a strategic plan or set of action steps, and not a set of rules about how people will collaborate. Options that describe publicity, a work plan, or team norms are distractors.

Listen for: A shared image of the future that guides improvement
SDL framework, Part One objective 0002

PA-2

Support the decision publicly and turn to implementing it. You stop relitigating. Options that have you continuing to argue the merits, seeking allies, or implementing half-heartedly are distractors.

Listen for: Support the decision publicly and implement it
SDL framework, Part One objective 0001

PA-3

As one body, informed early and equally - especially on the budget. You give the board consequences and options, not conclusions. Distractors work individual members, the board president, or the friendly bloc rather than the whole body.

Listen for: One body, informed early and equally · never work individual members

SDL framework, Part One objective 0003

PA-4

Before you make the case, not after you have built it. Engagement that begins after the plan exists is consultation as theatre, and the exam keys against it. The distractor family is premature output - a plan, letter, campaign or funding request produced before anyone has been consulted or anything diagnosed.

Listen for: Before you build the case · engage first, then make the case
SDL framework, Part One objectives 0004 and 0005

PA-5

Designing solutions with stakeholders. Not launching a campaign, not announcing a program, not going back for more input. When the listening is already done in the stem, the rewarded move is joint design.

Listen for: Design solutions with stakeholders · move to joint design, not to launch

SDL framework, Part Two objective 0003

PA-6

Define and scope the need. You do not cost it, staff it, or take it to the board before you know what it is. A request for board authorization before any assessment step is the board-takeover distractor.

Listen for: Define and scope the need first
SDL framework, Part One objective 0007

PA-7

Does it address the cause of the problem in front of you?

Options that are good practice in general but unconnected to the stated cause are the most expensive distractors, because experience makes them easy to justify.

Listen for: Does it address the cause of this problem
SDL framework, Part One objective 0007

PA-8

Make sure the number means what you think it means: check the measure, the population, the time span and the comparison. Concluding from one year, one source or one measurement is the premature-judgment distractor, cued by phrases like 'for the first time', 'last year', or 'a recent assessment'.

Listen for: Verify what the number actually measures
SDL framework, Part One objective 0007

PA-9

Addressing the system that allowed the failure, not just the person who committed it. Correcting the individual while leaving the process unchanged is the incident-fix distractor - a singular subject plus a corrective verb.

Listen for: Fix the system, not only the person
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0006

PA-10

The inconsistency itself is the finding. A district-level answer names the missing standard, protocol or monitoring routine that permitted the variation - it does not fix the weak school and leave the district without a standard. Solving it at the one school where it surfaced is the one-building-fix distractor.

Listen for: The inconsistency is the problem · name the missing districtwide standard

SDL framework, Part Two objective 0002

PA-11

Set the districtwide standard first, then require each building to write its plan against that standard. Asking buildings to plan before the standard exists produces exactly the variation you were trying to eliminate.

Listen for: Standard first, then building plans against it
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0002

PA-12

Never reorganize people out of frustration, and never float a personnel move you have not actually decided on. Announcing a possibility converts a manageable problem into a public one - the pattern the official Case Study models when the superintendent mentions swapping principals the afternoon before a board meeting.

Listen for: Do not reorganize out of frustration or float undecided personnel moves

SDL Preparation Guide, sample Case Study

PA-13

Whenever the gap is skill rather than will. Train people to do the thing; do not simply require them to do it. A new rule, deadline, mandate or evaluation criterion laid over a capacity gap is the compliance-bolt-on distractor, cued by 'require all', 'mandate', 'specify a date by which', or 'revise the criteria to include'.

Listen for: When the gap is skill, not compliance - train instead of requiring
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0004

PA-14

Through differentiated, ongoing support tied to clear expectations - not by announcing a deadline, publicizing results, or adding an evaluation criterion. Accountability without capacity is a compliance exercise.

Listen for: Differentiated ongoing support against clear expectations
SDL framework, Part One objective 0008

PA-15

Nothing. Hold the expectation high and supply the means to reach it. Adjusting a standard, goal or expectation downward to fit current performance is the lowered-bar distractor, cued by 'a more realistic goal' or 'procedures for modifying the standards'.

Listen for: Keep the standard and add support - never lower the standard
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0002

PA-16

Give the data back to the group that generated it and have them plan the response. The efficiency-trap distractor is the leader analysing the results alone and then introducing appropriate changes - faster, cleaner, and keyed wrong.

Listen for: Return the data to the group and let them plan the response
SDL framework, Part One objective 0007

PA-17

Professional learning that touches practice beats professional learning that discusses practice - embedded work on authentic problems and student outcomes, with follow-up, rather than a lecture, a seminar or a one-off presentation. Praise, inspiration or a seminar offered in place of removing an actual burden is the morale-substitute distractor.

Listen for: The one embedded in practice with follow-up
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0005

PA-18

Remove the load the district office is generating - competing initiatives, duplicative reporting, meetings, uncoordinated central office demands. Expressing gratitude, renewing commitment or offering seminars on empowerment are morale substitutes for the actual fix.

Listen for: Remove the district-generated load
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0004

PA-19

Sustained, two-way engagement over time - not a letter, a lecture, a presentation or a single seminar. One-directional communication aimed at an entrenched position is never the key.

Listen for: Sustained two-way engagement
SDL framework, Part One objective 0004

PA-20

Write for the reader you actually have, removing jargon rather than defining it; and never rely on a single channel, because every channel excludes someone. Adjusting warmth or packaging when the barrier is comprehension or access is the tone-fix distractor; 'post it', 'mail it' or 'send it' with no second route named is the single-channel distractor.

Listen for: Remove the jargon; use more than one channel
SDL framework, Part One objective 0003

PA-21

'First' ranks sequence, not importance - several options may all happen eventually, but only one happens now. 'Most important' ranks consequence if omitted - which option, if skipped, breaks everything downstream. 'Best' or 'most effective' ranks fit to the goal named in the stem, which is usually narrower than the scenario. When two options both look right, you have almost always stopped reading the qualifier too early.

Listen for: Sequence; consequence if omitted; fit to the stated goal
SDL Preparation Guide, sample question rationales

PA-22

They do not. That is a knowledge item wearing a scenario, and you answer from the standard - what the statute, regulation or case actually says - not from what good practice would want it to say. Equally, an item asking what you are 'most concerned about' is inverted: pick the worst thing, not the best thing.

Listen for: Answer from the legal standard, not from best practice
SDL framework, Part Two objective 0008

PART D

Progress Tracker

Blank. Fill it in as you go — accuracy by objective is what tells you where the next study hour should go.

Accuracy by objective

Part	Obj	Objective	Items	1st pass	2nd pass	Notes
103	0001	Leadership concepts, governance and ethics	6			
103	0002	Developing and sustaining an educational vision	6			
103	0003	Clear and effective communication	6			
103	0004	Collaboration and cooperation	6			
103	0005	The process of change and its management	6			
103	0006	Comprehensive, long-range planning	5			
103	0007	Data-driven decision making and problem solving	6			
103	0008	Promoting accountability	5			
104	0001	Understanding and supporting learning districtwide	7			
104	0002	Standards and expectations	6			
104	0003	Providing support to students	6			
104	0004	Supporting building leaders, teachers and staff	6			
104	0005	Fostering ongoing staff development	6			
104	0006	District-level operational management	6			
104	0007	District financial and facilities management	7			
104	0008	Supervising compliance with mandates	9			

Recall decks

Code	Deck	Cards	Round 1	Round 2	Still missing
FW	Framework & Blueprint	24			
GV	Governance & the Board	26			
FN	Finance & the Budget	30			
IC	Internal Controls & Audit	20			
PS	Personnel & Labor	29			
CP	Students, Rights & Compliance	30			
CA	Case Law	24			
WA	Written Assignments	20			
PA	Answer Patterns	22			

Timed sittings

One row per timed block. Track the writing separately from the items — they are worth the same.

Date	Part	What	Time used	Items right	Written task self-score	What to fix

Written-assignment rehearsals

The four task types. Score each rehearsal 1–4 against Purpose, Application of Content and Support.

Task type	Part	Words	Weight	Attempt 1	Attempt 2	Attempt 3
Work Product	103	150–300	17%			
Case Study	103	300–600	33%			
Management Problem Solving	104	150–300	17%			
Educational Program Analysis	104	300–600	33%			